



Meditatio
TALKS SERIES 2016 D · OCT- DEC

JOHN MAIN OSB

*One with God
through Jesus*

Talks from **WORD MADE FLESH** 1

Talks from **WORD MADE FLESH** 1

***It is the call and the destiny of each
one of us to become one with God.***

Transcript of selections from *Word Made Flesh*

© The World Community for Christian Meditation, 2016

THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION
www.wccm.org welcome@wccm.org

CONTENTS

1. The Theology of Meditation	5
2. From Self-centredness to God-centredness	7
3. Contact with Our Own Spirit	10
4. No Intellectual Content	13
5. Expectations	15
6. Progress in Meditation	17
7. The Universal Christ	20
8. Onslaught on Egoism	22



Each of us is called to be one with God. This is the astonishing capacity that we all have. Meditation teaches us that the capacity for this expansion is to be found within us.

1

The Theology of Meditation

Meditation is the great integrating power in your life, giving depth and perspective to everything you are and everything you do. The reason for that is this: We are beginning to live out of the power of the love of God.

So many people fail to understand the first principle in Christian prayer. The most important thing to remember is that there is only the prayer of Jesus. This is THE prayer. The prayer of Jesus is the torrent of love and power flowing between Jesus and the Father; that is the Spirit.

That is the first thing for us to try to understand, but of course we can't understand it. But although we can never understand it, we can experience it. We can experience this torrent of love flowing between Jesus and the Father. We can experience it through the human consciousness of Jesus. That is his great gift to us. Indeed that is our redemption. That is our salvation because it is in his human consciousness that we are delivered from our egoism; delivered from that into the mystery of God as we travel in that stream of love.

The great thing about the Christian revelation that we must enter into, open our hearts to, is that Jesus himself does not ask us to rest in him, but to go beyond him to the Father. This is the essence of the Christian mystery – to transcend self into Jesus and, in him, to transcend Jesus into the Father.

The theology of prayer, the theology of the Trinity, when we begin to see it in this experiential dimension, is simply mind-boggling. The mind cannot contain the mystery, cannot hold it together in its being, and that is why we must go beyond all concepts of God. We must transcend the language, the insights, everything that could possibly limit God. We must know God with God's own self-knowledge. Our knowledge is totally inadequate; the perfection of the human mind is as nothing compared to the wholly ineffable mystery.

That is why we need to tread the path of simplicity. And it is the simplicity of God, the simplicity of his oneness, that provides the greatest stumbling-block for us.

The mantra is the way over that stumbling-block. The mantra is like a sign or symbol of that oneness and simplicity of God. In all the classical literature on prayer – St Teresa, St John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart – the ultimate aim in prayer is total union, continuous presence. In all the literature, the way to that total union and continuous presence is the way of selfless discipline. That is the way of the mantra: selflessness, not self-consciousness but selflessness, and discipline. The continuous repetition of it brings us gradually, and we need a lot of patience, to the silence where everything is resolved in the utter simplicity of God, in his oneness, a oneness in which we become one with him.

Perhaps the most difficult part of understanding what meditation is about is the patience that is required, the patience that is required day after day, to return to that selflessness and simplicity. But make no mistake about it. Once you begin, and it takes lots of us months, even years, to begin, but once you begin you will find that your meditation is *the* great integrating power in your life, giving depth and perspective to everything you are and everything you do. The reason for that is this: We are beginning to live out of the power of the love of God, that power that is present in our hearts in all its immensity and in all its simplicity, in the spirit of Jesus. The integrating quality of meditation affects every part of our life. All our life is as it were aligned on Christ, and his presence makes itself felt in every part of our life.

The way to that is the way of humility, of simplicity – the way of the mantra.

■

2

From Self-centredness to God-centredness

Meditation is trying to take that step away from self-centredness to God-centredness. The result is that we find our own place in the world, we find where we should be.

