



I WANT *peace*

*Peace is my parting gift to you my own peace
such as the world cannot give*

John 14:27

FINDING CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

STELLA KON

For many Catholics, prayer is about asking God to change the world for their benefit. It is a superstitious pagan understanding, almost like white magic.

Christian Meditation is a deeply Christian form of prayer. To fully understand this, we need to make a paradigm shift in our understanding of prayer. Prayer is not about asking God to fulfil our desires but letting go our desires. **Prayer is a relationship with God, through Jesus.** This is the understanding of prayer in Christian meditation.

In the theology of the Gospel, Jesus is both God and man, God incarnate in man. God became human so that man could be reconciled with God. The purpose of our life is to be in union with God through Jesus. Hence all Christian prayer is made "through Christ our Lord." In meditation, we enter into the Trinitarian understanding, the deepest mystery of our faith. Jesus prays in our heart to the Father - his spirit is in us, constantly crying "Abba Father." This flow of love to his Father is what we call the Holy Spirit. The upwelling prayer of Jesus never ceases as St Paul says "We do not even know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." (Rom: 8.26) **The aim of all prayer is to lead us into the prayer of Christ.** However there are many obstacles that block us from being in touch with the indwelling Spirit. The distractions of daily life, the pull of the ego, the illusory desire for happiness - all these prevent us from recognising the reality of God's presence within us. We need to find a way to escape from these distractions.

Meditation is a direct path to this end. Jesus says, "If anyone wishes to follow me he must deny himself" (Mt 16:24). When we sit still in meditation and give our attention to the prayer word, we leave ourselves behind and turn our attention totally to God. **The mantra leads us into union with Jesus.** We lose ourselves in him. Our prayer is a tiny river flowing into the mighty ocean that is Jesus' prayer. This is the goal of Christian Meditation - **to clear the path to enable us experience the presence of the Risen Christ within us.**

Christian Meditation conforms to Jesus' teaching on prayer. In Mt: 6:6-7, Jesus tells us to go into the "inner room" - an interior place of silence and "Do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words." **Meditation is pure prayer, purified of words, thoughts, images, ideas - purified of desires.** In the silence of our hearts, we lay aside our words.

The Rosary, Scripture reading, the Eucharist, various devotions are all valid forms of prayer. They can be portrayed as the spokes of a wheel, which meet in the centre - the mind of Christ (see front cover). The spokes are meant to bring us to the same place, which is the prayer of Jesus, eternally present in the human heart. Christian Meditation does not replace these forms of prayer which get simplified and deepened by meditation.

In meditation, our prayer flows into the prayer of Christ - his prayer then affects all our forms of prayer. It is a two way flow - our prayers grow in quality rather than quantity and we return to our community prayer with a deeper capacity for attention and we experience God's presence more deeply. Our participation in the Eucharist becomes more significant. The Scripture begins to speak to us. Our verbal prayer becomes simpler with fewer words. Our whole spiritual life is transformed. ■

This article was compiled from many sources, especially the talks of Peter Ng and the writings of Laurence Freeman. Books and other resources on Christian Meditation can be obtained from the bookstore outside the Meditation Room (contact Daulet at 6469 7671, or email her at daulet@pacific.net.sg).

Watch out for our next Article in this continuing series on Christian Meditation: "The Fruits of Meditation: Transformation of the Person by the Indwelling Spirit"

Laurence Freeman osb

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meditation
THE WAY OF *Faith*

**Not just Belief...
A new understanding of Faith**

To live in faith is to live in love. Belief, orthodoxy, morality and... will be coloured by their faith context, but the essence of faith is transcendence. Faith is our capacity to go beyond the self-centred priorities of our ego and to centre in another, in God, where unity, love. So faith is a way of living and also a process of growth requires not just time but also the will. The person of faith makes the central value in all they do and in all their relationships. Faith therefore is an important determining factor for our personal and spiritual lives but also for our social life, life, and our civilization. Meditation, Fr Laurence says, makes meaning of being a faithful human being. Repeating the mantra returning to it throughout the meditation, takes us beyond consciousness to a place of union where the prayer of Christ: "May they all be one as we are one."

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ON CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Q What is the difference between Contemplation and Meditation?

