

# HUMILITY OF MEDITATION

By Gerry Pierse

## Humility (being teachable)

1. From time to time in the parish we appeal for volunteer catechists. A whole range of people – from those who have just completed grade school to retired principals with PhDs in education – apply.
2. By and large, the former are more satisfactory than the latter. The student is *receptive*, full of wonder, willing to learn, empty, and ready to be filled. The PhD knows it all, and does not see the point of the briefings: “After all, I’ve been teaching all my life!” They abhor the simplicity of the procedure and of the presentation.
3. When we come to prayer, we have the same difficulty. If we feel that we are good at it or know all about it, we are in great danger. If we feel empty, that we are beginners, there is a good prognosis for us. It was only when Peter said, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”, that Jesus called him to follow him. (Luke 5:1-11)

## Humility and the call to discipleship

1. God is calling each of us to the fullness of life – to a great expansiveness of our potential.
2. However, the call to follow Christ is a call to discipleship, to being a beginner, to accepting simplicity, to bowing to a discipline.
3. The first and main obstacle to our response is *our own conceit* – our ego’s unwillingness to admit that we need a simple path to discover the fullness of life that is within us.
4. Any grand notions that we may have about ourselves spiritually are great blocks to a true spirituality. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, “Whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).
5. A sense of our own poverty – our own weakness and sinfulness – is an essential prerequisite for true prayer.

## The ego is the big block to true prayer – to true spiritual freedom

1. In part, true prayer is getting into the stream of prayer that is happening in our hearts where the Spirit of Christ is ever crying “Abba, Father”.
2. Presence in silence to this prayer within us is part of true prayer, and such prayer is transforming.
3. You cannot be silent with the Spirit and continue to be destructively angry, fearful, jealous, revengeful, or lustful. Either prayer will stop, or these feelings will undergo purification.
4. There is an apt line in Graham Greene’s book, *The Power and the Glory*. Of the “whiskey” priest he says: “He wanted to pray, but he knew that to pray is to act, and he was not ready to act”.
5. True prayer leads to the elimination of what is inconsistent with it. St. Augustine put this in another way when he said, “Love God and do what you will”.
6. To pray, then, we need to *leave self behind*. Each time we come to prayer, we are beginners. We need to be humble. We need to be child-like in accepting a discipline that is simple and effective.

## Meditation and praying the mantra

1. There are many paths of prayer, but I have come to be convinced, through my own experience and the experience of others that I have journeyed with, that praying the mantra has a certain pre-eminence that cannot be denied.
2. Golf is a simple game that can be played by amateurs or professionals. It is a simple game, yet one in which you can always improve. There is no score that cannot be beaten. Every stroke is a new beginning. The amateur can get a hole-in-one; the professional can miss a six-inch putt.
3. So, too, with meditation. It is a prayer form for all. Every moment needs attention. One may become more proficient in it, but one can never rest on one’s laurels. Every stroke needs attention as if it is the first time one had ever held a club. Every meditation period, and every moment of meditation, is a new beginning.
4. Meditation is a way of prayer for all. There is no one so uneducated that he or she cannot meditate. There is no one so far advanced that the discipline of meditation will not help him or her on the way.
5. Remember the heights of spiritual growth to which St. Paul challenged his listeners. And, yet, who were his listeners? They were the butchers, the bakers, that is, the ordinary people of his time.
6. What we need is the courage to begin to meditate. When we have begun, we will experience a rightness about it, and then we will not need to be convinced anymore. We will discover that *the mantra has the merit of displacing the ego* – of unhooking our illusions.
7. It is simple beyond words, but that does not mean that it is easy. Our failure in doing something so simple will bring us to a great humility, a great sense of poverty. It demands great courage and humility to begin to pray it, to begin each day, to begin again each time we become distracted, and to be always a beginner.

Notes in outline produced by Alex Peck (aepck77@yahoo.com.au); May 6, 2009.

Source: Fr. Gerry Pierse, “The Prayer That Jesus Taught”, *Meditatio Talks 2006, Series B*.  
(<http://www.wccm.org/item.asp?recordid=meditatiolisten&pagestyle=default>)