

## **Christian Meditation as taught by Dom John Main**

Meditation involves coming to a stillness of spirit and a stillness of body. The extraordinary thing is that, in spite of all the distractions of the modern world, this silence is perfectly possible for all of us. To attain this silence and stillness we have to devote time, energy and love.

The way we set out on this pilgrimage is to recite a short phrase, a word that today is commonly called a mantra. The mantra is simply a means of turning our attention beyond ourselves, a method of drawing us away from our thoughts and concerns. The real work of meditation is to attain harmony of body, mind and spirit. This is the aim given us by the psalmist: "Be still and know that I am God". In meditation we turn the search of consciousness off ourselves.

In meditation we are not thinking or imagining about God at all. In meditation we seek to do something immeasurably greater; we seek to be WITH God, to be WITH Jesus, to be WITH his Holy Spirit. In meditation we go beyond thoughts, even holy thoughts. Meditation is concerned not with thinking but with BEING. Our aim in Christian

prayer is to allow God's mysterious and silent presence within us to become THE reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are. The task of meditation, therefore, is to bring our distracted mind to stillness, silence and concentration.

To meditate we seek a quiet place, and find a comfortable upright sitting position. Close your eyes gently. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer phrase "Maranatha". It is utterly simple. Say it like this, MA-RA-NA-THA. Four equally stressed syllables. Some people say the word in conjunction with their regular breathing. The speed should be fairly slow, fairly rhythmical.

Maranatha is in Aramaic, the language Jesus himself spoke. It means "Come Lord". It is probably the most ancient Christian prayer. St. Paul ends Corinthians with it, and St. John ends Revelation with it. Listen to the mantra as you say it, gently but continuously. You do not have to think or imagine anything, spiritual or otherwise. Meditation has nothing to do with quiet

reverie or passive stillness, but with attentive wakefulness. If thoughts or images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so return simply to saying your word. Don't use any energy in trying to dispel a distraction. Simply ignore it and the way to ignore it, is to say your mantra. Return with fidelity to meditation each morning and evening for between twenty and thirty minutes.

Meditation is a pilgrimage to your own centre, to your heart. To enter into the simplicity of it demands discipline and even courage. We need faith, simplicity; we need to become childlike.

If one is faithful and patient, meditation will bring us into deeper and deeper realms of silence. It is this silence that we are led into the mystery of the eternal silence of God. That is the invitation of Christian prayer to lose ourselves and to be absorbed in God. Each of us is summoned to the heights of Christian prayer, to the fullness of life. What we need, however, is the humility to tread the way very faithfully over a period of years, so that the prayer of Christ may indeed be the grounding experience of our lives. Meditation is a gift of such staggering proportions that we

must respond to it gradually, gently. When we begin we cannot fully understand the sheer magnificence and wonder of it. Each time we return to meditate we enter into that reality a little more deeply, a little more faithfully.

Because meditation leads into the experience of love at the centre of our being, it makes us more loving people in our ordinary lives and relationships. Not only is meditation the necessary basis for contemplative action, but it is the essential condition for a fully human response to life.

The wonderful beauty of prayer is that the opening of our hearts is as natural as the opening of a flower. To let a flower open and bloom it is only necessary to let it be; so if simply ARE, if we become and remain still and silent, our heart cannot be open, the spirit cannot but pour through into our whole being. It is for this we have been created.

*Heavenly Father:*

Open my heart to the silent presence of the Spirit of your Son. LEAD ME into that mysterious silence where your love is revealed to all who call.  
Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.  
Dom John Main.

## **What Is Christian Meditation?**

Christian Meditation is seen as a new prayer, and yet it is a very old way of prayer in the Church. It is very simple and as deep as the depths of God.

In the midst of our often-too-busy lives as Christians, we may find ourselves yearning for a deeper entry into the presence of God in our prayer. Something in us is still seeking the Lord. We think "there must be more to this". In Christian Meditation we follow this yearning into the depths of our own heart - past all thoughts, feelings and "experiences" even of a religious kind, down into the deep places of the Spirit within. And there we await in silence and hope in the presence of God. The discipline of meditation enables us to move beyond thoughtful reflections on Scripture and the mysteries of faith, and to interiorise these reflections still more deeply.

Meditation is not an invitation to introspection or to some form of realising one's own potential. Rather, it heeds the words of Jesus, "the Kingdom of God is within you", and it offers a path into that Kingdom.

A single, short prayer-word is used - a "mantra" - in which the depth of our calls to the infinite abyss of God. The importance of physical stillness as the setting for entry into the stillness of our heart is also recognised.

## Can I Meditate?

Yes, anyone can learn to meditate. Anyone, from any walk of life and from 9 to 99 years old. Whilst meditation invites us to enter into the depths of our hearts, it is also a very simple method of praying for all those who seek God. All you have to do is to get in touch with one of the [Irish Christian Meditation Groups / Centres](#) and they will arrange a teacher for you.

### Summary:

Here's what you do:  
Sit down with feet firmly on the ground, your hands resting on your knees, your back as straight as possible.

- Take some deep breaths and / or listen to some gentle music for one or

two minutes. This will help to focus your attention.

- Close your eyes gently. Begin to say your prayer word or mantra so to anchor your mind, by gentle and persistent repetition. The mantra we suggest is MARANATH A, an ancient Christian prayer. Say it in four equally stressed syllables: MA - RA - NA - THA. Say it for the whole time of your meditation without any thought as to its meaning. You can say any mantra you like such as "Come Holy Spirit" or "Jesus". But

whatever mantra you choose keep to it, do not change it.

- Meditate every morning and every evening for 20 to 30 minutes - even on Christmas Day.
- Distractions will come, let them float past you. As you become aware of them, return gently to saying your mantra. In this way you are choosing Jesus above the distraction.