



Monthly Online Meditation

World Community for Christian Meditation (Singapore) SESSION 19 | 2022 January

The Mystery of God and the Mystery of Life

REFLECTION – Peter Ng

Good evening, Fr Vaz, brothers and sisters.

The purpose of our monthly online session is to help new meditators to understand our teaching on meditation and to encourage old-timers, you might say, to persevere on the journey. So at each of our monthly sessions we take the opportunity to share with you what we describe as the essential teaching, the essential teaching of WCCM on meditation – basically, to explain to you what is meditation, how to meditate, and then to explain the process, the discipline of meditation in terms of our Christian faith. For tonight, I've chosen as the theme of our reflection, The Mystery of God and the Mystery of Life.

Now, the mystery of God is something which we all take for granted. Sometimes we forget about it, but we are reminded every time we have the Eucharistic celebration. The celebrant welcomes the congregation with the words: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.' And we respond: 'And with your spirit.' Now, the central facet of our Christian faith is the Trinitarian mystery: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is described as a sacred mystery because a mystery is something which is not easy to understand. That's why it is called a mystery. But although it is not easy to understand with our mind, in meditation we can experience the mystery in our heart.

So the aim of Christian meditation is to make us be aware, come to realise experientially that the Trinitarian mystery, the Trinity, is alive in our heart, is present within us. The Spirit of Jesus is present in the heart of each one of us. And in our heart, you might say, the Spirit of Jesus prays to the Father. And the love that flows between Jesus and the Father, John Main described that as the Holy Spirit.

So what we are doing in meditation is something quite simple. As you all know, the essence of meditation is to come to a stillness of body and a stillness of mind by the faithful recitation of the mantra. But although it is something which is very simple, not easy but simple, it is very profound. It is very profound because if we practise meditation regularly, what we are

doing is becoming present to the reality of God in our hearts. Become present. God is always present to us; Jesus is always present to us. But most of the time we are distracted by the problems of life, by the challenges of life, and only from time to time do we strive to be present to Jesus, to God, at our times of prayer.

The presence that we bring to our meditation is not thinking about God, is not imagining God, but is learning to *be* with God. The key word is 'to be'. To be means to give our total attention, to leave behind all our problems, our thoughts, our ideas. All those things we leave behind because they are distractions when we are trying to give our total attention to God, and the way we do it is by the faithful recitation of the mantra.

Fr John Main described meditation as the way in which we accept the gift of our being from God. We are created by God. God is our creator, we are his creatures. The gift of life is a gift from God to us. So every time we sit down to meditate, as you recite the mantra faithfully, as you breathe in and as you breathe out (the significance of the awareness of our breath) breathing in is as though we are accepting the gift of life from God. We are breathing in the life that God has given us, so we are accepting the gift of our life. And as we breathe out, you might say we are returning the gift to God. What we are saying is, 'Let all that I do in my life be a gift to you.' So we are accepting the gift of our being from God and we are returning the gift back to God. For me that is a very profound understanding of what we do when we meditate.

So let us now listen to Fr John Main's teaching on the same theme of The Mystery of God and the Mystery of Life before we go into meditation. Thank you.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF LIFE -John Main

Meditation is the way of becoming wholly present to God, coming to understand the fullness of the mystery of life. Most of us in our sort of society, most modern people, think of God and indeed think of themselves as a sort of problem – God is a problem that we have to solve, our life is a problem we have to solve. But what the tradition has to tell us is that God is not a problem, that our life is not a problem. God is a mystery, and our own life is a mystery. And in the presence of mystery, what we must do is let the mystery be, allow the mystery to reveal itself. And when we meditate, that's exactly what we do. We allow God to be God, and we allow ourselves to be in his presence. And that is the extraordinary power of it.

The first thing we have to do is to become fully present to ourselves. And that's why absolute stillness of mind and spirit is necessary. And for many of us, it will be the first experience we've had of the totality of our being. What we do when we meditate, is to enter fully into the present moment. And each time you recite your mantra, you are fully present to that moment. You're not thinking of the past, you're not planning for the future. You're there totally in that moment. And that's what our meditation leads us to. By becoming wholly present in this moment, in the moment when we say our mantra, we enter into the eternal *now* of God. The

life of God, the power of God, the power of his love, is to be found in your own heart, and to find that power requires that you be present totally to it, to discover ourselves by losing ourselves and to discover our essential part in the whole mystery of reality.

Most modern people, as a result of the philosophies of the last two or three hundred years, have thought of this as an invitation to come as it were simply to the full knowledge of their own limited being, their own individual being. But what the Christian tradition of meditation tells us is that our invitation is something much greater than that. It is to find our place in a reality that is infinitely greater not only than each one of us but of the sum total of all of us. The invitation is to find ourselves wholly alive within the mystery of God. The task that we face is to become simple enough, to become humble enough simply to say our word, simply to return to saying our word, leaving thought behind at the time of meditation, not at other times. There are times for ratiocination, for reflection for analysis; those times are not the times of meditation. During the time of meditation, we must learn to be like little children, to be childlike. And to be content with saying our word and letting go of all thought, of all imagination, of all analysis.

