
Pope at audience: “We all need to meditate”

“We all need to meditate, to reflect, to discover ourselves.” It’s a “human dynamic”, it is like “stopping and taking a breath in life”, said the Pope in the catechesis of today’s General Audience devoted to the prayer of meditation, live streamed from the Private Library of the Apostolic Palace. “Especially in the voracious western world, people seek meditation because it represents a high barrier against the daily stress and emptiness that is everywhere”, Francis said, adding that meditation “is a phenomenon to be looked on favourably: in fact, we are not made to run all the time, we have an inner life that cannot always be neglected.” For a Christian, the Pope said in his opening lines, “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’. 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”, Francis pointed out: “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 who do not have a religious view of life.”

But “once accepted in a Christian context, mediation “takes on a uniqueness that must not be eradicated”,

the Pope said, explaining in unprepared remarks: **“For the Christian, meditation enters through the door of Jesus Christ.”** In fact, when the Christian prays, “he or she does not aspire to full self-transparency, does 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” – Francis said – “If an experience of prayer gives us inner peace, or self-mastery, or clarity about the path to take, these results are, one might say, consequences of the grace of Christian prayer, which is the encounter with Jesus.

Meditating means going to the encounter with Jesus within us.”

“Christian meditation is not possible without the Holy Spirit. It is he who guides us to the encounter with Jesus”, Francis said. “There are many methods of Christian meditation”, the Pope repeated: “All of them are important and all of them are worthy of practice”. “But a method is only a guide”, and for a Christian the true guide, the travelling companion for going forward, is the Holy Spirit: “any method of prayer, if it is to be Christian, is part of that *sequela Christi* that is the essence of our faith.” *“There is no page of the Gospel in which there is no place for us. For us Christians, meditating is a way of coming into contact with Jesus. And in this way, only in this way, we discover ourselves”*, Francis concluded, pointing out that

Christian meditation “is not a withdrawal into ourselves:

it means 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.” “Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ”, the Pope remarked: “Here, then, the grace of Christian prayer is: 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”, Francis assured: “thanks to the Holy Spirit, the guide, 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.” “It is the Holy Spirit who connects us with these mysteries of the life of Christ – the Pope added in unwritten remarks - because in contemplation of Jesus we experience prayer, to join us more closely to him... 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 and the leper... We too rise 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 say, with the blind man, ‘Lord, have pity on me!’”. “Enter into that dialogue”, is the final invitation: And Christian meditation, led by the Spirit, leads us to this dialogue with Jesus.”

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