Meditation on Finding Rhythm in a Time of Trauma with reflections by Hazel (YouTube)

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 occasionally 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, followed by some guidelines on the steps of meditation (Lectio Divina)

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**

Reflections on Rhythm by Hazel.

In the past few weeks, for me, staying at home has been an opportunity to live and experience life very differently, but it has also been a great challenge to remain grounded and embodied, in the face of so much change and uncertainty, both individually and collectively. The need for noticing and accepting the range of emotions I experience, and the need for finding a new rhythm have become very important.

In a recently published short video, one of the world's leading experts on traumatic stress**,** **Bessel van de Kolk**, suggests actions we might take 'When the Covid-19 Pandemic Leaves us Feeling Helpless'. He defines trauma as being rendered helpless in the face of threat. 'When you are traumatised,' he says, 'you live in a timeless sense of helplessness'. In a state of being frozen, 'your whole sense of time disappears'. 'It is about predictability and trust'. If

the outside world becomes unpredictable, the only thing we can control is our own response to it, thereby bringing a sense of self-agency.

So, the two things he emphases most, are the need to bring structure into each day, and the need 'to move' - to be aware of 'living in our body'. How well ninety nine year old Captain Tom Moore demonstrated both of these in his sponsored walk, along with his very clear purpose!

Key workers in this crisis, despite huge pressure, may experience a sense of agency through the direct actions they take to help others, but at times, they may still feel helpless, when so much is out of their hands, or lives are lost. In contrast, those staying at home may feel isolated or less useful, and the loss of normal routine can be disorientating.

For all of us, finding a daily and weekly rhythm or timetable can be very important, and will help to prevent longer-term difficulties arising.

How might we find the right routine for us, and how might this link with our meditation practice? It seems to me that there are many ways in which we can experience rhythm through meditation, as well as ways in which natural rhythms support our mediation or our prayer practices, not just as we sit in silence, but as we mindfully experience and move in our days and our weeks.

We might begin by noticing the rhythms already in our lives. In our body we find rhythm in our breath, our heartbeat, our digestive system, our circadian rhythms that help us notice when we need sleep and when we awaken into activity again; and these are different for each of us. In our exercise, whatever form that takes (including moving to music), perhaps we might notice how our breath links to the rhythm of movements in our body. In nature around us there are rhythms of day and night, the moon, the tides, the seasons, and life cycles; the rings within the trunks of trees, the beat of a butterflies wings, the chant of a bird's song, and many more.

In the short silence that follows, you may like to think of those rhythms that are meaningful to you at this time. [Time of silence ……]

At a retreat on 'Benedictine Wisdom' at an Abbey in Massachusetts, **Dr Cynthia Bourgeault** spoke of the Benedictine rhythms in the practices of 'ora et labora', alone and together: prayer alone, prayer together, work alone, work together. How might we discern our own pattern of our days? "Listen" is the first word in the Benedictine Rule. "When we listen, the human heart hears the call of God…" say the monks at the abbey.

In Ecclesiastes, there seems to be a sense of divine universality of time and experience, and a listening to what is meant to be, and when.

> **'To every thing there is a season'** (from Ecclesiastes :1-8)
>
> To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
> A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
> A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and at time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and at time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace.

[Short silence……]

John O'Donohue (Irish poet, priest and philosopher), writes about finding our rhythm by listening, and noticing what he calls a 'kindness of rhythm'.

The Soul's Rhythm, by John O'Donohue
(from Anam Cara)

We should not force ourselves to change by hammering our lives into any predetermined shape. We do not need to operate according to the idea of a predetermined program or plan for our lives. Rather, we need to practice a new art of attention to our inner rhythm of our days and lives. This attention brings a new awareness of our own human and divine presence.

It is far more creative to work with the idea of mindfulness than with the idea of will. Too often people try to change their lives by using the will as a kind of hammer to beat their life into proper shape. The intellect identifies the goal of the program, and the will accordingly forces the life into shape. This way of approaching the sacredness of one's own presence is externalistic and violent. It brings you falsely outside of your own self and you can spend years lost in the wilderness of your own mechanical, spiritual programs. You can perish in a famine of your own making.

If you work with a different rhythm, you will come easily and naturally home to your self. Your soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has a map of your future, therefore you can trust this indirect, oblique side of your self. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more importantly it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey. There are no general principles for this art of being. Yet the signature of this unique journey is inscribed deeply in each soul. If you attend to your self and seek to come into your own presence, you will find exactly the right rhythm for your life. The senses are generous pathways which can bring you home.

As we adjust our posture for our meditation today, you may wish to pay particular attention to the rhythm of your breath, taking a calming deep breath in through your nose, and a slow breath out through rounded lips, letting go fully. Then repeat this 4-6 times. If you have a

sacred word you might notice its rhythm, perhaps in time with breath. During meditation, feel free to notice what it is you need today, whether it be your normal practice or to watch the candle, or to stretch your body and release tension. There is no need to complete the full 20 minutes if that is not for you. Simply allow your inner rhythm to be heard. We begin the meditation now.

Bell Sounds…

20-minute meditations begins…Count down timer starts

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

The following poem is an offering of reassurance by Belfast born poet **Derek Mahon**. Mahon draws us to attend to the 'watchful heart', which seems akin to O'Donohue's guiding us to attune to the rhythm of our soul.

Everything is Going to be All Right By Derek Mahon

How should I not be glad to contemplate
the clouds clearing beyond the dormer window
and a high tide reflected on the ceiling?
There will be dying, there will be dying,
but there is no need to go into that.
The poems flow from the hand unbidden
and the hidden source is the watchful heart
The sun rises in spite of everything
and the far cities are beautiful and bright.
I lie here in a riot of sunlight
watching the day break and the clouds flying.
Everything is going to be all right.
Everything is going to be all right.

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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