

Christian Meditation in Canada

NEWS NOTES SPRING 2005 VOL. 14 NO. 1 THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Outward Journey Brings Inner Transformation *a Meditator's Testimony*



If anyone had told me two years ago, “Darrel, you’re going to move to a remote settlement in the Canadian Arctic,” I would have laughed till my sides hurt. I don’t even like the cold winter weather in Ottawa, where I’d lived for the last twenty years. How did I move here to a new job where I can look out my office window at the vast Arctic Ocean? How did I begin a new life in an isolated settlement of 1300 people surrounded by thousands of square miles of barren tundra?

My story begins just over three years ago when I began attending Paul Harris’ Christian Meditation group in Canada’s capital. For many years I had searched for a spiritual

practice, a way of prayer that would deepen my relationship with God. And then, after numerous starts and stops, I finally found a practice that stuck. Meditation can deepen a sense of calling which may be very different for different people. For me, one of the fruits of that daily practice was a sense of self-confidence, or Godly confidence, but in a very paradoxical way. I felt less in control of the outer circumstances in my life and, yet, more confident about what the future had in store. What God had for me would be good. An outer restlessness increased while, at the same time, a deepening calm grew within. I knew something was coming but I had no clue exactly what it would be. I was getting very excited

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about life's possibilities. Change was coming.

Change came from a direction I never expected. It was a slow, step-by-step process that was happening to me. I only had to give my consent. There was no strain or anxiety or great effort on my part. I merely let things unfold and let them happen as I watched, somewhat amused. The end result was a job offer from the Territorial Government of Nunavut to work in a place I never knew existed. I thought at the time, "Why not? This seems to be where everything is pointing!" And then the adventure began.

So, in August 2004, I left my home and grown children in Eastern Canada and embarked on a six-hour flight west to Edmonton, Alberta, gateway to the North; followed by another trip to Yellowknife, North West Territories; and finally, one more flight to Kugluktuk, Nunavut on Canada's Arctic Coast. Kugluktuk, formerly called Coppermine, is situated at the mouth of the Coppermine River where it empties into Coronation Bay. Most of its inhabitants are Inuit. Despite the cold temperatures they are a warm, friendly people. Just a couple of generations ago the Inuit were primarily hunters roaming across the ice and tundra following the caribou, and living under the harshest conditions experienced by any human population. I was on the very edge of human civilization, isolated, alone, cut off from the south. I could feel the vast silence of the land surrounding me for thousands of miles all around. And yet, somehow, I knew I was exactly where I was supposed to be. I moved into my new apartment at "2B Tip Top Road."

The next day was my first day at work. My office is in the Health Centre that serves the community. I met the team of nurses, social workers and outreach workers. I met my first clients who were (surprisingly, to me) very receptive,

and opened up their hearts and shared their life stories. At noon, on my way home for lunch, tears filled my eyes. I was so happy to be here. God made no mistake. He led me to exactly where I needed to be despite the craziness of the decision to leave all behind.

I continued my daily meditation practice but had no group to attend. I knew I needed that community of fellow meditators. I began to ask around if anyone was interested in starting a meditation group and got immediate responses from others who, like me, had moved to the north. Also, my co-worker Loretta, a native social worker, wished to deepen her Christian faith. We formed a group and had our first formal meditation session in November. Since then others have expressed an interest and I know, if we keep the fire burning, more will come.

I remember our first session back in November. I hadn't heard a John Main tape for almost three months. When I heard his voice I appreciated anew the authority and genuineness of the teaching. He spoke with such clarity, simplicity and power.

Over the Christmas season I reflected on the three gifts given to me that have changed my life in a slow, but deliberate, way: The gift of Christian Meditation; the gift of inspired spiritual leaders - John Main, Fr. Laurence, Paul Harris - who convey this teaching; and the gift of the meditation group, which is so important for our spiritual fellowship and inspiration.

God bless one and all, from the most northerly meditation group in the world!

- Darrel Tessier, Kugluktuk, Nunavut

Learn How Yoga Can Help You Pray

In August of 2004, I attended a retreat, *Prayer of the Heart and Body*, led by Fr. Tom Ryan, a Paulist priest, certified yoga teacher and coordinator of ecumenical and inter-religious relations in the US and Canada. We practiced meditation as the prayer of the heart and yoga as the prayer of the body. We learned a series of yoga postures then put these together in a yoga flow to prayer songs. This yoga/prayer practice is an invitation to the deeper, silent practice of meditation. The Paulist Productions through <www.soundstrue.com>, and Fr. Ryan have made a DVD available to teach this to others who want to harmonize a yoga/meditation practice. Using prayers like Psalm 84, the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis and the Beatitudes, yoga postures become a vitalizing and powerful spiritual practice. The 90-minute program can be broken up into learning with instructions, then learning

with music. The student can choose any one or all of the 7 yoga flows and prayer-songs.