I was giving a talk in Dublin, Ireland, last week and someone said to me at the talk, 'Could you tell us in just a couple of sentences what is the essence of meditation, what is it really about?' I took some time to think of this because I was talking to a group of people who were all interested in meditation, but quite a few of them were wondering was this really for them. They were trying to understand the essence of it. I think this is what the essence of meditation is: it's learning to stand back and to allow God to come into the forefront of your life. So often in our experience we find that we have put ourselves at the centre of our world. So many of us, I think, see reality revolving around us. We think quite naturally of situations and of people primarily in terms of 'how is this going to affect me?' That's all right as far as it goes, but if we really imagine that we are at the centre of the world, then we will never be able to see any situation or any person, or even ourselves, as we really are. Because, of course, we are not at the centre of the world; God is at the centre.

Meditation is trying to take that step away from self-centredness to God-centredness. The result is that we find our own place in the world, we find where we should be. And we find our relationships in the right order: our relationships with one another, with creation, and our relationship with God. What we discover, and what is very important for each of us to discover, is that we do have an essential place in God's plan, each of us responding uniquely to the unique gift of our own creation. Perhaps that is the most important thing for

people in our society to discover: their own dignity, their own unique gift, the gift of their own creation.

How can we set about this? Meditation is a discipline. It is the discipline of learning to stand back; learning to focus our attention, perhaps even better, to focus our whole being on God. We have to begin somewhere. We have to begin with ourselves and we have to begin by learning to be silent ourselves. We have to really begin by learning to BE, to be ourselves, not to be defining ourselves by some activity whether that activity is some work or some thinking process, but simply to be. That is the purpose of the practice and the art of meditation in learning to say our word, our mantra.

To meditate, what we have to learn to do is to sit down, to be still, to be as still as possible physically, and then to begin to recite in our heart, in our mind, in our being, our word or our mantra. The word I recommend you to recite is the word ma-ra-na-tha. That's four equally stressed syllables; and you sound those syllables interiorly, silently, without moving your lips. As you sound them, you listen to them: ma-ra-na-tha. The purpose of sounding them, the purpose of saying the mantra, is that it becomes the focus of your attention, of your concentration. We are not thinking about anything; we are not pursuing any insights or thoughts that are coming to you. We leave those and let them as it were fall away. What you do is come to a greater and greater silence where the only sound in your mind is the word, the mantra.

Now you have to learn to be extremely patient, and you have to learn to be humble. In meditating, we are not seeking as it were to possess God, we're not seeking to come to some profound insights about God. We are seeking simply to be the person we are called to be. We are seeking simply to accept as fully as possible, and to respond to as fully as possible, the gift of our own creation. To do that we have to learn to be still, to be silent and to be truly humble.

You are all familiar with the word, 'egoism'. The word 'ego' is used a great deal in modern parlance or jargon. Basically, in meditation, we are leaving the ego behind. We are not trying to see with the ego as it were but we are trying to be ourself, our true self. The curious paradox is that once we give up trying to see, once we give up trying to possess, we see all and all things are ours.

When you are beginning, you need to understand the simplicity of it. The simplicity is this: that every morning and every evening you

give yourself the opportunity to be – to be in utter simplicity, to be in humility. Not asking yourself 'what is happening to me now?' Not analysing yourself. Not asking yourself 'am I enjoying this?' or 'am I getting anything out of this?' During this time of being you put the self-reflective ego entirely aside. You do this every morning and every evening and during the time of your meditation, you just say the word from the beginning to the end: ma-ra-na-tha.

■

3

Contact with Our Own Spirit

Conversion is turning from ourselves to the infinite God; it is learning to love. In turning to God, we turn to one another and learn to love one another.

The basic aim of meditation is simply to learn to live out of the reality that sustains us, to become fully aware of what IS.

The first step that all of us have to take is to come into contact with our own spirit. Perhaps the tragedy of any life is that we should live our lives without ever making full contact with our own spirit. What that means is discovering our own harmony, our own potential for growth, our own wholeness; discovering what the New Testament called the 'fullness of life' – not just living our lives out of five per cent of our potential but living our lives out of the hundred per cent of our potential.

What the Christian vision tells us is that our potential is infinite. Our potential for expansion of spirit is infinite, if only we will turn from self to the Other. Turning is what the New Testament calls conversion. That is the invitation to all of us, not to be locked into limitation, not to be prisoners as it were within the confines of just our own limited ego. Conversion is turning from ourselves to the infinite God; it is learning to love. In turning to God, we turn to one another and learn to love one another. And everywhere, in all loving, we are enriched. Then we begin to understand that we are living out of the infinite riches of God.

