

Fr John's Anniversary  
December 30 2016



Meditation takes us into the basic relationship of our life. It does so because it leads us into the intimacy with God that arises out of the eternal reality of his loving and knowing us. In this knowing and loving God calls us into being. Every human being is a response to the demand inherent in God's love and knowledge of us. It is the demand that we love and know him. Yet, we can only know him, not as an object of our knowledge, but by participating in his own self-knowledge, his life, his spirit. Thus we are always led back to the starting point of our being which is his love and knowledge of us. We come to know and love God because we allow him to know and love us. We allow his self-knowledge to become our self-knowledge. This is the alchemy of love.

*(The Oceans of God, in 'Monastery Without Walls')*

John Main's anniversary is a period each year in which I feel his presence and his absence in virtually equal measure. There is wonder and joy but also a loss and sadness. Grief, like all suffering, doesn't end until it is finally transfigured total presence. Our source and our goal meet in love.

Death and life – death felt as part of life - together form the most powerful paradox of human existence. Together they are the portal into the mystery that Fr John describes in the luminous words above which I have taken from his last letter.

As time passes I see more clearly how he touched my life and also how he practiced the detachment he taught. I see, too, how his words – the spoken words of the talks and the books - but much more the spirit within his words, touch people around the world every day who are seeking greater depth, reality and intimacy in their life.

Fr John's gift to us flowed from his direct and ever-deepening intimacy with Christ on his journey to God in the Spirit. Whenever I listened to him speak of the Trinity I always felt the freshness and immediacy of his knowledge of what he was speaking about. It was something he knew from within, a knowledge that welled up from the profound loving silence of his meditation. And so, he spoke of it not just as dogma but as experience.

Today we reflect on his life and the gift of his teaching which has been swept up by the Spirit into a community of love – the kind of community he passionately believed in and wanted to realise. He saw that this kind of community is the church. He saw that it is needed desperately in our world. And he saw that it is born and can only be sustained by living in the silence from which it draws its being and its doing.

Today will be a silent one for me, while knowing that I am held in this community and also holding it in my heart. I offer these words of John Main for you to reflect on during the day, maybe to read before or after your meditation times. I hope they will help you see more clearly in your silence what John Main saw in his.

His death burst into new life. The old year once again dies so that a new one can be born in richer hope and deeper love.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurence" with a small heart symbol at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurence Freeman OSB