

St Mark's Church, Broomhill & Broomhall
Living, Thinking, Loving Faith

Night Service

14 June 2020 @ 7 pm



***Christian Meditation:
Mysticism (Evelyn Underhill)***

Welcome!

Take time to settle.

Use these opening minutes to ...

*become aware ...
of the surroundings,
of those around,
of those you carry within.*

Introduction

The service is introduced and notices are given.

In Christian Tradition, *Mysticism* is a method of thought and spiritual practices which pursues a spiritual transformation of the self by pursuing unity with the presence of God. There are many ways within Christian Mysticism – from meditation upon divine mysteries and ‘The Cloud of Unknowing’, to asceticism, visions, miracles, and the Religious Ecstasy of mystics such as St. Teresa of Avila.

For Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), Mysticism was ‘the art of union with Reality.’ She described five-stages of the mystic journey:

Awakening

awareness of the existence of divine reality;

Purification

casting aside those things which stand in the way of divine love;

Illumination

activity of the Holy Spirit enlightening the mind;

The Dark Night of the Soul

confusion and helplessness, the final ‘unselfing’;

and Union

the experience of oneself united with God.

In this service, we will consider elements of Evelyn’s ‘First Form of Contemplation’ from her book *Practical Mysticism: A Little Book for Normal People* (1915), an exercise which contemplates the joy and beauty inspired by our ordinary surroundings.



The prayer bowl is sounded to draw us into stillness.

During this time, you might like to light a candle as a sign of prayer.

Gathering

Come to us this night, O God,
Come to us with light.

Speak to us this night, O God,
Speak to us your truth.

Dwell with us this night, O God,
Dwell with us in love.

Iona Community

A Prayer For Wholeness

O Lord, penetrate those murky corners
where we hide memories and tendencies
on which we care not to look,
but which we will not disinter
and yield freely up to you,
that you may purify and transmute them:
the persistent buried grudge,
the half-acknowledged enmity
which is still smouldering;
the bitterness of that loss
we have not turned into sacrifice;
the private comfort we cling to;
the secret fear of failure which saps our initiative
and is really inverted pride;
the pessimism which is an insult to your joy, Lord;
we bring all these to you,
and we review them with shame and penitence
in your steadfast light.

Evelyn Underhill

May God forgive us
Christ renew us
And the Spirit enable us to grow in love.
Amen.

Iona Community

Chant

We may join in with or listen to a Taizé chant:

The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:

In God I trust, in God I trust.

Taizé

Attending

Wisdom 7:24–8:1

For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;
because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.
For she is a breath of the power of God,
and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty;
therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

For she is a reflection of eternal light,
a spotless mirror of the working of God,
and an image of his goodness.

Although she is but one, she can do all things,
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God, and prophets;
for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.

She is more beautiful than the sun,
and excels every constellation of the stars.
Compared with the light she is found to be superior,
for it is succeeded by the night,
but against wisdom evil does not prevail.

She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other,
and she orders all things well.

**An extract from 'The First Form of Contemplation', from
"Practical Mysticism: A Little Book for Normal People"
by Evelyn Underhill**

Gather yourself up, as the exercises of recollection have taught you to do. Then--with attention no longer frittered amongst the petty accidents and interests of your personal life, but poised, tense, ready for the work you shall demand of it--stretch out by a distinct act of loving will towards one of the myriad manifestations of life that surround you: and which, in an ordinary way, you hardly notice unless you happen to need them. Pour yourself out towards it, do not draw its image towards you. Deliberate--more, impassioned--attentiveness, an attentiveness which soon transcends all consciousness of yourself, as separate from and attending to the thing seen; this is the condition of success. As to the object of contemplation, it matters little. From Alp to insect, anything will do, provided that your attitude be right: for all things in this world towards which you are stretching out are linked together, and one truly apprehended will be the gateway to the rest.

Look with the eye of contemplation on the most dissipated tabby of the streets, and you shall discern the celestial quality of life set like an aureole about his tattered ears, and hear in his strident mew an echo of

"The deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent
From all that breathes and is."

The sooty tree up which he scrambles to escape your earnest gaze is holy too. It contains for you the whole divine cycle of the seasons; upon the plane of quiet, its inward pulse is clearly to be heard. But you must look at these things as you would look into the eyes of a friend: ardently, selflessly, without considering his reputation, his practical uses, his anatomical peculiarities, or the vices which might emerge were he subjected to psycho-analysis.

Such a simple exercise, if entered upon with singleness of heart, will soon repay you. By this quiet yet tense act of communion, this loving gaze, you will presently discover a relationship--far more intimate than anything you imagined--between yourself and the surrounding "objects of sense"; and in those objects of sense a profound significance, a personal quality, and actual power of response, which you might in cooler moments think absurd. [...]

A subtle interpenetration of your spirit with the spirit of those "unseen existences," now so deeply and thrillingly felt by you, will take place. Old barriers will vanish: [...] Those glad and vivid "things" will speak to you. They will offer you news at least as definite and credible as that which the paper-boy is hawking in the street: direct messages from that Beauty which the artist reports at best at second hand. Because of your new sensitiveness, anthems will be heard of you from every gutter; poems of intolerable loveliness will bud for you on every weed. [...] All adventurous endeavours, all splendour of pain and all beauty of play--more, that grey unceasing effort of existence which makes up the groundwork of the social web, and the ineffective hopes, enthusiasms, and loves which transfuse it--all these will be seen and felt by you at last as full of glory, full of meaning; for you will see them with innocent, attentive, disinterested eyes, feel them as infinitely significant and adorable parts of the Transcendent Whole in which you also are immersed.

Evelyn Underhill

Responding

We share a time of silence for our own reflections and prayers.

During this time, you are invited to first centre yourself and find stillness.

(For ideas about how to do this, visit

<https://www.contemplative.org/contemplative-practice/>)

Once you are centred, look around you – you may wish to look out of a window or at an image or an everyday part of your surroundings. Choose one of the ‘myriad manifestations of life that surround you’ and pour yourself towards it as your object of contemplation. Allow yourself to consider it, to mull over the smallest and largest thoughts inspired by your earnest gaze. Allow these ‘ordinary’ things to teach you their significance and to speak to you of Beauty. Become aware of their connectedness to the Transcendent Whole in which you also are immersed.

Chant

As we ease out of silence, we may join in with or listen to a Taizé chant:

The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:

In God I trust, in God I trust.

Venturing

May the peace of Christ go with you,
Wherever you may roam.
May God guide you through the wilderness,
Protect you from the storm.
May God bring you home rejoicing,
At the wonders you have seen.
May God bring you home rejoicing,
Once again into our doors.

**The peace of all peace
Be ours this night
In the name of God,
Creator, Christ, and Spirit of Life.
Amen.**

Northumbria Community, adapted

*To learn more about Evelyn Underhill
and her approach to meditation and Christian Mysticism,
you can read her book
'Practical Mysticism: A Little Book for Normal People'
which is available for free via Project Gutenberg:
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/21774>*

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Thank you.



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