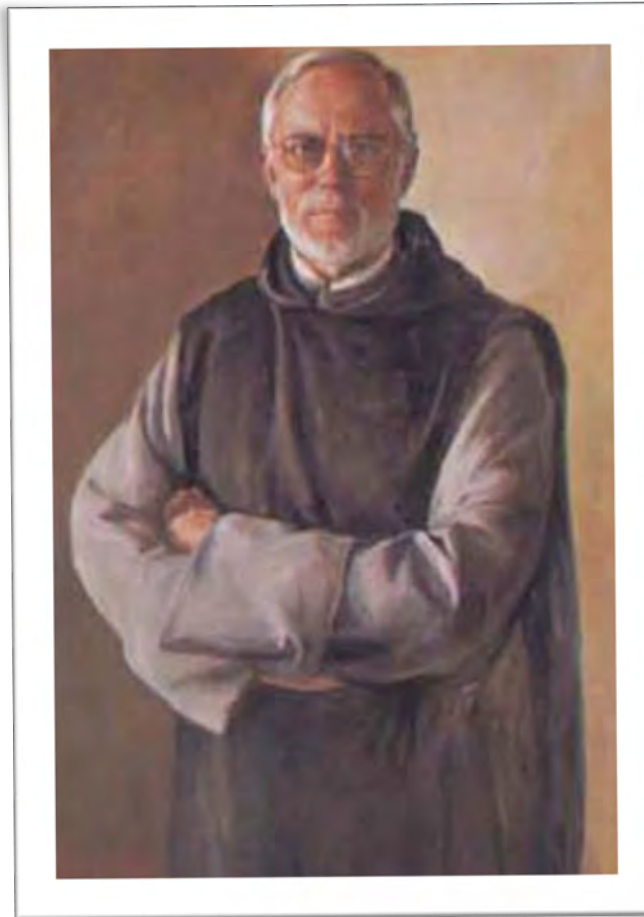


The Roots of Christian Meditation

Designed from the Teachings of John Main



The World Community
for Christian Meditation

 Institute for
Catholic Education

Christian Meditation is Contemplative Prayer



We begin our look at the roots of Christian Meditation by considering the example of our primary teacher.

“During this time he went out one day into the hills to pray and spent the night in prayer to God.”

Luke 6:12

“But when you pray, go into your room, shut the door, and pray to your father, who is there in the secret place; and your father; and your father who sees what is secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

“In your prayers do not go babbling on like the heathen, who imagine that the more they say the more likely they are to be heard.”

Matthew 6:7-8



History of Christian Meditation

Christian meditation dates back to The Desert Fathers and Mothers of the church in the 3rd century and was practiced in the following centuries.

