

Talking about life. Talking about death.

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An excerpt from John Main OSB, *Death and Resurrection, MOMENT OF CHRIST* (New York: Continuum, 1998), pp. 68-69.

St Benedict told his monks, Always keep death before your eyes. We don't talk much about death in the modern world. But what the whole Christian tradition tells us is that if we would become wise we must learn the lesson that we have here abiding city. [We must hear] what the wise of ages past and present say to us: to have life in focus we must have death in [focus. . .]. Talking about death is hard for the worldly to understand. Indeed the principal fantasy of much worldliness operates out of completely the opposite point of view: not the wisdom of our own mortality but the pure fantasy that we are immortal, beyond physical weakness.

But the wisdom of the tradition St Benedict represents is that awareness of our physical weakness enables us to see our own spiritual fragility too. There is a profound awareness in all of us, so profound indeed that it is often buried for much of the time, that we must make contact with the fullness of life and the source of life. We must make contact with the power of God and somehow, open our own fragile earthen vessels to the eternal love of God, the love that cannot be quenched. [. . .]

Every time we sit down to meditation we enter the axis of death and resurrection. We do so because in our meditation we go beyond our own life and the limitations of our life into the mystery of God. We discover, each of us from our own experience, that the mystery of God is the mystery of love, infinite love, a love that casts our all fear.

After meditation: Ranier Maria Rilke, Buddha in Glory from THE ENLIGHTENED HEART: An Anthology of Sacred Poetry, ed. S. Mitchell (New York: Harper, 1989), p. 131.

Center of all centers, core of cores,
almond self-enclosed and growing sweetâ€”
all this universe, to the furthest stars
and beyond them, is your flesh, your fruit.

Now you feel how nothing clings to you;
your vast shell reaches into endless space,
and there the rich, thick fluids rise and flow.
Illuminated in your infinite peace,

a billion stars go spinning through the night,
blazing high above your head.
But *in* you is the presence that
will be, when all the stars are dead.

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