Meditation on Simplicity, Reflections on Cistercian Spirituality by Paul

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 (narrator).

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 Simplicity by Paul.

[1.] The Cistercians are one of the lesser-known monastic orders. Everyone is familiar with the Benedictine black cloaked brothers and sisters of the original order but out of the seminal rule of St. Benedict, other holy men and women have sought a different interpretation of St. Benedict's words.One such man was Robert, Abbot of Molesmes who led 21 monks out of their home in central France into the wilderness of Citeax in 1098.

[2.] The Exordium Parvum, probably written in about 1120, chronicles the start of the order. Opening with the ringing declaration: “We the monks of Citeaux, first founders of this Church.....set out eagerly for a wilderness known as Citeaux, a locality in the diocese of Chalon where men rarely penetrated and none but wild things lived.....When the men of

God arrived there and realised the site was less attractive and accessible to laymen the better it would suit themselves....to build a monastery”

[3.] Here we can see the location of Citeaux in relation to the remainder of France. It's worth remembering that 11th Century France was not a united country. The Angevin Empire was still in control of much of the western and northern mainland, and all of the country was essentially decentralised with barons, essentially autonomous in their own regions paying nominal homage to the King.The challenge however for Robert and his colleagues was that they felt that the monastic way of life was drifting away from the original intention of St. Benedict. On the vast estates gifted by monarchs, it was common for monastic orders to use lay people (peasants and serfs) to till the land on the monasteries behalf and reap the benefits. Robert believed that to achieve true spirituality, a monk had to emulate the desert fathers.

[4.] (no audio) Carta Caritatis Posterior: The Charter of Charity

“That there may be no discord in our daily actions, but that we may all live together in the bond of charity under one rule and in the practice of the same usages.”

[5.] Here we can see the founding fathers with St. Robert in the centre.The simple early narrative of the foundation of Cîteaux, called at that time “the New Monastery,” is notably understated: amid the precise notifications of bishops and transitions of abbots, we can discern the zeal with which the founders strove to secure the possibility of their peaceful following of the monastic ideal of poverty, of wholehearted fulfillment of the vows. It is no small task to organize and systematically nourish the life of grace without quashing it: perhaps the great insight of th founders was the centrality of love, codified in the Carta Caritatis. The unity they strove to implement even at the most detailed levels was unity in the bond of love.

[6] (no audio) In Silence: The Desert

Consider the voice of the desert, the blessedness of the desert. The desert will feed you.....And Jesus will feed you much more frequently and in an even more wonderful way He will satisfy the needs of all of you who have followed Him into the desert.....since your purpose is so much holier” - Guerric of Agny

[7.] Citeaux was a desert peopled by ascetics, and that analogy between monastery and desert has continued to be the Cistercian way.

As Andre Louf explains:“It is in the desert that the soul most oftern receives its deepest inspiration. It was in the desert that God fashioned his people.....That is why the monastery is a kind of prophetic place, an anticipation of the world to come, a permanent declaration of a universe remade in God, a universe whose poles are charity and the praise of God”

Preparing for Meditation

[8] 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 25 minutes if that is not for you. Simply allow your inner rhythm to be heard. We begin the meditation now.

Bell Sounds…

25-minute meditations begins…Count down timer starts

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

[9.] To close, we will take a look at what it means to be a monk in two short slides. This slide is taken directly from the Cistercian rite of admission. It is worth noting that the Cistercians are also the home of the ascetic Trappist Monk, who takes a vow of absolute silence.

[10.] (no audio) In Silence: The Reception of Novices

Drawn by the love of God I have come here to learn your way of life. I ask you to teach me to follow Christ with the Gospel for my guide according to the Rule of St. Benedict and the Cistercian traditions.

From the "Conferences", St. John Cassian

[11.] (no audio) In Silence: The Purpose of a Monk

Drawn by the love of God I have come here to learn your way of life. I ask you to teach me to follow Christ with the Gospel for my guide according to the Rule of St. Benedict and the Cistercian traditions.

From the Rites for the Reception of Novices into a Cistercian Order

[12.] The Cistercians are a source of some of the most beautiful spiritual and profound philosophical writings. We do recommend that you research them for yourselves.

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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Our peaceful outdoor spaces promote wellbeing and are open to all, free of charge.