



## Introducing Meditation to a Mainly Christian Audience

by Kim Nataraja

The following are suggestions for talks for weekly groups. The following points will be food for a series of talks. Restrict your introduction to 15 minutes at the most at your weekly group meeting.

- Introduce yourself and situate yourself to the group briefly within the World Community for Christian Meditation. Describe briefly how you came to meditate. Stress the universal tradition of meditation, not just an eastern tradition, but also rooted in our Christian tradition. Then lead the group into silence for a few moments, before opening with a suitable scripture passage and comment on it in a way that establishes meditation as a way of prayer, deeply rooted in the Christian tradition. For example: Matthew 6,6: interiority, few words; Matthew 6,8:trust; Matthew 6,25: abandonment of worries, mindfulness
- Draw attention to the fact that in many denominations, there is an over-emphasis on 'doing': parish activities, committees, etc. Bring out the distinction between 'being' and 'doing'. We all may be 'doing' too much. Remind your audience of the story of "Martha and Mary" (Luke 10, 38-42) and stress that we need to be both at different times, but suggest that the quality of our 'doing' depends on our 'being', being at peace with ourselves and being interiorly silent so as to be able to listen to others.
- Introduce John Main and his rediscovery of the Christian tradition of meditation in John Cassian. Highlight the fact that John Cassian is a teacher acceptable to all Christians and lived long before the split into the various denominations in Christianity occurred. Therefore meditation is very important in ecumenism. It is a natural way for Christians to pray together, while words and ritual can divide us. Deep prayer shows us we are already "one in Christ." "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18: 20). Meditation does not eradicate differences, but we view them in a more gentle and forgiving way. It acts as an antidote to fundamentalism by respecting differences and learning to forgive one another from the 'heart'. Both diversity and unity are needed. In Mark 9, 38-41 Jesus shows tolerance and respects differences). Meditation is coming home to oneself, to one's personal relationship with Christ and to our original Christian unity.
- Present meditation as the missing link in our chain of prayer. It completes and enhances, not replaces other forms of prayer. It enriches scriptural prayer especially. Stress that meditation is a dimension of prayer that leads to silence. We are not speaking to God, not thinking about God, but "being with" God, being in communion with the presence of Christ within our hearts. Silence is "worship in spirit and truth."