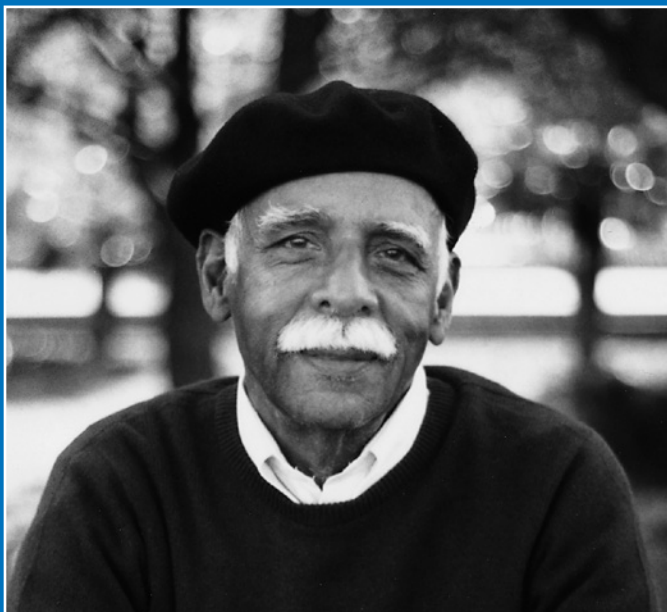


Ekknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

# Blue Mountain Journal

FALL 2020/WINTER 2021



## A World in Crisis

PART 2

# Our Role as Instruments of Peace

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## In This Issue

Right now we're facing crisis upon crisis in our world. In times like these, Easwaran tells us, we each have an important role to play: to live out our ideals and influence others through patient personal example. In the first article he tells how he and a friend created an island of trust in the midst of the violent unrest in India in the 1940s.

To set such an example we must deepen our spiritual practice. At the heart of that practice is daily meditation on passages such as the quintessential Prayer of Saint Francis featured in the other articles from Easwaran in this journal. Like every great mystic, Saint Francis taught as much by how he lived as by how he spoke, as reflected in the stories of his life included in this issue. Members of our BMCM community also offer their accounts of how this Prayer has guided them over the years.

This edition of the journal, available digitally and in paper, is the second in our series titled "A World on Fire" and now renamed "A World in Crisis." We hope everyone will feel strengthened and inspired by Easwaran's practical wisdom, ready to face whatever challenges may lie ahead of us with a calm mind and a loving heart.

– The BMCM Editorial Team

Fall 2020/Winter 2021, Volume 31, No. 3

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## From Easwaran

The test of wisdom is your capacity to be friendly in the midst of differences and secure in the midst of opposition. This can be true of nations also. Einstein made the understatement of his career when he said, “We know a few things that politicians do not know.”

I like that statement very much. When we lead, the politicians follow us. Often we do not lead, so they mislead us.

The shining examples of spiritual figures like Saint Francis stand as monuments of hope. They had to face adversities of every description, opposition from every imaginable kind of entrenched self-interest. Often they were able to make use of such problems to spur themselves on.

When we take a good look at the state of the world, we are sometimes inclined to say, “There is nothing to be done.” If we would only turn to the example of Saint Francis we would have to admit, “It’s not impossible, really. Look what he was able to accomplish. Why can’t we manage some of the same?”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Easwaran', with a large, sweeping initial 'E'.

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The *Blue Mountain Journal* is a publication of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1961 by Eknath Easwaran to carry on his work.



Easwaran, early 1960s.

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# Unity in Dangerous Times

Eknath Easwaran

Surely there is no spectacle more tragic than the one described by Abraham Lincoln as “a house divided against itself” – civil war. Dozens of countries are being torn asunder by it, with untold cruelties being inflicted upon men, women, and children. Many other countries are suffering from ethnic and racial tensions that flare into violence between neighbor and neighbor, family and family. Even the countries of America and Europe are not immune. In our highly armed, high-tech world, such conflicts pose a threat not just to our society, but to the earth and future generations.

## Patient personal example

As discouraging as these conflicts can be, we should remember that these are not clashes between armies but people, and that the most powerful way to transform people is not through violence or punishment or sanctions, but through patient personal example.

Every one of us has a role to play in this great task, right in our own home and community. It doesn't require speaking or writing or political skills. It requires ideals and the desire to live by them. I can give you a small example of this from my own experience.

In the early days of my academic career, India was undergoing the agony of civil war between Muslims and Hindus. On the eve of the partition of Pakistan and India, I was posted to a college in central India not far from the University of Nagpur, where I had studied.

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I arrived knowing no one in town, not acquainted with the regional language, and with no idea where I was going to stay. I also had considerable misgivings about classroom tensions as a result of religious and political unrest.

After meeting with the president, who welcomed me officially as a member of the faculty, I was going back to my tonga when a smiling figure from my student days blocked my way and gave me an Islamic hug. It was Naimuddin, my best friend in graduate school.

We had first met in the university hostel where our rooms were close together. Our friendship had begun with a shared interest in literature – he in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, and I in English and Sanskrit. He introduced me to his friends and the gracious ways of Muslim culture. But after graduating, we lost touch with each other for a few years.

## Dangerous times

Now here he was, teaching at the same college where I had just taken up duties, and he was offering me a place to stay – in a medieval castle, no less, owned by a nawab who had gone to Mecca on a long pilgrimage. I was so surprised and delighted that I could find no words for his hospitality. I accepted his generous invitation and stayed.

But those were difficult, dangerous days for Hindus and Muslims. In some cities terrible violence had been unleashed, and on our campus the spirit of unity had received such a setback that Hindu and Muslim students used to sit on opposite sides of the classroom. Even the faculty was becoming polarized.

Friends warned us that, because of the Hindu-Muslim tension, we were putting ourselves at risk by living under the

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same roof. Naimuddin and I were not brave fellows, but we began to see that our friendship could influence our students.

## Forgetting boundaries

We undertook an experiment. In the evening, sitting together with a few other junior faculty members, Naimuddin would recite the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam in the beautiful Persian original. I would recite FitzGerald's excellent English translation. These great verses are irresistible to any poetry lover, and there were many poetry lovers in my classes, both Hindu and Muslim.

It was only a matter of time before the news spread. One by one, students began to wander by and stand in the door, then step in, then sit down.

Gradually, the Hindu students coming to visit me at the old castle and the Muslim students visiting Naimuddin began to cooperate in our literary activities, forgetting their boundaries. On some occasions, gathered in that great hall, my students would recite Shakespeare and Naimuddin's Persian love lyrics.

Every morning, Naimuddin and I rode our bicycles to campus. Soon we found ourselves heading a procession of Hindu, Muslim, and Christian cyclists.

## An island of trust

What was important was that we hadn't done this as some political gesture. Everyone knew we were the very best of friends, and yet both very deeply in love with the heritage of our different faiths. So though people criticized us sharply, they were watching us very closely to see how we held up. And gradually, as our friendship only deepened, our students began to feel a little ashamed.

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One by one, some of our bolder students began sitting next to each other again. Then they began to talk to each other, and finally they were laughing and working together just as they had before. At breaks we saw Hindus and Muslims sharing the traditional sweet and savory snacks they had brought from home.

During our tenure at that college – even when tensions were very high – Naimuddin and I persevered. And just because two people carried their ideals into practice, the atmosphere of the whole campus changed. Our university became an island of trust in an explosive world.

### The noblest part of human nature

Recently I read about a terrible flood that swept away thousands of people in Kashmir, on both the Indian and Pakistani sides. I was deeply touched to read how Indian and Pakistani soldiers – usually at odds – worked together to save lives and rescue cattle, forgetting past differences. In such events we glimpse the noblest part of human nature, our true personality. All the rest – the fighting, the retaliation, the vendettas – are nothing but a covering, a cloud of smoke obscuring our real Self.

It is my prayer that, through such cooperation, seemingly insignificant people like you and me will be able to dampen and eventually extinguish the fires of hatred which now trouble so many communities and countries. It doesn't take large numbers to change human relationships in any country, even today. It doesn't take government action. It takes dedication, determination, and a certain amount of faith in the goodness hidden in our hearts.

It takes you. 🌸



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## If You Want to Draw Near to God

*Abu Sa'id*

If you want to draw near to God,  
seek him in the hearts of those around you.  
Speak well of all, present or absent.  
If you would be a light for others,  
be like the sun: show the same face to all.  
To bring joy to a single heart is better  
than building countless shrines for worship;  
to capture one heart through kindness is better  
than setting a thousand free.  
This is the true lover of God,  
who lives with others,  
rises and eats and sleeps like others,  
gives and takes with others in the bazaar,  
yet never forgets God even for a moment.



The memorial rock at Ramagiri Ashram.

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## COMMUNITY STORY

### Leading by Example

Easwaran's story about Naimuddin and their campus reminds me that leading by example is one viable, valuable way to improve conditions for all.

Easwaran's program of passage meditation provides a clear path through tricky situations. By deepening my meditation and practicing the other points, I am subtly supporting those in the world who need it most. Since modeling has powerful potential to effect change, I know my practice is a meaningful form of social justice advocacy.

Loving detachment also plays a role in my attempt to integrate passage meditation and social justice sensitivity. I have failed many times to do or say the right thing, and it certainly will happen again, in spite of my best efforts. Especially for those of us who have some privilege, missteps are bound to occur, given our blind spots.

With passage meditation to rely on for strength, I hope to be "called out" when I err. This will give me a chance to reflect and learn with self-compassion and enduring enthusiasm. Having the courage to fail provides an opportunity for me to feel a wider range of human emotions, which Easwaran assures us leads to deeper empathy and connection to others.