Also, of interest to yoga practitioners (or anyone who wants to examine the role of the human body in the Christian spiritual life) Fr. Tom Ryan has edited his latest book "Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality" ISBN 0-8091-4295-3, Paulist Press, 997 Macarthur Blvd. Mahwah, N.J. 07430. Contributing writers are: James Wiseman, James Dickerson, Casey Rock, and James Hall. It reclaims a positive, healthy attitude toward our individual bodies, toward the social body, toward the body of believers who make up the Church, and toward the earthbody of the natural world.

- Carol Peterson, Thessalon, Ontario

From the National Coordinator

On The Path

Not everyone agrees about Canadian winters. If you ask people at a party what is a good winter, you will likely get a wide range of answers. Some will say that it has to be cold and crisp, others will prefer it mild. Some want a lot of snow, others as little as possible. However, you would probably get consensus on two things. First, there has to be snow from December 24 to December 26, the White Christmas nostalgia, or syndrome. Second, rain in January is awful, specially freezing rain, and it should be made illegal!

Actually, there is another aspect of our winter about which most Canadians would agree: On a clear January morning, when the sun is shining on the firs covered with fresh snow, we connect with something sacred. Many meditators would say that it is the same profound mystery that we encounter in the depth of our silence.

A couple of days ago, in January precisely, we got quite a bit of rain in Cantley and then it turned cold again. Like many Canadians around the country, I felt miserable about that kind of awful weather and indulged in a moment of bitterness, thinking about the ski trails that would probably be ruined for a few weeks. Then, I felt a strange sense of relief: fortunately, Lucie and I had taken advantage of the good conditions Saturday and Sunday and went skiing twice during the same weekend! In a kind of seasonally distorted way, we had made hay while the sun shone!

Ski conditions vary incredibly according to weather. There are some good days when the snow is fresh and soft, and bad days when the ice has formed on the trails and it's hard to go up the hills and treacherous to come down. There are times when it's -20 degrees, windy, and you spend most of your energy just keeping warm; and times when it's -5 and sunny and you totally enjoy the glorious winter.

The question we could ask ourselves about meditation is whether there are good days and bad days? In a sense, yes. There are times when our silent prayer is a real struggle and we almost have to tie our bodies on our bench or chair to remain there for 20 minutes. And there are other times when we are filled with a profound sense of sacredness. At a deeper level, however, every day is a good day. The conditions for meditation are always great. There is no such thing as spiritual freezing rain that can prevent us from sitting quietly and reciting our mantra. Whether we are excited about a visit from a friend or disappointed about a difficult relationship, whether we feel amazingly energetic or mildly depressed, the day is always a good day to meditate. Morning and evening, we put that time aside to go deep into our heart and connect with the Spirit that dwells in us and in the universe all around. It's like a glorious sunny winter day that nurtures our soul.

– Michel Legault

Practicalities of Practice

This question and answer column is a regular feature

Q. When I first began meditating, I found it a very good way to pray. But recently when I meditate, I find painful and disturbing memories are being raised and I wonder if meditation is not a good way for me?

A. Your experience in meditation is one shared by many and I encourage you to continue. What happens in the silence is that we do become more in touch with ourselves, including our wounds and our wounding ways towards others. When

these thoughts arise during meditation, gently return to saying your prayer word. You may find it helpful to talk to someone about these memories - to a friend, a long-time meditator, or therapist. As you continue to meditate in faith, you will find that re-connecting with these wounds and disturbing thoughts is opening you to God's healing love and power in your life. I know that takes great trust.

– Rev. Glenda Meakin

The World Community for Christian Meditation

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COMMUNITY NOTES

GROUP LEADER RESOURCES

The new Handbook for Group Leaders is now available. It contains a wealth of information that is helpful to you and your group and also provides you with links to the larger meditation community. If you did not receive one in the January mailing, please contact Rev. Glenda Meakin at 1-519-273-4187 or email <meakin@cyg.net>.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE UPDATE

Ron McRae, registrar of the 2005 National Conference: Bridges and Boundaries reported on Feb. 3, 2005 that the conference registration is at 50% capacity. Please note all the non-resident spaces at \$170.00 have been taken. To avoid disappointment and ensure your participation in the Canadian Christian Meditation Conference register promptly. The registration form can be found on page 11.

CANADIAN MEDITATION GROUPS LISTED ON WEBSITE

A comprehensive list of Canadian Christian Meditation Groups can be found on the Canadian Christian Meditation English website at <<http://www.meditatio.ca/PeopleLists/GroupList.html>>. Thank you to all group leaders who responded to the update request.

A meditation group listing gives 'surfing seekers' an opportunity to find a supportive meditation group close to home. If you are a group leader who wants your group to be listed, we invite you to contact Christopher Tanner <christopher.tanner@sympatico.ca>.

