

Christian Meditation in Canada

NEWS NOTES SPRING 2004 VOL. 13 NO. 1 THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Contemplating the Easter Mystery

Where does one begin, in speaking of the mystery of the Resurrection?

We pick up the excitement and overflowing joy of the first disciples when they gathered and told each other, "I have seen the Lord!" We find reassurance from the details of the *Gospels* when Jesus "came and stood in their midst." We draw great confidence from the fact that the Risen Jesus was able to pierce through the walls of his followers' shaken faith.

Stories of the early Christian communities remind us that the people experienced the presence of Jesus in "living colours" as they gathered for fellowship, joined in worship and reached out in service.

Today we may not have such a vivid sense of presence, as did Jesus' first disciples. Yet, as people on a journey of faith, we have had moments when we have been touched by "Easter shalom," - touched by a peace that surpasses all understanding! Is this experience a meeting with the Risen Jesus? For us meditators, the gift of such grace, as fleeting as it seems, has sufficed to help us stay on our pilgrimage of prayer.

Our present day understanding of the Resurrection has been greatly enriched by those who know how to speak about the Cosmic Christ. In his writings, Dom John Main described how the cosmos itself is now permeated with the blessings that still flow from the Resurrection. His insights about Christ go a long way to dispel the exclusiveness into which Christians too easily fall. His teaching helps us to understand that our experience of the Risen

Jesus takes place in some interior dimension of our being and in an ever-widening expansion of consciousness.

In his book, *Jesus, the Teacher Within*, Dom Laurence Freeman sheds further insight on the Easter mystery. He states,

[T]he Cosmic Christ and the indwelling Christ are two sides of the nonduality of Jesus. His cosmic dimension can be perceived only in relation to his personal, intimate presence. In the energy of his Resurrection he at the same time touches the depths of every human person and the outermost reaches of the universe. (p. 262)

The mystery of Christ's Resurrection draws us into a stance of wonder and openness to further revelation. For me, Dom Freeman articulates this beautifully in another section of the same chapter:

At times we may be more conscious of meeting Jesus as the living Word of the gospels. At other times we may feel his influence on our own process of healing and integration. We will often be better able to recognize him present in responding to the needs of others. Sometimes he will emerge in the context of other religions. He will be recognized in the holiness of individuals whatever their faith. He may be present in the rose that captivates our senses or in the holy mysteries of our bodies. No one dimension in which he is known excludes another. Meditation opens the dimension in which he is known and recognized in the present moment in the power of silence. (p. 264)

Sr. Rita Stang, SMS, Kelowna, BC

Meditation and Addiction

Last November, I had the good fortune to be in beautiful Rome to do a presentation at the annual conference of the Italian Council for Christian Meditation. My topic was Meditation and Addiction. In essence, with this audience of about 50 meditators, I was sharing my own story, a story of recovery from alcoholism aided by meditation.

Early in my recovery work, I discovered that I needed to take seriously the instructions of step 11 of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) twelve-step recovery program that stated, "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for the knowledge of His will

for us and the power to carry that out." These words very much resonate with Dom John Main's message that we can access the human consciousness of Christ through meditation. I can honestly say that the practice of daily meditation has helped me to integrate many of the disparate elements of my life. In fact, I have found that even in sobriety, the nature of this disease can produce serious consequences if I don't maintain this conscious contact with God. This means that I truly have a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition.

Addiction manifests itself in various ways and intensities; it is not only suffered in the extreme identifiable forms such as alcohol or

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Meditation and Addiction *continued from front page*

drug addiction but it can also be experienced as a soft addiction, so nuanced that it is not recognized for what it is. In this broad sense, addiction is part and parcel of the human condition and it affects us all. In his book, *Addiction and Grace*, Gerald May describes it this way:

Addiction exists wherever persons are internally compelled to give energy to things that are not of their true desires. To define it directly, addiction is a state of compulsion, obsession, or preoccupation that enslaves a person's will and desire. Addiction sidetracks and eclipses the energy of our deepest, truest desire for love and goodness.

