

Jesuit Teachers Score TM as 'Dangerous'

Ottawa, Que. [RNS] — Two Jesuit priests who teach at the University of Ottawa see profound dangers in the practice of TM — Transcendental Meditation — ranging from "copping out" to merely "coping" with life.

Warning that some people may become as addicted to TM as to drugs, Father Peter Campbell, SJ, and Father Edward McMahon, SJ, said they see real peril in large numbers of people becoming proficient in the practice of meditation.

"Rather than actively committing themselves to the slow, painful task of long-term constructive change, many persons might instead meditate," they said. "Because they can cope, their motivation to change society or personal way of life is diminished."

In their course, called "psychic breakthroughs," the priests referred to meditation as a "coping device." They argued that TM simply conditions people to cope with, rather than change, circumstances that cause anxiety, tension or frustration such as dehumanizing working or living conditions, excessive crowding in cities, pollution, social injustice and inflation.

The meditator, according to the Jesuits, simply avoids the problem or postpones the anxiety instead of facing it.

Father McMahon described TM as a set of disciplined exercises that theoretically results in inner harmony because the meditator

learns to focus on or do only one thing at a time.

Father Campbell said commercial sales pitches for TM would be accurate if they described their product as a "non-drug form of anesthetizing yourself against pain."

Both Jesuits claimed that pain is usually a motivating force that will stimulate people to change their circumstances, and in facing pain, a person may be motivated to find a new job, a better school, a different partner.

They concede that meditation can result in positive physical changes, such as relaxation, because the meditator's rate of metabolism is slowed. But, they argued, meditation does not wipe out whatever worry is creating disharmony. "It can only override it momentarily by altering consciousness."

Father Campbell said some people develop a drug-like dependence on TM because it is appealing to diminish bad feelings even momentarily. "It produces a certain effect for a certain amount of time. When the effect wears off, and the ungratified basic need resurfaces, then the meditation must be used in order to deal with the problem."

Father McMahon contended that widespread use of TM might create "pockets" of people in society who are vulnerable to totalitarian government.

Comparing the current use and ancient roots of meditation, he noted that the use of drugs and meditation techniques began in countries such as India and they were used as an escape from the misery of famine and poverty. Nomadic cultures, he added, created "non-drug ways to develop 'highs' — mainly through asceticism — as a way of blotting out other levels of awareness."

"It would be a monumental cop-out, in our opinion," the two priests said, "if instead of doing something to change the dehumanizing conditions and imbalance in our society, we meditated."



Street Children Now

The world of these Guatemala children literally dropped from under them when the earthquakes rocked Guatemala City. They and others are dependent on relief supplies. (RNS)

Diocesans Donate \$5,166

Guatemala: Needs Tripled

Caritas International, which is coordinating the Catholic response to earthquake-ravaged Guatemala, has declared that efforts will have to be "tripled" to carry out necessary relief action now and long-term reconstruction over the next few years.

In its first "balance sheet" report, the Rome-based agency observed that the catastrophe not only has halted socio-economic progress in that Central American country but has caused a "retrogression of years" with respect to development.

Caritas pointed out that Christians of all kinds and others from across the world have responded with aid. It added that Guatemala Caritas has received \$175,000 in cash and more than \$338,000 in clothing, shelter material, food, medicine and blankets, largely from Catholic Relief Services in New York City.

[The Rochester Pastoral Center soon after the earthquake sent a contribution of \$2,500 to CRS in New York and will continue to accept donations from diocesans. Individuals and parishes wishing to assist may send contributions directly to the Pastoral Center, Rochester, N.Y. 14624 for immediate disbursement to CRS.]

"I write with tears rather than ink . . . all those living are sleeping in the streets between the dead and injured. It is indeed something to make you weep." — Cardinal Mario Casariego of Guatemala City to Pope Paul VI.

"Things which have always been considered permanent are proven to be temporary. The earth, taken for granted as a solid foundation, quivers under the feet." — Clark Scanlon, Southern Baptist field representative in Guatemala City.

[As of last Thursday, a total of \$5,166 in cash contributions had been received at the Pastoral Center, according to Anne Eckert. She said contributions were coming from all over the diocese and that some people were bringing their donations in person to the Pastoral Center.]

According to Religious News Service, Caritas International said that shipment of materials from Europe to Guatemala is not advisable because of the cost, but efforts are concentrated on securing supplies near the disaster

site for quicker and less expensive assistance.

Caritas said its agencies "will have to triple their efforts to help Caritas Guatemala and its 1,400 volunteers to actively participate in concerted relief areas and later in a long-term complex reconstruction phase."

Meanwhile, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (missions) has announced a grant of \$50,000 for aid to Guatemala. The society makes regular grants to mission dioceses and emergency grants for unusual needs.

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