In Memoriam

Ottawa's oldest meditator dies at 92

Julia Villeneuve, a widow with one daughter, who began meditating at the age of 87, died in Ottawa of a heart attack, Thursday February 7, 2005. She was a well loved member of the St. Patrick's Basilica group and in fact had attended a group meeting just a few days before her death. At the end of that meeting she had indicated to group members that she was planning to start a meditation group in her apartment and had already lined up a few potential members.

A funeral mass was held at St. Pat's, Friday, February 11, attended by a large number of family, friends and fellow meditators. She had a great zest for life, was a committed daily meditator, and enjoyed to the fullest Fr. Laurence Freeman's twilight retreat in Ottawa last October... RIP.

– Paul Harris

Blue Mountain Meditation Centre *CMCT Dreams a Possible Dream*

For a number of years now various members of the Christian Meditation Community of Toronto (and meditators from across Canada and around the world) have been voicing their wish for a permanent meditation centre with a residential component somewhere in our midst. About six months ago, we heard that there was a small retreat centre, currently known as The Shepherd's Field, for sale in Clarksburg, Ontario (about 2.5 hours' drive northwest of Toronto). On a visit there last August 31, Fr. Laurence declared it 'a real find and an ideal place for a meditation centre.' (For information, visit <www.findthedivine.com> and follow the links to The Shepherd's Field.)

This centre can presently accommodate 16 overnight guests and up to 24 daytime guests. It is situated on 50 acres of rolling farm land with 900 feet of frontage on the Beaver River. The land near the building is extensively landscaped, including a pond with a waterfall and a labyrinth. The purpose of the centre would be to incarnate the teaching of Christian meditation with a daily regime centered around the precepts of 'silence, stillness and simplicity'. It would be managed by a small, mostly volunteer, lay monastic community, but open to all individuals and organizations interested in the inner journey of prayer and contemplation.

A modest extension to the building and a few other alterations would be desirable to make it fully compatible for our intended use. In total it is about a \$1.1 million project.

At a meeting in London, England, on December 15, the WCCM Trustees agreed to a contribution of ~£150,000 (about CA\$350,000) towards the realization of this project, provided an equal amount can be raised locally/nationally in Canada.

The Coordinating Group currently consists of George Zquette, Glenda Meakin, Marilyn Metcalfe, David Walsh, Joy Gordon, Lucy Chong and Clem Sauvé. The National Council and Meditatio, the Canadian Christian Meditation charity, are fully supportive. A Founders' Appeal will be launched shortly. As George says: 'if 300+ foundations, corporations or individuals donated \$1,000 each or part thereof our dream would become a reality'. All donations are receiptable for Canadian Income Tax purposes. If you are prepared to help in any way please contact either George at 905 856-9956 or <Zquette@sympatico.ca> or Clem at 416 921-0367 or <clems@interlog.com>.

Note: \$7,000+ has been pledged so far.

– Christian Meditation Community of Toronto

NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR

ALBERTA

THE SCHOOL: SHARING THE GIFT -
CALGARY REGISTRATION STILL AVAILABLE

The resource team reports there is space available for a few more participants at the Sharing the Gift weekend school in Alberta, May 6-8, 2005. Participants are grounded in the Essential Teaching, the History of the Tradition of Contemplative Prayer and the Stages of the Meditation Journey. There are opportunities to practice giving talks to small groups. This weekend is a way of gaining support and confidence for sharing the gift of Christian meditation with others. See Calendar of Events for contact information.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION DROP-INS

A Monthly Booster entitled 'Christian Meditation Drop -In' is being offered at the FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Avenue Calgary, AB. The 2005 spring dates are May 5 and June 2. Two times are available, 12:00 noon to 12:45 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Group leader Engeline Piet suggests meditators interested in other meditation opportunities at the Centre call 403-228-4215 for an update on events planned for 2005.

FIRE OF CHRISTIAN MEDITATION KINDLED ON CAMPUS

'Revisiting the Spirituality of Silence' was the theme of an evening the Edmonton Christian meditation groups shared with the students of Newman club, a group of Catholic students at the University of Alberta campus, on January 28, 2005.

We first approached the campus ministry to see if we could have Michel Legault, the National Coordinator of Canadian Christian Meditation Community, give a talk at the university, hoping to reach more people. The campus ministry representatives suggested that since the evening we were looking at was the same as the students' regular meeting night and that they had a guest speaker most of the time this could be a worthwhile joint venture.

