

Meditation and table fellowship

On a shiny Sunday in July, eight meditators of the community that has been forming in Bogotá and I were sitting around the dining table at María Teresa and Arturo's house. We were exultant with joy, listening to stories, learning about each other, enjoying the succulent meal she had arranged to be prepared for us. There was a feeling of a family gathering, although we knew very little about each other except that meditation keeps us delving back into the mystery of love. The mellow atmosphere of the gathering was lit up by a warm sun that entered through the glass windows of the dining room.

The gathering was planned the Tuesday before when I told a few meditators I had a flash trip to the city during the weekend and perhaps it would be a good idea get together to meditate on Sunday morning. As soon as the possibility of the gathering was mentioned, María Teresa resolved to search for different venues and later decided to stop the search and called to ask if we could meet in her house instead; she was delighted at the idea of having us gathered at her place. She sorted out a menu, pointed out that across her house there was a parish and that we could attend mass, if we wished so. In a gleeful tone, she said that she would take care of the details with droplets of pure love. This was our first encounter post-pandemic centered on meditation. A few months back, several of us had gathered for supper on another of my occasional visits to the city.

As each one started to arrive that Sunday around 10am and sat at the living room, there was a spark, a manifest bliss of being at home with each other. What John Main expressed came on the scene: *a community that meditates together wants to share itself with others at many levels. It is as natural as the bursting of a tree into leaf or the blooming of a flower*¹

We introduced ourselves again since some of us knew each other only through Zoom. We meditated and reflected on the translated summary of Cynthia Bourgeault's talk in the Unified Consciousness Series that the Spanish community had generously shared. After the reflection, we attended mass and returned to Maria Teresa and Arturo's house for the lunch they had arranged; the droplets of love

¹ Coming Home, Monastery without walls.

impregnated the place when left for mass and again when we entered to sit at the table.

Let us serve one another in love (RB 35 1,6)

The experience was enfolded by many symbols: the symbol of returning home to ourselves and to others, the symbol of the Eucharist, the table and the meal as the yearning of the human heart for communion. The significance of hospitality, of opening ourselves to the present and also to each other and ultimately the readings about unified consciousness and the meaning of contemplation in our times. For many, the community they had yearned for is becoming a reality in the same measure that meditation is helping us to discern God's presence within us and among us. Being together around the table gave the possibility of physical, psychological, spiritual. We treasured that we belong, that we fail; we are sometimes inconsistent, and despite that we can break the bread together, be who we are during silence and in the table. It was a truly transformative and wonderful encounter.

This is what three of our meditators shared:

This experience of community was something I had longed for. It was the first time that I met to meditate with others in person after more than two years online. I used to meet in traditional prayer groups, but this experience was very significant for me. I felt the dedication of each one, the deep silence and the respect for prayer every second. It felt like a balm to be in the company of others, to know that we were all connected with the same objective "GOD" in each one of us and at the same time to be able to share what came from my heart. I felt such a beautiful and joyful sensation that I simply don't know how to express in words.

I placed everything in the presence of God so that everyone would feel at home, and that is what I perceived. I saw each one of them as they made themselves comfortable at the table, savoring the meals which I offered to them with all my love and noticing the joy in each one. I was very happy to receive them all at my home.

- María Teresa García de Acuña

It was the first time we had met in this way and there was a great joy in our hearts as we felt that what we had accompanied virtually was interwoven and began to take on more strength by the mere fact of being present and sharing.

We were around three things: the first was meditation, the second was the community and the third was the table. There is no doubt that the experience of sharing around the table fills the present with meaning through gratitude, makes visible and at the same time transmits common values; in short, it creates community. At the table we not only shared food, but also joy, happiness and being present together and once again we were reminded that it is at the table that He makes Himself present. Thus this meeting marked the beginning of a commitment that goes beyond, understanding not with the intellect, but with the heart that when we gather, we remember, we become members, we become community.

- Sharing the table - Cristina Terán

Last July we met in the home of María Teresa and Arturo, meditators of the community in Bogotá, who generously welcomed us, arranging everything to take care of us in the best way, in their own words: with many droplets of love. The meeting was marked by a spirit of unity and hospitality that could be felt in the atmosphere of the house, in the gestures, in the silent word and the spoken word.

The joy of meeting in person was particularly meaningful for us, as we have been meditating in online groups for two years. But now, we can meet again as a community, shake hands, hug, recognise faces and voices.

John Main, in one of his teachings on community, says that meditation creates community. Naturally it must be so, for in community we share the gifts that each one has for the edification of the community itself, as St. Paul says: There are diversities of gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12, 4). In community each one of us can be in the richness of our uniqueness and be in harmony with the plurality.

In community, each one welcomes the other and also knows that he or she is welcomed. In other words, it is in community that the spirit of hospitality that our spiritual tradition always recommends is put to the test. At this point, I would like to pause to point out that this value, or rather, attitude of hospitality is not only an

imperative for Christians today, but paradoxically, it is a sign that men and women of our times are calling for, in a world where it seems that differences, instead of building, destroy us, a world where geographical and existential borders are closed, guarded with suspicion, or in the worst cases, transgressed in violent or subtle ways. In our self-sufficient societies with a marked individualism and selfishness, being and doing community would become a subversive sign, for it reverses what the world recognises as a source of recognition and prestige. These times we are living in globally are not for polarisation, but for unity.

- Sharing three gifts: meditation, community and the table, Meyer Polo