

Contemplation

Contemplation takes place in the inner core of our being, where Jesus Christ prays constantly to the Lord, regardless of ourselves. Connecting our very existence to the Creator therefore the whole of Creation. It is beyond mental prayer or thought, talking to God, thinking about God or petitioning God. In fact no sense, memory, imagination, will or intellect function in this place.

In silence, stillness and simplicity we reach out to Our Lord. To achieve this state of being takes disciplined intention which is fuelled by a devoted love and need to be with Christ. To still our being we must go to the moment and be in the moment in order to reach the place where Christ is. To reach the place of contemplation we need to be able to de-activate the impulses created by the distractions of day to day living or of the moment itself. Therefore a set practice of meditation is necessary. There are different forms of mediation but it was Christian Meditation that brought me to the place where the Holy Spirit would find me waiting.

“*Meditation* is a detachment from the things of the world in order to attend to the things of God. *Contemplation* is a detachment from the things of God to attend to God Himself. It is a gift of the Spirit and only the Spirit can take us to it and lead us in it.” (1)

Meditation can bring us to direct communion with God, not by reason but with faith. St. Anselm said “I believe, in order that I understand”. To do full justice to our meditation practice, we should prepare for the very thing we desire, the search and finding of Christ within us. If we had an appointment with Archbishop Desmond Tutu I think it would be fair to say that we would be in a state of preparation, anticipation and mindfulness quite a time before the actual event.

It is very important *not* to be tense prior to meditation. Relax by using vocal prayer, walking or yoga positions and breathing exercises can all be useful in reducing tension. If we are reading, the passage must not be stimulating, do not think around the subject but accept each passage as it comes. Read slowly until whatever you are reading dissolves in the mind. Whatever goes into the mind must descend into the heart.

In Christian mediation the mantra used is the Aramaic phrase “*Maranatha*”, which translated means “Come Lord” or “The Lord Comes”. The mantra is said internally as four syllables of equal length. MA-RA-NA-THA but we can use a mantra of our own choosing if we so wish.

- We should be seated in such a way and in a position it will be easy to hold for 20-30 minutes.
- The back should be straight and held in easy tension. The back, neck and head should form one straight line.
- Eyes should be closed, eyeballs down and relaxed.

- The arms should be relaxed with hands resting palms downwards on the upper part of the thigh or in the lap, palms upwards.
- Feet are firmly planted on the ground (if sitting in a chair)
- Breathe gently.
- Look mentally to the heart and begin praying the mantra lovingly.

At the beginning of the meditation we may be in a state of self-awareness, where our *five senses*, *Imagination* and *Memory* can bombard us with information. Disregard everything and keep praying the mantra lovingly.

As we go deeper into ourselves the *five senses* are left behind. At the next level interference may come from the *Imagination* and *Memory*. If we constantly put aside a recurring memory that may have an unseen, negative impact on our lives, the constant process of meditation could break its grip. *Intellect* and *Will* are at this level.

“*Intellect* is now to be understood, not in its discursive form but as an ability to know intuition without reasoning. *Will* as the ability to love by a single act and *not* by a multiplicity of acts as in normal every day life” (2)

Step over *Imagination* and *Memory*, looking past them to God. We have now reached the inner core of ourselves. All that is left is *Intellect* and *Will*. At this point there is only love. Until this stage is reached the only constant is the praying of the mantra, lovingly.

The final step I took was to offer my heart to God in surrender to the Holy Spirit. From that point absolutely everything fell away. There was ‘nothing’. My practice and goal had always been to work towards this state because this was the place where I felt the Holy Spirit calling me. I thought I had reached my destination. Not so.

The Holy Spirit has taken me onto a place of understanding, when in the same moment that there was ‘nothing’ suddenly there is ‘everything’ in that same moment. The mantra I used has changed now. From internalising the word *Maranatha* when I sat to meditate, to a new prayer that is embedded into the very heart of me. Now I hear it all the time. At the back of my mind if I am busy, as if beautiful music is being played in another room and at the front of my mind if I am still. Obviously my life is changed and is changing.

In a way everything I have written should be dis-regarded, the process of meditation is very personal and is different for everyone. Contemplation is gifted to us by the grace of the Holy Spirit so in the final analysis it is all in the hands of God.

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(1) “*Prayer and Contemplation*” by Robert Llewelyn (2) “*The Life Within*” by Hoffman