Conversion, in the bible, was of two sorts. There was the exterior ritual conversion such as rending of garments and putting on ashes. The constant theme of the bible in Prophets is that this exterior ritual conversion is of no use whatsoever, unless it is inspired by and springs from an interior conversion, a conversion of heart. The prophet Isaiah cries: 'This people honours me with their lips but their heart is far from me.' (Mt 5:8; Is 29:13)

This is what meditation is about. It's about that deep conversion of heart. Religion is meaningless if it is confined to exterior, ritual

acts of worship. Liturgy, all ritual only has meaning if it is inspired by that deep conversion of heart. This is what we are turning ourselves to: To learn to be still, to learn to become aware that God has revealed himself to mankind in Jesus, and that Jesus reveals himself to us in our hearts by his Spirit, which he sent to dwell in our hearts. We must learn to be as fully open as we can be in this life to this Spirit.

People looking at meditation from the outside think of it as a static state, a state where you close down all your interests and activities. But meditation, far from being a static state, is much better understood as a dynamic awakening to the fullness of your own potential for development – the expansion of your spirit in the love of Jesus through his Spirit.

Let me remind you again of the way. It is a way of simplicity. It is a way that requires childlike trust and childlike wonder – not looking for anything to happen, not looking for insights or wisdom, not looking for any exterior phenomena. All these are trivia compared to the reality that *is*. The reality that *is*, we know from our Christian faith, is that the Spirit of God dwells in the heart of each one of us. We must turn aside from everything that is passing, from everything that is temporary, and instead open our hearts to what is enduring, to God and his love for you and for me. And that is how we discover our love for one another and our love for all our brethren.

What the tradition tells us is this: To meditate, we must be still, silent, simple and faithful. Understand that you must sit as still as you can. More important than that, is that you must *be* as still as you can. So take a couple of moments to get comfortable. The only essential rule of posture is that your spine is as upright as possible. Either sit on the floor, on a cushion. or sit on a chair. Then close your eyes lightly and begin to say your mantra or your word. That's all that is required for meditation, to keep repeating your word with gentleness, relaxation, but with absolute fidelity from the beginning until the end.

The word I recommend you to use is *maranatha*. If you can do it, breathe it in in one breath and breathe it out silently. Saying the mantra is like your acceptance of God's Spirit which is your life and which you breathe in and so live. Your breathing out in silence is as it were returning your life to him with absolute faith and with absolute love, ready to receive it from him should he give it back to you.

Meditation is firmly anchored in the essential axis of the Christian revelation: death and resurrection. Death to everything that is passing away, and life into the eternal love of God.

It is essential, and I choose the word carefully, essential to meditate every day. Meditation is to the spirit what food and air are to the body. You must come to that peacefulness, to that serenity, to that capacity for vision, to live your life in the light of God. As the New Testament tells us time and again, that that light shines in our hearts, and we must be open to it in humility and in love. So we must try to the best of our ability to find a time, a space every morning and every evening of our day, when we turn aside from all that is passing away and are open to what is eternal to what is infinite, to what is love, to the most extraordinary mystery of your life and of mine: that God dwells in our hearts.

Listen to this reading from St John:

What we have seen and what we have heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we write this in order that the joy of all of us may be complete.' (1 Jn 1:3-4)

That is the Christian vision. That is the Christian proclamation, the Christian message, that we are invited to share in the life of God, in the very being of God.

■

4

No Intellectual Content

One of the difficult things about talking to people who are hearing about meditation for the first time is that all or many of them are trying to understand the intellectual content of it. But there is no intellectual content. In the silence of meditation, we have to go beyond all that, because the truth we open to is beyond all that.