When we meditate, we are like the eye that looks forward, looks ahead into the mystery of being. And like the eye, we cannot see ourselves. The way is the way of meditation. The way of silence the way of simplicity, of humility, and above all the way of the mantra, learning to say the mantra to the exclusion of everything else. Say it, recite it, listen to it: ma-ra-na-tha.

Transcript of extracts from: *Moment of Christ, John Main Collected Talks Vol III, 'Beyond Technique'*

Meditation

ALIVE WITH THE MIND OF CHRIST -John Main

To learn to meditate, it's necessary to meditate every morning and every evening, every day of your life. And it's necessary to repeat the mantra from the beginning to the end.

When we begin to meditate, we take our place in a great tradition. We're not just starting something new; we're entering a tradition of hundreds, indeed of thousands of years. Let me tell you what our tradition as Benedictine monks is. To meditate, you must learn to be still. You must learn to sit absolutely still in your bodily presence, and you must move towards an interior stillness in your spirit. And the way to move to this, that we have from the tradition, from our great monastic teacher, John Cassian, is to take a very simple word or phrase and just repeat it over and over again. And the word I suggest that you take is the word, 'maranatha'.

And so when in a few moments we meditate, take a couple of moments to get into a comfortable posture. The only essential rule of posture is that your spine is as upright as

possible. Sit still, close your eyes gently. And then begin to repeat your word, your phrase, your mantra, ma-ra-na-tha – four equally-stressed syllables.

Say the mantra as gently as you can. Use no force, but move towards absolute fidelity. To learn to meditate, it's necessary to meditate every morning and every evening, every day of your life. And it's necessary to repeat the mantra from the beginning to the end.

Transcript of excerpt from: Moment of Christ, John Main, Collected Talks Vol III, Beyond Technique

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, open my heart to the silent presence of the spirit of your Son. Lead me into that mysterious silence where your love is revealed to all who call. Maranatha, maranatha, come Lord Jesus.



<https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/in-the-beginning>

Scripture Reading & Reflection

GOD'S WISDOM REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT (1 Cor 2:6-16) (Jerusalem Bible)

⁶But still we have a wisdom to offer those who have reached maturity: not a philosophy of our age, it is true, still less of the masters of our age, which are coming to their end: ⁷The hidden wisdom of God which we teach in our mysteries is the wisdom that God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began. ⁸It is a wisdom that none of the masters of this age have ever known, or they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory; ⁹we teach what scripture calls: the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him. ¹⁰These are the very things that God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹After all, the depths of a man can only be known by his own spirit, not by any other man, and in the same way the depths of God can only be known by the Spirit of God.

¹²Now instead of the spirit of the world, we have received the Spirit that comes

from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us. ¹³Therefore we teach, not in the way in which philosophy is taught, but in the way that the Spirit teaches us: we teach spiritual things spiritually. ¹⁴An unspiritual person is one who does not accept anything of the Spirit of God: he sees it all as nonsense; it is beyond his understanding because it can only be understood by means of the Spirit. ¹⁵A spiritual man, on the other hand, is able to judge the value of everything, and his own value is not to be judged by other men. ¹⁶As scripture says: Who can know the mind of the Lord, so who can teach him? But we are those who have the mind of Christ.

REFLECTION –Fr Eugene Vaz

A very Happy New Year to all of you, 2022. We pray and deeply hope that it will be a very meaningful year for all of us as Christian meditators, a year in which we will grow in the depths of our meditation, in the discipline of our meditation, in the practice of our meditation. As the Holy Father says, in his homily on 1st January, we place this year in the hands of our Blessed Mother. We begin the year celebrating her as the mother of God, we place our life in her hands who had that tremendous privilege to bring into our life, God made man. I think it's also very providential that Peter has chosen this theme today for our meditation, the Mystery of God and the Mystery of Life. That's something that every one of us wants to grow deeper into in the year 2022. What a wonderful year 2022 will be for us as through our meditation we grow into the mystery of God and we grow into a deeper appreciation of the mystery of Life.

When we speak about the mystery of God, actually in the biblical perspective of the word 'mystery', it's not just something we cannot solve, something we cannot know. Like John Main said, it's not a problem to be solved, either God or life. 'Mystery' in the scriptures is used to describe the awesomeness God, and I really believe that through our meditation. done honestly and truthfully and faithfully, we get deeper into appreciating that mystery of God.

When you look at it scripturally, we refer to three things when we speak about the mystery of God. We are led to appreciate three aspects, if you want, of God's character, of God's person, personality, God's being.

The first is his omniscience. God knows everything. And that's where the mystery of life takes its flow from, not knowing everything but coming to know a lot of things more and more every day because we are being rooted in God, because we are focusing on God, because in our meditation we are being totally present to God in this moment of meditation and in the moments that flow from the meditation. So that's why meditation is important. It gives us a beautiful experience of being totally present to God when we are thinking of nothing else and we are focusing on nothing else but only on him who is the source of our life and being and who knows everything, so that the moments after meditation, that's the bulk of

our everyday life, is growing into God, the omniscience of God, who knows everything and who wants us to come to know everything. That's the mystery of God and that mystery, dear friends, was revealed by God in his Son, Jesus. Therefore, Paul always calls Jesus that grace of God. That grace of God.

