

FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM

By Gerry Pierse

The power of meditation

1. The power of meditation is that it opens one up to love – of self, God, and neighbour.
2. The dictum of St. Augustine is apt: "If we are to be restored to God, we must first be restored to our own selves, and then make of ourselves as it were a stepping stone by which to step to God".
3. To be restored to ourselves is to go beyond fear.

The rosary

1. One can go beyond saying the rosary as talking to, or listening to, God.
2. A person can say the rosary as a *mantra* – just as a way of being there with God.

"If one is close to God, nobody can insult you".

1. This is the fruit of contemplation – indeed if we are close to God nobody can insult us.
2. Humanly, if someone says something negative about us, we get so upset – we get *fearful*.
3. But, if we are close to God, if somebody says something negative about us – it is either true, and therefore it is valuable feedback; or, it is false.
4. If the person is telling a lie, or expressing jealousy, then *that* person has a problem. So why should *I* get upset?

The hub of love is in relationships.

1. As I meditate, I begin to discover that the great obstacle to relationships on all levels is *fear*.
2. We are afraid of what is going on inside *ourselves*; we are afraid of the scrutiny of *others*; we are afraid of *God*.
3. So many people are in a spin of activity precisely because they do not want to sit with the doubts or fears that are within them. (They are like doughnuts – a spinning periphery with an empty centre.)

The nature of fear

1. Whenever I feel like telling a lie, I know that I am afraid of something.
2. If I am grasping or over-powering, either physically or emotionally, I am acting out of fear.
3. Because of this, we go into little areas of our own, little fiefdoms, where we can be boss.
4. Or, we present others with *fait accompli*, no-option situations, where our wills will have to be done.
5. I know from experience that this happens in religious groups, in marriage, and in any group that works together.
6. If we have so much fear of ourselves, and of others, it is inevitable that we will have a lot of fear of God.
7. In the past, the Catholic education system was based on fear. It was a list of do's and don'ts that constituted sin; sin that brought God's eternal damnation. The main reason we gave people for joining the community in Eucharistic celebration was that, if they did not participate, they would commit a mortal sin and go to hell. How awful to motivate people in this way!
8. Reverence for the human body and sexuality was similarly motivated. This led to a lot of unnecessary guilt, fear, and scrupulosity.

Leaving fear behind – from fear to freedom

1. There is no use in trying to talk a person out of fear; it is something that comes from deep within oneself.
2. The only way of reversing fear is to experience that there is no need for it.
3. Many people when they begin to meditate expect great peace. I remember this in my first years of meditation.
4. However, it was not what happened. I had a lot of sexual turmoil, authority turmoil, anger, and so on. I think what was happening was this: I grew up in a very confined seminary, the seminaries of the fifties. I suppose the two issues of adolescence – authority and sexuality – had not really been dealt with; I had repressed them.
5. But, as I began to meditate, and I was over forty at this time, these things came up gently but persistently. I just let them be there, and I let them go.
6. Eventually a certain serenity – at-homeness – came. There was a whole lot of garbage in there that needed to be faced and allowed to come out. And it came out, and I just let it out, and that was it.
7. I have experienced that this is what meditation does. As I continue the effort to be still within myself, I discover from experience that it is an okay place to be. It is okay to just be who I am, and to let thoughts come and go.
8. As I continue to meditate, I spot myself being afraid. There is just that little space which develops between me and the ego in which I can decide whether or not I will let it continue to bully me. I also begin to see myself bullying others and have that split second in which to decide whether or not I will act out the compulsive desire to dominate or manipulate.
9. Then I find that my whole attitude to prayer has changed.
10. It is no longer a way of trying to get this God, this Father that secretly I am deeply afraid of, to fulfill my desires. I find that after the stillness of meditation, I can be content to present my concerns to a God that I know is loving. I can trust him to further my better interests, no matter how hard it is at times, and for me to see that he is actually doing so.

Notes taken by Alex Peck (aepeck77@yahoo.com.au); March 25, 2009.

Source: Fr. Gerry Pierse, "The Prayer That Jesus Taught", *Meditatio Talks, Series B* (April-June, 2006).