You all know well the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Jesus is constantly putting before the apostles that our vocation is to be one with him. Just listen to his words:

May they all be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, so also may they be in us.' (Jn 17:21)

The union of Jesus and the Father is a union that St Thomas Aquinas called a 'substantial union'. We would probably understand that as a union in essence of the Godhead. And it is the same essential presence of the spirit of Jesus in our spirit. That is the truth that we seek to be open to in meditation. It is difficult to get away from the idea of intellect. It is very difficult to get away from the idea that we can encapsulate God in our own little intellectual formulae.

Listen to St Paul writing to the Corinthians:

We are no better than pots of earthenware to contain this treasure, and this proves that such transcendent power does not come from us, but is God's alone. . . . Wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death that Jesus died, that in this body also life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus lives. (2 Cor 4:7, 10)

This is the truth that we are committed to, that that death and that life are to be found in each of us. The death is death to all limitation, the limitation, for example, that any little intellectual formula imposes on God; death to the limitation that any thought

that we could have imposes on God. The extraordinary thing about the Christian proclamation is that every one of us is invited to this utter liberty of spirit, the liberty that we experience when we leave behind all created limitations. We leave them behind in the human consciousness of Jesus.

That is the purpose of our meditation. But make no mistake about it. The commitment is a commitment to discipline, the discipline of putting aside all limitation in the form of words, ideas, thoughts, concepts, insights, whatever.

Meditation is like the practice sessions of an athlete. The iron discipline leads to that utter freedom of movement when the discipline is transcended in the exercise of the art or athletic movement. The means necessary are utterly simple – that we meditate every day, every morning and every evening; and that during the meditation we say our word from beginning to end, gently turning from all day dreaming, from all holy floating, from all self-dialogue, and gradually submitting ourselves to the yoke of utter poverty, the poverty of the one little word.

That requires faith, commitment. There are no half-measures possible. You cannot meditate a bit. You either say your word or you do not. I think it takes many people years to come to that moment of commitment. But whether it takes years, months, weeks, or days, is of no importance. There is only one thing that is important, and that is that each of us, as best we can in this earthenware vessel that is our body, is as open as we can be to the basic truth, the essential truth that we are invited to be in the 'all in all'. As far as we can see from our limited insights, the way to that commitment is the way of poverty, of silence, of humility – the way of the mantra, the way of commitment, the way of faith.

■

5

Expectations

Meditating is like breathing. Nothing dramatic happens except that your spirit breathes. You come to a vitality of spirit very similar to the vitality that your body enjoys as a result of your breathing.

One of the questions we have to face when we begin to meditate is: 'What should our expectations be; what should we expect to happen?'

To approach meditation like that would be somewhat similar to approaching breathing by asking, 'What will happen as a result of my breathing?' As you know, what happens when you breathe is that you live. Your vitality is assured with every breath. Meditating is very like that. Nothing dramatic happens except that your spirit breathes. You come to a vitality of spirit very similar to the vitality that your body enjoys as a result of your breathing.

If someone says to us that we should meditate every morning for half an hour and every evening for half an hour, that sounds like a big investment of time. We can't help asking, 'What is the return going to be?' We are used to profit and loss; we are used to investment and the return on the investment. There is a real danger for anyone who tries to talk about meditation to present it to you in terms of some sort of return. If you look at any of the paperbacks on meditation that you can find in the bookstores, you will see a whole list of returns: lower blood pressure, capacity to bi-locate, be at two places at once, capacity to levitate as well, and so forth. You will see all sorts of pay-offs that are promised. Now, it may be that you will be able to levitate or bi-locate, but it is not of the slightest importance.

The really important thing is that your spirit lives, that it lives wholly, and that it realises its union with God, and with all. So, a quality you require for meditation is the quality of simplicity. You have to learn just to sit down and to do it.

Perhaps the most important thing for people of our time is to come to an understanding of our own goodness and of our own capacity for goodness, a goodness that can only be measured by

the infinity of God; his Spirit lives in our hearts.

Once our spirit is open to the Spirit of God, division is over. We do not have to play any games. We don't have to act except out of integrity. Nothing can divide our heart once we are open to the Spirit. What we have to learn is the generosity of heart to be at the disposition of God in utter openness, in love.

