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## 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2008 CONTEMPLATION

### Welcome and Presentation

Contemplation is the intimate relationship with God; it is therefore the source of our faith.

### Prayer:

*Late have I loved Thee, O Beauty, ever ancient ever new.  
Late have I loved Thee!  
For behold, Thou wert within me and I outside and I sought Thee outside.  
And in my loneliness I fell upon the lovely things that Thou hast made.  
Thou wert with me and I was not with Thee.  
I was kept from Thee by those things.  
Yet had they not been in Thee they would not have been at all.  
Thou didst call and cry to me and break open my deafness.  
And Thou didst sent forth Thy beams which shine upon me  
and chase away my blindness.  
Thou didst breathe fragrance upon me and I drew in mv breath  
and do now pant for Thee.  
I tasted Thee and do now hunger and thirst for Thee.  
Thou didst touch me, and I have burned for Thy peace*

*(St Augustine)*

### Music and silence

### 1) Sabbath

#### **Dt 5:15**

*15 You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.*

**Ex 20:8-11**

8 *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

9 *Six days you shall labour, and do all your work;*

10 *but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates;*

11 *for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.*

**Ex 16:22-31**

22 *On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers apiece; and when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses,*

23 *he said to them, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay by to be kept till the morning.'"*

24 *So they laid it by till the morning, as Moses bade them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it.*

25 *Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field.*

26 *Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there will be none."*

27 *On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none.*

28 *And the Lord said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?"*

29 *See! The Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days; remain every man of you in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."*

30 *So the people rested on the seventh day.*

31 *Now the house of Israel called its name manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.*

**Ex 35:3**

2 *Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death;*

3 *you shall kindle no fire in all your habitations on the sabbath day."*

**Nb 15:32-36**

32 *While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day.*

33 *And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation.*

34 *They put him in custody, because it had not been made plain what should be done to him.*

35 *And the Lord said to Moses, "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."*

36 *And all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him to death with stones, as the Lord commanded Moses.*

**Ex 34:21**

21 *Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.*

**Ne:15-16**

*15 In those days I saw in Judah men treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on asses; and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day; and I warned them on the day when they sold food.*

**Jr 17:21**

*21 Thus says the Lord: Take heed for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.*

**Time of personal recollection:**

Do you consecrate each week a complete day to God only? What is for you the meaning of sabbath? How do you live it practically?.

**Sharing****2) Charles de Foucauld: with You**

*(1858-1916) - French hermit in the Sahara.*

**So near to me**

*You are, My Lord Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist!  
You are there, one metre away from me, in this Tabernacle!  
Your body, your soul, your humanity, your divinity,  
your entire being is there, in its double nature!  
How close you are, my God! My Saviour!  
My Jesus, my Brother, my Spouse, my Beloved!*

*You weren't any closer to the Holy Virgin,  
during the nine months when she carried you in her womb  
than you are to me  
when you come onto my tongue in Holy Communion!*

*You weren't any closer to the Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph  
in the stable at Bethlehem,  
in the house at Nazareth, during the flight to Egypt,  
during all those moments of the divine family life  
than you are to me at this moment  
and so, so, often in this tabernacle!*

*Saint Mary Magdala wasn't any closer to you,  
sitting at your feet at Bethanie,  
than I am here at the foot of the altar!*

*You weren't any closer to your apostles  
when you were among them  
than you are close to me now, My God!  
How happy I am!*

## **More than 15 hours with You..**

*How sweet it is to arrive here at 4.30 in the morning, telling myself: still four hours that I can spend before the altar, with nothing else to do but to gaze upon God; and then at 10.30 am: how lovely it is to say to myself: I have one hour and a quarter that I can spend before the altar, to look at you, Lord. Then at 3 o'clock: half an hour to rest while looking at You. Then at 5 o'clock how deeply moving, the end of the working day having arrived, to spend time at your feet with the thought that until tomorrow morning there is nothing to do but to stay close to you wherever I am..... Oh what sweetness of sweetnesses, my God: more than 15 hours without anything else to do but to look at you and to tell you that I love you! O Happiness! Oh how good it is to be there hidden in the secret of your face...*

### **Time of personal recollection:**

Love as meaning of life: nothing else counts. God's love is everything. Why to be active? How to stop sometimes?

### **Sharing**

## **3) St Gregory Nazianzen:**

*(4<sup>th</sup> century) - St. Gregory Nazianzen is sometimes called the minstrel of the Holy Trinity.*

*From the day whereon I renounced the things of the world to consecrate my soul to luminous and heavenly contemplation, when the supreme intelligence carried me hence to set me down far from all that pertains to the flesh, to hide me in the secret places of the heavenly tabernacle; from that day my eyes have been blinded by the light of the Trinity, whose brightness surpasses all that the mind can conceive; for from a throne high exalted the Trinity pours upon all, the ineffable radiance common to the Three. This is the source of all that is here below, separated by time from the things on high.... From that day forth I was dead to the world and the world was dead to me.*

### **Time of personal recollection:**

How do you relate differently to the 3 persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit?

