## Meditation: Becoming like Children – Reflections by Rob

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 countdown timer are part of the presentation.

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

**Welcome to Christian Meditation** in the Centering Prayer Tradition

**Opening Prayer: Opening Prayer:** Eternal God, through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, stability, peace and justice making. **Amen**

**Theme: Becoming like Children**

**Introduction**: In two days time my granddaughter will be just one month old. My joy at her birth has reminded me of how we are encouraged in the Scriptures to become as little children. But how do we become childlike rather than childish? I would like to share my reflections about this with you for our meditation practice this evening.

**Jesus's Teaching** The main passage in the Bible is **St Matthew, Chapter 18:**

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' He called a child, set him in front of them and said, 'I tell you this: unless you turn around and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Let a man humble himself till he is like this child, and he will be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."

What does it mean, to 'turn around' and to humble oneself like a child? There are clues in the Gospel of Thomas in which the importance of resembling children is a common theme. Logia 4 reads: "Jesus said:

The old man in days will not hesitate
To ask a little child of seven days
About the Place of life,
And he will live,
For many who are first shall become last

And they shall be a single one"

**Logia 17 reads: "Jesus said:**
I will give you what no eye has seen,
And what no ear has heard,
And what no hand has touched,
And what has not arisen in the heart of man."

*Note: The Gospel of Thomas is a non-canonical sayings gospel. It was discovered near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in December 1945 among a group of books known as the Nag Hammadi library.*

A newborn child knows nothing of the world. Everything is new and full of wonder. Their senses are keen, but what they see, hear touch and think, for them has never been seen, heard, touched or thought before. It is all amazing and filled with wonder. I was sitting holding my little granddaughter and gently patting her back to bring up wind when I noticed that she was gazing intently with big round eyes at something behind me. I looked round and noticed that every time I moved my arm, it was shaking the branch of a tree behind me, the leaves were moving, and she was focusing with amazement on the movement. Such strange round green things appearing out of nowhere!

So this is how we must become: prepared to look at the world and every thing and being in it as if for the first time, full of wonder, and most importantly without any pre-conceived ideas, beliefs, assumptions or opinions. Just seeing, noticing just what is in its original shape and form before it has entered our heads and been processed with comparisons, perceptions and prejudices. With humility and, in other words, letting go of any input from the ego. This is also the practice of meditation or centering prayer – just to be present, noticing the actual experience and letting go of all thoughts, views and interpretations which may arise. And this is the practice which we need to take with us into the world and into all our relationships with it and with each other.

**The Marks of a Great Person** There is, however, something to be added to this teaching. We cannot literally become as a tiny child which has no experience of the world and has much to learn about it. The Aryan people (literally the "noble ones") who migrated from Persia to Northern India in about 1500 BCE, long before the development of both Hinduism and Buddhism, taught that there were 32 marks of a Great Man. The teaching was actually a paradox, but no one saw it. Every time a spiritual tradition arose its adherents maintained that their founder had the 32 marks of a great man. This was particularly true of the historical Buddha. Moreover a tradition developed that the "great man" or superman with his 32 marks was, or would be a strong, powerful and perhaps ruthless leader. The idea was taken up by philosophers like Nietzsche and tragically by the Nazis.

The Aryans were in fact accomplished physicians with a good knowledge of anatomy, and most of the 32 signs can, indeed, be found in Gray's Anatomy. The paradox was that they are not characteristics of a powerful adult but those of a baby in the womb about to be born. The great man, or great person as we would say nowadays was not the strongest, but the weakest and most vulnerable member of society. The Aryans were teaching, had we listened,

that to be truly great, we had to become as little children new to the world: something which Jesus also understood and imparted.

But there was a twist to the Aryans' paradoxical teaching. The 32nd sign was a circle with a thousand spokes appearing on the soles of the feet. You can still see images or statues of the Buddha with this symbol shown on his feet. This was also an anatomical feature, but not one which appeared on the feet of any baby. It represents an eye, and the eye stood for seeing, awareness and wisdom. By positioning it on the feet of a great person, the Aryans were teaching that we must not only become as little children but must also do so from a foundation and base of wisdom and experience. So we must see things as they really are free from opinions about them and prejudice, but we must also see them with eyes of wisdom, understanding what they consist of, how they have come into this state of being and how things work in the world. Not judging, but knowing and understanding

**Reflections:** So these are the qualities which truly connect us and which make up the kingdom of Heaven, which Jesus said is within us and around us: the qualities of clearly seeing things as they truly are with humility and appreciation, but also with understanding and wisdom. These things – selfless appreciation, compassion and wisdom together constitute love. I am looking forward to seeing my little granddaughter develop and, I hope, flourish as long as I am around, and I can wish her nothing better than to retain the childlike qualities of exploration with joy and wonder whilst at the same time growing in appreciation of every aspect of the world, in understanding of it and in wisdom.

**Beginning Meditation:** So let us find and move into a comfortable position, relaxing the body, noticing its contact with the chair or cushion and with the floor. Letting go of the efforts, difficulties and worries of our day, and bringing ourselves into the peace of the present moment. Noticing our breathing as it slows and deepens. Giving attention to any points of tension or discomfort. If you use a sacred word you might notice its rhythm, perhaps co-ordinating it with the breathing, or simply focus on the candle or on the breathing, returning to the point of focus whenever you are aware of the mind wandering off, in a spirit of non-judgmental acceptance. Accepting everything which arises, whether it be a sound, a thought a feeling, pleasant or unpleasant or another distraction, and noticing it just as it is without adding anything by way of wanting, not wanting, judging or analyzing. Returning with ease and joy to the meditation object

The meditation will last for 25 minutes and will begin and end with the sound of the bell.

**Bell Sounds…25-minute meditations begins…Count down timer starts**

**Bell Sounds…Meditation ends**

*Continues..*

**Poem after meditation:** I would like to end with a short poem by the mystic, William Blake..

**Infant Joy**

"I have no name:
"I am but two days old."
What shall I call thee?
"I happy am,
"Joy is my name."
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old,
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

**Closing Prayer:** Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Moments of your personal prayer follow…Amen

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

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