Easily distracted by our busy, materialistic, self-centred individualistic world, we either deny or fail to recognize our personal addiction, be it extreme or soft. Nonetheless it remains an illness that is both personal and social, which needs to be addressed at the spiritual level. In her book *When Society Becomes an Addict*, Anne Wilson Schaef laments "We have lost the connection with our source, with ourselves, with each other."

In his biography, *In the Stillness Dancing*, Neil McKenty rightly points out that John Main's essential teaching has to do with "facing the spiritual problem," and that people cannot continue to solve problems piecemeal, rather they should address problematic issues within the context of the ultimate question of what it means to be human.

The constant application of quick fixes and instant answers that we use to resolve serious problems is akin to treating the symptoms of an ailment while masking its primary cause. The quick fixes make us falsely believe that we are getting somewhere when, in fact, we are simply getting nowhere, or worse still, we compound the problem. To unmask the root cause of any type of addiction is what the individual sufferer must confront. John Main explains it this way:

The basic challenge that every human life faces is to come to terms with the essential spiritual reality. That is the underlying phenomenon of what it means to be human. Unless we can come to terms with the basic spiritual being that we are then we will always be dealing with our own life, with relationships, with other people at the surface level. Fritz Schumacher once asked, 'What does it mean to be human?' If we don't grapple with that problem then we will

always live at the surface level. Do we want to live as de facto materialists throwing a little religion in here and there along the line? Or are we going to live our lives out of the depth of our own capacity to be deeply spiritual men and women? The New Testament summons each of us to live not on the surface but from our own depth of spiritual experience (McKenty).

Seeking a solution to these types of challenges forces the addict to make life or death decisions. One choice is to live at the surface and die slowly while trying to escape the pain of living in disease. Another choice is to plunge into the waters of ego death by getting extremely honest, and surrendering to the reality of the need for a spiritual solution to the real problem of being disconnected from oneself, from others and from God.

At the conference, after I shared my personal journey of meditation within the context of AA's twelve-step healing program, there was an immediate and overwhelming connection and appreciation. These were people trying to tread a spiritual path and they recognized immediately the universal truths contained in the twelve steps. Many came up to me afterwards and asked if they could use AA's program in their own lives or even visit some AA meetings. To a few people who spoke about alcohol or drug addiction in their own families, I was able to give them the contact information for the Italian general service in Rome. I was truly awed by their response and the love they showed me for sharing these amazing gifts from my life.

One of the most significant comments came from my translator, who said she found the concept of "God as we understood Him," particularly freeing and important. For her, it extended an invitation rather than imposing indoctrination. Interesting enough, invitation is also the operative word for meditation. Come and taste and see for yourself the true water of life. Don't just take someone else's word for it. You are invited to enter the experience yourself by showing up every day at the well. By practising daily meditation, you will be available to God and be transformed more fully to His image and likeness. Thus you will discover your authentic self and your true connection to your own center, to others and to God.

George Zanette, Retreat Facilitator in Meditation and Addiction, zanette@sympatico.ca

Editor's Note

In having entered this Easter season, we are once again reminded that suffering can lead to transformation and new life. Those, who at this time find themselves ill can take courage from Jesus' experience of suffering, death and resurrection. Many would agree with the words of Fr. Robert O'Brien of Toronto, "The completeness and integrity of our experience of illness is one of the essential moments of spiritual growth and witness. Far from being peripheral, it is integral to our living to the full." (p.12, W. F. Sullivan, *Promise of Mercy*). One's experience of transformation

is always personal but it can affect and bring life to many others as well.

We, at *News Notes*, would like to hear from our readers. Send us your stories, your questions and your valuable insights. Email your information to: lpedri@lakeheadu.ca.

