

ICE HOUSES

By Eileen O’Hea CSJ

Those who practise Christian meditation each day can sometimes feel that nothing is happening in their prayer, that their prayer seems flat or dull or futile. This is what our prayer may feel like on the level of our *external* senses.

An image for this experience of prayer might be found in those climates that have frigid winters. During this season, their lakes freeze and are layered with the accumulation of snow. No longer can the breeze ripple its waters. No longer can it reflect the clouds drifting above it or mirror the sun and moon dancing upon it. Rather, the lake presents the observer with a picture of frozen stillness. Winter seems to have closed down the lake and its activity and life. But what is not immediately seen by some is known to others who will clear away a few feet of snow and drill through the solid layers of ice, sometimes a distance of four feet, to reach the lake’s flowing waters. These hardy winter souls know that the lake teems with life and activity beneath its surface. Many will erect small wooden shelters, ice-houses, where they will sit fishing, enjoying nature in another form of beauty and becoming one with the silence and stillness which surround them.

In our prayer, it is our *interior* sense – those senses that are part of mystical consciousness or contemplative consciousness – which tells us of the Divine Life and activity happening deep within us despite the surface experience of our prayer. It is this interior sense of knowing, a knowing that we are already one with Divine Love, that brings us back to our prayer periods each day no matter what our surface experience is. It is this interior sense of knowing, perhaps not felt in the emotions or body during our times of prayer, that allows us to sit in the silence of our prayer, alert to the possibility of the full realisation of Divine Love but patient with the process that is involved in our awakening to this realisation. Each prayer period is our active participation in this process. It is the expression of our faith and love.

Notes produced by Alex Peck (aepeck77@yahoo.com.au); June 10, 2009.

Source: Eileen O’Hea CSJ, “Rain for the Sea: Reflections for a Time of Meditation”, *Meditatio, Talks Series 2009A, (Jan–Mar)*. Internet:

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