Like Easwaran and Naimuddin, in a small way we can all become "islands of trust in an explosive world."

— A passage meditator in the US

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# A Prayer for Transformation

Eknath Easwaran

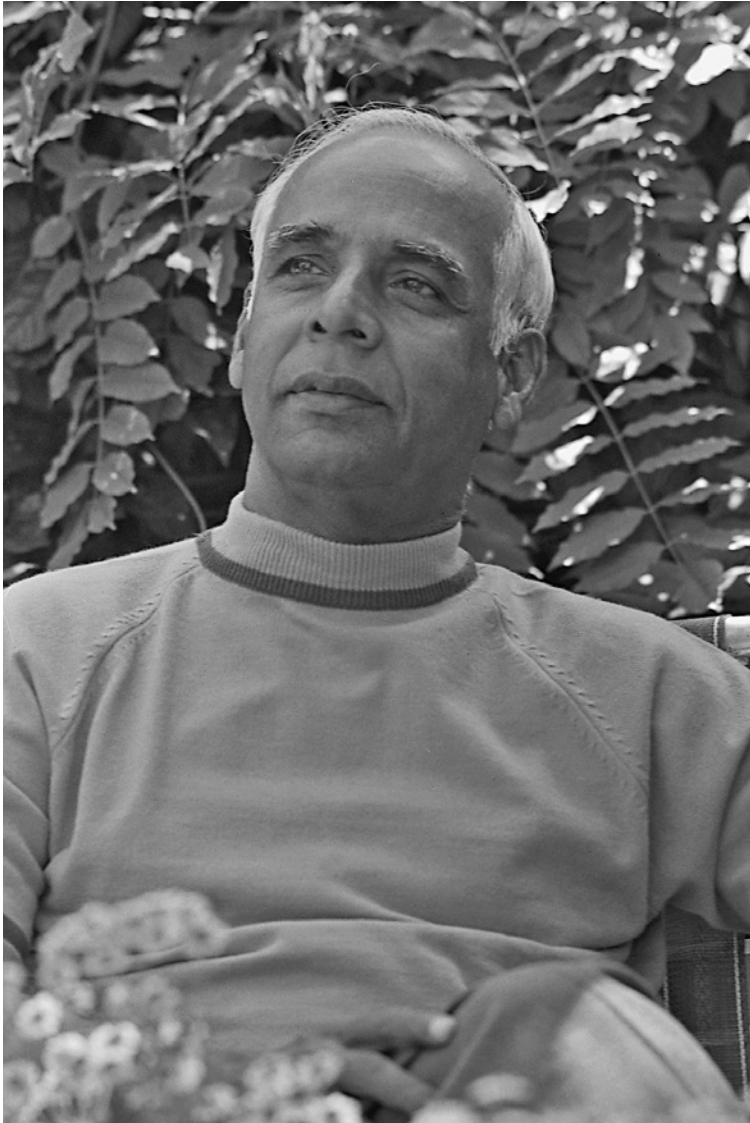
When I first came to this country, I looked hard for a suitable meditation passage for the West. In the Prayer of Saint Francis I found the perfect answer. During all these years I have been recommending it to everyone because, as you can see, it is a very rare thing: an attempt to reverse almost all the ordinary tendencies we find in human nature. It gives us a blueprint for making our life a blessing for everyone.

In this profoundest of prayers, Saint Francis confides in us how the son of Pietro di Bernardone was transformed into a son of God. We too can aspire to such a transformation by making his Prayer an integral part of our consciousness. This cannot be done through reading or discussion, which take place only on the surface level of consciousness. It can only be done by regular, systematic meditation. If we meditate on Saint Francis's words diligently and with enthusiasm every morning, the marvelous transformation that Francis worked in himself will gradually be effected in us too.

## The story of Francis

Francis Bernardone was born into a prosperous family in the last part of the twelfth century, an age as turbulent as our own. He was much like any bright, popular boy today. His main ambition was to be a singer with his own band so he could stand under some balcony and sing ballads in French to the girl above. That was the extent of his horizons. He had no direction, no noble impulses beyond the moment.

Then one day he walked into a little church called



Easwaran, 1960s.

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San Damiano—just as any of us might walk into church, without direction, without any higher call—and suddenly he heard the walls echo with the voice of God: “Francis, my church is falling into ruin. Repair my church.” It happened in the twinkling of an eye, in the space of an Ave Maria. The words went like arrows of light deep into his unconscious, demolishing the foundations of his superficial life—which actually had no foundation—and built such strong, unshakable foundations that Western civilization will never be the same.

This cannot be said of even the great scientist or the great statesman, but it can be said of this poor little man of Assisi. His conquest still spreads; he still calls unto the depths in millions of hearts.

### Calling to the best in ourselves

It has been said that a great book is the lifeblood of its author. I would say a great prayer is the soul-force of a saint. The few lines known as the Prayer of Saint Francis give us the key to his transformation and a new vision of what a human being can become. Each line points to a higher way of living—and as I comment on these precious verses, you can see for yourself how precisely modern civilization is heading in just the opposite direction.

In this prayer, Francis is not addressing a remote personality in another galaxy. He is referring to a presence deep within the heart. As we go through the words, it is important to remember that we are not appealing to someone else, but to an inner presence inseparable from our real Self. We are calling to the best in us, deep within. In the truest sense, we are calling to ourselves.

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*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

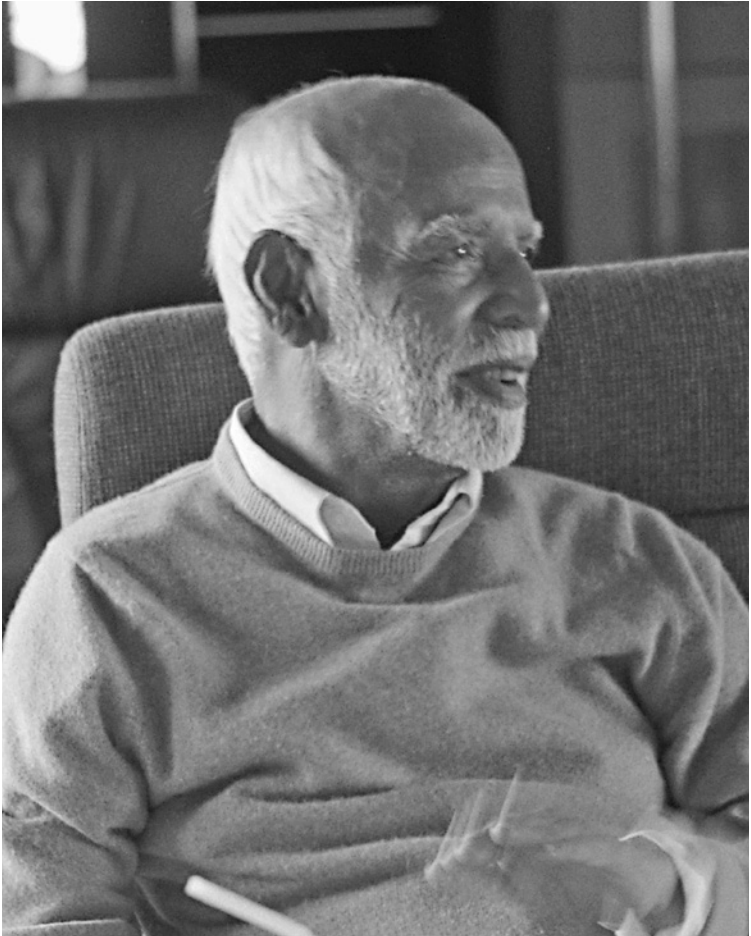
## Peace begins in our hearts

Without spending a single moment beating about the bush, Francis comes straight to the point of the spiritual life. Our first priority is to reform ourselves; without that, how can we expect to help other people reform themselves? It is the living example of a man or woman giving every moment to making love a reality that moves our hearts to follow. We do not have to call ourselves religious to serve as examples of love and unity. We do not need a bumper sticker that says, “You are following an instrument of the Lord.” Our everyday actions speak for themselves.

So Francis begins, “Lord, make me” – not rich, not famous, not powerful, but “an instrument of peace.” Peace here, in my presentation, means first the capacity to live at peace with others – other people, other races, other religions, other nations. That is the hallmark of the man or woman of God.

Then, second, it means peace with the environment. Nothing in the world belongs to us, neither the earth, nor the air, nor the forests, nor the rivers, nor the seas. Every human being is a trustee with the divine responsibility to protect the earth for our children and our children’s children.

Third, and most important, peace means being at peace with ourselves. This is the source from which peace in the world



Easwaran, 1990s.



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flows. If we do not have peace in our hearts, how can we ever find fulfillment? We may make billions, win the Nobel Prize, become ruler of a country, but unless we have peace in our minds and love in our hearts, it is not possible for any human being to feel complete – which means that we cannot help manipulating people and things around us to try to make up for what we lack within. This is the root of all discord, and that is why peace in the world begins with peace in the hearts of people like you and me.

### Crib notes for learning to love

Line for line, Saint Francis is giving us ways to learn how to achieve this lofty goal. “Learn” is the key word here. We can look on the Saint Francis Prayer as crib notes for a comprehensive curriculum intended to teach this higher mode of living. The only way to be an instrument of peace, Francis is telling us, is by sowing love wherever we find hatred, beginning with ourselves.