My advice to you is to see your times of meditation not as times that are at your disposition at all; to see your meditation, your prayer, not as your prayer but as the prayer of Jesus. As long as we think self-importantly about 'my' meditation, or 'my' prayer, we have not really started out on the pilgrimage, The time is his; the prayer is his. The miracle is that his prayer is our prayer. It is simplicity that brings us to this total confidence, unshakeable confidence in the Father, which the Gospel describes as hope. So we approach meditation with no hesitation but with this childlike sense of availability to God.

Let me remind you again what the discipline of meditation involves. It involves two times of meditation each day; if you can manage it, half an hour each morning and evening. It demands that during the time you recite your mantra, your word, with absolute simplicity, not analysing it, not in a calculating way – there'll be this payoff if I did this; nothing like that, but something that perhaps we could describe as wholly sincere, self-emptying love. The wonder of it is that that self-emptying brings about our being filled with the power of God, filled with the knowledge that we are one with him, that we are lovable and that we are loved. The requirement is total selflessness – a total abandoning of all our own thoughts, imagination, insights and, perhaps above all, abandoning of our prayers – and an openness to the prayer of Jesus in our heart.

The ancient writers called meditation the practice of purity of heart. We have to purify and clarify our hearts, our consciousness, so that can see with utter clarity of vision. What we see is what is there. We see ourselves; we see creation; and we see God. The revelation is his, and what we learn to do in the faithfulness of our daily meditation is to wait on him, to attend to him in growing fidelity, and in growing purity of heart. I urge you to put aside all sorts of speculation: Am I getting anything out of this, am I enjoying it; am I becoming wiser, or whatever. The pilgrimage is the pilgrimage away from self into the mystery of God.

■

6

Progress in Meditation

When you think of progress, think only of progress in stillness, in silence. As your heart fills with wonder at the unfathomable mystery that we are part of, to be more deeply still. Progress is only progress in fidelity

Let me remind you of the way of meditating. When we meditate, we sit comfortably, with upright spine; close our eyes lightly; and then begin to repeat interiorly and silently our word. That is the whole process of meditation – ma-ra-na-tha, just to repeat the word. That is all we have to learn to do. It is very simple, but it is also very challenging.

What we recommend is that you try to come to ten of these Monday evening talks, and then, if you feel like doing so, when you feel like doing so, to switch to the Tuesday evening group. People sometimes ask me, ‘What is the difference between the Monday group and the Tuesday group?’ Sometimes people call the Tuesday group the group for the ‘proficients’! I think the difference is this: One of the things we have to learn when we come to meditate is to be simple, to be still; and then, once you do learn to meditate, you have to be reminded of the necessity to become more simple, more still.

People often ask me, ‘What sort of progress can I expect to make in my meditation?’ I think it is important for us to understand at the beginning that our progress is not to be found in anything else but stillness. If you ask yourself ‘what sort of progress am I making?’ don’t ask, ‘am I seeing visions, or am I levitating?’ That has nothing to do with it. Indeed if you are seeing visions or if you are levitating, it is much more likely to be due to your diet – you are probably drinking far too much soda water or something. So don’t be concerned with the phenomena of meditation. This is one of the big problems for so many of our contemporaries, and we are all affected by it, that we are concerned with the phenomena.

Thomas à Kempis who wrote *The Imitation of Christ*, when writing about monks, said: ‘The habit and the tonsure contribute little to the

essence of the monk.’ In other words, being a monk has nothing to do with externals such as what you wear or the way you cut your hair. Our progress is not to be found in anything else but stillness.

Just listen to these words of St Paul writing to the Ephesians:

So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are nearby; for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one Spirit’ (Eph 2:17)

Those are magnificent words of St Paul. The message we have to hear from them is that Jesus has achieved all this. He has as it were opened the highway to the Father for us. We don’t have to do anything ourselves to bring this about; that is the way it is. We have access to the Father in him, and all we have to do is to realise this. That is what meditation is about. It is about opening our heart, opening our consciousness, to the great reality that is taking place in our heart – that in our heart, the Spirit of Jesus worships the Father, loves the Father, returns to him in love.

The same is true of meditation. It has little to do with externals, not even with the way that you sit. It is not essential for you to sit in the lotus position or to kneel upright; you can meditate in whatever posture you take. The only basic rule is to have your spine upright, to be alert.

