Meditation: Faces and Spirituality – Reflections 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 introductory text is on the screen with narration. A countdown timer is part of the presentation, and will sometimes be accompanied by music.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centering Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona Jenvey, one of the group leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. Our Meditation this week is led by Paul. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate in the Centering Prayer tradition, beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

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**

Faces and Spirituality

“Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done.”
Micah: 3:4

Whilst researching this talk, which was to be about an entirely different subject, I came across this verse of scripture:

“Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done. “

You don't have to be a great theologian to know that whenever the Lord hides his face from someone they're going to be in for a rough few weeks at least. Coincidentally on that day the headlines in the news were about everyone in the UK being obliged to wear a mask when shopping. This got me thinking as to what is "face". A quick word count on the computer tells me that there are approximately 420 occurrences of the word "face" in the Bible as a noun. But what does it mean to us, spiritually?

I will freely draw upon Christian and Jewish thinkers during this homily, but especially David F. Ford, and his work "Self and Salvation" (ISBN 0-521-42616-2)

We live before the faces of others. Some are there physically, others in memory. We have been formed face to face from our earliest days, deeper than conscious memory. A baby is welcomed -it has a face like no other, constantly moving and changing.
How will this child be received and understood? What are the codes and influences, habits and customs, which are to be distilled into this new person? What does it mean to be firstborn, or female?

How are you related to your face? This isn't a silly question: you are obviously more than the outside of your head, but that phrase doesn't adequately ring true, as your face is more than that.
To meditate upon a face is to consider the internal self of the owner.
Each face is uniquely individual: it is the primary method of interacting with others, it provides our main method of communicating abstract thoughts through speech. All senses and emotions are active through the face.
The face is a complex mix of public and internal self, personal history, and private emotion.

The face is a social interaction: walking down the high street, we communicate actively or passively with other souls through our faces: a glance at another superficially tells you whether that person is momentarily happy, sad, determined, or serene: who wants to talk, or who wishes to be left alone. In that second, we all make decisions about how we interact, or not, with that other person.

What do those decisions say about us?

What about the visual representation of the face? Art surrounds us: faces of long ago, and of today. We should consider artists as tutors in our apprenticeship of seeing faces. Our seeing has a history, and so does representation.
However we are today overwhelmed with images of faces: for the first time in man's history, we can see thousands of faces in personal interaction rather than just faces in a crowd: whether it be in an art gallery, movie, Facebook, or a Zoom meeting. Control of which faces you see in such circumstances is controlled by another, whether it be the curator, film producer, or the "host" of an online meeting.
Seeing is a complex process of interaction, recognition, attention, and integration. How should we cope with this constant parade of faces?
Do all these faces both real and virtual blur into a miasma of eyes, noses, mouths, ears, hair for you?
"Oh she was in such and such on BBC2, she played.....you know".
"I met someone from Church in the High Street, married to Fred with the strange haircut.....can't remember her name. But they're both doing well in the lockdown."

Do all these faces that we see every day mean less to us in a contemporary life? Or is it that we've lost the ability to discern the media representation of faces from those faces that really matter?

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord

who is the Spirit. "2 Corinthians

So, here we come to the crux: we are expected to face our Creator with unveiled faces, so that we can share our true being. How should we face our fellow humans?

“this seems to mean that the human face–every human face–is a copy or reflection of the face of God.” *Art Green*

But in a plainer sense, setting someone (or some One) before us implies an image that we see in our mind’s eye. We know that we are each made in God’s image. Is it possible to keep that Adonai in our mind’s eye all the time? An Adonai Who encompasses the faces of every living human being?

And not just the faces of those whom we know, but especially the faces of the poor, the ill, the hungry, the malnourished, in virtually every country on Earth.

Can we keep their faces in front of us at all times? The challenge is not to turn away, not to give up out of hopelessness or frustration, not to pretend that our affluent lives can properly be lived in a vacuum away from the rest of the world.

This is the challenge. To open our worship and prayer practices to the anguish of the world. To keep these faces of humanity, these aspects of God’s image in front of us, always.

Beginning Meditation: Before beginning our meditation, you may wish to adjust your posture, 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, letting go fully. Then repeat this a few times. If you have a sacred word you might notice its rhythm, perhaps noticing your how your word is in time with the breath.

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

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

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

For meditation groups, prayer groups, spirituality, wellbeing, retreats, workshops and our labyrinth garden, please visit our website: **wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk**



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