A few weeks later, the students agreed. The talk was incorporated in the Newman club regular meeting. We were between 40 and 50 people. Starting with music led by the students (guitar and drum), the talk followed. Michel took advantage of the drum, studying how it is made and demonstrated the importance of the empty chamber for the drum to be able to resonate. He continued with some of the history of Christian meditation. It was followed by 15 minutes meditation and then sharing in small groups. The students were very receptive and enjoyed the experience and so did we. Thanks to Michel who kindled the fire of Christian meditation, in the few spare hours he had while on a business trip to Edmonton.

'CHRISTIAN MEDITATION AS PATH'
SHARED IN EDMONTON

We got a real sense of community when we received help from meditators in Winnipeg, North Bay and Edmonton and Michel Legault, while preparing for a day of Christian meditation (advertising and all) for Jan. 29, 2005 at Providence Centre in Edmonton. The theme of the day was 'Christian Meditation as Path'. Numerous and quite varied examples given by Michel linking Christian meditation and hiking path (how we find them, how we walk on them....) must have found a chord to vibrate in each of the participants. Over our lunch bags, we had a good opportunity for exchanges in what's happening regarding Christian meditation in Edmonton, Canada and the world.

SECONDARY STUDENTS INTRODUCED TO
CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

In October 2004, I was given the opportunity to introduce Christian meditation to nine grade 10 classes. An open and energetic chaplain facilitated the experience. She also helped introduce a meditation club in the school. We meet every Monday at lunchtime. The most we had is 5 persons, but I think it is a good presence in the school. One day, on my way to the meeting, a basketball player stopped me in the hallway saying that he had to play at that time, but he was trying on his own. Great!

We had 3 sessions of 20 minutes with each class. Most of the teachers and students were happy with this experience and for most of them it was their first time meditating. As the chaplain pointed out to me, one of the recurring questions is: How to get rid of the distractions?

Are not my students, His children on the right path? They realize there are distractions.

My wish: That more students be made aware of the Love that is revealed from practicing Christian meditation.

– Monique Eng, Edmonton

MANITOBA

YOGA AND MEDITATION

From the experience of fifteen years of teaching Yoga and Meditation, I remember and echo in my mind the words of a Hindu Lady who attended my Yoga Retreat, 'now I am convinced that Jesus is the real Guru (Master).' I began the practice of Yoga in 1979. The more I go deep into the practice of Yogic postures and meditation, the more is my conviction and faith in Jesus Christ and I know that I am becoming more like unto Him.

Yoga means union - union with the Divine, with the whole

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humanity, with nature and within oneself. It is a means of spiritual enlightenment, an art of living with cheerfulness and positive attitudes. Moreover, it is a way of life. The practice of different Yoga Postures (asanas) and relaxation methods will help us to tune our body and mind to be receptive and open to the Spirit. Once we achieve the attitude of receptiveness, the Spirit can work better in us. Then we will be able to enter into deep contemplation and meditation. Meditation is the continuous awareness of the presence and activity of Divine. It is the best method to be with the Lord and enjoy the ability to act His way. Thus, it will be a period of enjoyment and celebration in the Divine presence and at the same time leading us to spiritual transformation. This is a slow and radical process of transformation of our life.

I came from India to Canada in September 2003. While in Thompson, Manitoba, I had chance to introduce meditation in town. There I came to know about the Christian meditation group in Canada. I was happy to get the Newsletter and know more about the Christian Meditation Group. In August 2004, I met Rev. Phil Barnett in Winnipeg. We shared our experiences with each other. Those were for me joyful moments. Now I am in The Pas. At the very start of February 2005, I came to know about the Christian Meditation Group in The Pas. This is a small, lively group filled with the Spirit. I am sure meditation is a wonderful spiritual method, which unites us as the children of our heavenly Father and brings spiritual transformation in the world. I wish you all growth in the path. It is by the Spirit that you have been drawn.

– Swami Devaprasad

ONTARIO

MEDITATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

John Callaghan, Christian Meditation Community of Toronto member and former teacher, accepted an invitation to introduce students to Christian Meditation. Here he summarizes his day in Brampton.

On November 25 I had the rare privilege of entering St. Thomas Aquinas High School to speak about meditation to grade 11 and 12 students. The students came into the school chapel so quietly that it was hard to believe that they were the same teenagers that we hear so much about. I spoke to seven or eight groups throughout the day. I tried to hook their interest by using reflections from students who have gone with me on trips to Developing Countries - reflections usually made free from the chains of distractions and addictions in their lives.

The students at St. Thomas Aquinas were all very familiar with their own 'monkey minds'. They all seemed to smile at the term. Throughout the day there were many wonderful statements and questions including the following:

"I really needed this stuff this morning."

"I can't believe that everyone could stay so quiet for so long."

"What is now?"

"If a Catholic and a Hindu and a Buddhist all meditate and experience silence, do they all experience the same thing?"

"So, suppose that I just keep my mind busy and let the 'monkey mind' be in charge forever at least until I die... What difference does it make?"

