

Sustaining Awareness

Thursday, December 20, 2018

As we saw yesterday, there are many forms of contemplative practice. CAC faculty member James Finley describes how meditation—another name for contemplation—is simply any practice that opens us up to Presence:

There is something about simply sitting still, quietly attentive to your breathing, that tends to evoke less agitated, less thought-driven modes of meditative awareness. When this shift . . . embodies a sincere desire for [the Divine], a new capacity to realize oneness with [the Divine] begins to emerge. Resting in this awareness offers the least resistance to [the Divine]. . . .

...

And this is what has happened to us many times: we are graced with moments of spontaneous meditative experience of [the Divine's] presence in the midst of our daily living, only to go on as if no awakening had been granted. . . . But not quite. For the coming and going of our moments of awakening began to graze our hearts with longing. This is what makes us seekers of the inner way—this longing, in which we find ourselves going about with a certain holy discontent, a holy restlessness, a kind of homesickness. . .

..

Perhaps by trial and error, with no one to guide us, we find our own way to respond to the unconsummated longings of our awakened heart. We, in effect, discover our own personal ways to meditate. By meditation I mean, in this context, *any act habitually entered into with our whole heart as a way of awakening and sustaining a more interior meditative awareness of the present moment.* The meditation practice we might find ourselves gravitating toward could be baking bread, tending the roses, or taking long, slow walks to no place in particular. Or we might find ourselves being interiorly drawn to painting or to reading or writing poetry or listening to certain kinds of music. Our meditation practice may be that of being alone, truly alone, without any addictive props or escapes. Or our practice may be that of being with the person in whose presence we awakened to what is most real and vital in our life. . . . We cannot explain it, but when we give ourselves over to these simple acts, we are taken to a deeper place. We become once again more grounded and settled in a meditative awareness of the depth of the life we are living.

We discover we cannot make our moments of spontaneous meditative awakening occur. But even so, we . . . freely [choose] to make ourselves as open and receptive as possible to the graced event of awakening to that meditative sense of oneness with [he Divine] one with us in life itself.

James Finley, [*Christian Meditation: Experiencing the Presence of God*](#) (HarperSanFrancisco: 2004), 42-43, 45-46

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