John Main’s theology of prayer

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Kim Nataraja November 20, 2026

John Main’s theology on prayer is closely linked with his Christian theology in general. In a previous weekly teaching we heard John Main say, that the *“purpose of our Community is to hand on the tradition of meditation. What we are handing on, or trying to hand on, is the knowledge that Christ dwells in our hearts.”* He emphasized this communion over and over again: *“Jesus has sent his Spirit to dwell within us, making all of us temples of holiness: God himself dwelling within us….We know then that we share in the nature of God.”*

This faith in the indwelling Christ – always seen in Trinitarian terms, God, Holy Spirit – and prayer as a way to touch this Presence informs all of John Main’s teaching. He constantly stresses the need to let go of thoughts, images, sense impressions, which form our surface consciousness, our rational consciousness. When we do so, we get in the realm of our own deeper consciousness and at the same time the consciousness of Jesus, the Christ consciousness. We can do that, because Jesus shared our humanity: *“The journey of prayer is simply to find the way to open our human consciousness to his human consciousness.”*

Not only do we then have communion with his consciousness, but we also join him in his prayer to the Divine, which he always saw in terms of ‘Abba’, a respectful yet loving term of endearment for Father. When we do that, John Main stressed, we will find that there comes a point when we no longer talk of ‘my prayer’, but join Christ in his prayer to the Father. We enter the stream of love that flows between Jesus and his Father, which is the Holy Spirit.*“To enter into that stream of pure prayer, you must transcend yourself; you must leave self behind. Learning to say your mantra, and learning to discipline yourself to prayer every day, is the way the tradition gives us and the way our own experience gives us for journeying with Jesus, through Jesus, to the Father.”*The essence of meditation is exactly this: focusing all our loving intention and attention on our prayer word, putting everything else temporarily aside.

John Main always stressed that meditation is prayer, but also that it is not the only way to pray, and not the only way to enter this stream of love. All forms of prayer, liturgical prayer or personal prayer, can lead us into the silence within our heart, where Christ dwells, where we become aware of the Divine presence, this pure experience of God: “*So meditation is not in any sense exclusive. We are not saying to anyone, do not waste time saying the rosary and don’t waste time saying your Breviary. What we are saying is: Enter into the pure stream of the prayer of Jesus.*

Launch yourself into that stream by any means you can find, whether it is the rosary, the Stations of the Cross, the Divine Office, or whatever.”