That means learning to forgive, and that in turn requires faith – in oneself, in others, in the power of goodness. Lack of faith in human nature brings despair, but faith brings hope – and anyone who brings hope into a dark world is welcomed as a source of light. Lifting the burden of despair like this is the only way the world can be transformed, because only an unburdened heart can have the strength and courage to love when circumstances seem hopeless.

First, of course, we need to sow love where we find hatred in our own hearts. How else can we hope to spread love and peace of mind to others?

We are used to thinking of hatred as the absence of love, but spiritual psychology goes deeper. Hatred is what *covers*

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love. A large part of learning to love is unlearning the negative conditioning of hatred, anger, resentment, and ill will that hides the qualities that make us human – love, compassion, forgiveness, trust.

In other words, to be an instrument of peace, the first step is not to be an instrument of discord. If we can't be peacemakers immediately, we can at least not add to the anger, hatred, and hostility around us.

And Francis goes to the heart of the matter in the very next line. Anyone can love those who return love, he implies. To love in the teeth of hatred requires learning to forgive – learning to overlook injuries, real and imagined, for the good of all.

## We can change

Saint Francis once said that anyone who doesn't know how to forgive has lost the greatest source of joy in life. Today we are practically encouraged to do just the opposite: to be resentful, to be hostile, to retaliate, nurse our grievances, and never forget past wrongs. Books, movies, newspapers, and magazines go on repeating messages whose impact is to make the human being incapable of forgiveness.

Even if we say "Let's shake hands and be quits," the embers of resentment and revenge are burning deep inside, where they can lead to disease in mind and body as surely as a bacillus. Resentments eat away our vitality; hostility undermines our immune system.

"Resentment is human nature," we may say. Yet nothing in human nature requires us to be vengeful; that is the most important thing we can learn from Saint Francis's life. Even if this is the way we are now, we can change.

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## The magic of the mantram

Whenever you feel angry or revengeful and want to take it out on others, don't act on the impulse or dwell on it. Go out for a fast walk repeating your mantram. Saint Francis repeated "My God and my all" (in Latin, *Deus meus et omnia*), an example followed by Franciscans around the world today.

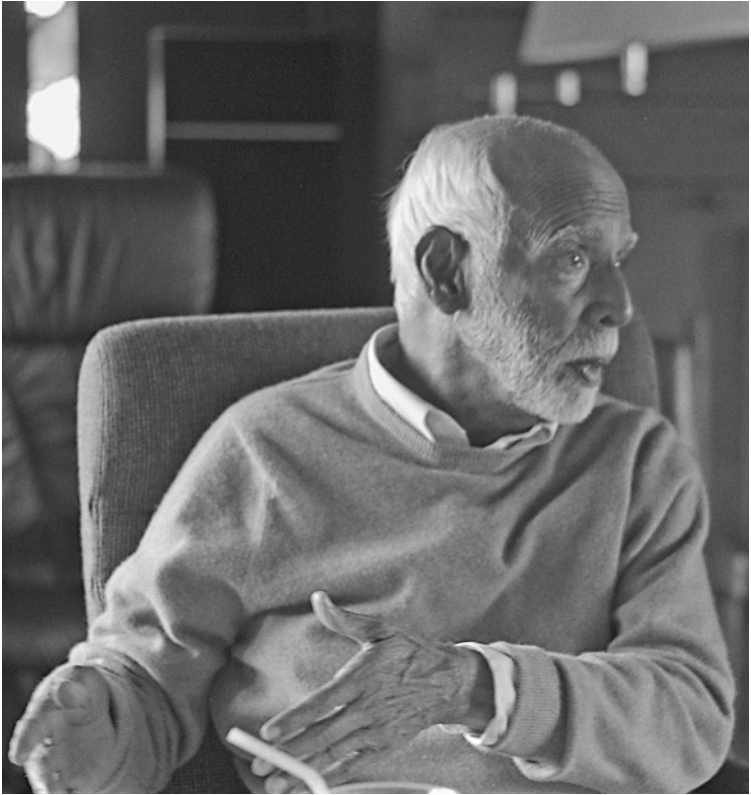
Other mantrams I recommend are: *Jesus, Jesus; Ave Maria; Barukh attah Adonai; Allahu akbar; Om mani padme hum;* or Mahatma Gandhi's mantram, *Rama, Rama*. Whichever mantram you have chosen, it will act like an eraser: as soon as thoughts of revenge appear in your mind, the mantram will erase them. Finally the day will come when all your thoughts of revenge will turn to thoughts of reconciliation. That is the magic of the mantram.

Long ago one of my students realized that he had a knack for making enemies. He asked me, "Will it help them if I pray for them?" I said, "I don't know if it will help your enemies, but I know it will help *you*." Everyone prays for friends, but you too will receive the benefit when you pray for those who dislike you. That is why Jesus says, "Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you." It can seem impossible, but the mantram brings it within reach.

## Meditation and the mantram hand in hand

The nobleman Bernard of Quintavalle, before he enlisted himself as a disciple, wanted to find out for himself whether young Francis of Assisi was a sincere lover of God, so he invited him to his wealthy home. "Saint Francis accepted the invitation," the chronicle continues,

and took supper with him, and stayed the night also;  
and then Bernard resolved to make trial of his sanctity.



Easwaran, 1990s.

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He got a bed prepared for him in his own room, in which a lamp was always burning all night. Saint Francis, in order to conceal his sanctity, entered the room and immediately threw himself on the bed and feigned to sleep. Bernard also resolved to lie down, and began to snore loudly, as if in a very deep slumber.

Thereupon Saint Francis, believing that Bernard was really asleep, immediately rose from the bed and betook himself to prayer, and raising his eyes and his hands to heaven with the greatest devotion he said, "My God and my all!" So saying, and shedding many tears, he remained until morning, constantly repeating "My God and my all!" and nothing more.

Meditation and the repetition of the holy name, or mantram, go hand in hand: meditation is for the quiet hours of morning and evening; the mantram can be used at any other time of day or night. Together these two help us to change negative habits at a depth our ordinary will cannot reach.

### **An all-out effort to understand**

Late in his life Francis found himself compelled to give over his place as head of the order to Brother Elias, who thereafter became very keen on improving the conduct of his Brothers. When Elias came to him with complaints and plans to penalize some of them, Francis gave him strong advice: "See to it that no Brother in the whole world, however he may have sinned, is permitted to go from you without forgiveness if he asks for it. And if he does not ask for forgiveness, then ask him if he does not want it. And even if he comes before your eyes a thousand times with sin, love him more than you do me, that you may draw him to the Lord; . . . for the healthy need no physician, but only those who suffer illness."

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The forgiveness Francis is prescribing here is not a matter merely of saying “I forgive you; let bygones be bygones.” No amount of talking can prevent the seed of resentment from taking hold in our heart. True forgiveness requires that we not only not take personally any harsh thing said or done to us, but that we make an all-out effort to understand the other person’s situation. Then, even if we get angry for a few minutes and think, “That Mortimer!” we know it will soon turn to “Well, he comes from a discordant home, and nobody showed him how to object nicely.” When this happens, we know that resentment doesn’t stand a chance.

But Francis is zealous in his recommendation that we follow up this forgiving with genuine acts of kindness, which can actually cure the impulse of the other person to say or do something harsh again.

### Kindness is contagious

Resentment will defend itself with a foolish argument: “Well, it’s my own business.” Not at all. In the first place, unless the person against whom you nurse the grudge is extremely secure, you are making that person into an agitated missile who is going to injure a lot of others. This is no exaggeration. Resentment is contagious, much more so than a virus. In a home where it is allowed to fester, everybody gets infected: the children, the children’s playmates, even the dog.

But kindness is even more contagious. Whenever people see somebody facing harsh treatment with quiet security, with a kind of infectious good humor, they get infected too. “How I wish I could do that!” they marvel. We can use kindness to inoculate those around us against the dread disease of resentment.

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## Faith in ourselves

The sheer impossibility of these challenges can overwhelm us. We may doubt our capacity to face them, let alone to conquer them. So Francis says, “Where there is doubt, let me sow faith” – beginning, again, in one’s own heart.

I sometimes think our civilization is engaged in a conspiracy of doubt. The main effect of most books and movies seems to be to fill us with doubt: about the world, about other people and their motives, about ourselves.

None of us need be ashamed or embarrassed if ghosts out of our past come and whisper, “Remember what you did in high school? All the escapades you took part in? How unkind you were, how you wasted so many opportunities?” To me, this sort of guilt is a trick the ego plays to make us doubt ourselves. It is most unfair. Here we are looking back at our behavior of ten or twenty or thirty years ago and judging it by our standards of today. Who has not made mistakes at some tumultuous period in life? If you ask me personally, “Did you?” I will say, “Plenty.” And if you ask, “Well, don’t you too feel guilty about what you did?” I will say, “I’m not proud of it, but that is how I saw life then.”

If you want to judge yourself, the only fair way is to judge yourself with today’s eyes as you are today. Look at yourself straight on and ask, “Have I been selfish today in any way?” If you have a competitive streak, this is where you can make good use of it. Just say, “Today in such and such ways I have been somewhat selfish, but tomorrow I’ll do better.”

A robust optimism in the face of challenges is necessary even for good health. Years ago a penetrating researcher, Suzanne Kobasa, broke new ground by showing how helplessness and hopelessness are linked with physical illness.

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To overcome them, we need faith: not necessarily faith in the conventional religious sense, but faith in ourselves and others and the enduring power of goodness.

Few today are born with this precious capacity, but all of us can cultivate it. I did not have much faith in my early days, and what little I had was lost when I went to college. That is where I lost my faith in faith also. So don't blame yourself if you have no faith. You can reclaim your faith in others and in yourself by practicing it, never giving in to negativity, hopelessness, or despair. This kind of faith can not only move mountains; as Gandhi would say, it can change the face of the world.

