

Take Time Out: A Series of Meditations



Christopher News Notes

IN TODAY'S BUSY WORLD, IT'S EASY TO GET SIDETRACKED FROM TAKING THE TIME WE NEED to nurture our relationship with God and put our faith into action. So here are a series of brief meditations to keep you spiritually grounded. Take the time to contemplate each one and the ways it can apply to your life.

- **What does spirituality mean to you? Some people see it as a private matter. But true spirituality is caring about others. Jesus immersed Himself in the joys and the sorrows of the people**

around Him. He reached out to the poor, the outcasts, and the wounded of this world, and He told His followers to do likewise: "Love one another as I have loved you."

■ The great writer Dante defined hope as "waiting with certitude." Hope is a confident anticipation of something wonderful that is yet to come. It is more than merely wishing. Pope John Paul II said, "We cannot live without hope. We have to have some purpose in life, some meaning to our existence. We have to aspire to something. Without hope we begin to die."

■ "The essence of volunteerism is not giving part of a surplus one doesn't need, but giving part of one's self. Such giving is more than a duty of the heart, but a way people help themselves by satisfying the deeper spiritual needs that represent the best that is in us." —*Kathleen Kennedy Townsend*

■ A passage from the Book of Isaiah, telling of God's mercy, includes this prayer: "You are a refuge for the poor, for the needy in distress, a shelter in the storm and a shade from the heat." It isn't enough that we know about God's unchanging love; each one of us is called to radiate it. Our greatest challenge is to communicate God's love to those around us, to be their shelter in the storm of life.

■ Ask yourself these questions: Are you considerate of others? Do you tend to make snap judgments about them? Do you habitually show them the same warmth and attentiveness that you expect? Do you make the same allowance for their thoughtless blunders and oversights that you think they should make for you? Do you do unto others as you would have them do unto you?

■ "When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the morning light, for your life and strength. Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living. If you find no reason to give thanks, the fault lies in yourself." —*Tecumseh*

■ When you love someone, you delight in being with them, you enjoy looking at them and hearing the sound of their voice. The same must be true of

God. He loves you. That means He enjoys your company. He is delighted with your efforts to become a better person. He knows your needs.

■ You can't change the past, but you can ruin a perfectly good present by worrying about the future.

■ "It is easy enough to tell the poor to accept their poverty as God's will when you yourself have warm clothes and plenty of food and medical care and a roof over your head and no worry about the rent. But if you want them to believe you, try to share some of their poverty and see if you can accept it as God's will yourself." —*Thomas Merton*

■ Do you know the story about the two frogs that fell into a bucket of cream? They tried to get out by climbing up the side of the bucket. But each time they would slip back. Finally, one frog said, "I give up!" So he drowned. The other frog decided he had nothing to lose by keeping at it. Lo and behold, he found that all his kicking had turned some cream into butter! Leaping on top of it, he hopped out. God blesses those who keep trying.

■ Blessed Julian of Norwich, a 14th-century mystic, received these words from Jesus in a revelation: "Do not blame yourself for all the tribulations and miseries you must endure: I do not want you to be imprudently depressed and sad—for I tell you whatever you do, you will always have some sorrow...The greatest honor you can give to Almighty God—greater than all your sacrifices—is to live gladly, joyfully because of the knowledge of His love."

■ Rabbi Jack Riemer encourages the revival of an old Jewish practice, the making of ethical wills. Instead of only providing for the disposition of property, an ethical will offers spiritual wisdom to loved ones. In one such will, a man encouraged his children to dedicate their lives to some sacred and worthy goal. Encourage your family to make a commitment to the common good.

■ Dear God, You give me today, one minute at a time. That is all I have, all I ever will have. Give me the faith that knows that each moment contains

**"Joy is that translucent knowing
Through which we see a space
Beyond the space that rings the world,
Clear as light, open beyond
The alpha and omega of all things.
...Ancient phrases burn our tongues,
We repeat their small sound, translating
What mountains shout,
What flowers sing with open lips,
What rivers speak with flowing voices,
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord."**

—**CATHERINE DE VINCK**

exactly what is best for me. Give me the hope that trusts You in trials. Give me the love that makes each minute a foretaste of eternity. Amen.

■ "Nothing would be done at all if we waited until we could do it so well that no one could find fault with it." —*Cardinal John Henry Newman*

■ A retired Episcopal priest wrote to tell us the story of his vocation. He had a vision in his youth of a vast amount of work to be done. He also felt unworthy. "What can I do to ease the burdens of worry and care in so many people?" he asked himself. One day it came to him. He could simply offer his friendship, a smile to comfort those needing it. He entered the ministry and adopted these words as his motto: "I'll do what I can."

■ A certain amount of privacy is necessary in life. No one can keep giving and giving without taking time for rest and rehabilitation. A good retreat, a day of recollection, or even an hour of prayer can do wonders for soul and body. When you feel yourself drowning in the sea of duty, take some time off to recharge your batteries. Enter God's peace and silence. This is a creative act of self-renewal and self-respect.

■ Henry David Thoreau described what may be one of the greatest of all talents: the ability to help

others to enjoy life more. He said, "It is something to be able to paint a lovely picture, or to carve a magnificent statue, but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere in which we live."

■ "Our world will change for the better when there are more people who get into the thick of things and fewer who sit on the sidelines finding fault; when there are more people to point out what's right and fewer to harp on what's wrong; when there are more people who are interested in lighting candles and fewer in blowing them out."
—Father James Keller, M.M.
the founder of The Christophers

■ Have you ever missed an opportunity to apologize? When that question was put to Kathy O'Dea of California, she said, "Yes. My stepfather died a year ago. We were a lot alike and at times we clashed. But I really liked him. I never really got to say I was sorry." Don't miss your chance.

■ "The gift of life, God's special gift, is no less beautiful when it is accompanied by illness or weakness, hunger or poverty." Those words were spoken by the late Cardinal Cooke of New York while he lay dying of cancer. It takes faith and a special kind of wisdom to recognize in every life a reflection of God's radiant presence. Look for that presence in the lives of those around you and within yourself.

■ Let's sing a song to God, a song of thanks for understanding, love and life; a song of thanks for

children and for those who've grown old; for those whose wisdom has helped us to see the truth; for those who taught us to love. Let's sing a song of praise to God for all that He has made. By living and sharing His gifts, we sing our songs to God.

■ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., considered Dr. Benjamin Mays his spiritual leader. Dr. Mays often said: "Whatever you do, do it so well that people looking on will feel that the task was reserved especially for you by God Himself."

■ Human cooperation is needed to bring about the full effect of God's action. We tend to underestimate the importance of our own cooperation in the work of grace. The same Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus to give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, abides in you. God asks each one of us to be carriers of His divine love. Quite an honor, and quite a responsibility.

■ "St. Thomas Aquinas defined the purpose of education in one word: 'contemplation.' To arrive at the highest use of the human mind is to contemplate the wonder of God's creation. Contemplation begins with the realization that your union with God depends more on His love for you, than on your love for Him. His union with your soul is a free gift. Accept it joyfully."
—Father John Catoir



**"It's better to light one candle
than to curse the darkness."**

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"Listen to the exhortation of the Dawn!

Look to this day...

For yesterday is but a dream,

And tomorrow is only a vision:

But today, well-lived, makes

Every yesterday a dream of happiness,

And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well therefore to this day!

Such is the salutation of the dawn!"

—SANSKRIT POEM

This is an edited version of the classic
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