



Committee on Contemplative Spiritual Formation

Online Meeting Program

Theme: **"Vision of Enchantment"**

Saturday, September 11, 2021

8 am Vancouver, San Francisco / 11 am New York, Toronto / 12 noon Sao Paulo /

4 pm London / 5 pm Hamburg / 11 pm Manila

Gaia Room, Meditation Chapel

[If you have registered with the Meditation Chapel, but can't find the email with the link that was sent to you, please send an email to dignitytoronto@gmail.com. For new Meditation Chapel users, register ahead of time [here](#).]

Checking In:

As a ground rule for our gathering today - for the check-in and for the rest of our gathering today - only share what you are comfortable to do so. In addition, I ask everyone to remember that this is a spiritual space of confidentiality and trust.

God is present in all parts of our lives – not just the easy or serene moments. Acknowledge how you are feeling in this moment. This could be up or could be down. If being calm is hard, acknowledge it. If you find yourself frustrated or stressed, acknowledge it.

As our check-in, I invite you to share:

- your name,
- what county you live in,
- how you are feeling now, and
- what you are most grateful for today.

Opening Prayer

Please turn to page 3.

+ Christian Meditation – Silent Prayer +

We'll now move from spoken prayer to 20 min. of silent prayer. It will be an opportunity to stop our repetitive thinking and become more aware of the present moment and the Divine indwelling in us.

I have some suggestions for what to do during the silence, as most persons are not accustomed to this state. Please note that this is not the only way.

First, when your eyes are closed, pay attention to your breathing. It's something we do from birth to death, normally without any awareness. To become grounded in the present, notice your breathing during the 20 min. of silence.

Second, select a sacred word or phrase, such as "Yahweh" the Hebrew word for God, saying "Yah" as you inhale and "Weh" as you exhale. Another mantra word is "Maranatha" meaning "Come Lord Jesus." Recite it as four syllables of equal length: "Ma-ra" as you inhale and "Na-tha" as you exhale. Whatever word you select, gently repeat it over and over during the silence. **Do not try to think or image anything – spiritual or otherwise.**

Third, during the silence, addictive thought patterns and obsessive ways of feeling will circle by, again and again, saying "Think me! Think me! Feel me! Feel me!" as they try harder to be noticed. In 90% of our thinking, our monkey brain rehashes the past and worries about the future. However, God is only to be found and experienced in the present. Use the imagery of some small boats lining the shoreline of a stream or river that is nearby. When one of these repetitive thoughts arises, gently name the thought or feeling, put it in one of the waiting boats and push it gently into the moving water, letting it flow downstream away from your present consciousness. If you choose, you can deal with it after our session today.

So, we'll start our 20 min. of silence. Please turn off your microphone and your video camera too. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Take two or three deep breaths. [pause] Feel yourself supported in whatever position you're in. Sink into that space where silence awaits you. Rest in the Divine who is resting in you. You are consenting to God's presence and action in your life. So, I invite you to be silent, still and aware. Listen and learn, being open to heart wisdom and grace.

Reading and Sharing

"My starting point is that we're already there. We cannot attain the presence of God because we're already totally in the presence of God. What's absent is awareness. Little do we realize that God is maintaining us in existence with every breath we take. As we take another it means that God is choosing us now and now and now. We have nothing to attain or even learn. We do, however, need to unlearn some things.

To become aware of God's presence in our lives, we have to accept what is often difficult, particularly for people in what appears to be a successful culture. We have to accept that human culture is in a mass hypnotic trance. We're sleep-walkers. All religious teachers have recognized that we human beings do not naturally see; we have to be taught how to see. That's what religion is for. That's why the Buddha and Jesus say with one voice, "Be awake." Jesus talks about "staying watchful" (Matt. 25:13, Luke 12:37, Mark 13:33-37), and "Buddha" means "I am awake" in Sanskrit. Jesus says further, "If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light" (Luke 11:34).

Thus, we have to learn to see what is there. Such a simple directive is hard for us to understand. We

want to attain some concrete information or achieve an improved morality or learn some behavior that will make us into superior beings. But there's no question here of meritocracy. Although we have a "merit badge" mentality, prayer shows us that we are actually "punished" by an expectation of merit and reward. For that expectation keeps us from the truly transformative experience called grace. We worship success. We quaintly believe we get what we deserve, what we work hard for and what we are worthy of. It is hard for Western people to think any other way than in these categories.

Experiencing radical grace is like living in another world. It's not a world in which I labor to get God to notice me and like me. It's not a world in which I strive for spiritual success. It's not a cosmic game of crime and punishment. Unfortunately, a large percentage of the world's religions do teach that, if usually indirectly. Religious people are afraid of gratuity. Instead, we want God for the sake of social order, and we want religion for the sake of social controls...

... Prayer is not primarily saying words or thinking thoughts. It is, rather, a stance. It's a way of living in the Presence, living in awareness of the Presence, and even of enjoying the Presence. The full contemplative is not just aware of the Presence, but trusts, allows, and delights in it.

All spiritual disciplines have one purpose: to get rid of illusions so we can be present. These disciplines exist so that we can see what is, see who we are, and see what is happening. On the contrary, our mass cultural trance is like scales over our eyes. We see only with the material eye...

Rohr, Richard. *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*, Crossroad, 2nd edition, 2003, pp. 29-31.

Possible Sharing Questions:

*What am I hearing? What word, phrase or idea from the reading **resonates** or challenges me? As an LGBTI person?*

*How is it **touching** my life now?*

*How will I respond? Is there an **invitation** for me to be or to do in the next few days?*

LGBTI/ GNRC News

An update, news, or a pressing issue in the community locally or globally that affects or concerns us as LGBTI and as Catholics. How am I / are we responding?

Spoken Prayers

<i>A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation</i> [Opening Prayer] Father, we praise you with all your creatures. They came forth from your all-powerful hand; they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love. Praise be to you!	<i>Evolving Spirituality: Mysticism</i> [Closing Prayer] We celebrate our common origin with everything that exists. We celebrate the Divine Presence, the Ground and Sustainer of everything that exists, in whom we live and move and have our being.
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Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the
weak,
and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

[Pope Francis. *Laudato Si* (Encyclical Letter: Praise be to You – On
Care for Our Common Home), 2015, para. 246]

We acknowledge
this awesome mystery
embodied
in every human person,
aware that
each gives the Divine Presence
unique and personal expression.

Here,
now,
the Divine Energizing Presence is everywhere present,
visible in every human person
who loves.

Here,
now,
this Presence comes to visible expression
in each of us.
We give thanks for men and women
throughout human history
who sought to articulate
human connectedness with the Divine
and with all of creation.

We give thanks especially for Jesus of Nazareth.
He inspires us to name ourselves
as “temples” of the Divine Spirit
and challenges us to live and act accordingly.

Jesus challenges us
to look into our hearts,
to examine the way we are neighbor,
to overcome our prejudices,
to put an end to divisions,
to stretch our generosity,
to overcome our fear of the mystery,
to see the Divine present in our everyday loving,
to make the “reign” of love visible
throughout our world.

We believe
the same Spirit of Divinity
that came to visibility in Jesus
yearns for visible expression in us.

This is our common dignity
whatever our race or creed,
whatever our place or time.

We long to see our common dignity
proclaimed
honored
and celebrated by all religions.

We pray that the one Spirit all people share
may be given free and generous expression
for the betterment of humanity
and our world.
Amen.

[Adapted from: Morwood, Michael. *Praying a New Story*. Orbis
Books.]