

who do not have a religious view of life. We all need to meditate, to reflect, to discover ourselves, it is a human dynamic. Especially in the voracious western world, people seek meditation because it represents a barrier raised against the daily stress and emptiness that is rife everywhere. Here, then, is the image of young people and adults sitting in recollection, in silence, with eyes half closed... But what are these people doing, we might ask? They are meditating. It is a phenomenon to be looked on favourably. Indeed, we are not made for rushing all the time, we have an inner life that cannot always be trampled on. Meditating is therefore a need for everyone. Meditating, so to speak, is like stopping and taking a breath in life.

But we realise that this word, once accepted in a Christian context, takes on a uniqueness that must not be eradicated. Meditating is a necessary human dimension, but meditating in the Christian context goes further: it is a dimension that must not be eradicated. The great door through which the prayer of a baptised person passes — let us remind ourselves once again — is Jesus Christ. For the Christian, meditation enters through the door of Jesus Christ. The practice of meditation also follows this path. And when Christians pray, they do not aspire to full self-transparency, they do not seek the deepest centre of the ego. This is legitimate, but the Christian seeks something else. The prayer of the Christian is first of all an encounter with the Other, with a capital “O”: the transcendent encounter with God. If an experience of prayer gives us inner peace, or self-mastery, or clarity about the path to take, these results are, so to speak, side effects of the grace of Christian prayer, which is the encounter with Jesus. That is, meditating means going to the encounter with Jesus, guided by a phrase or a word from Holy Scripture.

Throughout history, the term “meditation” has had various meanings. Even within Christianity it refers to different spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, some common lines can be traced, and in this we are helped again by the Catechism, which says the following: “There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters... But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus” (n. 2707). And here, a travelling companion is indicated, one who guides us: the Holy Spirit. Christian meditation is not possible without the Holy Spirit. It is he who guides us to the encounter with Jesus. Jesus said to us, “I will send you the Holy Spirit. He will teach you and explain to you. He will teach you and explain to you”. And in meditation too, the Holy Spirit is the guide to going forward in our encounter with Jesus Christ.

Thus, there are many methods of Christian meditation: some are very simple, others more detailed; some highlight the intellectual dimension of the person, others the affective and emotional one instead. They are methods. They are all important and all worthy of practice, inasmuch as they can help the experience of faith to become an integral

act of the person: one does not only pray with the mind; the entire person prays, the person in his or her entirety, just as one does not pray only with one's feelings. The ancients used to say that the organ of prayer is the heart, and thus they explained that the whole person, starting from the centre — the heart — enters into a relationship with God, not just a few faculties. We must thus always remember that the method is a path, not a goal: any method of prayer, if it is to be Christian, is part of that Sequela Christi that is the essence of our faith. The methods of meditation are paths to travel in order to arrive at the encounter with Jesus, but if you stop on the road, and just look at the path, you will never find Jesus. You will make a “god” out of the path. However, the path is a means to bring you to Jesus. The Catechism specifies: “Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire. This mobilisation of the faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ” (n. 2708). Here, then, is the grace of Christian prayer: Christ is not far away, but is always in a relationship with us. There is no aspect of his divine-human person that cannot become a place of salvation and happiness for us. Every moment of Jesus' earthly life, through the grace of prayer, can become immediate to us, thanks to the Holy Spirit, the guide.

But, you know, one cannot pray without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is he who guides us! And thanks to the Holy Spirit, we too are present at the River Jordan when Jesus immerses himself to receive baptism. We too are guests at the wedding at Cana, when Jesus gives the best wine for the happiness of the couple, that is, it is the Holy Spirit who connects us with these mysteries of the life of Christ because in contemplation of Jesus we experience prayer, to join us more closely to him. We too are astonished onlookers of the thousands of healings performed by the Master. We take the Gospel, and meditate on those mysteries in the Gospel, and the Spirit guides us to being present there. And in prayer — when we pray — we are all like the cleansed leper, the blind Bartimaeus who regains his sight, Lazarus who comes out of the tomb... We too are healed by prayer just as the blind Bartimaeus was healed, the other one, the leper... We too rose again, as Lazarus rose again, because prayer of meditation guided by the Holy Spirit leads us to relive these mysteries of the life of Christ and to encounter Christ, and to say, with the blind man, “Lord, have pity on me! Have pity on me!” — “And what do you want?” — “To see, to enter into that dialogue”. And Christian meditation, led by the Spirit, leads us to this dialogue with Jesus. There is no page of the Gospel in which there is no place for us. For us Christians, meditating is a way to encounter Jesus. And in this way, only in this way, we rediscover ourselves. And this is not a withdrawal into ourselves, no: it is our going to Jesus, and from Jesus, discovering ourselves, healed, risen, strong by the grace of Jesus. And encountering Jesus, the Saviour of all, myself included. And this, thanks to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you.



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Our Parish is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham: Registered Charity No. 234216

The ‘Year of Prayer’

2023-24 has been designated the Year of Prayer by Pope Francis, with a particular emphasis on the *Our Father*. It will help us prepare for the Jubilee Year “Pilgrims of Hope”. It presents our Church with a significant opportunity to revisit the basics of prayer, and for us to become even more a people of prayer.

Each week during this year a teaching about prayer related to the readings of that Sunday is posted on our parish blog (address above.) This resource has been prepared by Fr Rob Taylor, Spiritual Director at Oscott College. This week the posting is already included in our newsletter.

