

# 40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

## DAY 3 – I Pray God Rid Me of God!

*You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*  
Ephesians 4:22-24

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260 - 1327/8) is one of the great, albeit controversial, Christian mystics. He was born near Erfurt in Thuringia and in his distinguished career became a Parisian Professor of Theology and took a leading pastoral and organisational role in the Dominican Order. Through the vividness of his use of imagery, Eckhart attempts to direct us to that which lies beyond what we perceive.

It is sometimes hard to get a grip on some of the sayings of Meister Eckhart.

But can I invite you to spend some time today on these 3 sayings from his *Talks of Instruction*:

1. "Whoever possesses God in their being, has him in a divine manner, and he shines out to them in all things; for them all things taste of God and in all things it is God's image that they see."
2. "People should not worry as much about what they do but rather about what they are. If they and their ways are good, then their deeds are radiant. If you are righteous, then what you do will also be righteous. We should not think that holiness is based on what we do but rather on what we are, *for it is not our works which sanctify us but we who sanctify our works*"
3. "It is a fair trade and an equal exchange: to the extent that you depart from things, thus far, no more and no less, God enters into you with all that is his, as far as you have stripped yourself of yourself in all things. It is here that you should begin, whatever the cost, for it is here that you will find true peace, and nowhere else."

In 1985 the Pope, John Paul II, said: "Did not Eckhart teach his disciples: 'All that God asks you most pressingly is to go out of yourself - and let God be God in you'? One could think that, in separating himself from creatures, the mystic leaves his brothers, humanity, behind. The same Eckhart affirms that, on the contrary, the mystic is marvellously present to them on the only level where he can truly reach them, that is in God."

Probably, Eckhart's most provocative saying was, "I pray God to rid me of God." Of course to our logical mind we would see this as nonsense! But what he means is this: There is no concept of God that can contain God. Your present notion of God is never it. As Augustine said, "If you comprehend it, it is not God." We can only come to know God as we let go of our ideas about God, and as what is not God is stripped away. So we should pray, not "to" God, but pray "through" God because we can never comprehend who this God is that we are praying "to", but we are given Christ "through" whom we come before God.

So given this, here are some questions to ponder today.

1. Eckhart clearly rejects the notion that it is not our works which sanctify us but we who sanctify our works. That is, holiness is based on who we are, not what we do.  
*So what does this mean for our Christian walk and involvement in both fellowship and service?*
2. Eckhart says there is only one way in which you will find true peace.  
*How can we find this peace in a world in which peace has become synonymous with personal safety?*

## PRAYER

"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'thank you', it will be enough." Meister Eckhardt

AMEN.