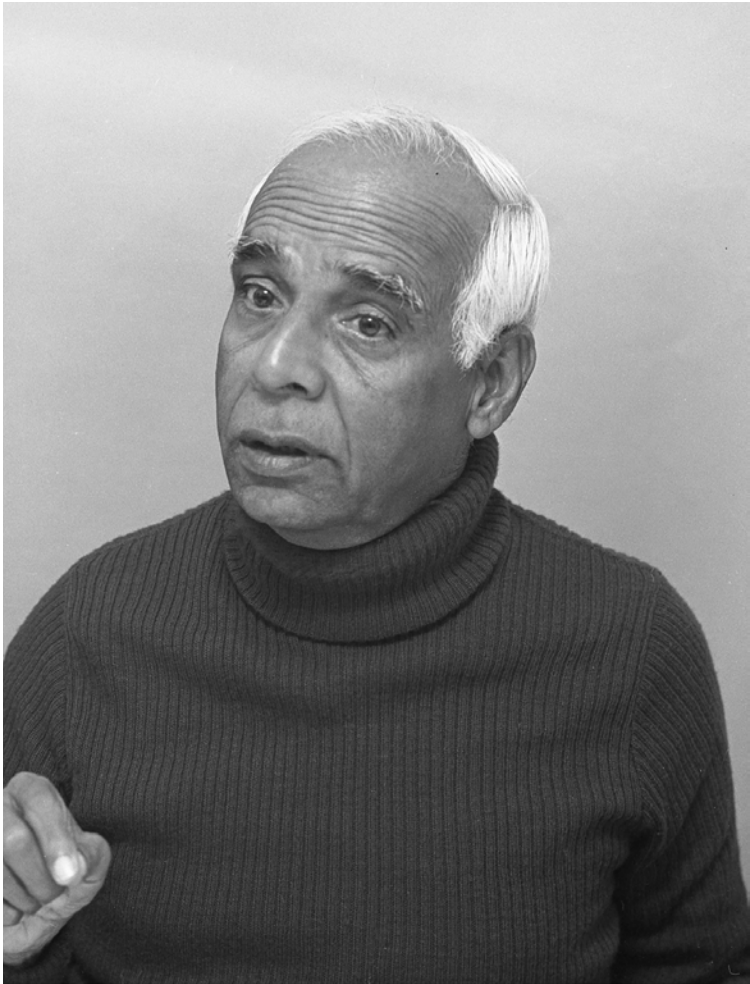
### Test faith against experience

Sometimes people speak of faith as something we should cultivate on principle—no matter how the intellect balks, no matter what our own experience has taught us. My own attitude is stubbornly practical. I've never taken anything on faith that I could not test against my own experience.

Today, I would say freely that I am a man of profound faith in God. But mine is a living faith. It began as the most tentative proposition: "I shall move in this direction, even when it doesn't look pleasant, and let us see what happens." As my meditation deepened, great difficulties did come my way, but over and over I have been rescued—sometimes at the eleventh hour. I could never have told you why, but my path would be cleared; courage, insight, and resourcefulness would come to me.

Today, after many years of validation in my personal experience, I can claim that my faith in God has become unshakable. But that faith is the fruit of a long period of effort and clear observation—and, I would add, an open mind.





Easwaran, 1970s.

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## Cause for enormous hope

I keep up with a variety of magazines and newspapers, and I find a lot of people throwing up their hands. Many tell us civilization is doomed, perhaps even the planet itself. I am not one of those who claim all is well no matter what is happening. On many fronts, the horizon is dark. But who is responsible for all these crises? Not the three Greek sisters of fate, not the Power which created us. It is we ourselves who are totally responsible; therefore it is we who can set these wrong situations right.

When I was in India, I came across a number of American expressions which baffled me. One was “pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps.” I resolved that when I came to this country, I would look for some person performing this acrobatic feat!

This is the marvel of meditation – a marvel I have never been able to get over. Nobody pulls you up; you pull yourself up. It should appeal enormously to the justly lauded spirit of American ingenuity. Francis himself said, “More than all the grace and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit . . . is the conquering of yourself.” You go to work on your own mind and change whatever needs changing, making yourself into the kind of person most suited to meeting the challenges of the day. There is cause for enormous hope here.

## “The movement of love is in light”

These precious qualities throw light on life. They help us see more clearly when choices seem confusing or unclear. As Paul says, human beings can see only “through a glass darkly.” We see only a tiny corner of life. What guides our steps is “what abides: these three, faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.”

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One of India's modern mystics, Swami Ramdas, says, "The movement of the mind" – of ordinary conditioned thinking – "is in darkness. The movement of love is in light." That's why I say not to go on thinking things like "this is what he said to me" and "what did I say to her" and "here's what I am going to say to him if I ever see him alone." When you have some serious quarrel or differences, the very best thing you can do is repeat the mantram. Don't let the mind dwell on it. Don't let the mind brood on it and blow it up into a big balloon until you can't think about anything else. This is how it becomes worse.

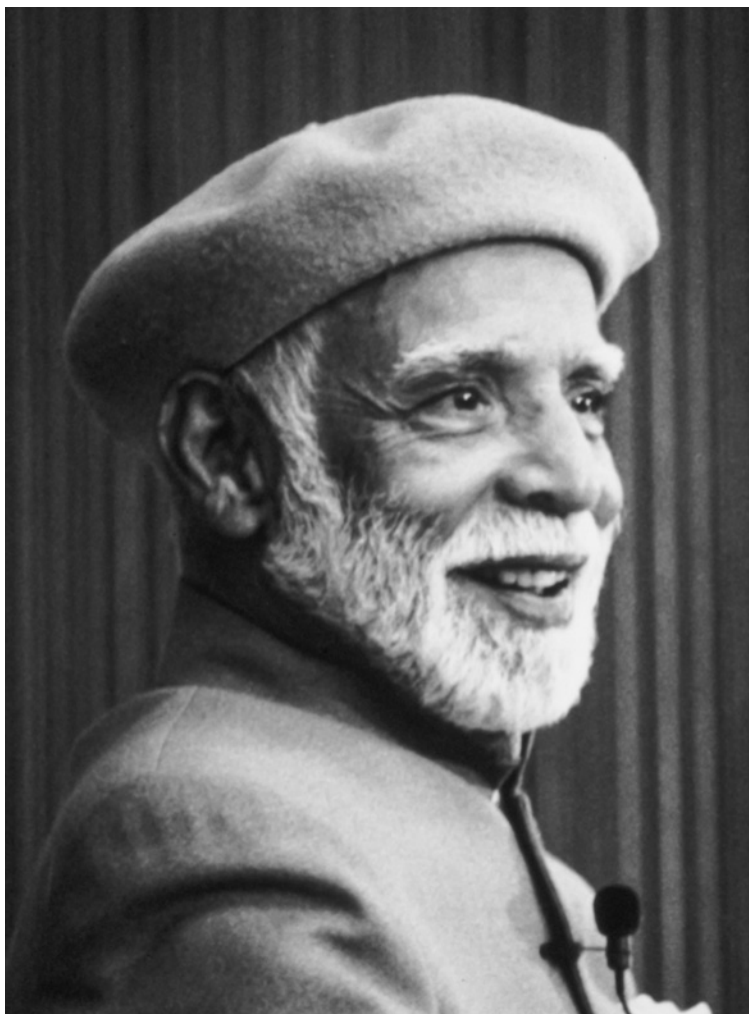
People who get caught in this kind of negative thinking are sowing sadness, not only in their own life but all around them – at home, at work, on the bus, at the gym, everywhere.

Saint Francis is quietly bringing home to us the tremendous responsibility of being human. We cannot say, "I live alone in an attic off Fourth Street. What does it matter what I think?" Francis would say, "Yes, but you go to the store, you go to work or school; you affect everybody you meet."

## Sow acts of kindness

It is the responsibility of every one of us to sow *gladness* – those little acts of kindness that the world is slowly forgetting.

To the south of my ancestral home in Kerala, South India, beautiful rice fields stretch almost to the horizon. When I was a little boy, every morning during the planting season I would be awakened just after dawn by the sounds of the villagers plowing the land with their bullocks, talking and singing as they worked. First the tiny seedlings must be planted. Somebody goes along with a big basket, planting them one by one in a row, so carefully that when you look at rice growing,



Easwaran, 1990s.

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it looks like a gigantic green carpet. Later each seedling must be transplanted. All in all, it is difficult to believe that these minute seedlings are going to bear such a rich harvest.

You and I can go in for a similar kind of hand labor. When you plant just one kind word with somebody who has been unkind to you, though it is only a tiny seedling, it is going to bear a rich harvest. A lot of people get the benefit – secondhand, thirdhand – from our little kindnesses.

Every time you focus on what brings people together instead of what drives them apart, you are planting a long row of these seedlings. Every day – in the office, at school, in the kitchen, at the store – everyone has opportunities for this kind of hand labor. We may think our opportunities are hardly worth the trouble, but little things like kindness catch on and spread.

### Arrows to the heart

One of Francis's contemporaries, an historian who had been a student at Bologna and heard Francis speak on the Feast of the Assumption, described him in this way:

His habit was dirty, his appearance insignificant, his face not handsome. But God gave his words such power that many noble families, between whom there had been much old-time enmity and spilled blood, allowed themselves to be induced to make peace. And all felt great devotion and reverence for him. . . .