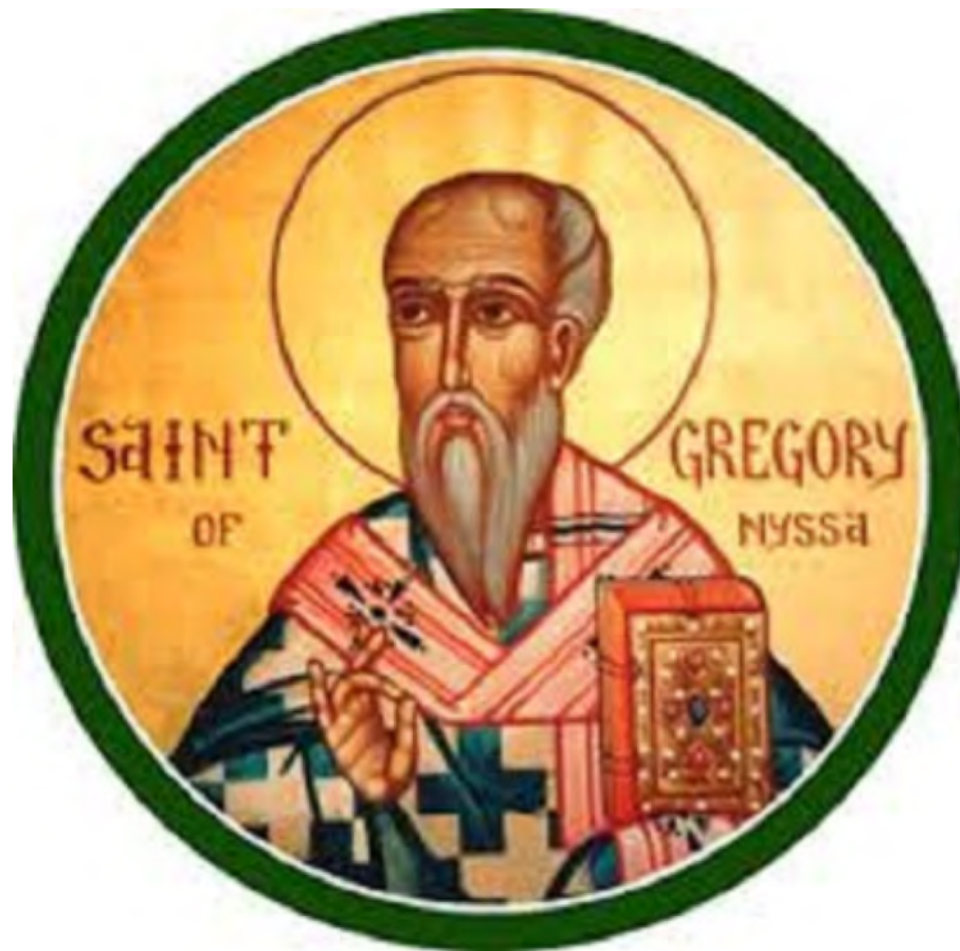


St. Anthony of The Desert – 3rd century



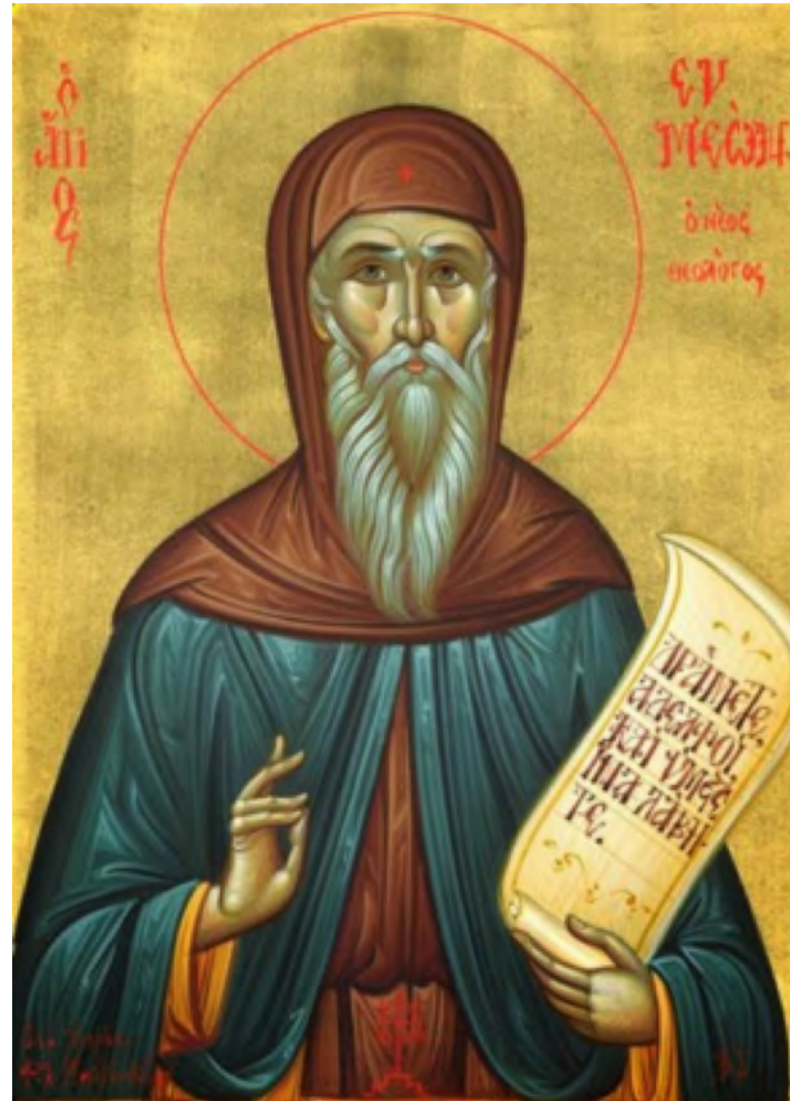
Gregory of Nyssa – 4th century

*"Every concept
grasped
By the mind
becomes an
Obstacle in the
quest to
Those who search."*



Evagrius Ponticus - 4th century

“When you are praying do not shape within yourself any image of the deity and do not let your mind be shaped by the impress of any form. Approach the immaterial in an immaterial manner. Prayer means the shedding of thought.”



St. Augustine – 4th- 5th century

“The best one can say about God is for one to keep silent out of the wisdom of one’s inward riches. So be silent and don’t chatter about God. For when you do chatter about God, you are telling lies and sinning.”

