Meditation for the first week of Easter with readings and reflections from Paul and Fi Jenvey 15th April 2020 (Fi Jenvey, narrator).

This reflection and meditation can be done without the Youtube video (recommend the use of Youtube if you can). For those who struggle with hearing, the text below can also be used to support the video. Our Youtube presentation is an invitation to spiritually join regular meditators at Wisdom Centre (presently isolated and meditating in their own homes). The tradition we meditate in is Centering Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

The text is on the screen with narration. Music and a count down timer are part of the presentation. For technical reasons, the reflection has some disruption to the sound quality. To overcome this, a transcript is below.

Begins with usual opening prayers and introductions (Audio Visual or follow using text below)

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centering Prayer Tradition with Fi Jenvey (narrating for Paul).

Opening Prayer: Through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, by whose breath our souls are raised to life. We, in meditation in this time of crisis pray with all others, as one community and one world to One God, we unite with our brothers and sisters of all world traditions.

With God are Wisdom and understanding. May our ears be attentive, may the meditation of our hearts be for understanding. Through Christ, may we seek and find you, acting only according to Your will. May we follow His teaching, also seeking, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we commit to love of earth, faithfulness, community, stability, peace and justice making.

Letting go of all else, in contemplation we surrender in love to you. Let our sacred word be a symbol of our consent to your loving presence and healing. May we be faithful to this word so that it rises in our hearts, awakening that sense of Your presence. **Amen**

Introduction

Welcome to our meditation on Wednesday of this first week of Easter. Easter is a perfect time to consider Scripture and the passage we use is Luke, 24:13-35. This week Paul, a member of our meditation group, reflects on the importance of the Essenes, or Nazarenes on 'the way' of the early Church. Paul thought he would share some of his thoughts which Fiona has also found interesting and has contributed to.

The Easter season, positioned as it is in spring, seems to call on all life to arise. The sun is called upon to rise higher in the sky, the trees and flowers to grow tall and burst open in splendid colour. Mother Nature is doing her thing to bring about new growth and new birth.

At this time, we are invited to look at our lives and find 'the way' towards God. The Essenes have much to teach us.

Scripture Reading from Luke, Chapter 24:13-35

On the Road to Emmaus: Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus…They were talking with each other about everything that had happened…Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognising him… He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" [they then shared how The Messiah had been crucified, and women had found his tomb empty with angels in attendance]. As they approached the village to which they were going, the disciples urged the stranger "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it…Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him…and he disappeared from their sight.They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

Thoughts from Paul and Fiona:

In 2007, at an Easter talk, Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged that the home where Jesus had his last meal was an Essene home. The Essene, teachers of 'the way, were also called the Nazarene and felt a great affinity with the prophets, Elijah and Enoch. The Essene are also known as the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls. When the scrolls were discovered by Bedouin boys looking for their lost goat, much was discovered about this ancient spiritual way of truth. Beautiful angel communions and spiritual practices were uncovered. Angel meditations were practised every day. Wednesday, the evening of our usual meditation practice is dedicated to the Angel of Love.

"The way of truth" is constantly referred to throughout the Bible. We often associate 'the way' with Buddhist and Vedic spiritual practices, with some scholars suggesting that Jesus encountered Buddhist teaching. As we know, Jesus famously said to Thomas "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." It is far more likely that this teaching originated with the Essene.

The Gospel reading this morning, from Luke, tells the classic Emmaus Road story, where the disciples accompanied by a stranger 'on the way,' were chatting about women having visions of angles at a miraculously empty tomb. Upon breaking bread with the stranger, his identity was revealed to them, their eyes were opened, and the story of Easter and new life in Christ really began. (Luke 24:13-35)

By looking at the Essenes, we can learn a lot about the spiritual background of Jesus and the beliefs of the earliest Christians. In Acts, 24:5 St Paul is described as an Essene (Nazarene) and refers to the practice as 'the way'. 'The Way' has a few features which are worth reflecting on in this Easter Season.

