The great school of community

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An excerpt from John Main OSB, "Christian Community" in The Hunger for Depth and Meaning, ed. Peter Ng (Singapore: Medio Media, 2007), pp.143-4.

The crime of idolatry is, precisely, creating our own god, in our own image and likeness. Rather than encounter God in God's awesome difference from ourselves, we construct a toy model in our own psychic and emotional image. In doing this, we do not harm God, of course, as unreality has no power over truth. But we do debase and scatter ourselves, surrendering the potential and divine glory of our humanity for the false glitter of the golden calf. The truth is so much more exciting, so much more wonderful. Our way to experience this truth is in the silence of our meditation. The power that silence has is to allow truth to emerge, to rise to the service, to become visible. We know that it is greater than we are, and we find a perhaps unexpected humility without ourselves that leads us to real attentive silence. We let the truth be. Just as we can cut God down to our own size and impose our own identity, so we can do this with other people. In meditation, we develop our capacity to turn our whole being towards the Other. We learn to let our neighbor be, just as we learn to let God be. We learn not to manipulate our neighbor but rather to reverence him, to reverence his importance, the wonder of his being. In other words, we learn to love him. . . . Because of this, prayer is the great school of community.

After meditation: Robert Frost, "A Time to Talk" in THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST (New York: Henry Holt, 1979), cited in The Writer's Almanac, 1.31.17 *A Time to Talk* When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am, 'What is it?'
No, not as there is a time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.