



# Monthly Online Meditation

World Community for Christian Meditation (Singapore) SESSION 26 | 2022 Dec

## Sources of Wisdom

We will begin our session with a talk by Fr Laurence Freeman on Sources of Wisdom

### **SOURCES OF WISDOM** -Laurence Freeman OSB

We are all news junkies today. We are all picking up what are the restrictions, when is the vaccine coming, and so on. So we are all fed, fed, fed with news and views and opinions. But in contemplation we go back to the source, not to opinions or views or information. We go back to the source of consciousness itself, what the mystical tradition calls the heart, the apex, or the virgin point of the soul. In the Middle Ages they used to say that the one place that the devil cannot get into is your heart.

THE BODY. The human body is a source of wisdom. It always tells the truth, the body never lies. The body is always in the present moment. We are attuned to the body, and the mind and the body are in harmony. We are in touch with the great grounding sacrament. The body is a physical sacrament, a visible sign of our true nature.

INTER-GENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION. All the stages of life, from infancy to old age and death, each of these stages of life has its own particular source of wisdom or is a source of wisdom – inter-generational communication, the young stimulating the older but also learning from the older; the older loving the young and training them but also allowing ourselves to be rejuvenated by contact with the younger generation. So, a healthy world, a healthy society, a healthy community or family is where there is an exchange of the source of wisdom from different stages of life.

MONASTICISM. A source of wisdom, that I have alluded to already, which comes to us from our religious tradition is through the channel of monasticism. It is not the only source of wisdom, but it is a very important channel of communication. This is something I think that the Christian contemplative tradition desperately, on behalf of our ailing culture and society, needs to recover and teach.

There is, as we all know, a great hunger for spirituality, from many different forms and many different sources. We are not in competition with any of these. Jesus is not competing for market share, so we don't have to feel we have to compete. But, we do have to know what it is we have been entrusted with to share, and to share with the nations.

Sadly, and unfortunately, we have become very alienated from our own contemplative tradition and contemplative wisdom and the kind of practices that keep that wisdom flowing from its source. We study it, we write books about it and so on, but the actual practice has become very diminished in mainstream Christian life.

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Extracts from Laurence Freeman, *Sources of Wisdom*, Meditatio Talks 2021 A

## **REFLECTION** – James Loh

The contemplative path has given us a wiser alternative to live from the interior instead of from the usual external. We tap the contemplative wisdom from the Life Source that is within us. The interior is about consciousness, awareness, empathy, gratitude, compassion, and forgiveness. Very often we refer to this as the 'heart knowledge', which often is neglected and side-stepped, as against the head knowledge, which is the predominant operating system where we seek answers and are constantly as Fr Laurence said being fed, fed, and fed with news, opinions, views and information.

It's not uncommon for us to receive messages which have been forwarded many times over WhatsApp and other social media platforms. These messages can at times be a source of great information, but what we need to understand is that *information* does not lead to *transformation*.

Our contemplative tradition, a source of great wisdom, teaches us to enter into the inner sanctuary of the heart. It requires us to participate in and practise the mystical wisdom in order to discover the truth, not by more thinking, more information, and more discussion. We need to learn to integrate the mystical wisdom and contemplative practice into our daily living from the sacred space of our own home. That's where our twice-daily practice of meditation becomes so essential.

If for example you have received an invitation to come and join us for our monthly online meditation and for some good reasons you're unable to join us, you would have missed the opportunity to participate in and practise Christian meditation, and to discover the immense truth and wisdom found within the tradition. It is often said you become what you eat. Similarly, our participation in and our practice of contemplation will make us more synonymous with the person of Christ, reflecting him and witnessing to him more freely and more readily.

Without a contemplative practice we are unable to free ourselves from a mind that is addicted to a certain way of thinking. So as St Paul said, we have to 'let our minds be remade,

and our whole nature thus transformed.' (Rom 12:2) Our practice of meditation can help us tremendously in that.

Fr Laurence said we have become very alienated from our own contemplative tradition and mystical wisdom. The actual practice has become very diminished even in mainstream Christian life. It's our calling and our responsibility to share this gift of meditation with the people and communities around us. We know the world is going through unprecedented crises, one after another, because humanity is divided, and it points to the fact that man is divided in himself. Our contemplative practice seeks unity and harmony within ourselves and with the Spirit of Christ dwelling in our heart. We can then be an instrument to bring unity and healing to the world. It may seem a tall order, wanting to bring healing and unity to the world, but with our practice we are on the right path and we bear in mind that we are doing it alone for we can always count on the Holy Spirit to do it with us.

A better world must become our deepest desire.

Let us now listen to the instructions on how to meditate by Fr John Main and then we will continue with the practice of meditation.

## Meditation

### HOW TO MEDITATE – John Main OSB

When we prepare for our meditation, everyone should try to find a sitting posture that is comfortable and yet alert. The only essential rule of posture is to sit as straight as you can, on the floor or in your chair. Be absolutely comfortable in the way you're sitting. Sit as still as you can. Then closing your eyes gently, begin repeating interiorly, silently, without moving your lips or your tongue, the word 'maranatha'.

Maranatha is the oldest Christian prayer there is. It's an Aramaic word, the language spoken by Jesus, and it means 'Come Lord'. But don't bother about the meaning. Listen to it as four equally stressed syllables: ma-ra-na-tha. That's all you have to do during your meditation, from the beginning to the end. Don't think about anything. Don't think about God. Don't think any thoughts pious, holy, or otherwise. Try and stay with the word and with the word alone: ma-ra-na-tha.