He was not silent about wrongs that he saw, but gave everything its right name. And it seemed to each who listened that the poor little man from Assisi talked to him alone, as if all the words he heard were directed to him, and one after another, like well-aimed arrows sent by a master hand, thrust their points into his heart.

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This is precisely what we experience in meditation as the holy words of Saint Francis's Prayer penetrate our hearts.

### Change that endures

When we drive these words into the depths of consciousness through years of meditation, we will be able to forgive anybody and everybody, and in our forgiveness educate them. We will be able to love everybody and anybody, and in that love we will educate them.

Unconditional love may act slowly, but it overcomes all obstacles. This is the only force for change that endures, because it brings a lasting change of heart. 🌸



Ramagiri Ashram.

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## COMMUNITY STORY

### On the Path to Peace

Easwaran says that we are born into these times for a reason. I have always taken this to heart, thinking that I must change this messy world into a peaceful place. Since he recommends the Prayer of St. Francis as the first passage for us to use, there must be a clue embedded in its words as to how I can do this. Of all the passages I've used over the years, I continue to incorporate this one into my meditation every day. Here's why:

St. Francis begins by praying that he become an instrument of peace. Well, clearly it is needed in our current state of affairs! Before I became a meditator, I had wished, begged, demanded, and even screamed for peace, and yet here we are. So how does this prayer help? It helps by showing us a way forward; a path to peace. It is as humble as he is: we must begin with ourselves.

#### Turn these concepts on their heads

Hatred, injury, doubt, despair, darkness, sadness . . . These all sound too familiar. It has been too easy for these thoughts to overtake me when I learn of the day's events, listen to friends, and frankly, hear my own thoughts! However, this prayer says to let go of these things if we want to see peace. And then, to turn those concepts on their heads! Make love from hatred. Put injury aside, and pardon it. Erase doubt with faith. Choose hope rather than despair. Find light in the darkness. Let joy shine brighter



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than sadness. These are tall orders, but as Easwaran keeps telling us, we are up for it.

So what has changed? Frankly, the very act of meditating on the Prayer of St. Francis every day has embedded those concepts into my very core. I know this because I can no longer hear angry words or watch something that has ANY kind of violent content without feeling the pain of it. The fear that is rampant in our culture these days has not taken hold in me, either. Oh, I have my moments, as we all do, but I do not speak or act out of fear the way so many are doing. These are the first steps on the path to peace. I no longer spread the hatred, despair, and doubt. It's like the old saying, "the buck stops here."

### Change ourselves, and the world will change

When Easwaran says that we are born into these times for a reason, I now realize my life's mission is not to change this whole world. That grandiose concept went nowhere in my life. How did I think it ever would? I now understand that to become an "instrument of peace" means something completely different. It means that if we all begin to change ourselves, the world will change. There is no other possible outcome and I am plopped down in this time and place to begin that process, along with everyone else. With the grace of my teacher and the Prayer of St. Francis, I am doing just that.

— Loretta, a passage meditator



BMCM offices at Ramagiri Ashram.

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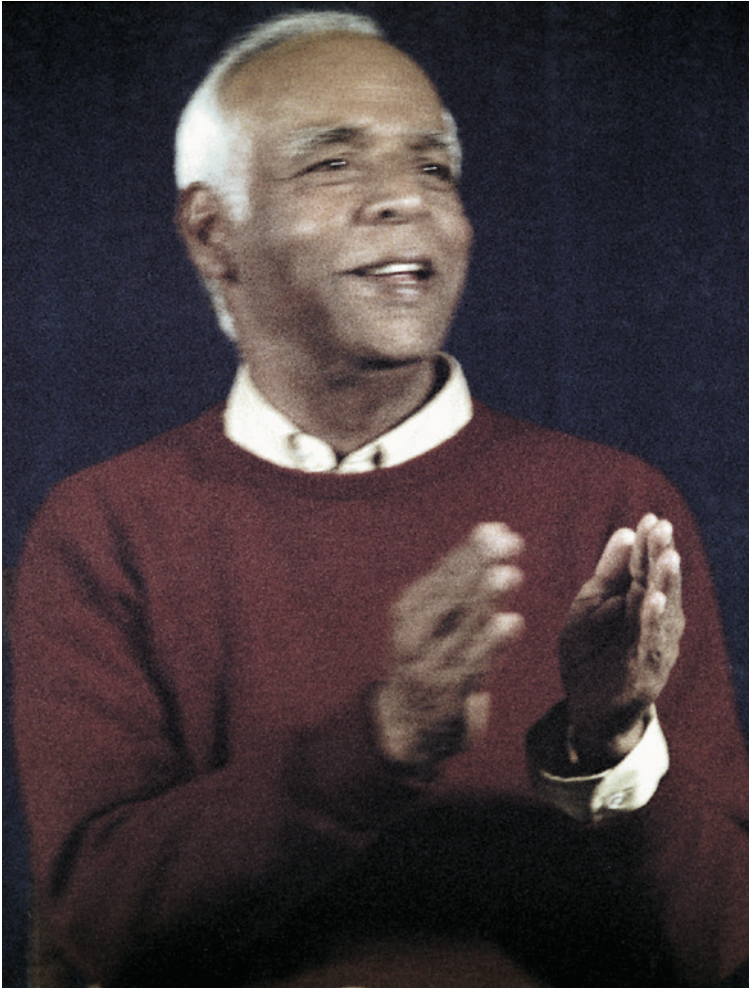
## Prayer for the Peace of the World

*Hazrat Inayat Khan*

O Thou, the Almighty Sun,  
Whose light cleareth away all clouds,  
We take refuge in Thee,  
King of men, God of all deities,  
Lord of all angels.

We pray Thee  
Dispel the mists of illusion  
From the hearts of the nations  
And lift their lives  
By Thy all-sufficient power.

Pour upon them  
Thy limitless love  
Thy everlasting life  
Thy heavenly joy  
And Thy perfect peace.



Easwaran, 1970s.

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# Growing in Love

Eknath Easwaran

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.*

Francis's second stanza begins beautifully: O divine Master. . . . We can all think of ourselves as the Lord's servants; he is the Master, the one and only boss. It is a superstition to believe that we are unemployed at any time. We are all born with our appointment orders: "You, Morton E. Hazelby, are hereby instructed to contribute to life on earth and continue contributing until the last breath of the life I have given you is spent." Those of us who take the terms of this order to heart become secure and respected wherever we go.

The ideal of living as the Lord's servant was embodied with consummate grace by Francis's dear disciple Clare. Though she held the office of abbess and all the Sisters at the tiny San Damiano convent looked up to her as their spiritual leader, it was Clare who most often served them at table. She took personal care of any Brothers and Sisters who happened to be sick, and did not hesitate to take on any chore, however lowly, that needed doing. When Sisters came home from working outside the convent, Clare washed their feet with her holy hands. And at night she often got up to put the covers back on

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a Sister who had uncovered herself in her sleep, for fear she might become chilled.

## Have compassion for others

The second half of the prayer continues: “Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console.”

Our usual motivation is to ask for comfort, to seek consolation. This is all right for a little child, but Francis is reminding us that once we outgrow childhood, we should gradually learn not to ask for attention and comfort for ourselves because that is a form of self-pity, which is one of the most weakening of human emotions.

In the family, it is frequently the case that a less mature member will play for affection by constantly pointing to himself or herself as in need of help. Here Mahatma Gandhi, who reminds me of Saint Francis in so many ways, joins him to give us the same instruction: let your heart melt with compassion for others, but stand firm where your own difficulties are concerned.

This is one of the simplest ways of leading the spiritual life, and the practical application is very simple: when you want to dwell on your troubles, turn your attention away from yourself to the welfare of those in your own family. Think only about the needs of the whole and forget your own problems – they will be included when you pay attention to the needs of all, in which group you too are included.

When you feel you are in such a difficult situation that you need to go begging for attention, instead of seeking sympathy or a willing ear, go for a fast walk repeating your mantram. You are calling on the source from which all attention comes,

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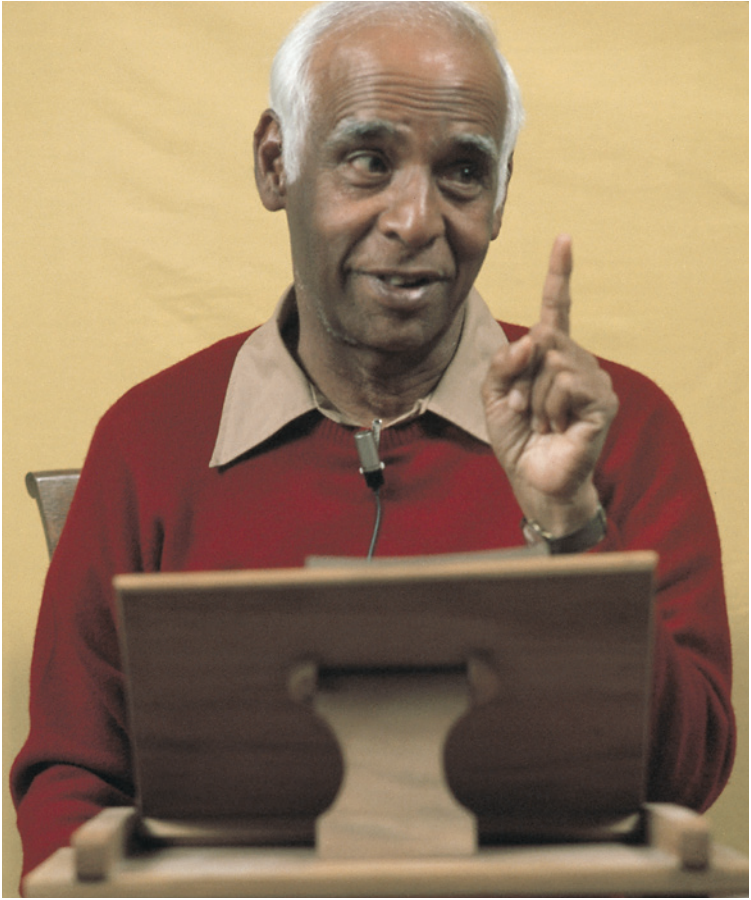
asking for help from that inner source which alone can strengthen you and guide you wisely – the divine spark buried deep in your own consciousness.

