

Guided Meditation: Word Within Words

Poem

Not that we think he is confined to us,
Locked in the box of our religious rites,
Or curtained by these frail cathedral walls,
No church is broad or creed compendious
Enough. All thought's a narrowing of sites.
Before him every definition fails,
Words fall and flutter into emptiness,
Like motes of dust within his spaciousness.

Not that we summon him, but that he lends
The very means whereby he might be known,
Till this opacity of stone on stone,
This trace of light and music on the air,
This sacred space itself becomes a lens
To sense his presence who is everywhere.

A Lens, Malcolm Guite

-oOo-

Meditation

Take up a posture that is comfortable and close your eyes.
Now become aware of your breathing. Become aware of the air as it enters and leaves your nostrils . . . Not as it enters your lungs, just as it passes through your nostrils . . .
Do not control your breathing. Do not try to deepen it or change its rhythm. Simply observe your breathing, in and out, in and out . . .

I'm going to read the poem slowly [once/twice].
Don't prejudge the words and what you think you will find in them. The poem is a gift to be received. Ask the Spirit to speak through the poem.
Let a word or short phrase wink at you.
Stay with the word, repeat it to yourself, relish it, let it sink in to your heart.

[read poem once, or twice with short intervening pause]

Continue to chew over the word or phrase that the Spirit has revealed to you . . .
What is it saying to you? It doesn't matter if it is out of the passage's context. Why has it snagged your attention now? . . .

Now address your ponderings to God.
You might have questions you want to ask. You might want to challenge God.
Or you might want to thank God, or to say sorry, or to say yes.
Offer to God whatever is in your heart . . .
Allow God to respond . . .

Now simply rest in God's presence, filled with God's grace . . .
If you become distracted, return to your breathing or to the word.
Abide in loving silence before God . . .

Now return gradually to an awareness of your breathing and your posture . . .
When you are ready, open your eyes.

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Notes

I wrote this meditation for a one-off meeting of the Slow Book Group at Exeter Cathedral, reading *The Word within the words* by Malcolm Guite.

The breathing exercise is adapted from [Sadhana: A Way to God, Christian Exercises in Eastern Form](#) (pdf) by Anthony de Mello.

The style of the meditation is based on the ancient monastic practice of *Lectio Divina*. Although it is also for use in groups, it is a different approach to the Shared *Lectio Divina* group, which I hold weekly on Zoom. There are many more [resources for Lectio Divina available on the blog](#).

Clare Bryden
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