**Louisa Pedri
Editor**

FROM NATIONAL COORDINATOR

On the Path

We had waited long enough! For a couple of years, Lucie had needed a good pair of snowshoes to replace her old ones that were falling apart. The incentive to make the purchase came on a day that offered ideal conditions for snowshoeing – fifteen inches of fresh snow on the ground. Lucie was incredibly impressed at how the technology had evolved over the last decade. She commented that the new metal frames were light and immense and the feet actually went where you wanted to go.

So off we went, on our first outing of the year, excited by the idea of testing Lucie's new toy! On the Carman Trails, the new equipment delivered on its promise. Thanks to the metal grips, Lucie was able to walk solidly, to go up steep hills and to go down without sliding. Wow! That was exciting! That was what snowshoeing was meant to be in the first place!

The Carman Trails, neighbouring Gatineau Park, have a network of loosely marked paths that connect with each other. On our way in, we crossed several of them that were all intertwined. After an hour and a half of walking we decided not to push our luck on our first outing so we turned back. One of the trails that we crossed looked like it was going to make a loop and reconnect with the main path a little further down. Full of excitement, energized by our joy of the day, we forged ahead on the loop that was no doubt going to become a short cut.



After half an hour, it became clear that the path did not lead us to where we thought it would. It had meandered and had taken us further south than we needed to be. Thirty minutes later the trail ended ... on a road! We removed our now unnecessary equipment and made an educated guess to walk to our left. By the time we made it back to the car, we were exhausted, humbled and somewhat wiser. We then remembered that earlier in the day as we were driving to the Carman Trails, we had heard an announcement on the radio stating that a family who had gone snowshoeing the day before, just outside Buckingham, 45 minutes east of where we live, had somehow gotten lost and had to be rescued. "No doubt some very inexperienced people!" We had said. We were now swallowing our snobbish comments with a healthy dose of humility.

Reflecting on this experience reminds me that even in meditation, shortcuts don't work. The path of meditation is very simple; meditate twice a day, meditate half an hour each time. Any variation that seems to be easier or more exciting doesn't lead us anywhere. Attending retreats, reading books, talking with fellow meditators, none of that will replace the inescapable essentiality of daily practice. We need the faithfulness to stick to that demanding path. And the more we do so, the more alive the path becomes; and the more we connect with the depth of Life hidden in our inmost core.

Michel Legault
National Coordinator

Bulletin

You can NOW access the Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC) Website at <www.meditatio.ca>

Visit the site to get up-to-date information about the Christian Meditation Community in Canada. The Calendar of Events, which is regularly printed in *Christian Meditation in Canada News Notes*, will also be available on the website. You will also find the announcements of events and some information about Fr. John Main; you can even hear him giving instructions to new meditators. George Zanette leads the organizing committee made up of Chris Tanner and Terence Marner. If you have some new ideas or comments for improvement send your comments to them. George's e-mail address is zanette@sympatico.ca. Chris and Terence's e-mail is found in the subsequent entries.

Electronic Form for Christian Meditation in Canada News Notes. If you would like to receive News Notes in an electronic form, then e-mail your request to Chris Tanner, at christopher.tanner@sympatico.ca. Please note that if you are now receiving the hard copy of *News Notes*, you will continue to receive it unless you inform us otherwise.

Seeking Help. Do you have practical experience introducing meditation to young people from age five years to early twenties? If you do, then Fr. Michel Boyer and Terry Marner would like to hear from you.

Respondents in the English language please contact Terry at marner@accesscomm.ca. Respondents in the French language contact Fr. Boyer at lagrottefranciscains@sympatico.ca.

The World Community for Christian Meditation

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
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Montreal, Quebec H4A 3P9
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meditatio@sympatico.ca
<http://www.meditatio.ca>

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Submission Deadline

16 October, 16 January, 16 April, 16 July
Send your information to Louisa.Pedri@lakeheadu.ca

Page design: www.khatvanga.com

NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR

ONTARIO

Three New Weekly Christian Meditation Groups

In **Waterloo**, two groups now meet at All Saints Church, 685 Highpoint Avenue. The evening group meets on Monday at 20:30 hr.; the morning group meets on Friday at 9:30 hr. For information, contact Matthew Keiswetter at 884-8474.

