

Finding inner peace in times of conflict

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An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB. “Dearest Friends,” WCCM International Newsletter, Winter 2001.

Inner peace is hard to find at times of conflict and fear. We find it difficult to sit still when mind and feeling are in turmoil. It is easy to give up meditation at such times when it is most needed. So it helps to see that our meditation is not for ourselves alone. If it were, we are no more than religious consumers. The meaning of contemplation is found in its fruits, especially the love and service of others. When we have inner peace we go out to others in compassion. Lacking it all our out-going is subject to the ego’s desire, anger and competitiveness. God is the love that casts out fear in our neighbor because, when we have truly met that love within ourselves, we can never do our neighbor harm.

Peace is not achieved by rooting out and destroying evil. When we become aware of our vices – anger, pride, greed, lust – the attempt to destroy them easily degenerates into self-hatred . . . Better than destroying your faults is to work patiently to implant virtue—a slower and less dramatic work but far more effective. [. . .] The first step in implanting virtue that will eventually overpower the vices is to establish the foundational virtue of deep prayer. Through the silent rhythm of prayer, wisdom slowly penetrates our mind and our world. It is the universal power that brings good out of evil. As the book of Wisdom says, ‘the hope for the salvation of the world lies in the greatest number of wise people.’

The wise know the distinction between self-knowledge and self-fixation, between detachment and hardness of heart, between correction and cruelty. There are no rules for wisdom. Rules are never universal. But virtue is.

After Meditation, an excerpt from The Book of Wisdom 8: 21-29 in Christian Community Bible (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997), p. 925.

I have come to know everything we see and everything hidden, because Wisdom, who designed them all, taught me. In her is a spirit that is intelligent, saintly, unique, manifold, subtle, active, concise, pure and lucid. It cannot corrupt, loves what is good and nothing can restrain it. It is beneficent, loving humankind, steadfast, dependable, calm though almighty. It sees everything and penetrates all spirits, however intelligent, subtle and pure they may be.

Wisdom surpasses in mobility all that moves, and being so pure pervades and permeates all things. She is a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; nothing impure can enter her. She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of God's action and an image of goodness. She is but one, yet Wisdom can do all things and, herself unchanging, she renews all things. She enters holy souls, making them prophets and friends of God. . . She is indeed more beautiful than the sun and surpasses all the constellations; she outrivals light, for light gives way to night, but evil cannot prevail against Wisdom.

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