REFLECTIONS FOR HOLY FAMILY SUNDAY

The feasts of Christmas and the Holy Family help us to marvel at the incarnation, and God's choice of Mary and Joseph to provide human nurture and love for the Son of God. We can only be filled with wonder as we ponder these great events, these great mysteries. On 5th May 2021 Pope Francis, in his catechesis on prayer, turns our focus on the prayer of meditation, seeking meaning, through prayer of these, and all mysteries of our salvation.

Pope Francis on Meditation

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we will talk about the form of prayer called meditation. For a Christian, to “meditate” is to seek meaning: it implies placing oneself before the immense page of Revelation to try to make it our own, assuming it completely. And the Christian, after having welcomed the Word of God, does not keep it closed up within him or herself, because that Word must be met with “another book”, which the Catechism calls “the book of life” (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2706). This is what we try to do every time we meditate on the Word.

The practice of meditation has received a great deal of attention in recent years. It is not only Christians who talk about it: the practice of meditation exists in almost all the world's religions. But it is also a widespread activity among people

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2023: PARISH MASSES

Sa	30	6pm	HOLY FAMILY	John & Geraldine Kenny Ints (K)
Su	31	9am		Paul & Maria Nguyen RIP (N)
		11am		For the parish
M	1	10am	Mother of God	Rebecca & Patrick Kegan RIP (K)
T	2		Ss Basil & Gregory	
W	3			
Th	4			
F	5			
Sa	6	6pm	EPIPHANY	For the parish
Su	7	9am		For health of Josie Philpot (Drozd)
		11am		Jack Murphy RIP (Newstead)

Please pray for those who are sick including Theresa Monteiro; Craig Brooks, Paul Craig, Fr Michael Ho, Brenda Davies; Stephen Burke; Lesley Devlin & Jean Lawlor. **Please pray** for Dorothy Baker who died recently and for Eugene Marder, Elizabeth Kelly, Gwen Lavelle, John Lynch, Brendan Carroll, Jerome Harrington, Ken Hearne and all others whose anniversary at this time.

WEEKDAY SOCIAL. Tuesdays after 10am Mass. All are welcome.

PARISH CAR PARK Free parking for 1 hour is available for anyone at anytime in our carpark. Automatic free parking permits are issued to cover all parking on **Sat** from 5.30pm to 7.30pm; on **Sunday** from 8am to 2pm; on **Mon, Tues, Weds** from 9.30am to 11.30am and **Fri** from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. At other times, if on site for parish meetings and the like - to park for more than 1 hour, please scan the QR poster in the church or Benedict Room to extend your 'free' parking time.

The Parish operates in accordance with Statutory **Safeguarding** Guidance and the National and Archdiocesan policies & procedures at all times. Our Parish Safeguarding Representative is Mary Rose. She can be contacted at: sg.stnicholas.boldmere@rcaob.org.uk Alternatively the Diocesan Safeguarding team can be contacted on 0121 230 6240 or safeguarding@rcaob.org.uk

Retrovaille – Do you need help in

your marriage? Retrovaille has helped many couples find new hope, nourishment and growth in their marriages. If you want to uncover or reawaken the love, trust and commitment that brought you together and work through difficult times in your marriage contact Retrovaille confidential for more information about our 2024 programmes. There is no group therapy or group work. Their next programme commences with a Virtual weekend on 8 - 11 February 2024 or there is a Face to Face weekend in Welwyn Garden City on 14-16 June 2024. Call or text 07887 296983 or 07973 380443, email retrovailleukinfo@gmail.com - or visit www.retvovaille.org.uk

The Introductory Rites

Opening Song

Infant holy, infant lowly, for His bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing,
noels ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the Babe is Lord of all,
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of the gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the Babe was born for you.
Christ the Babe was born for you.

Gloria



We praise you, we bless you,
we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Glory to God...

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;
You are seated at the right hand,
of the Father, have mercy on us.

Glory to God...

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.

Glory to God... Amen. Amen. Amen.

The Collect

The Liturgy of the Word

Genesis 15:1-6,21:1-3

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision,
'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward
will be very great.'

'My Lord,' Abram replied 'what do you intend to give
me? I go childless...'. Then Abram said, 'See, you have
given me no descendants; some man of my household
will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was
spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir
shall be of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking
him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the
stars if you can. Such will be your descendants' he told
him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted
this as making him justified.

The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and
did what he had promised. So Sarah conceived and
bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God
had promised. Abraham named the son born to him
Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

Psalm 104(105):1-6,8-9



Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
O sing to him, sing his praise;
tell all his wonderful works!

Be proud of his holy name,
let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice.
Consider the Lord and his strength;
constantly seek his face.

Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, the judgements he spoke.
O children of Abraham, his servant,
O sons of the Jacob he chose.

He remembers his covenant for ever,
his promise for a thousand generations,
the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.

Colossians 3:12-21

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, give way to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and treat them with gentleness. Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents, never drive your children to resentment or you will make them feel frustrated.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. *Alleluia!*

Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Homily

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

All: Through our lives and by our prayers,
your kingdom come.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Offertory

NB Our next collections for the Bethany Food Bank are 7th and 21st January.

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright,
round yon Virgin Mother and child;
holy infant, so tender and mild;
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing alleluia:

Christ, the Saviour, is born, Christ, the Saviour, is born.

Silent night, holy night. Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace:
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Sanctus



The mystery of faith



The Communion Rite

Communion thanksgiving

Jesus, name above all names,
Beautiful Saviour, glorious Lord.
Emmanuel, God is with us.
Blessed Redeemer, Living word.

Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rites