### 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

**ST PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS** -Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

### **God's plan of salvation**

*<sup>3</sup>Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. <sup>4</sup>Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, <sup>5</sup>determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ for his own kind purposes, <sup>6</sup>to make us praise the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved...*

### **The triumph and the supremacy of Christ**

*<sup>15</sup>That will explain why I, having once heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the love that you show towards all the saints, <sup>16</sup>have never failed to remember you in my prayers and to thank God for you. <sup>17</sup>May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. <sup>18</sup>May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit*

### **REFLECTION** –Peter Ng

Brothers and sisters, I want to thank James for inviting me to give the reflection on the scripture passage that we just heard. And I chose this scripture message because the theme of our teaching tonight from Fr Laurence Freeman was about wisdom, sources of wisdom.

I have been meditating now for 35 years. It was 35 years ago in 1988 that we started our Singapore meditation community. And that was when I began the journey of meditation. I was 40 years old at that time. Now I'm reaching 75 – 35 years older. But I don't think I would have become 35 years wiser if I had not begun the journey of meditation. If I am any wiser now compared to 35 years ago, it is because of the practice of meditation. And so I'd like to thank the Singapore meditation community and indeed the world community for giving

me the gift of meditation. Because if I had not been the leader of the community together with my late wife Patricia, and my friendship with Fr Laurence Freeman, I don't think I would have persevered on this journey for the last 35 years.

Meditation gave me the gift of wisdom, so I'd like to share with you what that means for me by reference to the scripture passage. The passage is from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

The first line that struck me was when Paul said that before the world began God chose us, chose you and me in Christ. This is a very significant point, that God chose you and me, every human being that exists and will exist. He chose us in Christ. So that means that every human life has a meaning, has a meaning for God. In other words, if we were not in the mind of God, we would not have emerged from our mother's womb. So I think we need to understand that every time we sit down to meditate, every morning and every evening, what we're doing is we are taking our place in creation.

From the beginning of time until the end of time we exist for a certain period of time in this life. But this life that you and I live has meaning for God, otherwise we would not have been created. So this fact alone is a fact of wisdom, to know that, to know how sacred we are, how sacred our life is, that we were created by God in Christ, we have meaning for God.

Later on in the same letter to the Ephesians, Paul speaks about the spiritual gifts of wisdom that God has given us through his Spirit. What does wisdom mean for me? What is my understanding of wisdom now through the practice of meditation? I think the first understanding of wisdom is what I call reality.

So, what is reality? What is, what is really real. Reality means something that does not change, it exists forever, endures forever. It is not here today and gone tomorrow. That is the deepest understanding of reality, that which doesn't change. So what doesn't change? God. God is. That's why we say God is, God was, and God will be – the Alpha and the Omega. So when we pray the Glory Be, we say, 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.' Was and is and forever. So the only reality in this world is God, in the sense that God is the only thing you might say that exists forever.

Everything else changes. And what is it about us that doesn't change? We are a human being, composed of body, mind and spirit. When we are born, God breathes his Spirit into us. So we come into this world body, mind, but what gives us eternal value, what really makes us real, is our spirit because our spirit is with God. Our body and our mind will decay. As we get older our body will go to dust, dust unto dust. Our mind will slowly degenerate. What is eternal in us, what is real in us is our spirit. And the spirit is what we touch and make contact with in our daily meditation.

When we sit down and meditate, as we say the mantra, we go deeper and deeper. We go to the first level of distractions which is the everyday superficial events – television programmes we've be watching, stories we are listening to, all kinds of distractions in our daily life.

As we go a little deeper below the surface distractions, we encounter our emotional distractions. These are the memories of the past, regrets of the past, disappointments, or we find ourselves worried about the future. These are all the emotional restrictions. And we have to say the mantra to get through the second level of restrictions.

As we continue to say the mantra and go deeper, we encounter the third level, which is our ego. Our ego is our self-identification – who am I? what is my job? what is my responsibility? who am I in society? etc – the roles that we play, temporary roles in this life, whatever they may be, father mother, son, daughter, whatever. It's only when we're able to even go deeper than the ego that we touch our spirit, which is our true self. So it requires considerable discipline for us in our meditation to penetrate right down to the level of the spirit, which is why meditation requires a constant daily discipline so that we get in touch with that aspect of us that is real, that is unchanging, that doesn't die. Our spirit does not die.

Once we are able to establish that contact with our spirit, it will also help to remove the fear of death, because we realise that our body will die, our mind will die, but when we die our spirit does not die. Our spirit is eternal in God, and that helps us to overcome the fear of death and to think about life eternal. In other words, our spirit is eternal in God.

If we are able to practise our meditation on a regular basis, on a constant basis, then we are able to get in touch with the spirit even now. We are able to touch eternity now, without waiting to die so to speak. This is a very important aspect of wisdom, to know that God is real, our spirit is real, because it endures.

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## USEFUL LINKS

WCCM SINGAPORE	<a href="http://www.wccm.singapore.org">www.wccm.singapore.org</a>
WCCM	<a href="http://www.wccm.org">www.wccm.org</a>
BONNEVAUX	<a href="http://www.bonnevauxwccm.org">www.bonnevauxwccm.org</a>
NEWSLETTER	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/wccmsubscribe">https://tinyurl.com/wccmsubscribe</a>
MEDITATION TIMERS	
- In the Beginning (John Main)	<a href="https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/in-the-beginning">https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/in-the-beginning</a>
- Moment of Christ (John Main)	<a href="https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/moment-of-christ">https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/moment-of-christ</a>
- The Ego (Laurence Freeman)	<a href="https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/the-ego">https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/the-ego</a>
- Fr Gerry Pierse	<a href="https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/fr-gerry-pierse">https://www.wccmsingapore.org/timer/fr-gerry-pierse</a>