Some older writers use the word “meditation” to refer to wordless (or apophatic) prayer, but the meaning of the word has changed somewhat over the years. Many methods of prayer use imagination, imagery or word-based reflection, to bring the mind to Christ. This is often called Meditation, e.g. the Ignatian method of meditation.

Contemplative prayer is prayer without words, bringing the mind to stillness. Christian Meditation is a form of contemplative prayer.

Q Is there a danger that if we empty the mind in meditation, the devil might come in, as mentioned in Mt Ch 12?

In meditation we do not empty the mind – we cleanse it of distractions, so that the indwelling Christ can fill it and take it over. There is no danger of the devil coming in.

Q I only meditate in the morning as I am too tired at night. Is that enough?

Like a medicine that is prescribed to be taken twice a day, you will get the full benefit if you meditate morning and evening. The mantra brings a rhythm of serenity into our life, as our meditation opens the new day ahead, and closes the day that is past. You may find it easier to plan your meditation time earlier in the evening, rather than late at night.

Q Can I play music while I meditate?

The tradition taught by Fr John Main is sometimes called “the Way of Poverty” because it does not provide any indulgences for the ego, the mind or the senses. Although music may be helpful in other forms of meditation, in this tradition it will be a distraction. We listen only to the prayer word in the silence of our mind.

Please send all your queries on meditation to:
meditatorQA@gmail.com.

HOW TO MEDITATE

SIT

Sit down. Sit still and upright.
Close your eyes lightly.
Sit relaxed but alert.

SAY

Silently, interiorly,
begin to say a single word.
We recommend the prayer-phrase
maranatha.
Recite it as four syllables of
equal length: Ma-ra-na-tha.

LISTEN

Listen to it as you say it,
gently but continuously.
Do not think or imagine anything,
spiritual or otherwise.

RETURN

If thoughts or images come,
these are distractions at the time of
meditation, so keep returning to
simply saying the word.

PERSEVERE

Meditate each morning and
evening for 20 to 30 minutes.

ness and Holiness

one cause of distractions - lack of physical conditioning

Fr Joe Pereira speaks of the body as a vessel of holiness which needs to be integrated with the mind and spirit in coming to wholeness. One cause of distractions in meditation, he says, can be due to a lack of physical conditioning. Fr Joe teaches some simple breathing and stretching exercises to prepare the body for meditation and help in sitting 'upright and still' as energy of life which is in the spine, and the energy of intelligence which is and the energy of intelligence is made to drop downwards, they meet in the heart. * Then concentration is easier. Yoga, he says, can help many meditators to let go of the ego and to welcome the Spirit of the Risen Lord dwelling in our hearts.

- CD1
1. Wholeness and Holiness
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 3. The Prayer of the Heart
 4. The Practice
 5. Stretching and Breathing 1
 6. Fully Alive
 7. To be a Zero
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- CD3
1. The Secret of Healing
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- CD4
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 2. Q&A 2. Chakras and Kundalini
 3. Q&A 3. Yoga Exercises and Meditation
 4. Q&A 4. Distressing Thoughts
 5. Q&A 5. Distressing Thoughts
 6. Q&A 6. Falling Asleep
 7. Q&A 7. Hoarding of Attachments
 8. Community Prayer
 9. Gentle Shepherd (song)

ness and Holiness

4 Audio CDs

Fr Joe Pereira is the WCCM Indian co-ordinator. He is an archbishop, founder-director of the foundation which is devoted to the care and rehabilitation of sufferers from HIV/AIDS. He is also a yoga teacher globally to selflessness in relation to the field of social work in India. He has written a book and DVD, 'Yoga for the Meditator'.

GROUPS & TIME

- Monday, 7pm
Tuesday, 8pm
(Beginners group)
Wednesday, 7.30pm
Thursday, 8pm
Friday, 8pm
(Young Adults group)

CONTACT DETAILS

- Felix (Tel: 6443 3661)
Janey (Hp: 9173 8738)
janey_tan@yahoo.com.sg
Rebecca (Hp: 9835 7835)
rebeccalim49@gmail.com
Stella (Hp: 9644 4342)
kon.stella@gmail.com
Francis (Hp: 9368 7773)
francisteo7@gmail.com
Duane (Hp: 9748 6673)
adre1986@gmail.com