



The importance of the weekly meditation group

by Kim Nataraja

The foundations of the World Community for Christian Meditation are the thousands of small groups meeting in homes, parishes, schools, prisons, hospitals in at least 100 countries all round the world. Meeting in a group is an important part of the meditation journey. Firstly, the group is a place of teaching, where the essentials of Christian Meditation as passed on by John Main and Laurence Freeman are taught and its ancient authentic Christian nature is reinforced. Moreover, the group setting makes it a welcoming and safe environment for newcomers to join.

Secondly it is important to be with like-minded people when one is on the spiritual journey. Alone it is not an easy journey; the gentle support and encouragement of others on the same path is invaluable. John Main very much stressed the importance of weekly Meditation meetings. Underlying this was his belief that “meditation creates community”. Men and women are social creatures at heart and we are influenced in subtle ways by those we associated with. But he was also referring to the effect of prayer: “When two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them”, says Jesus in Matthew. His presence forms a growing bond between people who pray together and out of this bond comes a sense of communion, a wish to hearten and encourage others.

This is especially so in silent prayer. It is silence that forms the essence of any Meditation group meeting. By repeating faithfully our word we are led into the deep silence in the centre of our being, where Christ dwells. In that silence we discover our own true self and in doing so we realise that we are not isolated, individual beings, but that we are interconnected with everyone, with Creation and with the Divine. This is therefore not an individual silence but a shared one; it is the silence that truly unites us. Moreover, it is the memory of that joined silence that supports us and keeps us faithful to our individual twice-daily practice in our own home or helps us to start again if we have faltered.

The person who has felt called to lead a group has an important supportive role here. He or she can help create the right environment for the silence to take root and their own constancy in being there every week is an example to all the others.

In so many ways Christian meditation links back to the life of the first Christians in the early centuries of our era. Not only has John Main re-discovered silent prayer with the help of a prayer word in the writings of that time, but even the environment, in which the early Christians met to pray was similar: they too met in small groups in homes or meeting places.

For further help with setting up and leading groups, please look at the ‘Christian Meditation Groups’ Website in English, Spanish and French, based on the book ‘A Pearl of Great Price’ by Laurence Freeman.