I drove home from the school knowing that the day had been well lived. I realized again that silence is so natural for people of any age. In some strange way we all thirst for it. I do believe that the students had an enriching experience, and hopefully the seeds planted will bear fruit at some unknown mysterious moment.

– reprinted from **Christian Meditation Community of Toronto January newsletter**

THE SCHOOL: SHARING THE GIFT NORTH BAY – REGISTER SOON

Meditators who would like to deepen their practice of silent prayer and also share the gift of meditation with others are encouraged to participate in "The School: Sharing the Gift" weekend, Oct. 14-16, 2005 at the St. Joseph's Motherhouse, in North Bay. See Calendar of Events for contact information.

ARNPRIOR RETREAT OFFERS RENEWAL AND COMMITMENT TO MEDITATION

Joan McGuinness, with Angela Sumegi, was a guest speaker and meditation leader at a week-end retreat at the Oblate retreat centre in Arnprior in October 2004. This was an annual retreat for the groups of Corpus Canada, Concerned Catholics of Canada and the Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE).

The theme of the retreat was 'Meditation: The Lotus and the Cross'. Both Buddhist and Christian meditation were reviewed. The leaders focused on the practical aspects of their respective traditions, seeking common ground while exploring the differences between the two.

Angela, a practising Buddhist and teacher of Buddhism at Carleton University, gave short presentations of the various methods of Buddhist meditation and led the retreat participants in these meditations. She showed a video on her journey of India, including a visit to a Buddhist temple. Joan followed with a presentation from the Christian historical perspective and from John Main's teachings, and then led a group in Christian meditation. There was an opportunity to participate in a walking meditation as well. Discussion was lively. Many participants expressed an awakened or renewed interest in the practice of meditation; for others it was a confirmation of an established part of daily life.

– Joan McGuinness and Diane Haughian

News from Far and Near *continued from previous page*

RETREAT BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

Participants in last year's Christian Meditation and Yoga retreat in Tweed, Ontario appreciated their experience and asked that it be repeated. The team will present a format very similar to last year: meditation sessions interspersed with yoga as well as periods of relaxation and times to walk and enjoy the magnificent setting in the company of interesting people.

The weekend, which will start with supper Friday evening and end with lunch on Sunday, will be held from October 21-23, 2005, at Bridgewater Retreat Centre. Interested? Please contact Casey Rock email <caseyrock@rogers.com> or Lucie Legault <legault.smeltzer@videotron.ca>.

– **Lucie Legault**

OTTAWA FRENCH MEDITATION GROUP HOSTS DAY RETREAT

On December 4, 2004, approximately fifty people attended a day retreat sponsored by the French Meditation group at Sacre-Coeur Parish in Ottawa. The guest-speaker, Fr. Benoit Garceau, o.m.i., was much appreciated by all the participants. Inspired by John Main's teachings and his own personal experience, Fr. Garceau gave two talks: *Why I meditate* and *How I meditate*. His words were an incentive to pursue the pilgrimage to our own hearts, rooted in our true self and in Christ who dwells in us.

We were also privileged to have with us Fr. Michel Boyer, Coordinator for the French sector of Canadian Christian Meditation. With much expertise, he led the group into the times of silent prayer. Two short periods of Yoga exercises guided by Lucie Legault enriched this day retreat. Warmhearted gratitude to all those whose total commitment made possible a memorable event!

– **Murielle Smith**

PAUL HARRIS' TALK IN OTTAWA

The Santosha Yoga Centre in Ottawa invited speakers on meditation to a series of talks (January- March) on "Meditation and the World's Great Spiritual Traditions". January 18 was the date for the Christian tradition of meditation, and Paul Harris spoke on the life and teaching of John Main, the practice of this way of prayer by the 3rd century Christian desert monks, and the recovery by John Main of this ancient practice. The talk was followed by a meditation period and Agape. Representatives of various spiritual traditions including Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Sikh and First Nations gave subsequent talks.

MEDITATION DAY IN NORTH BAY

About 40 people from northern Ontario, and as far away as Pickering gathered at the St. Joseph's Motherhouse in

North Bay for a day of sharing, learning and meditating together. The North Bay meditation community welcomed arrivals; our hosts provided a lovely room and refreshments, while Helene Boivin hosted the Book table. Group leaders, Nicole Manville and Sr. Martha-Gisele Beauchamp from Temiskiming, Raymonde Pelland from Sudbury, and Marilyn Parker and Joan Sparkes from North Bay shared information on meditation groups, reporting that people from the French and English communities meet weekly in parishes and seniors homes. Joan also shared information about the Benedictine Oblate Community with anyone interested in knowing more about oblation.

