



November 29, 2020

Dear friends of God,

Happy New Year! You might be thinking that I have finally lost my mind. Or you may think that I had lost my sense of sanity a long time ago. However, today is the beginning of our new liturgical year and so it is also the beginning of our new year as Catholic Christians. It is refreshing to begin a new year, liturgical or otherwise. As we begin again together as followers of Jesus, it is a good moment to recommit ourselves to prayer, compassion and to love of God, neighbor and enemy as we prepare for the coming of the Prince of Peace.

Advent is close to my heart. It is my favorite season of the Church year. There is something simple in this season. Advent is a quiet alternative to the bustling and buying of our American secular Christmas. Our Catholic faith gives another way of viewing this time of year that shows a way of celebrating that reminds us that we were not born to be consumers but we have been created by God to be his children. Advent is the most contemplative of the seasons. It is the time we remember the coming of the Christ Child. Jesus grew in Mary's womb to prepare for the birth of her Son and the Son of God. Her *fiat*, her "yes" to bearing the child of God, shows us the way that each of us are to live a *fiat* life in which we continually say "yes" to the coming of God into our hearts, our lives, our world and our entire universe.

Christian Meditation is central to my personal prayer. I use a mantra during the time of meditation to let go of thoughts, to be in the present moment. That is easier said than done. Father John Main taught that this prayer is so easy to understand that it can be written on the back of a postage stamp: Close your eyes, sit still and simply say your mantra, your prayer word.

The all-important aim in Christian meditation is to allow God's mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only a reality, but **the** reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are...

Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase **maranatha**. Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything – spiritual or otherwise. If thoughts or images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so keep returning to simply saying the word. Meditate each morning and evening for between twenty and thirty minutes.

– John Main, OSB

It is easy to understand the process of meditation, it is also easy to see how distracted our minds truly are in reality. We sit for seconds and we find ourselves distracted. Every time we begin to say our mantra this is another opportunity to say “yes” to God. I would encourage you to give Christian Meditation a try during Advent. It is a great way to prepare for the coming of Christ in our hearts and our world.

*Maranatha* is an ancient prayer word in our Catholic Christian faith. In the early Church, it was always prayed during the Mass. It is in Aramaic, Jesus’ own language. *Maranatha* ends both St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians and the Book of Revelation. Often it remains untranslated from the original Aramaic. It is our ancient Christian Mantra. It means “Come, Lord” and it can also mean “The Lord Comes.” Those two meanings are both important in our understanding of God’s presence and action in our world. We call upon God to come and we also know that God is continually coming into our midst whether we ask God to come or not. Just as we remember Mary’s “yes to God” and grow in our own “yes to God” during Advent (and every day of our lives), we remember that our God always says “yes” to each of us and all of creation.

Happy New Year and Advent Peace!

Much love,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "F. Ken" with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.