The Essenes were great travellers, both physically and spiritually. Nazarenes were the name of the Northern Essenes at Mount Carmel and linked to the Essenes in the settlement of Nazareth. These ancient followers of 'the way' were historically recognised as the mystical Jewish prophets of high priestly lineage, "the holy ones of God". The Essenes prayed and meditated to Angels on a daily basis, a practice unrecognised by the Protestant Church today. It is no accident that the term Essene comes from the Northern Aramaic word chasya, which means saint or holy in Greek. The word is also linked the the Latin term Assay (assaya) which relates to doctor or healer...

The Nazarene were thought to revere creation, eating only a plant-based diet, rejecting animal sacrifice and having a high regard for teachers of righteousness, or prophets. The Nazarene and had a positive attitude toward women who were accepted as having equal rights and responsibilities with men. This ancient community desired to be of service to God in the "world", as wisdom workers for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Nazarenes chose not to live out of worldly authoritarian bureaucracy as the Pharisees and Sadducees did. Individually, they owned no personal estate, but sought a godly Kingdom for all men. In this way their tradition has a lot in common with the early monasticism that flowered from the desert tradition. They did not seek to acquire any private property at all, no house or slave, or farm cattle, or any of the other things which procure or minister to wealth; rather they enjoy the benefit of all in common."

The Torah was used as a guide to higher consciousness and enlightenment. The Nazarene believed in equality before God and believed in the resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. (Acts 24:15).They were devoted to service of poor and rich, Jew and gentile alike, they desired to purify their life in voluntary service to humanity. They were hailed for their honesty, temperance, reason, and justice, as well as their talent as healers and prophets. The early Church was undoubtedly filled with Essenes.

Moden day Essenes seek to Live by the Sevenfold Peace, of Shalom which helps lead to the ultimate peace of self-realisation. An emphasis of the modern Essene Way, is that the movement represents a mix of people from different cultures and religious backgrounds that choose to follow this way of life. So, at this point in history the community represents a synergy of the Jewish, Christian, Yogic, Taoist, Buddhist, and other traditions.

Paul Shares a prayer from the Essene Gospel of Peace

(from The Original Hebrew and Aramaic Texts of an ancient manuscript found in the Vatican Library. It is a wonderful document of Jesus teaching about how to live in harmony with the laws of nature.)

The prayer cycle of the Essenes was constant, and daily, every evening they would hold a communion, the centre of which would be a prayer to the Heavenly Father and one of the Angels of Heaven.On a Wednesday evening, the Communion is with the Angel of Love. These are the words spoken:

"Angel of Love, descend upon my feeling body and purify all my feelings…" From the Sea of Eternity, Beloved, let us love one another: For love is of the Heavenly Father, and every one

that loveth Is born of the Heavenly Order and knoweth the Angels. For without love, a man's heart is parched and cracked as the bottom of a dry well, and his words are empty as a hollow gourd. But loving words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, loving words in a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of love as a flowing brook. Yea, it was said in the ancient of days, thou shalt love thy Heavenly Father with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy deeds, and thou shalt love thy brothers as thyself. The Heavenly Father is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in the Heavenly Father and the Heavenly Father in him.

He that loveth not is as a wandering bird cast out of the nest; For him, the grass faileth And the stream has a bitter taste. And if a man say, I love the Heavenly Father but hate my brother; He is a liar: For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, How can he love the Heavenly Father whom he hath not seen? By this, we know the children of light: Those who walk with the Angel of Love, For they love the Heavenly Father, And they love their brethren, And they keep the Holy Law. Love is stronger than the currents of deep waters…

Bell Sounds…

20-minute meditations begins…Count down timer starts

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

Final reflection

Fiona shares the third Communion with the Angel of Wisdom from the Essene Gospel of Peace

The Angel of Wisdom, who maketh man free from fear, wide of heart, and easy of conscience: Holy Wisdom, the understanding that unfolds, continuously, as a holy scroll, yet does not come through learning. All wisdom cometh From the Heavenly Father and is with him forever. Who can number the sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of eternity? Who can find out the height of heaven, and the breadth of the earth? Who can tell the beginning of Wisdom? Wisdom hath been created before all things…The crown of wisdom makes peace and perfect health To flourish, both of which are the gifts of God…

Ends with usual closing prayers: Through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, by whose breath our souls are raised to life, we in meditation in this time of crisis pray with all others, as one community and one world to One God, we unite with our brothers and sisters around the world. Moments of your personal prayer follow**…Amen**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon

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