Michel Legault, our National Coordinator, taught us about meditation as a path, using quotes from the writings of Fr. John Main and weaving these into personal experiences of his own path as he hiked trails and climbed mountains, through the heat of summer, the beauty of autumn, the snow of winter and the awakening of spring. These reflections were very close to the hearts of us living in northern Ontario, reminding us of our own inner and outer paths over our rocks and rivers, lakes and forest, and in the seasons of our often isolated places. Michel's teaching brought the message of meditation to a deeper level of understanding and awareness: how to get started, how to share the practice, how to walk together in diversity, and how to keep on keeping on.

Two meditation periods were led by Carol Peterson, who introduced some simple body movements to prayer-songs as a way of preparing for the silence and stillness of meditation.

Announcements were made of upcoming events - the weekend retreat with George Zanette on May 13-15, and The School: Sharing the Gift on Oct. 14-16, 2005. Thank yous and goodbyes were exchanged and all were invited to stay for mass in the chapel.

– **Carol Peterson, Thessalon, On.**

QUEBEC

PAUL HARRIS' TALK IN AYLMEER

On Saturday January 8, Paul Harris joined 12 members of a Catholic men's club in Aylmer, Quebec for an early-morning hearty breakfast followed by a session on the teaching and practice of Christian Meditation. The program included a talk, meditation and question period, and handouts and books were available. The group meets monthly in the "Upper Room" of a local restaurant and invites various speakers on spiritual topics. Paul has hopes some of the members will join a Christian Meditation group at nearby St. Mark's church in Aylmer, led by Arlene Dolan.

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News from Far and Near *continued from previous page*

NOVA SCOTIA

ECUMENICAL RETREAT: "LOVE BADE ME WELCOME"

Love bade me welcome

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
from my first entrance in,
drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
if I lack'd anything.

"A guest" I answer'd, "worthy to be here";

Love said, "You shall be he."

"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee."

Love took my hand and smiling did reply,

"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
go where it doth deserve."

"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"

"My dear, then I will serve."

"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."

So I did sit and eat.

– George Herbert 1593-1633

Love bade me welcome was the theme of an ecumenical retreat, sponsored by the Halifax-Dartmouth Christian Meditation Community in November 2004.

Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith, a priest serving the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, through the discerning words of poet George Herbert, led over 40 participants on a journey revealing the simplicity and the depths of 'the gracious hospitality of God'.

Over the course of Friday evening and Saturday, Frances gave four presentations. The first invited us to experience an encounter with our Host, the very personal God of love, who bade us welcome. The second session revealed the gentleness of the Host who reached out and took our hand and, as our Creator, called us forth, as guests, to see anew with the very eyes He had created. The third session drew us into an intimacy with Christ our Host, who bore our blame and cleansed our souls. The final session invited each of us to sit, and to be in communion with Him.

Like delicate threads in a tapestry, Frances wove moments of prayer and meditation between each presentation: "... like a deer longing for the waters of the brook" (Psalm 42); proclaiming the handiwork of God (Psalm 19); focusing on the humanity and the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ (Paul's letter to the Philippians, Chapter 2: 5-11); together reflecting on the prayer Jesus taught us; reaching out in intercessory prayer; and then sending us forth at the end of the day to resume our journey, sharing the comfort of knowing the ever-powerful presence of God, and living out the mission (Luke 4: 14-21) to proclaim the good news of Christ, and with our Host, creating all things new.

It was a time of reflection, a journey that invited us inward as "Love bade (us) welcome..." and then renewed our mission to journey outward, celebrating the experience of this Love with all God's creation - truly an experience of the gracious hospitality of God.

It was a Spirit-filled weekend, well prepared by our speaker, well appreciated by each of the participants. And one could hear the whispers as we went forth into the late Saturday afternoon mist, "Can't wait for her presentation next year..." Amen. Alleluia!

– Bernie Murphy, Bedford Meditation Group

Calendar of Events

Note: For regular updates please refer to the Meditatio website at www.meditatio.ca/news/updates.

April 2005

23 Apr. Waterloo, Ontario. *Easter Quiet Day of Meditation and Reflection* led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Venue: Renison College, University of Waterloo, 240 Westmount Road North, Waterloo. Time: 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Registration: Marilyn Malton at 519 884-4404 X628 or email <renrim@renison.uwaterloo.ca>.

28 Apr. Toronto, Ontario. *Meditation and Pilgrimage* led by Clem Sauvé; and Annual Satsang/Community Meeting. Time: 7 p.m. Venue: Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, U of T (St. George Campus). Contact: Clem Sauvé 416-921-0367 or <clems@interlog.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718 or <joyg@sympatico.ca>

May 2005

6-8 May. Calgary, Alberta. *Sharing the Gift: The School Weekend* led by the School resource team. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Avenue, Calgary AB. Contact: Tom Cain 403-327-3365 or <tomcain@shaw.ca>.