### Listen with detachment

The next line of the prayer is similar: “To be understood as to understand.” Understanding is the first thing to jump out the window when two emotionally involved people get into a quarrel. “He just doesn’t understand me!” is a grumble that frequently reaches my ears. Saint Francis, I suspect, would reply, “What does it matter? The real question is, do you understand him? Have you tried to understand his point of view?” The honest answer would usually be no. Strong emotions plug up our ears like those foam earplugs which expand into the opening of your ear to prevent even a single wave of sound from getting through.

I have yet to hear of anyone who did not understand his or her own side of a quarrel in minute detail. “See, my hay fever is acting up now because my prescription ran out, and I had this terrific headache from our youngest son yelling at me. So when my husband came into the kitchen and slammed the door for no reason, I just let him have it.” Our private prosecuting attorney in the mind has built up an open-and-shut case. That is the problem: we shut the case too soon.

As any experienced judge knows, every case has two sides. Fairness demands that we give equal time to the defense, who is inside us too. The other side deserves the same hearing and the same benefit of the doubt that we give ourselves as a matter of course. This is detachment. If we can practice it, quarrels can be settled amicably before they ever come before a jury.



Easwaran, 1970s.



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## The other person's welfare

Saint Francis continues, "Grant that I may not so much seek to be loved as to love." This is just the opposite of the usual Valentine's Day message, which has undertones very much like King Lear's constant plea: "Do you love me? Do you love me?" The question I should ask is not whether you love me, but how much I love you. If I love you with all my heart, I won't ever have time to ask how much you love me. I will feel certain of your love because I know with certainty that I love you.

To love like this means only one thing: the other person's welfare is more important to you than your own. If your girlfriend's welfare is more important to you than your own, you are in love with her. If your boyfriend's joy is more important to you than your own, you are in love with him. Other tests are secondary.

## The more we love, the more we can love

Love does not confine itself to just one person or one family. When I was in India, at the end of the term, right after my last class, the horse carriage would be waiting just outside the classroom with all my luggage aboard. I would jump on it, rush to catch the Grand Trunk Express, and be reunited with my family on the Blue Mountain two days later. My colleagues were very happy to see this. "What devotion to his family!" they would exclaim.

But now that I had begun to meditate, I knew all this was not enough. Mahatma Gandhi's words went right into my heart when he said that if you don't love everybody on earth, you are not a lover of God. It was not that I was coming to love my family less, but I was beginning to love those around me equally, because now my capacity for love was growing.

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It was all so mysterious to me, so new. A certain creative process had begun to work in me, and I had no idea what the final result would be. All I could do was cooperate.

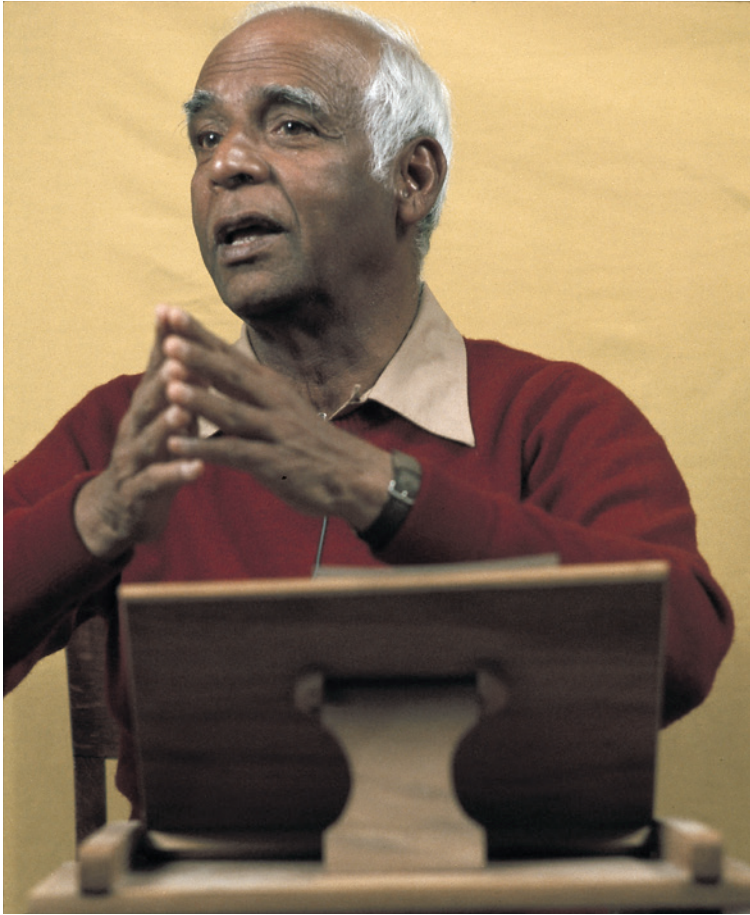
This can happen to every one of us, over a long, long time. We start with our own family, our partner, our child, but then gradually we extend the circle of our compassion and affection to our neighbor. Slowly, it moves on down the street.

In time, our new capacity to love is so strong that it won't let us ignore the needs of homeless people on the other side of town. Then it extends to the county, then to the state. This is how it develops, and this is why it takes some years. We can say, "Oh, this is impossible!" But there is Saint Francis saying, "I have done it," and Saint Teresa saying, "I have done it." The more we love, the more we can love.

### Everything is a trust

"For it is in giving that we receive." We often act as if we believe it is in grabbing that we receive. If we don't take what we want, we are afraid we won't receive anything at all. Francis is telling us just the opposite: the more we give, the more we receive. Even in my own small life, I find every day that the more I give, the more I have to give on the following day. The more I give on the following day, the more I have to give that evening.

So keep on giving – your time, your energy, your talent, your resources. Everything is a trust given to you to be used for the benefit of others. And you will find that the more you give, the more energy and understanding you will have, and the more love you will have for giving even more. This is the very best way to increase your capacity to help and to serve.



Easwaran, 1970s.

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## Test your practice of meditation

“It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.” What a wonderful statement! When people offend you, Francis would say, don’t avoid them. Court their company. It will be difficult. They may insult you again. That’s where endurance comes. “Do good to them that hate you.” This is how you can test your practice of meditation.

To give an example, when I was coming to the United States from India, I traveled by ship with many other Fulbright scholars – including some from a country whose relations with India were very strained. At the dining table, they would take out their international frustrations on me as if I were the Prime Minister of India. I would plead innocence: “I am just a poor professor; what do I have to do with setting foreign policy?” But my protests did little to stem the unpleasantness. Quite a few of my Indian colleagues left the table to sit as far away as possible.

## Political differences need not stand between us

Now, before I had taken to meditation, I confess I would have done the same. I have never cared for controversy, and there seemed to be nothing gained by staying and arguing. But now I was secure. It was not that I didn’t understand their remarks or that their open animosity wasn’t painful – I was convinced that differences in our political opinions need not stand between us as human beings. I simply didn’t reply, but I didn’t move away or become hostile, either.

This went on almost until we reached Marseilles. There we parted company: they were going on to Gibraltar; I disembarked to take the train for Paris. And the interesting thing was that just as I was leaving, they gave me a party. It

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was a deeply human response. They were really embarrassed, and with simple courtesy they asked, “Please forgive us for what we have said.”

## Peace on an international scale

In the many disturbed areas of the world today, people have not forgotten animosities or forgiven hostilities which stretch back hundreds of years.

Here is where Francis would play peacemaker on an international scale by saying, “Close down the doors of history. Let the past bury its dead. Build the future from today onwards by forgiving all that has been done by one race or ethnic community to another.” It is by this kind of forgiveness, and only by this kind of forgiveness, that international good will grows.

## In everyday relationships

Courage isn’t just something that happens in the lives of the saints and martyrs. The vicissitudes of everyday relationships can call forth enormous courage in every one of us, once we determine to act in the deepest interest of everyone around.

For example, putting others first does not mean saying yes to everyone. Love often expresses itself in saying no. When you allow people to exploit you, you aren’t just hurting yourself; you are helping the exploiter to hurt himself as well. It requires enormous judgment, and bravery too, to oppose nonviolently people we love – to fight the sin but not the sinner. In time, we can lovingly wear them down with our patience and when we see signs of regret and reconciliation, we make friends again and completely forget the barrier that stood between us.

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## Tender and tough

Saint Francis was described as almost fragile in appearance, delicate as a reed. Gandhi weighed only a hundred pounds at the time of his death. And my grandmother was probably smaller than either of them. Yet when they took a stand, no one on earth could move them. The combination of tenderness and toughness made them irresistible. To be tender without toughness is sentimentality. To be tough but not tender is cruelty. But in a great spiritual figure, the two qualities are perfectly balanced.