### **Sharing**

## **4) Père Henri Le Saux, OSB**

*Father Henri Le Saux, OSB, lived in India where he practised meditation as a Christian Father.*

### **Peace of mind**

*Christian spirituality should at least take one point from yoga - its seeking by one means or another to establish that silence of mind and thought which is the essential prerequisite for a full inner awakening. Only such a silence in fact allows the Holy Spirit to act freely in the soul. It is indeed so difficult for us not to be constantly either rushing ahead of or lagging behind the Spirit; we are always so eager to know and act on our own and at our own speed. Furthermore, this emptiness and this silence are in themselves an appeal, the abysmal appeal of the spirit for God - abysmal, because it originates in the infinity of God's creative love.*

*This emptiness frees the mind, or rather, the deep self, from its attachment to and self-identification with the various transitory characters whose role it adopts one after another in the eyes of other*

people and of itself. Henceforth the bonds - those "knots of the heart" of which the Upanishads speak - have been broken, which tied it to the world of appearances and enslaved it to its instincts. The wise man who has reached this point no doubt thinks and wills like everyone else, but he no longer identifies himself with his acts of thinking or willing. He no longer sees anything or wills anything in relation to his limited ego. All is known and willed by him in the light of what is real - first of all, the unique Self (as the Vedantin would say); or God in Himself (as the believer would understand). He has thus recovered his essential freedom; nothing any more now limits the infinite summons towards God which sounds in the depth of his being. Nothing therefore any more obstructs the possibilities of the Spirit's action in him - the Spirit being that same power which the Sages recognised as working in themselves as in the universe, and whose divine character they surmised. The marvellous powers attributed to yogis are no more extraordinary than the miracles performed by the saints; the former have simply released within themselves, as they put it, the same energy which permeates the whole cosmos, whereas the latter, as the Greek Fathers used to say, have recovered the blessed condition of Adam, when he emerged from the hands of God, sovereignly free and master of the whole creation.

### **Time of personal recollection:**

How do you do to find peace of mind in God?

### **Sharing**

### **5) The Prayer of the Name:**

**"Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner".**

*There are different stages in the practice of the prayer of the Name. Those which are usually noted, at least in Russia and the Eastern Mediterranean, are linked with the "place" at which the prayer is uttered: namely by the lips, in the mind, or finally, in the heart. None of these places, of course, excludes the others; however the "place" at which anyone normally utters the prayer can be taken a sure sign of the depth at which he is aware of the divine Presence.*

*In the first stage, the beginner will set the divine Name on his lips and his tongue, somewhat as the Lord's Body is received in Holy Communion. He will repeat the Name aloud, or will at least murmur it audibly, without flagging. At this point the mind may be completely distracted and have wandered off on its own. The heart also may be filled with desires which are quite inconsistent with the prayer uttered by the lips. But this does not matter so greatly. The repetition of the holy Name will of itself bear fruit when the time comes. For the moment the essential thing is to be pronouncing the Name with respect and a real longing for the grace of God.*

*In the next stage the lips remain closed. It is in the mind, or "in the head", as it were, that the prayer is made; there is a barely perceptible movement of the vocal chords and other muscles associated with speech, a whisper of the imagination that can just be discerned within. The prayer has now become the mind's unbroken attention to the Name which it repeats without stopping. This does not mean that one should be reflecting or meditating on the meaning of the Name. The movements of the mind should be increasingly stilled in the same way as those of the throat-muscles; becoming like the gentle undulations on the surface of a quiet pool when caressed by a gentle breeze. The mind is concentrated, but without becoming taut, stilled, but without strain. As a help, especially at the beginning, the novice (in the Indian context) is encouraged to fix his imagination on the letters of the mantra, or else on some symbolic form, or even on a single point.*

*The highest stage is reached when the prayer, or rather the Name, is set in the heart. There is now no longer any movement of the lips or of the vocal chords, or even in the end, any movement of thought. The prayer is now firmly fixed at the very centre of our being, and from there its light and glory radiate everywhere. This is truly the "experience of the Holy Spirit of which the Russian saints often spoke. This glory, the very light of the Transfiguration, is sometimes manifested even in the physical body, as in the famous vision of St Seraphim of Sarov.*

*The Name has now come to its true place; the sign has returned to the Reality from which it proceeded. Now not only has the mind come to perfect peace and recovered its true silence, but even the desires of the heart have been transformed. In being fulfilled they have been brought to unity. In no part of the soul is there now any other desire except for the Lord himself, the desire to contemplate his glory and share his joy. As an aid to placing the Name in the heart, the saints who have practised this prayer recommend that it be uttered (inaudibly, of course) in time with the process of breathing or the beating of the heart. In this way the whole being is taken up and borne along in this prayer - soul and body, mind and senses, and indeed, by means of the body, the entire universe, with which each of us in his body is physically one.*