In **Stratford**, the new group meets each Wednesday evening at 19:30 hr. at St. James Church, 6 Hamilton Street. For information contact the Rev. Glenda Meakin at 273-4187.

Inspiring Story

A very inspiring story unfolded after Paul Harris discovered that a businessman in **New Liskeard** was ordering hundreds of copies of *Daily Readings with John Main, Silence and Stillness Through Every Season* in order to give them away. Paul's curiosity led him to Yvan Chartrand, owner of the 5th Wheel Training Centre. Very enthusiastic about meditation, Yvan invited Paul to give a public lecture and then give a workshop to his 25 employees on December 21-23. This event proved to be very rewarding for all participants. Paul describes his experience in very moving words:

It began to dawn on me that something very special was happening. The Spirit was at work in this Nativity season. John Main's pleading that "He must be born in our hearts," was actually taking place before my very eyes. These people in New Liskeard were making room for him in the 'inn' of their hearts. This Christmas 2003, as they opened to the path of meditation, they in fact opened their hearts to the birth of Christ. Laurence Freeman put it so well when I told him what had happened. He replied, "Isn't it interesting that the Spirit comes to a small town rather than Madison Ave, New York." Not surprisingly, the Spirit continues its work. As of 5 February, community members together with the employees and adult students of 5th Wheel Training Centre have been meeting regularly to meditate.

You are invited to contact Paul Harris at paulturnerharris@aol.com to obtain *A Christmas Story 2003* (1400 words), which details the drama that led to the formation of a new Christian Meditation group in New Liskeard. It really is a testimony to the work of God's

Spirit in our lives, if only we would stop to pay attention and respond – as Paul courageously did.

30th Christian Meditation Group Starts in the Greater Ottawa Area.

A one day Christian Meditation seminar on the theme "Christian Meditation: The Silent Teaching of Contemplative Prayer," conducted by Paul Harris was held on Saturday 6 March at St John the Evangelist Anglican Church in downtown Ottawa. Over 70 people participated in the program, which included two talks, two periods of meditation, two videos (*Coming Home and Quiet Mind*) and a question and answer session. A resource room featured books and tapes for sale as well as a display of 45 panels of photographs of the life of John Main and meditators from around the world.

Wanda Dillabough, Christian Education Coordinator at St. John's offered a room in the church basement for the group's weekly meditation meeting. Accordingly, on the following Monday, 8 March at 19:30 hr., fourteen people joined leader Darrel Tessier in the kick-off meeting of the new group. Darrel already leads a group at St. Joseph's Church in downtown Ottawa and volunteered to take on this additional leadership role. This is the 30th group started in the greater Ottawa area.



QUEBEC

Yoga and Meditation: Two Prisms Reflecting and Enriching Each Other

In November, a group of yoga practitioners, Christian meditators and newcomers got together in **Trois-Rivières** for a weekend aimed at integrating these two disciplines and let them enrich each other. Although it may appear that yoga is mainly focused on the body and that meditation is mainly a matter of the mind, there clearly remains a physical dimension to meditation and a spiritual aspect to yoga as the twenty participants discovered over these couple of intense days. Josée Préfontaine, meditation group leader for Trois-Rivières, Hélène Rivard, yoga teacher, and Michel Boyer, coordinator of Méditation chrétienne du Québec combined their talents to make this a rich experience of integration. Says Josée Préfontaine, "Discipline and letting go complement each other and reinforce each other in yoga as in meditation."



Icons I

Margaret Rizza, Music CD • \$24

Instrumental versions of the choral music of several of Margaret Rizza's CDs.
10 tracks, total duration 60 minutes.