8 May. Prince Edward Island. *Sharing the Gift of Christian Meditation* led by Kathleen Bolger, CSM, and Norma Hannouch. Venue: Mount St. Mary's, 141 Mount Edward Road, Charlottetown, PEI. Time: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Contact: Kathleen Bolger, CSM, 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>

13-15 May. North Bay, Ontario. *The Awakened Heart – Living, Working and Being – In Love, exploring the fruit*

Calendar of Events *continued from previous page*

of contemplative prayer led by George Zanette. Venue: St. Joseph's Motherhouse, 2025 Main St. West, North Bay, On. Registration Fee: \$90.00. Registration is limited. Contact: Sister Nona Dennis 705-474-3800 ext. 213 at St. Joseph's Motherhouse.

14 May. Vancouver, BC. *The Quality of Mercy: Meditation and Compassion.* Day of Reflection for the Vancouver/Victoria Area in B.C. led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Venue: St. Mary's Parish, 5251 Joyce St., Vancouver, B.C. Time: 9:45 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Registration: at the door. Contact: Joyce Rogers <joycerogers@shaw.ca>.

26 May. Toronto, Ontario. *Contemplative Dimensions of Celtic/Creation Spirituality* led by Lucy Magnus-Burke. Time: 7 p.m. Venue: Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, U of T (St. George Campus). Contact: Clem Sauvé 416-921-0367 or <clems@interlog.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718 or <joyg@sympatico.ca>

June 2005

10-12 June. Orangeville, Ontario. *Annual Weekend Retreat* led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Theme: *Re-enchanting the Disenchanted: Meditation and Wonder.* Venue: St. Francis Centre for Religious Studies, 208501 Hwy. 9 (Mono Mills). Registration fee: Residential \$240 single, \$220 double (per person) includes 2 nights accommodation, 5 meals and use of all facilities. Commuters: \$150. Contact: Joy Gordon 416-485-9718 or <joyg@sympatico.ca>

10-12 June. Calgary, Alberta. *Weekend Retreat* led by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre 219-19th Ave. Contact: Mary Robertson at FCJ Christian Life Centre 403-228-9459 or <maryrobertson@fcsisters.ca> .

16 June. Montreal, Quebec. An Evening with Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: National Resource Centre, 5964 ave. Notre Dame de Grace, Suite 208, Montreal, Quebec. Time: 7:30 p.m.-9 p.m. Contact: Polly Schofield 514-481-8746 or <mark.schofield@sympatico.ca>

17-19 June. Orleans, Ontario. 2005 Canadian National Conference. *Bridges and Boundaries: Friends and Neighbours on the Paths to the Centre.* Venue: La Maison Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence in Orleans (Ottawa). Contact: Helen or Ron McRae at 613-841-4698 or <wccmottawa@sympatico.ca>. Registration form found on page 11 of this issue.

17 June. Ottawa, Ontario. *Opening Address for the National Conference of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community* delivered by Fr. Laurence Freeman. The talk will be followed by meditation. Time: 7:30 p.m. Event free to conference registrants, and \$10.00 for others. Venue:

Good Shepherd Parish, 3092 Innes Road, Ottawa (OC Transpo bus 125 route). Contact: Ron or Helen McRae at 613-841-4698 or wccmottawa@sympatico.ca

23 June. Toronto, Ontario. *The Power of Intention* led by Kathleen Russell. Time: 7 p.m. Venue: Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, U of T (St. George Campus). Contact: Clem Sauvé 416-921-0367 or <clems@interlog.com> or Joy Gordon 416-485-9718 or <joyg@sympatico.ca>

24-25 June. St. John's, Newfoundland. *The Quality of Mercy: Meditation and Compassion.* A retreat for meditators and those who would like to learn about Christian meditation led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Contact: Barbara Dick (709) 722-4561 or <bdick@avint.net>

August 2005

8-11 Aug. Thousand Oaks, California, USA. The John Main Pre-Seminar Silent Retreat: *Light and Dark: The Way of Unity* led by Dom Laurence Freeman OSB, director of the World Community for Christian Meditation. Venue: California Lutheran University. For information, email Pat Mitchell <pmitchell@stjohnsem.edu> or visit <www.wccm.org>. Registration is available through the website or by calling toll free 1-877-285-6809

11-14 Aug. Thousand Oaks, California, USA. The John Main Seminar 2005: *A Lever and a Placet to Stand* led by Father Richard Rohr. Venue: California Lutheran University. For information, email Pat Mitchell at <pmitchell@stjohnsem.edu> or visit <www.wccm.org>. Registration is available through the website or by calling toll free 1-877-285-6809.

October 2005

14-16 Oct. North Bay, Ontario. *Sharing the Gift: The School Weekend* led by the School resource team. Venue: St. Joseph's Motherhouse 2025 Main St. West, North Bay, On. Contact: Marilyn Parker 705-497-7783 or <mer31@viaet.ca>.