*Only by using picture language can one attempt to convey something of the depth and power of this prayer. Abstract concepts give little help in explaining it. The essential point on which it is all based is clearly that we cannot be content with living at the surface of our being, simply at the level of sense and mind, still less with praying at that superficial level in the hope of finding God there. The only possible place where we can truly encounter God is at the very centre of our being, the source from which we have come, the point at which we proceed from God in the eternal birth of the divine Word. This is physically symbolised by the heart, the centre of the body and the organ from which the blood is pumped out to give life to the whole body. Even when we direct our attention to the physical heart, it amounts symbolically to directing all our activities towards the centre of our being. This centre is a point which is quite impossible to localise or to picture in any way. But it is the very place at which the spirit issues, so to speak, from the hands of God and awakes to itself, to God and to the world.*

### **Time of personal recollection:**

How can traditional prayers (rosary, prayer of the name) be means to find comfort in God's presence?

### **Sharing**

## **6) Henri Le Saux: "I" and "YOU"**

(free simplified translation)

*If God were not presence to one's Self, in the centre of the Self, creatures would not be, because being would not be. Such is the law of being. Being is the affirmation of the "I" when it enters into existence. The being is, because it says "I". But this "I" can be only if, in the depth and in the heart of this affirmation, the "YOU" of another presence arises. This other presence takes its origin in the same source out of which this "I" flows. The origin of the "YOU" is the source of this existential surge which is the "I". Being is communion; there is no "I" which does not accomplish itself in "YOU", in the other. In saying "YOU" - that is in calling the other - the "I" of the caller finds its expression. In this couple formed by "I" and "YOU" which is the origin of being, and in this form of exchange and of reciprocity out of which being flows, a peculiar form of otherness takes shape, which is far beyond any possible representation by the human mind. Nevertheless this*

*otherness carries in itself such a strong requirement for unity that it can only be realised in the non-duality (advaita) which is the Spirit as the manifestation of the perfect union of both, in the heart of being.*

*Such is the law of being and of its mystery, as it has been revealed to us in human language by the One who flows out of the origin in the heart of the Father and who is the expression, in the eternal "YOU", of the "I" as source of being. He is the murmur in the depth of the heart of those who open to the light of grace, it means to the Spirit of accomplished Love and Unity, the only One who "peers into the depth of God" (1 Cor 2:10).*

### **Time of personal recollection:**

Read this text by yourself and meditate about "I" and "YOU". 15 min.

### **Sharing**

## **7) Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj**

*Hindu Guru*

*Question: I can keep quiet for an hour in the morning. But the day is long and many things happen that throw me out of balance. It is easy to say "be silent", but to be silent when all is screaming in me and round me - please tell me how it is done.*

*Maharaj: All that needs doing can be done in peace and silence. There is no need to get upset.*

*Q: It is all theory which does not fit the facts. I am returning to Europe with nothing to do there. My life is completely empty.*

*M: If you just try to keep quiet, all will come - the work, the strength for work, the right motive. Must you know everything beforehand? Don't be anxious about your future - be quiet now and all will fall into place. The unexpected is bound to happen, while the anticipated may never come. Don't tell me you cannot control your nature. You need not control it. Throw it overboard. Have no nature to fight, or to submit to. No experience will hurt you, provided you don't make it into a habit. Of the entire universe you are the subtle cause. All is because you are. Grasp this point firmly and deeply and dwell on it repeatedly. To realise this as absolutely true, is liberation.*

*Q: If I am the seed of my universe, then a rotten seed I am! By the fruit the seed is known.*

*M: What is wrong with your world that you swear at it?*

*Q: It is full of pain.*

*M: Nature is neither pleasant nor painful. It is all intelligence and beauty. Pain and pleasure are in the mind. Change your scale of values and all will change. Pleasure and pain are mere disturbances of the senses; treat them equally and there will be only bliss. And the world is, what you make it; by all means make it happy. Only contentment can make you happy - desires fulfilled breed more desires. Keeping away from all desires and contentment in what comes by itself is a very fruitful state - a precondition to the state of fullness. Don't distrust its apparent sterility and emptiness. Believe me, it is the satisfaction of desires that breeds misery. Freedom from desires is bliss.*

*Q: There are things we need.*

*M: What you need will come to you, if you do not ask for what you do not need. Yet only few people reach this state of complete dispassion and detachment. It is a very high state, the very threshold of liberation. (...) Let things happen as they happen - they will sort themselves out nicely in the end. You need not strain towards the future - the future will come to you on its own. For some time longer you will remain sleep-walking, as you do now, bereft of meaning and assurance; but this period will end and you will find your work both fruitful and easy. There are always moments when one feels empty and estranged. Such moments are most desirable for it means the soul had cast its moorings and is sailing for distant places. This is detachment - when the old is over and the new has not yet come. If you are afraid, the state may be distressing; but there is really nothing to be afraid of. Remember the instruction: whatever you come across - go beyond.*

**Time of personal recollection:**

Is this the path to liberation or to passivity? How do you experience: “What you need will come to you, if you do not ask for what you do not need”?

**Sharing**