Silence of the Soul

Margaret Rizza, Music CD • \$24

A guide to prayer of the heart through words and music.
14 tracks, duration 62 minutes.



See order form on page C7

Calendar of Events

April 2004

25 April–May 05. Toronto, ON. His Holiness the Dalai Lama will confer the Kalachakra Initiation. This is primarily for Tibetan Buddhists but is open to all. Check the news or <http://www.kalachakra2004.com>

29 April. Toronto, ON. *Staying Rooted in a Shifting Landscape* led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Time: 19:00 hr. Venue: Room 183, Croft Chapter House, University College, U.T., St. George Campus. Contact Clem Sauvé at 416-921-0367 or clems@interlog.com. or Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718 or joyg@sympatico.ca.

May 2004

01 May. Toronto, (Willowdale) ON. *Benedictine Spirituality Group Retreat Day*; Focus will be on how lay people can integrate these principles into their daily lives. Joan Chittister's book *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today* will be used. Time: 10:00-14:30hr. Venue: 1 Botham Road, (Yonge/Sheppard), Guest Wing, Sisters of St. John the Divine. The fee of \$20.00 includes lunch. To register, contact Marilyn Metcalfe at 905-831-2945.

03 May–07 June. Toronto, ON. *The Psychology of Meditation*, a course led by Fr. Schuyler Brown, Professor Emeritus, U.T., Pastor at Church of the Good Shepherd. Time: Monday's 19:00-21:00 hr. Venue: School of Continuing Studies, U.T. To register, contact: 416-978-2400 (then press 2) or see the School's web site at learn.utoronto.ca.

07–09 May. Rustico, PEI. *Sharing the Gift: A weekend for experienced meditators who want to share the gift of meditation.* To register, contact Sr. Kathleen Bolger at 902-892-6586 or kbolger@peimarthas.ca.

08 May. Kelowna, BC. *Christian Meditation Retreat Day for beginners and experienced meditators* led by Sister Rita Stang, sms. Time: 9:30 - 15:30 hr. Venue: 5819 Chute Lake Road, Seton House of Prayer. Phone/Fax: 250-764-4333 or setonhp@idmail.com.

08 May. Hamilton, ON. *Exploring the fruits of meditation as experienced in our everyday life* led by Millie McDougall Allen. Time: 9:00 - 16:00 hr. Registration: \$20 (a portion of fee to go to the Canadian Council). Brown bag lunch. Contact Millie McDougall Allen 905-627-2573 or sandyford@sprint.ca.

08 mai. Montréal, QC. *Rencontre de ressourcement et assemblée annuelle*, 9h30 à 15h30. Ressourcement, 9h30 à 12h, avec Pierre Brunette, ofm : Itinérance spirituelle et Méditation chrétienne. Pour infos: 514-525-4649 ou medchre@bellnet.ca

14–16 May. Surrey, BC. *Sharing the Gift: A weekend for experienced meditators who want to share the gift of meditation.* Venue: Rosemary Heights Retreat Centre. Contact Joyce Rogers at 604-531-0001 or joycerogers@telus.net.

27 May. Toronto, ON. *The Eastern Roots of Christian Meditation* led by Clem Sauvé; and Annual Satsang/Community Meeting. Time: 19:00 hr. Venue: Rm. 183, Croft Chapter House, University College, U of T, St. George Campus. Contact Clem Sauvé at 416-921-0367 or clems@interlog.com. or Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718 or joyg@sympatico.ca.

June 2004

11–13 June. Orangeville, ON. *Annual Weekend Retreat. The Silence of the Heart* led by Fr. Lucien Coutu, C.S.C., Time: Friday's 20:00 hr. Venue: 208501 Hwy 9 (Mono Mills) St. Francis Centre for Religious Studies. Registration fee: Residential: \$235 single, \$220 double (per person), includes 2 nights accommodation, 5 meals and use of all facilities. Commuters: \$140. Contact Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718 or joyg@sympatico.ca.