The lovers of God don't play Pollyanna. They don't bury their heads in the sand and say, "Oh, everybody is good; everybody is loving" – not at all. They know the world is a harsh place, and the times we live in are difficult and dangerous. But they have enough security, endurance, and love to remember that all these upsets are on the surface. Beneath the anger and agitation, through every human being a river of love still runs.

## A fountain of joy

The Saint Francis prayer concludes, "It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life." It sounds hard, but this is a very joyful statement when we understand the joy it means – not in some afterlife, but here and now. In practical terms, what it means is that when I die to all that is selfish in me, I truly come to life. In traditional religious language, it is only when we empty ourselves completely of selfishness and self-will that God can work through us as an instrument.

All the world's great spiritual traditions tell us over and over to reduce our self-will little by little, day by day, by putting others first instead of dwelling on ourselves. Put your partner first, your children first, your parents first, your

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friends first, your boyfriend or girlfriend first, and you will find that gradually you are forgetting to think about yourself at all. I don't think anything is more challenging. But in the evening, when you go to bed, you will find a fountain of joy welling in your heart just because you have done your best. In time, through the grace of the Lord, you will find that you are becoming an instrument of peace, helping to make the world a better place for generations to come.

### Start behaving like Francis

Today, when I use the words “Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace,” they resonate at a deep, deep level. It is no longer a matter of words; it is now a great desire encased in words – and desire is power. When the Prayer of Saint Francis discharges its power at a deep level, you will slowly start behaving like Francis. Instead of wanting other people to console you, you will start consoling them. Instead of nursing old grievances, you will be more forgiving. You will stand up and face opposition calmly, neither flinching nor retaliating. You will become a Little Flower of South Bend, or of Minneapolis! 🌸

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## COMMUNITY STORIES

### The Prayer That Planted a Seed

As I imagine is the case for many of Easwaran's students, the Prayer of St. Francis was one of the very first few passages I memorized for meditation. As I reflect on the prayer many years later, I realize that was the start of what has been a lifelong cultivation of the spiritual life for which the use of the Francis Prayer had early on prepared the ground.

While other passages may have appealed a little more to me as I began meditating, I still recall how the rhythmic simplicity of this short prayer made it easy to memorize and inspiring to repeat — a steady first rung on the ladder. This simplicity and brevity also, however, quickly forced an unsettling awareness of just how unruly and cacophonous my mind was as I struggled to maintain concentration for even a minute or two in the beginning. "How could I not know this was going on?", I remember thinking. There was no turning back.

#### **A profound truth**

"It is in giving that we receive." With those few simple words, the Francis Prayer planted a seed that allowed me to slowly begin to internalize Easwaran's repeated insistence that, despite the drumbeat of our modern culture, we cannot be fulfilled from without by seeking satisfaction of our



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personal desires without regard for others. The ability to gradually put the welfare of those around me ahead of my own wants and dislikes has yielded countless small examples of this profound truth, and given me a tool with which to 'rub off the corners of my personality' as Easwaran puts it.

"Make me an instrument of thy peace." It was only after many, many years that the surrender implicit in those familiar words would begin to blossom and compel my attention, but I know the ground that fed this unfolding had been made rich by countless repetitions of this phrase I use to start my meditation.

## **Beyond death**

"It is in dying to self that we are born to everlasting life." What were once enigmatic words now help me go deeper in approaching the possibility that Easwaran presents for each of us to go beyond death, "not in the afterlife, but here and now" as he tells us, seeking the taproot of our awareness.

My affection for the Prayer of St. Francis continues to grow as I return to these simple, rhythmic, profound, familiar verses with the awareness of how they have nurtured my efforts on the path for so many years.

— A member of our Affiliate Program



Ramagiri Ashram.

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## Choose Kindness

One morning a few weeks ago I was grappling, once again, with the existential question of why human beings seem inherently to have struggles, large or small, internal or external. Forgetting my spiritual training I lapsed into despondency. After some time, with no satisfactory answer(s) forthcoming, I resignedly set out to tackle the first task of the day: edging the front lawn.

But the edger wouldn't work. As I began examining it my neighbor across the street noticed, dropped what he was doing, offered to look at it and to fix it if he could. As that was happening my neighbor two doors down came over with his gas edger and offered me the use of it.

### From sadness to joy

In that moment I witnessed their kindness as they gave of their time, treasure, and talent. In their kind acts they also displayed a modicum of satisfaction and joy. For me their kindness was huge. I was compelled to remember that, at least partially, humans have struggles because of needing to give and to receive kindness. I was pulled out of despondency from despair to hope, sadness to joy. Though their actions might have seemed incidental to them, I was transformed from a negative state to a positive one. I was humbled.

Relatedly, an elementary school nearby has a lit-up marquee, and it reads, CHOOSE KINDNESS. There we have it in full view — the petition of the Prayer of St. Francis and a fundamental teaching of Sri Easwaran.

— Lu Anne, a passage meditator

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## Learning to Be a Source of Peace

During this difficult time for our world family, I have felt sadness deep within my heart and within my entire being. So many people are falling ill and dying from the COVID-19 virus. I am not able to visit or help my children and grandchildren who live far away across an ocean.

Yet, from the beginning of the pandemic, I have felt a quiet joy deep inside me which lies underneath the sadness. This quiet joy gives me hope that I might learn to be an instrument of peace in my home, community, and world.

With the losses that we have all had to bear, I am so grateful to have this practice and to have been using St. Francis's prayer for meditation. I am praying along with Francis for both personal peace and for a world community with peace, health, happiness, safety, liberty, and justice for all. Slowly, as Easwaran promised us, I believe that my will is getting stronger and my character is being transformed.

### Spiritual fellowship

As the virus spread to my country, we moved our satsang to an online format. Seeing my satsang friends' faces, hearing their stories, and practicing the eight points together every week comforts me.

When two different beloved members of our satsang had to be hospitalized and then transferred to skilled nursing for non-virus conditions, we poured out mantrams for our friends and drove by the skilled nursing facility during a

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Fourth of July parade organized for the facility. We were spreading mantrams to the hundreds of patients and staff gathered outside. We all had tears of joy that we could see each other. Where there was sadness, we were sowing the seeds of joy. Both friends are now safely home.

## Sadness and solutions

It seems as if the pandemic stretches on and on before us. As the shutdown continues, I find days when I just need to slow down, allow the sadness, repeat my mantram, and wait. I remember Easwaran's teaching to not attempt to dwell on and figure out what causes the sadness, and I find relief in our practice during these times. I add in extra spiritual reading and mantrams to fill myself with hope and to continue to believe in the quiet joy always present. When sadness or anxiety comes, I know what to do to feel better, however long it might take.

## What I have learned

I have learned that during my times of deep sadness I can use my will to continue to do volunteer work and to increase my use of the mantram. When I am repeating my mantram, I understand that I am asking simply to get closer to the divine presence, the source of all strength, all joy, and all love. I seek the divine presence through the mantram with every step and every thought. I am working toward being a small source of peace, love, pardon, faith, hope, light, and joy that Francis's prayer tells me is possible.

— Annette, a member of our Affiliate Program

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## Prayer for Peace

*Swami Omkar*

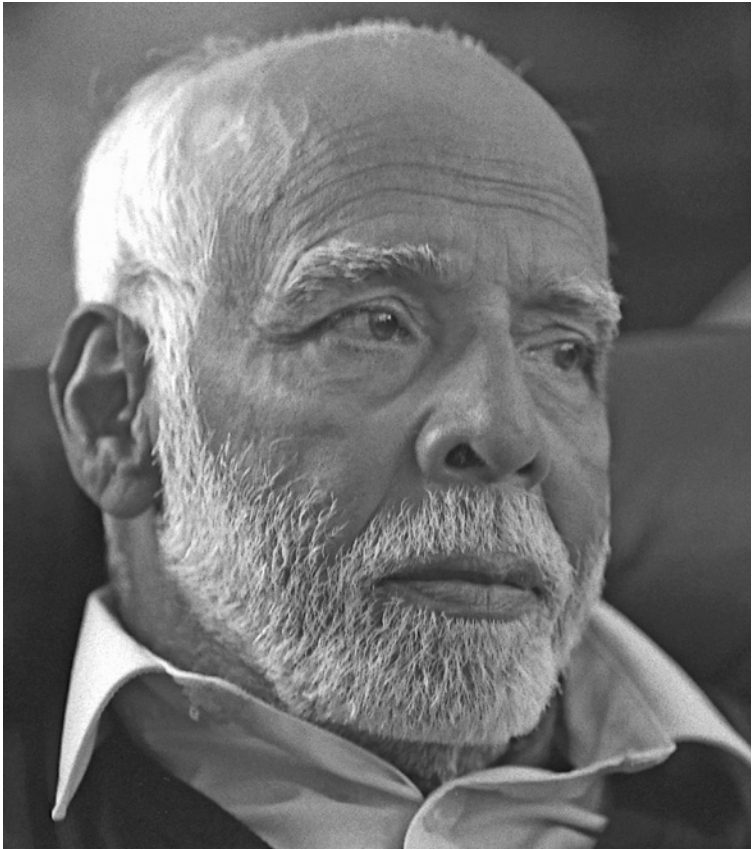
Adorable presence,  
Thou who art within and without,  
    above and below and all around,  
Thou who art interpenetrating  
    every cell of my being,  
Thou who art the eye of my eyes,  
    the ear of my ears,  
    the heart of my heart,  
    the mind of my mind,  
    the breath of my breath,  
    the life of my life,  
    the soul of my soul,  
Bless us, dear God, to be aware of thy presence  
    now and here.

