

In 1991 The World Community for Christian Meditation was set up to communicate John Main's teaching on contemplative prayer. An International Center in London, England, and a Guiding Board oversee the direction of the community. There is a quarterly newsletter, an annual John Main Seminar, Schools for Teachers, and many Christian Meditation Centers around the world. National councils also exist in various countries to pass on the teaching and to nurture the weekly meditation groups.

The Simple Teaching of Christian Meditation

How to Meditate

Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Breathe calmly and regularly. Silently, interiorly begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase MA-RA-NA-TIA. Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything—spiritual or otherwise. If thoughts and images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so keep returning to simply saying the word. Meditate each morning and evening for between twenty and thirty minutes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

To receive more information about US Retreat and Talk schedules, a list of coordinators and groups by region or to order WCCM newsletter and US Update, please contact:

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for the meditator's journey*

meditation



silence

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

*The all important aim in Christian Meditation
is to allow God's mysterious presence within us
to become more and more not only a reality, but the
reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to
everything we do, to everything we are...*

John Main OSB
mantra

Meditation

Meditation is not something new to the Christian experience, but is deeply rooted in Christian tradition. However, many Christians have no knowledge of this ancient tradition of prayer. Meditation involves coming to a stillness of spirit and a stillness of body. The extraordinary thing is that, in spite of all the distractions of the modern world, this silence is perfectly possible for all of us. To attain this silence and stillness, we have to devote time, energy and love.

The way to set out on this pilgrimage is to recite a short phrase, a word that today is commonly called a mantra. The mantra is simply a means of turning our attention beyond ourselves, a method of drawing us away from our own thoughts and concerns. The real work of meditation is to attain harmony of body, mind, and spirit. This is the aim given us by the psalmist: "Be still and know that I am God."

St. Paul wrote that "we do not know how to pray, but the spirit prays within us (Rom. 8:26)." What this means in the language of our own day is that before we can pray, we first have to learn to become still, to become attentive. Only then can we enter into loving awareness of the Spirit of Jesus deep within our heart. Silence is the language of the Spirit.

Meditation, known also as contemplative prayer, is the prayer of silence, the place where direct contact with Christ can occur once the never ceasing activity of the mind has been stilled. In meditation we go beyond words, thoughts, and images into the presence of God within.

St. John of the Cross says, "God is the center of my soul." Julian of Norwich says, "God is the still point at my center." Meditation is this daily pilgrimage to one's own center.

THE TRADITION OF THE MANTRA

The mind has been described as a mighty tree filled with monkeys, all swinging from branch to branch and all in an incessant riot of chatter and movement. When we begin to meditate, we recognize this as a wonderfully apt description of the constant whirl going on in our mind. Prayer is not a matter of adding to this confusion by trying to shout it down and covering it with another lot of chatter.

The task of meditation is to bring our distracted mind to stillness, silence, and attentiveness. In order to assist us to come to stillness, we use a sacred word or mantra.

THE MANTRA AND THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

There are various mantras which are possible for a beginner, but a good choice might be a word that has been hallowed over the centuries by our Christian tradition. Some of these words were first taken over as mantras for prayer by the Church in its earliest days.

One of these words is "MARANATHA." This Aramaic word means, "Come Lord Jesus." It is the mantra recommended by John Main (1926-1982), a Benedictine monk who has put into contemporary language this ancient teaching of prayer. It is the word which St. Paul uses to end his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:22), and the word with which St. John ends the book of Revelation (Rev. 22:20). It also has a place in some of the earliest Christian liturgies. This Aramaic word is preferred because it has no visual or emotional connotation and its continuous repetition will lead us over time to a deeper and deeper silence.

An Inner Journey of Silence

Meditation, therefore, is an inner journey of silence, stillness and simplicity, and is the missing contemplative dimension of much Christian life today.

Meditation is a pilgrimage to our own center, to our own heart. To enter into the simplicity of it demands discipline, even courage. We need faith and simplicity; we need to become childlike.

If we are faithful and patient, meditation will bring us into deeper and deeper realms of silence. It is in this silence that we are led into the mystery of the eternal silence of God. The invitation of Christian prayer is to lose ourselves and to be absorbed in God. Each of us is summoned to the heights of Christian prayer, to the fullness of life. What we need, however is the humility to tread the way very faithfully over a period of years, so that the prayer of Christ may indeed be the grounding experience of our lives.

THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

In order to support their daily personal commitment to meditation, people frequently join a weekly meditation group. These groups meet in over 110 countries of the world, in parishes, homes, offices, prisons, and schools. A simple format is followed: a teaching on meditation, a meditation period, a time for discussion. The silent meditation period is the focal point and main purpose of the meeting and through it many people discover a deeper sense of the presence of Christ in their lives and recognize the seeds of contemplation within themselves.