The progress is in the stillness. That is what you have to try to understand. It’s difficult for us to understand, as people living in the sort of society we live in, because we should, as it were, be achieving goals. That has very little to do with the reality of what St Paul is writing about, because it is all achieved

It’s all achieved in Jesus. Every one of us in this room has access to God, and that is the marvel of the Christian proclamation. We don’t have to bring anything about. It’s there. All we have to do is to be open to it, entirely open to the fullness of reality contained in the love of Jesus, as he sweeps us beyond ourselves and beyond him into the mystery of the limitless life of the Father.

What we have to learn to do is to be faithful. That is the measure you can apply, that you do meditate every morning and every evening. We have to put it first in our lives. Meditating every morning and every evening is nothing else but supreme practicality: to start your day rooted in Christ, rooted in the mystery of reality, your heart

supremely open to the supreme reality. For that, we require simplicity, the simplicity of the child, to sit down, to be still, to be open in the presence of our Father. That's why we must begin our day in faithfulness. As we all know from our own experience, so often our day can drift into distraction, meaninglessness. Our evening meditation is as it were binding all this, the entire day, everything in it, binding it again in the love of Christ. Don't think of your meditation as the icing on the cake of your day. Don't think of it as 'putting a bit of spirituality' into your day. See it as informing your whole day with reality, the supreme reality that we have access to God.

We are living in the age when the possibilities for the development of human consciousness have been radically transformed as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That means your consciousness and my consciousness have undergone this radical transformation, because in him we have access to the Father. We live in the age of the infinite mystery realised in Christ, and in us. Meditation is simply openness to that reality.

So when you think of progress, think only of progress in stillness, in silence: In your physical posture, to be as still as you can; as your heart fills with wonder at the unfathomable mystery that we are part of, to be more deeply still. Progress is only progress in fidelity.

■

7

The Universal Christ

Learning to say the mantra is learning to receive everything from God, to respond totally to the gift of your own creation, of your own potential for expansion of spirit, in union.

St Paul, out of his experience, proclaimed his vision of the Cosmic Christ, the Universal Christ – Christ filling the whole universe and every part of it with his redemptive love.

Just listen to him here:

He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us away into the kingdom of his dear Son in whom our release is secured and our sins are forgiven. He is the image of the invisible God and his is the primacy over all created things. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, not only things visible but also the invisible orders... The whole universe has been created through him and for him. And he exists before everything and all things are held together in him, and he is moreover the head of the body, the Church, the community of the faithful. He is its origin, the first to return from the dead, to be in all things alone supreme, for in him the complete being of God by God's own choice came to dwell. Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself making peace through the shedding of his blood upon the Cross to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, to him alone. (Col 1:16)

What I think we understand in the experience of meditation is that all of us, every single human being alive, is in a creative relationship with God through Christ. Why meditation is so important for each of us individually is that, as each of us comes closer to Christ, the whole fabric of human consciousness is knit more closely together. When we begin to understand that as individuals, we begin to see that the development of our consciousness, the deepening of our understanding of spirit is not just a personal thing, but it is a

responsibility we have for the whole human race. What we also understand is that the deeper we enter into this mystery, the more truly human and humane we become, each of us. That deepening commitment to our own humanity is a deepening commitment to the whole of humanity and to the part of it that we encounter in our daily round.

This is just another way of saying that our commitment is to the Universal Christ. The experience of prayer, the experience of meditation is a commitment to the whole of creation and for a love of everything in creation – the beauty of nature, the beauty of man's spirit as expressed in art. Every part of life is deepened as we enter the mystery of the Universal Christ.

The longer you meditate the more you will come to understand that the vision is a vision of infinite depth, of infinite proportions. But we must never allow that infinite vision to blind us to the necessity for daily fidelity and for daily humility. Anyone who has tried to say their mantra with deepening fidelity more and more faithfully has every reason to continually grow in humility.

In this sense, I think meditation is a total asceticism that will ground you deeper and deeper into the strength of Christ, always knowing that that strength comes from beyond you, is greater than you and contains you, and yet is your strength. That is the real mystery of the experience of prayer, that the power that is released in your heart is your power, and yet it is the power of God. Learning to say the mantra is learning to receive everything from God, but to receive it fully, not to receive it passively; to respond totally to the gift of your own creation, of your own potential for expansion of spirit, in union.