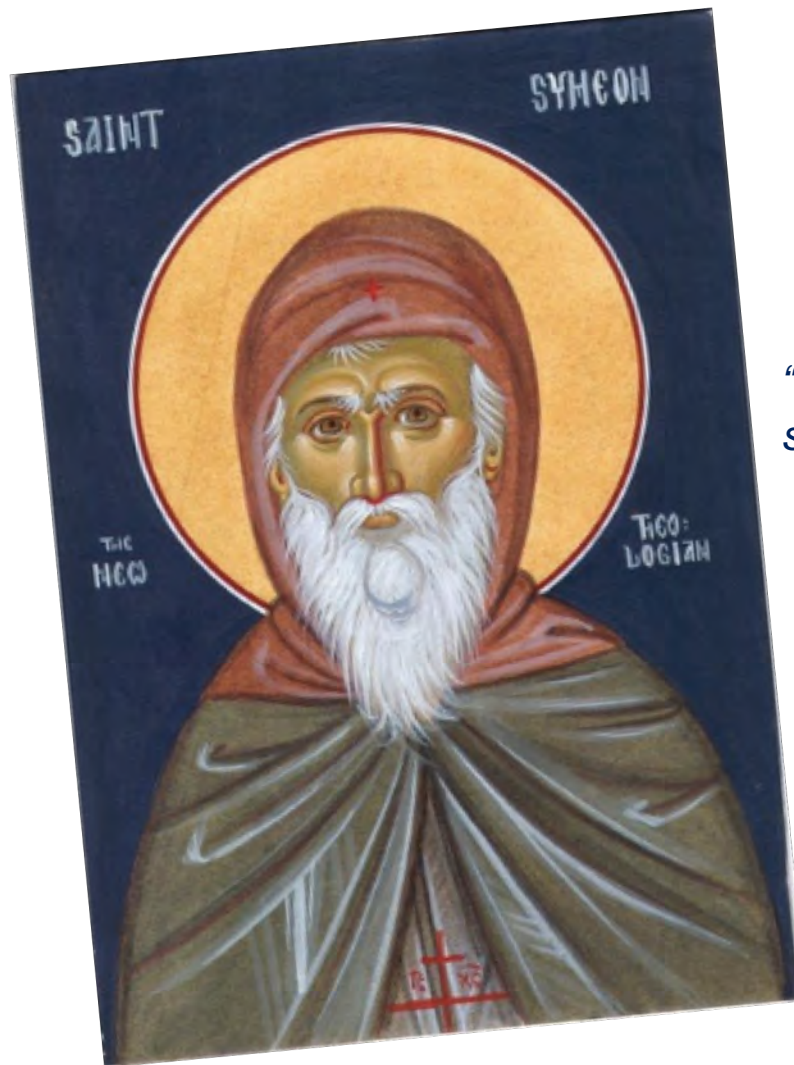




St. John Cassian, 4th – 5th century

“The mind thus casts out and represses the rich and ample matter of all thoughts and restricts itself to the poverty of a single verse.”

“Let the mind hold ceaselessly to this formula above all until it has been strengthened by constantly using and continually meditating upon it, and until it renounces and rejects the whole wealth and abundance of thoughts. This straitened by the poverty of this verse, it will easily attain to that gospel beatitude which holds the first place among the other beatitudes. For, it says, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’”



Symeon, the New Theologian, 10th-11th century

“Sit down quietly, and alone, bow your head, shut your eyes, breathe slowly and look with the powers of your imagination into your heart, and lead your reasons, that is, your thoughts from the head to the heart. With each breath, you should say, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!’ you should express the words slowly and quietly, with the lips or only with the breath.”

The Cloud of Unknowing – 14th century



“So take a little word of just one syllable to help focus your attention. The shorter the word the better, because it is more like this particular activity of the Holy Spirit. Chose a word like “God” or “love” or any word of one syllable that appeals to you and impress it indelibly on your heart so that it is always there, whatever happens.”

“Use this little word and pray not in many words but in a little word of one syllable. Fix this word fast to your heart so that it is always there come what may. With this word, you will suppress all thoughts.”