It is in Jesus that we come to know the mind of God, it is in Jesus that we come to know the will of God, it is in Jesus that we come to know the way of God. And it is in Jesus, therefore, the mystery of our life begins to be developed. The mystery of our life is mystery because our life is in God and God is that mystery, in the sense of his omniscience, in the sense of his grace, and in the sense of his sovereignty. He is the Lord of our life. He is the King of our life and he wants all of us all to live in that wonderful way in his kingdom. And the essence of that life in his kingdom is love. And that love is best expressed in God, in his relationship as Father, Son, and Spirit. We know from our catechism and we know from the words of scripture the classic love is the way the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, and that love is most profoundly expressed in the Spirit. And every one of us has been given that Spirit.

So in this lovely passage that we just heard from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 2:6-16, this is what we saw, that the Apostles taught the wisdom of God. That is what the Apostles taught, the wisdom of God, because there is no way anybody can become wise other than coming to know the mind of God. And so the Apostles taught the wisdom of God, which was actually a profound elaboration of the teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't come just to teach us some rules and lay down some principles and conditions and things like that. Jesus Christ came to reveal to us the mind of God, the will of God, and the way of God. And this wisdom that the Apostles taught comes from the Holy Spirit, and therefore the whole ministry of Jesus is led by the Spirit.

Next Sunday, we will be celebrating the Baptism of the Lord. And at his baptism, what happened? The Spirit came on him like a dove, we are told, and he heard this voice saying, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.' And in the power of that Spirit, Jesus begins his public ministry. In the power of that Spirit, Jesus unfolds to us the mystery of God. So it's not something intellectual, it's not something academic. Neither is it part of some sort of detective work. It is a whole revelation being made to us. The mystery of God is how he unfolds the unfathomable to us, people who are so mortal, who are so finite, who are so perishable. The Spirit gives us that mind of God, and this is what makes the mystery of God so exciting in our life, that every day, I'm not exaggerating, every day is a gift given to you and me. Every morning we get up and say, 'Wow! Praise God. Praise the Lord, I'm alive.' Yes, I got up, it's true, but actually it's God saying, 'It's another day in your life for you to go deeper into the mystery of my being, into all that I know, into all that I will, into all that I want for you, into all that way I have put out to you through the teaching of my Son, Jesus, and which you learn not just from your catechism or from the study of scripture – through your meditation you are given an experience of getting into the depths of me.' Yes, this is the gift of your day, every day. For some of us, this has been going on for many days – 70 years, 80

years, 35 years, 40 years. Whatever may be your age, it's not just growing older. It is growing deeper into that mystery of God.

So when you look at life, what is the purpose of life? That's the meaning of 'mystery of life'. The mystery of life means the purpose of life and that purpose, we have put out for us by Jesus and the example of all the saints, the example of our Blessed Mother, the example of so many people contemporary to our own time who are also wonderful examples of that Spirit and that way that we call Christian that leads us into the depths of God. Therefore, I think dear friends, the last line of this passage that we read just now 1 Cor 2:16 is very, very beautiful:

Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who knows the mind of the Lord so as to be able to instruct him? Nobody knows the mind of God. Nobody? Not really – that's the point Paul is trying to make. Who has the mind, who knows the mind of God? You know, who? We who have the mind of Christ, we who have the mind of Christ know the mind of God. But that's the mystery, the mystery of God and the mystery of life meeting. This is the puzzle.

Sometimes, even though we know the mind of God, we are not living the way of that mind. And also, when we come to realise we are not living that mind of God, there is an experience of conversion in our life, isn't there? There is an experience of repentance; there is an experience of turning more and more to God. And I think Christian meditation really helps us in this discipline of letting the two mysteries meet. When the mystery of God touches the mystery of life, and when the mystery of life touches the mystery of God, that's where you and I keep moving, as Paul says, from the unspiritual to the spiritual. That's where we become more and more people who make this mystery of life impactful in our families, in our communities, in our societies because, knowing that mind of God, we then can make that mind of God happen wherever we may be – at home, at work, in play, in the community of the church, in our Christian meditation group, anywhere.

Everywhere we are, we are with that mind because we have placed ourselves to be fully present to God – that's meditation – so that we can be fully present to everyone around us, bringing to everyone around us that wonder, that mystery of God which we have been so privileged to touch in the depths of our being by our meditation and therefore are able to live an expression we call the mystery of life, Christian life, deeply human life. Family life, community life, social life, all this life is affected, impacted and made possible because we have entered into and enjoyed, through our meditation, the mystery of God.

Have a wonderful, meaningful 2022, dear friends. Let this mystery of God come alive to all of us through our meditation daily and through our making expression in our life the awesome wonder of God.

Thank you.

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