So, as always, we return to the mantra. To see the vision we must become still. To come into contact with God's Spirit in your heart, you must come into contact with your own spirit in the simplicity of utter stillness, by fidelity – the daily return to meditation, and during meditation the fidelity to the one word. That is faith. However often we hear it, we only come to realise it in the practice of meditation. It was the one teaching my own teacher gave me, and thirty years down the road, I realise it was a teaching of the most extraordinary wisdom.

■

8

Onslaught on Egoism

It is the call and the destiny of each of us to become one with the energy of God; and with his energy, with his power, to expand our lives into generosity, into love and into life, into eternal life, which means limitless life.

Meditation is the most effective onslaught on egoism. We think that our ideas, our thoughts, our imagination are so important. In meditating, we have to learn to let them all go and to BE. Once we touch the ground of our own being we make an extraordinary discovery. Final rootedness, real stability, for each of us, can only come when we are anchored in God. The extraordinary discovery that is there for all of us to make is that once we are anchored in ourselves, we are anchored in God. This is a great discovery to make because it is at the same time a discovery of our own fragility. We can so easily just be tossed around by the storms of life. But it is at the same time a discovery of our own extraordinary potential.

Our destiny calls each of us to enter into the ground of our own being. Each one of us is called to be one with God. This is the astonishing capacity that we all have. What follows from this? It means that we no longer live our own isolated, diminishing lives. It means we live in harmony with God, and with others. It means that it is the destiny of each of us to be in a state of continuous and constant expansion beyond the frontiers of our own being, of our limitations. The return to meditation every day of our lives teaches us that the capacity for this expansion is to be found within us.

To enter into our own spiritual reality is to enter this world of limitless development. This is the root and source of all community, of all relationship, of all progress. We possess, each of us within ourselves, the energy and the capacity to defeat isolation, selfishness, death. What each of us has to learn in that time of being every morning and every evening of our lives as we return to our meditation is that it is the call and the destiny of each of us to

become one with the energy of God; and with his energy, with his power, to expand our lives into generosity, into love and into life, into eternal life, which means limitless life.

Remember the process once again. It is important to sit still. It's the first attack on egoism, to have your body absolutely still in preparation for the stillness of spirit. Close your eyes gently and then begin to say your word, your mantra: ma ra na tha. Say your word for the entire time of meditation. If you find that you are distracted and you're thinking of something, return to the word gently, and keep returning to it.

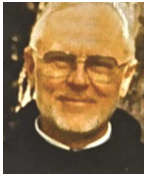
Listen to Jesus:

He who dwells in me, as I dwell in him, bears much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing... If you dwell in me, and my words dwell in you, ask what you will, and you shall have it. This is my Father's glory, that you may bear fruit in plenty and so be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Dwell in my love. If you heed my commands, you will dwell in my love, as I have heeded my Father's commands and dwell in his love. (Jn 15:5, 7-10)

That is an excellent description of meditation: To dwell, to abide, to remain in the love of God.

■

The ultimate aim in prayer is total union, continuous presence; the way to that total union and continuous presence is the way of selfless discipline. That is the way of the mantra: selflessness, and discipline. John Main



JOHN MAIN OSB (1926-1982) served in the diplomatic service in the Far East, and taught law at Trinity College, Dublin, before he became a Benedictine monk. He founded an open Benedictine community in Montreal, from which sprang The World Community for Christian Meditation. His books and CDs make available to people today the unique and transforming power of his teaching. They retain the authority, clarity and humour of his original teaching and carry the spirit of the gospel directly into the heart.

The selections on this CD are taken from talks John Main gave to the early meditation groups in Montreal. He presents meditation in the context of Christian faith and emphasises the simplicity and discipline of the practice. The talks open deep insights into the prayer that brings the whole of our being to God and lets his transforming power flow through our hearts and into the world. The complete talks are published on CD and in print under the title *Word Made Flesh*.



THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org welcome@wccm.org