Meditation on 'Coming Home' – Reflections by Hazel

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 Hazel. 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: 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**

Reflections on 'coming home'

Introduction: Two weeks ago, I called into the Wisdom Centre for the first time since March. I went to drop something through the letterbox, not expecting to see anyone, but I was met at the door by a beautifully warm and joyous welcome from Jackie, and then also from Fiona and Sister Marie. As I walked inside, mask on, noticing 2-metre distance markings on the floor, signage, sanitiser, and so on, despite these various changes, I felt a tangible sense of 'being home'.

I later tried to put further words to this. In my body, it was a relaxing, a releasing of tension in my shoulders, a freedom of breath, a sense of space and movement. Emotionally, it was a sense of relief, warmth, acceptance, safety, and significantly, a feeling that I belonged to whatever it was that the centre represented for me. Relationally, I felt connected to others and part of something bigger. Spiritually, perhaps hardest to describe, it was a sense of depth, holding, interconnectedness and wordlessness - a 'coming home' of a deeper sort.

This is the first mediation back in the Wisdom Centre for our Wednesday group, after the long break from March this year. It is perhaps in some way, a 'coming home'. The meditation is also offered online for those who are unable to come or who prefer to access it that way. In these reflections, I simply offer a few writings by others on aspects of 'coming home', and each of these will be followed by a short time of silence.

Homecoming: The first piece I turned to was a song written and sung by a university friend of mine, Anita[1], accompanied by her husband, Nick. It is on their CD called 'Homecoming'. Anita wrote this as 'a grateful acknowledgement of God's love shown through the faithful and compassionate support of family'. The song begins like this:

> I have been to many places
> I have wandered many lands
> I have seen so many faces
> As I've travelled on my way
> I have heard a hundred stories
> That have made me laugh or cry
> But nothing that has made me want to stay.
>
> 'Cause home is where the heart is
> Where my weary soul finds rest
> And my spirit bathes in love
> Where open arms surround me
> Give me hope to face the world
> And if home is where the heart is,
> Then I'm home.

Coming home – the parable of the prodigal son: I began to reflect on the range of people's experiences of home from their early years - some born into welcoming, safe and happy families and others whose family home was not a place they would choose to return to, or even one that they would actively avoid. In the parable of the prodigal son, the son did not expect a great welcome on his return home. Having squandered all his wealth given to him by his father, and ending up in a state of poverty and starvation, the son admits his powerlessness to manage his own life all by himself and makes a decision to return to his Father (Luke 15:18-.42 (NRSV). The son decides:

> 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against
> heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like
> one of your hired hands."' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still
> far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms
> around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against
> heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father
> said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a
> ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let
> us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost
> and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

This was indeed a joyous welcome. No doubt home life would not be all plain sailing as there was work to do in relationship with his brother, but there was a loving, secure base in the welcoming arms of the father from which life's challenges could be worked through.

To find your true home within your life: I began to notice other times when I felt at home, and how this might be simply in connecting with nature – a familiar stream that I had not been to for a while, taking time to be beside it, to 'be with' it; relaxing into the sensations of

[1] Nick and Anita Haigh. 'Celtic Roots and Rhythms: Homecoming'. Northumbria Community. https://shop.northumbriacommunity.org/product/celtic-roots-and-rhythms-boxed-set/

feeling the leaves on a tree branch or pressing the fruit of the sloe between my fingers, smelling the wild flowers, or watching a wren in a hedgerow; all seemed to bring a sense of returning to a deeper place that was not dissimilar to my welcome at the Wisdom Centre, although in a different form and setting.

Taking this further, I read some of John O'Donohue's book, 'Eternal Echoes: Exploring our Hunger to Belong' in which he explores the experience of 'presence', and what it takes, in his words, 'To find your true home within your life'. He writes:

> 'Each one of us is alone in the world. It takes great courage to meet the full force of your aloneness. Most of the activity in society is subconsciously designed to quell the voice crying in the wilderness within you. The mystic Thomas à Kempis said that when you go out into the world, you return having lost some of yourself. Until you learn to inhabit your aloneness, the lonely distraction and noise of society will seduce you into false belonging where you will only become empty and weary. When you face your aloneness, something begins to happen. Gradually, the sense of bleakness changes into a sense of true belonging. This is a slow and open-ended transition, but it is utterly vital in order to come into rhythm with your own individuality. In a sense, this is the endless task of finding your true home within your life. It is not narcissistic; for as soon as you rest in the house of your own heart, doors and windows begin to open outwards to the world. No longer on the run from your aloneness, your connections with others become real and creative. You no longer need to covertly scrape affirmation from others or from projects outside yourself. This is slow work; it takes years to bring your mind home. … The huge longing of the human mind is to discover ever larger shelters of belonging. … Home is where you belong.'

Coming home to the Wisdom Centre: So whether you are listening to this at the Wisdom Centre or at home, may you feel at home here, and may you not leave without a blessing.

A Blessing for a New Home - By John O'Donohue

May this house shelter your life.
When you come home here,
May all the weight of the world
Fall from your shoulders.

May your heart be tranquil here,
Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this home be a lucky place,
Where the graces your life desires
Always find the pathway to your door.

May nothing destructive
Ever cross your threshold.

May this be a safe place
Full of understanding and acceptance,
Where you can be as you are,
Without the need of any mask
Of pretence or image.

May this home be a place of discovery,
Where the possibilities that sleep
In the clay of your soul can emerge
To deepen and refine your vision
For all that is yet to come to birth.

May it be a house of courage,
Where healing and growth are loved,
Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
A home where patience of spirit is prized,
And the sight of the destination is never lost.

Though the journey be difficult and slow,
May there be great delight around this hearth.
May it be a house of welcome
For the broken and diminished.

May you have the eyes to see
That no visitor arrives without a gift
And no guest leaves without a blessing.

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 how your word is in time with the breath.

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

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

Reflection after meditation

To Come Home to Yourself - by John O'Donohue

May all that is unforgiven in you,
Be released.

May your fears yield
Their deepest tranquilities.

May all that is unlived in you,
Blossom into a future,
Graced with love.

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.