21-23 Oct. Tweed, Ontario. *Fully Alive: Christian Meditation and Yoga Event* led by Casey Rock, Lucie Legault and Carol Peterson, meditators and yoga teachers. Venue: Bridgewater Retreat Centre, Tweed ON. Contact: Casey Rock <caseyrocks@rogers.com> or Lucie Legault <legault.smeltzer@videotron.ca>.

21-23 Oct. Montreal, Quebec. *Silent Retreat* with Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: L'Ermitage Ste. Croix, Montreal. Contact: Magda Jass 514-489-0998 or <meteor.jass.heritage@qc.aibn.com>.

Know of an event not listed? You will find a user-friendly form to submit additions at www.meditatio.ca/Forms/EventForm.html.

CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION CONFERENCE

June 17-19, 2005

*Bridges and Boundaries:
Friends & Neighbours on the Paths to the Centre*

Our community gathers for talks, workshops and celebration at La Maison Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence in Orleans (Ottawa).

Fr. Laurence Freeman, OSB will give the keynote address. Workshop sessions explore such topics as Christian Meditation in relation to Hinduism, Buddhism, yoga, medieval women mystics, Native spirituality, and the Prayer of the Heart.

- Registration, including meals and a single room with shared bath, is \$225.00.
- Registration is on a “first-come, first served” basis, and the deadline for receipt of registration forms with payment is Monday, May 9.
- Your cheque payable to “Ottawa Christian Meditation” must accompany the form.

Send the form below with your currently dated cheque to:

OTTAWA CHRISTIAN MEDITATION, 2170 Auburn Ridge Drive, Orleans, Ontario K1W 1H8.

For additional information contact Helen or Ron McRae at (613) 841-4698 or wccmottawa@sympatico.ca



Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Are you vegetarian? YES NO

I enclose a separate donation of \$ _____ to assist another meditator to attend the conference

LET'S KEEP CONNECTED

Christian Meditation in Canada News Notes is made possible through the generous offering of time and money by meditators, to nurture the gift of meditation through the sharing of news and activities within the Canadian Christian Meditation Community. Approximately 3000 copies are circulated to individuals, groups and institutions. The suggested contribution for 2005 is \$15.00. Any additional donation that you make helps to defray the cost of circulating the Newsletter to those who are unable to contribute. Receipt of your contribution will be indicated on your address label as 05 adjacent to your name. News Notes is published in the spring, summer, autumn and winter, and also includes the **International Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation.**



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Meditatio/Christian Meditation Community Newsletter is published four times a year.
Mailing includes the International Newsletter of the World Community for Christian Meditation

Celebration of Fr. John's life and teaching 1926-1982

On December 30, as we have for the past fourteen years, the Montreal Community celebrated the life and teaching of Father John at Loyola Chapel, with meditation and a joyful Agape.

Fathers Jerry Westphal and Paul Geraghty concelebrated the memorial mass. That they both knew and loved Father John emphasised deeply the reality that we are a spiritual family.

Fr. Paul's homily was a moving tribute to his teacher – and ours. We would like to share excerpts of his talk with you.

*They were amazed at his teaching
because he taught them with authority.*

Finding yourself in the presence of the authentic is liberating and healing. The authenticity of Jesus calls us back to that which is essential and because, before he was anything else, Father John was a true disciple of Jesus, so does he. The many human gifts that Father John had were a delight to enjoy and they make those of us who actually met him not so much special, but very lucky. They were far from being essential, however, and could even be a distraction. What was essential was that, like Jesus his teacher, Father John embodied what he taught. There was no disconnect between his words and the person he was - as we have to acknowledge there often is for most of the rest of us. He was self-giving not self-serving. It was years after he died that I realised that I had never

seen Father John in a rush, or a hurry, despite the heavy workload he got through in a day. Unlike most of us who dissipate our energy on the surface of our lives, Father John drew from a profound and inexhaustible source of energy deep within. One of the early church Fathers could have been describing Father John when he wrote, "acquire inner peace and a multitude will find salvation near you." And if we do find salvation "near" Father John, it will be because he has pointed us to the same experience out of which he lived and because we have had the courage to journey in the direction he pointed out. To journey to the encounter with the limitless energy of love in our own heart - the energy of love that can only be released as we learn to trust more in its reality and less in the illusory reality of our fears and anxieties, our wounds and resentments, our desire for self preservation and security.

The best way of honouring our teacher, of loving Father John as someone who is not just a part of our past but of our present, is by becoming the person in Christ we are called to be – just as he did, fully alive, fully loving, fully himself – his true self. The work is urgent because people are as hungry as they ever were for the experience of authenticity – for the encounter with the love that calls us into intimacy with itself and then gives us no choice but to do what our teacher did.

- Polly Schofield, Montreal

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