

The Weekly Group Meeting

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John Main's hope that the teaching would be shared in an organic way through small groups of men and women meeting regularly in homes, parishes and work-places has been more than fulfilled, as there are now in addition to the ones he mentioned groups in schools, hospitals, hospices, cancer centres and prisons. In Georgetown University Business School Christian Meditation was introduced as part a MBA Course there. In fact, there are now 2257 groups meeting weekly in more than 53 countries in the world.

John Main had a clear understanding of the need of a community of faith that would solidify one's own commitment to the spiritual discipline of meditation: *"In contact with others we awaken to the deeper truth of our being that we are meant to see, and so we learn to travel beyond ourselves. This is why meditating regularly, whether daily or weekly, with the same group or community is such a healthy sustenance to our pilgrimage. We cannot maintain the delusion of an isolated pilgrimage when we are present with others. And yet, this very physical and spiritual presence recalls us to a deeper personal commitment to stillness, to silence and to fidelity.....The group or community similarly signals the end to all false heroism and self-dramatization. Being in touch with the ordinary failings and limitations of others puts our resources and fidelity into perspective, which we need for balance and harmony in our life. In the presence of others we know ourselves."*(The Present Christ)

Meditators instinctively realize that this is a journey that is difficult to make alone; it is so much easier if we make it with others. It is true that no one else can meditate for us; we meditate in solitude every day, but at the same time we realize that meeting with others on a common pilgrimage can give us the support we need to carry on the journey.

The group setting also enables beginners to learn 'how' to meditate. Newcomers can be integrated into a group at any point in time. Experience has also demonstrated that when a group starts in a new geographic area, people who have never meditated before will join the group. New groups introduce new people to meditation.

The important reasons why we should meet in a meditation group once a week is therefore clear: it promotes a spiritual bond amongst the members and a mutual concern between those who have set out on a common pilgrimage. In commenting about meditating in a group, Fr William Johnston SJ, in his book, '*The Inner Eye of Love*', says: "*For example we can sit together in silent and wordless meditation. And in such a situation we can feel not only the silence in our hearts but the silence of the whole group. Sometimes such silence will be almost palpable and it can unite people more deeply than any words.*" This sharing of silence is the heart of the meditation group meeting. The power and strength of meditating together comes from the words of Jesus, '*Where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them*' (Matt 18:20).

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