May we all be aware of thy presence  
    in the East and the West,  
    in the North and the South.  
May peace and goodwill abide among individuals,  
    communities, and nations.  
This is my earnest prayer.

*May peace be unto all!*



Christine Easwaran.



Easwaran, 1990s.



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# Joys and Sorrows

Eknath Easwaran

Toward the end of his life, Saint Francis of Assisi asked his companions to stay behind while he went up into the wild, secluded heights of La Verna for solitary prayer. After some thirty days and nights, just before sunrise, he entered a state of deep ecstasy – what the Hindu mystics would call samadhi, union with the Christ within. In that supreme state he prayed fervently for two favors: “The first, that I may, as far as it is possible, feel in my soul and in my body the suffering which thou, O gentle Jesus, sustained in thy bitter passion; and the second, that as far as it is possible I may receive in my heart the overflowing love that moved thee to suffer so much for us.”

So complete was his identification with the Christ, the chronicles say, that he experienced both: the unutterable joy of complete love and the other side of that love, the cruelty of the wounds which Jesus suffered on the cross.

This complete identification is the meaning of samadhi. Those who attain it feel the joys and sorrows of others exactly as they would their own. They suffer and rejoice with all. The rest of us – less evolved, more self-centered, more separate – are scarcely aware of the full extent of suffering around us. The more separate we feel, the easier it is to forget about others’ troubles, ignore the tragedies that surround us all, and bury ourselves in the pursuit of personal satisfactions.

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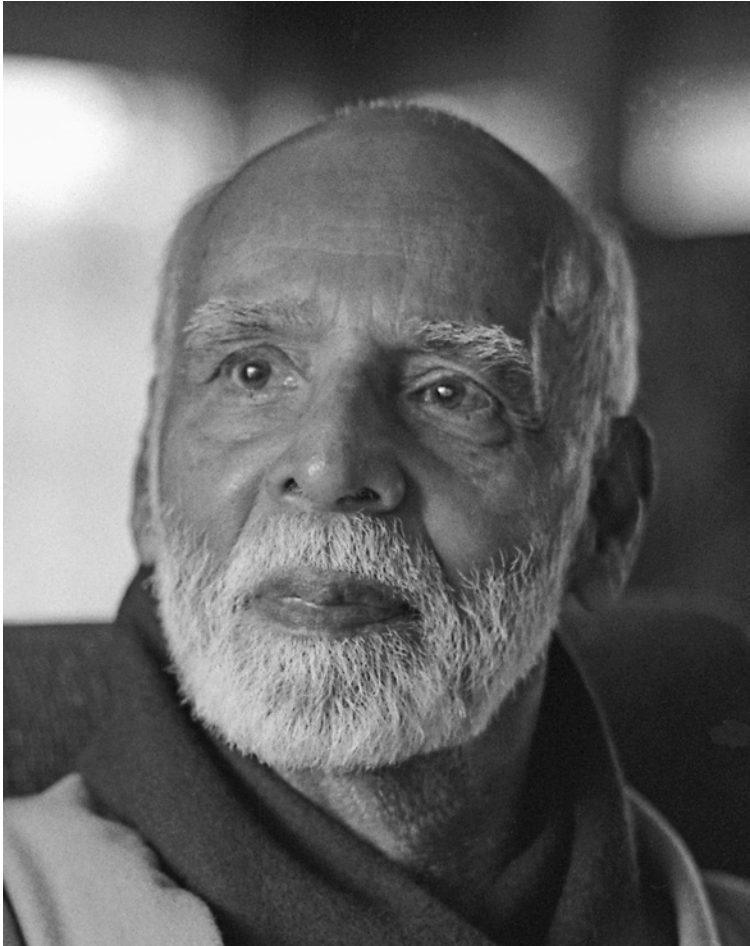
## Light into our lives

The more you grow in selflessness, the more deeply you will feel the sorrow that throbs at the heart of life. But this is not a paralyzing sentimentality. Wherever you see suffering, you will have to do something to relieve it. You will never throw up your hands at the magnitude of a problem and say, “There’s nothing I can do. The world is going to pieces; let it go.” Your deep identification with all of life will release the resources to go to the causes of sorrow and devote your life to alleviating it.

I don’t think we have any disagreement that the whole country needs our work now. Everyone has a part to play, and anyone who doesn’t play that part is contributing to the problem. But when we play that part, we are contributing to the solution. It can be brought about only by little people like us – every man, every woman, every child – changing their personality from selfish to selfless, from human to divine.

And the one prayer I have found that is universally effective for this transformation is the Prayer of Saint Francis. It contains the living secret of how Francis the troubadour became Francis the light of the world – and how you and I, following in his footsteps, can bring this light into our lives and dispel the darkness of our times.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to C. S. Lewis, positioned at the end of the text.



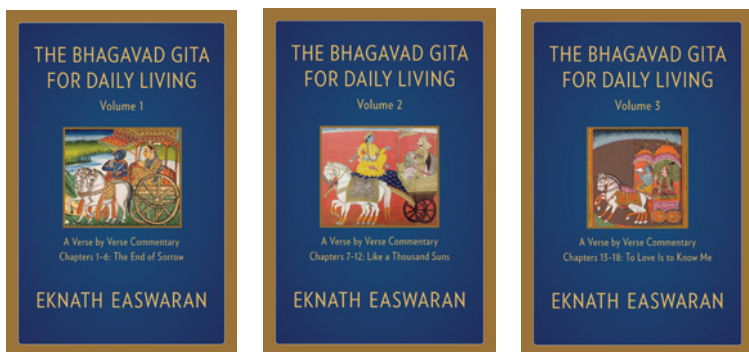
Easwaran, 1990s.

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## A New Edition of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*

From the BMCM Press Team

Easwaran's classic three-volume commentary will be available in a new, redesigned edition, in paperback, hardcover, and as an ebook containing all three volumes, from November 10, 2020, and for pre-order now.



Paperback: \$22.95 each for Volumes 1 & 2, \$23.95 for Volume 3

Hardcover: \$29.95 for each volume

Ebook: \$29.95 (contains all three volumes)

In Volume 1 of *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*,  
Easwaran writes:

There is no significant problem in life which cannot be referred to the Bhagavad Gita for a perfect solution. It is a practical manual for daily living in any age, in any religious tradition, and my commentary is an attempt to apply its teachings specifically to the problems facing us in modern life.

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## Audiobook for 2021

An audiobook with all three volumes will be completed in early 2021. The books have been read by Paul Bazely, an actor of Indian heritage and a longtime student of Easwaran, who has also recorded Easwaran's bestselling translation, *The Bhagavad Gita*. Here's what he said about this project:

We have been recording *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* for nearly two years now. A real labour of love. To try to embody not only Easwaran, but also Arjuna and Sri Krishna is a pretty tall order! But I repeat my mantram before every session and have to say it's the best sadhana I've ever done. I hope friends enjoy listening half as much as we enjoyed recording it. It was the greatest privilege.

## An urgent need

Continuing in Volume 1, Easwaran tells us:

Today there is an urgent need for such a manual. We see this reflected in our newspapers, magazines, books, movies, and television programs, but most of all in our daily living. In spite of all our technological advances and material prosperity, we have no peace of mind and live in fear and anger in the midst of increasing violence.

The Bhagavad Gita shows us how we can awaken from this dream. We can find lasting fulfillment only by contributing to the joy and fulfillment of others, in which our own joy and fulfillment are included. This is not a philosophical platitude, but a practical principle which we must learn to live by if our civilization is to survive.

We hope this new edition will reach many new readers and help them to benefit from Easwaran's wisdom.

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## Online Retreats 2020–2021

From the BMCM Programs Team

After we had to cancel in-person retreats in Tomales due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we began work on a new program of online retreats with Easwaran's lofty vision of the "spiritual renaissance" at the heart of the curriculum.

A recent retreat participant wrote:

One of the joys of a weeklong retreat in Tomales is a schedule optimized to dive deep into the eight-point program, with the gentle guidance of the BMCM Programs team and the support of a group of dedicated seekers.

The online retreat also provides gentle guidance and support, but right in the home environment that Easwaran tells us is perfectly matched to advance our sadhana. No expense, hassle, health risk, or carbon footprint of travel. No problem with re-entry — we're already here!

The retreat helped me to see with new eyes, and practice with new vigor, the householder opportunities to slow down with one-pointedness and to train the senses and put others first.

It's been a month now, and I still feel the retreat working to help my householder life rub off my many rough edges.



Retreatants and BMCM staff welcome Christine Easwaran on a recent Weeklong Online Retreat.

## 2020 Workshop

Returnee Online Workshop: November 21

## January–March 2021 Retreats and Webinar

Introductory Weekend Online Retreat: January 15–17

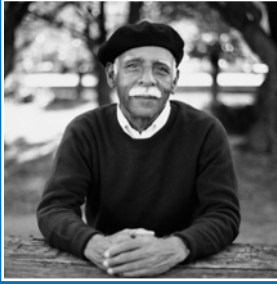
Introductory Webinar: January 23

Setu Half-Week Online Retreat: January 29–February 1

Weeklong Online Retreat: February 26–March 2

Returnee Weekend Online Retreat: March 19–21

For more information about upcoming events, including fees and financial aid, visit our website at [www.bmcm.org/programs](http://www.bmcm.org/programs). We'd love to have you join us!



The lovers of God know the world is a harsh place, and the times we live in are difficult and dangerous. But they have enough security, endurance, and love to remember that all these upsets are on the surface. Beneath the anger and agitation, through every human being a river of love still runs.

— Eknath Easwaran



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Center of Meditation**

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