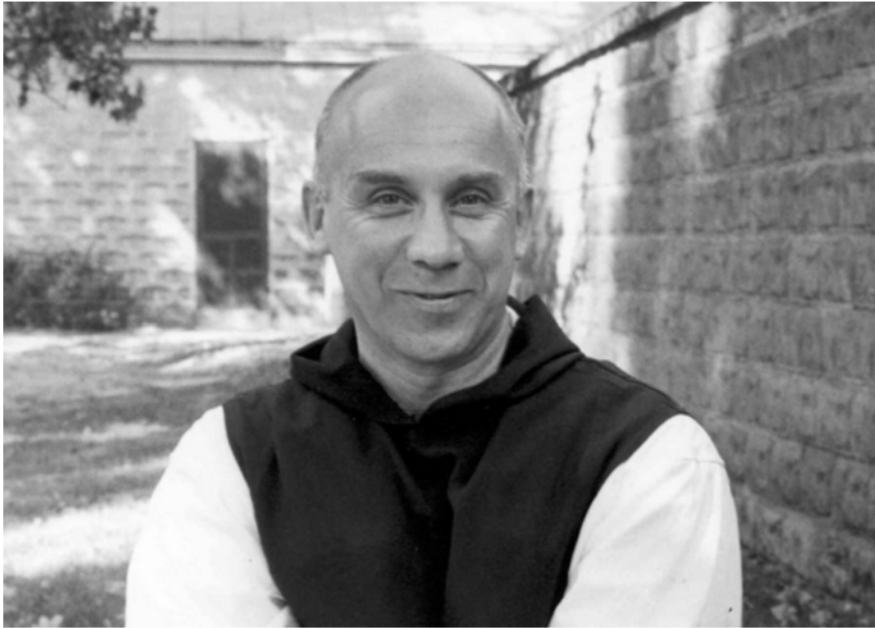
St. John of the Cross, 16th century

"I entered into unknowing. Yet when I saw myself, without knowing where I was I understood great things. I will not say what I felt for I remained in unknowing, transcending all knowledge. That perfect knowledge was a peace and holiness held in profound solitude. It was something so secret that I left stammering, transcending all knowledge."



Theophan the Recluse, 19th century

“To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you.”




Thomas Merton, 20th century

“Contemplative prayer is, in a way, simply the preference for the desert, for emptiness, for poverty. One has begun to know the meaning of contemplation when one intuitively and spontaneously seeks the dark and unknown path of aridity in preference to every other way..”



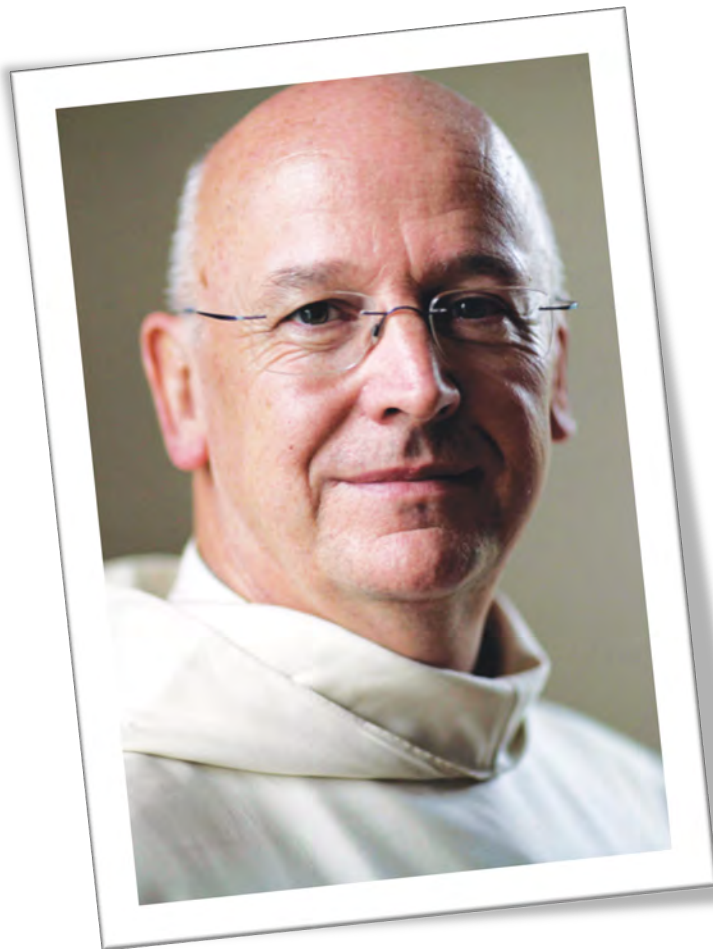
St. Benedict



"Meditation is not time for words, however beautifully and sincerely phrased. All our words are wholly ineffective when we come to enter into this deep and mysterious communion with God. In order to come into this holy and mysterious communion with the word of God indwelling within us, we must first have the courage to become more and more silent. In a deep, creative silence, we meet God in a way that transcends all our powers of intellect and language. We have to listen, to concentrate to attend rather than to think.

Silence is absolutely necessary for the human spirit if it is really to thrive, and not just thrive, but to be creative, to have a creative response to life, to our environment, to friends. Because the silence gives our spirit room to breath, room to be. In silence, you don't have to be justifying yourself, apologizing for yourself, trying to impress anyone. You just have to be, and it's a most marvelous experience when you come to it. And the wonder of it is in that experience, you are completely free. You are not trying to play any role, you are not trying to fulfill anyone's expectation." John Main, *Word Into Silence*





“With spiritual knowledge we know from the inside. It is not about looking at, but seeing.”

Fr. Laurence Freeman, OSB and The World Community for Christian Meditation