13 juin. Lachute, QC. *Rencontre fraternelle* chez les Franciscains à Lachute, de 11h à 16h (eucharistie, partage, méditation). Pour infos : 450-562-2345, ou lagrottefranciscains@sympatico.ca

24 June. Toronto, ON. *Christian Meditation: A Beginner's Perspective* led by Virginia Belmonte. Time: 19:00 hr. Venue: Room 183, Croft Chapter House, University College, U.T., St. George Campus. Contact Clem Sauvé at 416-921-0367 or clems@interlog.com or Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718 or joyg@sympatico.ca.

July 2004

26–28 July. Burlington, Vermont, USA. *Silent Retreat* led by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: St. Michael's College. See enclosed brochure. For information, contact Denis McAuliffe at djm2@georgetown.edu or 202-342-0557.

29 July–01 Aug. Burlington, Vermont, USA. *John Main Seminar 2004: Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men* led by Sr. Joan Chittester, O.S.B. Venue: St. Michael's College. See enclosed brochure. For information, contact Denis McAuliffe at djm2@georgetown.edu or 202-342-0557.

Continued on next page

Calendar of Events *continued from previous page*

August 2004

02–09 August. *One-week pilgrimage to the Western Canadian Arctic to appreciate the wonder of creation.* Departure is from Montreal or Edmonton. Registration limited to 15 people. Contact Lucy Chong at: 416-429-3499 or clucy@interlog.com; or Clem Sauvé at 416-921-0367 or clems@interlog.com; or Prasad Gopinath at: 416-425-5885 or prasad@flightsandvacations.com.

October 2004

02 October. Toronto, ON. *Workshop on Contemplative Prayer* led by Abbot Thomas Keating of the Centering Prayer movement. More information at a later date.

15–17 octobre. Châteauguay, QC. *Retraite* avec Laurence Freeman, osb au Manoir d'Youville Pour infos: 514-525-4649 ou medchre@bellnet.ca

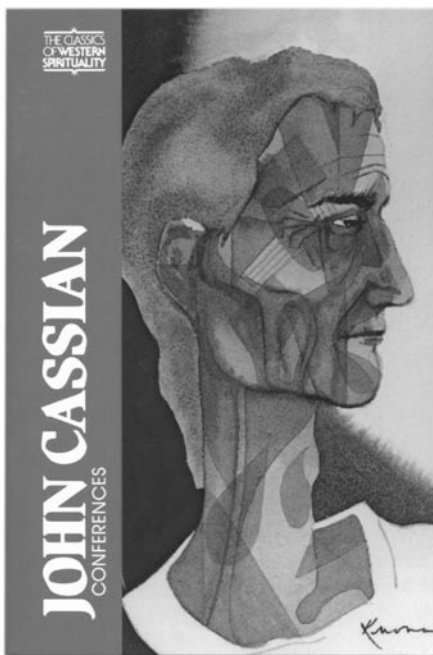
19–21 October. St John's, NB. *Retreat* led by Laurence Freeman. Contact Sr. Anastasia or Sr. Kathleen Bolger at 902-892-6586 or kbolger@peimarthas.ca.

22–24 October. Montreal, QC. *English retreat* led by Dom Laurence Freeman, O.S.B. Venue: Near St. Jerome at the Jesuit retreat house, 45 minutes drive north of Montreal in the Laurentians. Registration: \$160.00. Contact Magda Jass at 514-489-0998 or meteor.jass.heritage@qc.aibn.com or fax 514-489-8941.

26 October. Gloucester, ON. *Twilight Retreat* led by Dom Laurence Freeman, O.S.B. Time: 5:30-10:00 p.m. , The Good Shepherd Parish, 3092 Innes Road. Contact Ron or Helen McRae at 613-841-4698.

27 October. Toronto, ON. *Twilight Retreat* led by Dom Laurence Freeman, O.S.B. Contact Clem Sauvé at 416-921-0367 or clems@interlog.com. More information at a later date.

29–31 October. Victoria, BC. *Retreat* led by Dom Laurence Freeman, O.S.B. Contact Diane Tolomeo at dtolomeo@uvic.ca.



John Cassian – Conferences

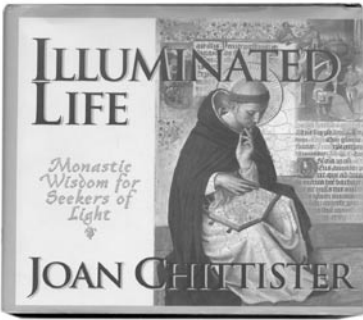
Translated by Colm Luibheid,

Introduction by Owen Chadwick

\$33.95

At the turn of the sixth century the Mediterranean world was witnessing the decline of Roman rule that had formed the bedrock of its civil order. During the chaos of those years, monastic movements arose in the deserts of Egypt and Syria that offered men and women a radical God-centred alternative to the present society. Cassian's masterpiece, the *Conferences* is a study of the Egyptian ideal of the monk. The new translation by Colm Luibheid is coupled with an insightful introduction by Owen Chadwick, who writes "Like the Rule of St. Benedict, his work was a protection against excess and a constant recall to that primitive simplicity where eastern spirituality met western."

See order form on page C7



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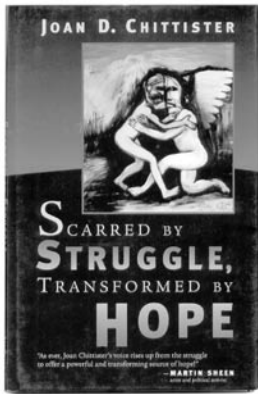
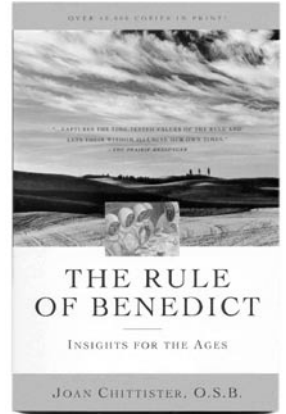
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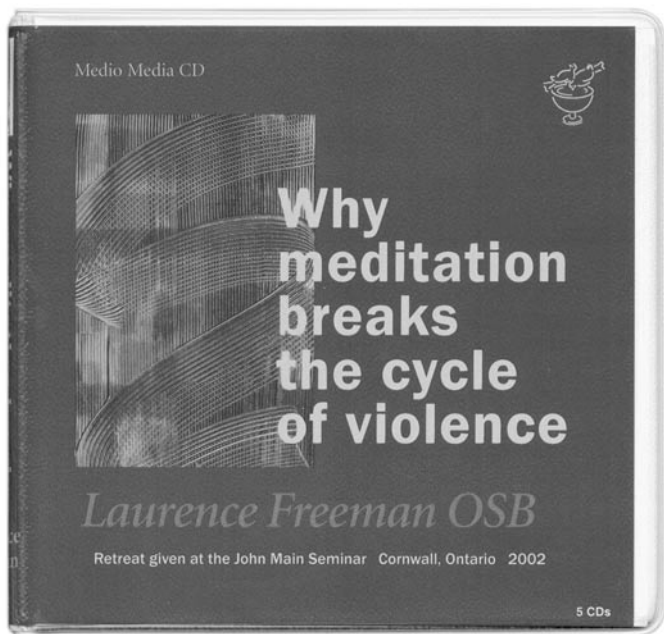
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In this series of talks given at the retreat preceding the 2002 John Main Seminar, Dom Laurence Freeman explores the role we can play as meditators in this increasingly violent modern world. Is there any way our sincere practice of pure prayer can make the world a less violent place?

See order form on page C7.

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