

Remembering John Main

Father John was the most generous and sane person I knew. He often said that the world must be renewed in sanity and sanctity - that one sane person can change the world. He was convinced that the transforming power of meditation is the way.

There was an old rug with beautiful, earth colours of brown, magenta and rust – an ancient carpet from Baluchistan. It was stashed in the corner of the breakfast room in the Vendôme house. That is where I first saw it.

Father John, going to pick up some used furniture donated for the new monastery, had asked the lady of the house for it. It had been destined for the garbage, a rag – frayed and old. But Father John had a soft spot for the old and beautiful. “Created beauty,” he once told me, “always leads to the Uncreated.” I asked him if I could repair it. I came every day to the Priory, sitting in the middle of the floor underfoot, happily sewing, binding, patching. What I had done one day, I undid the next; just so I could be there. If Father John saw through my ploy, he showed no sign, and I stayed.

Years later, when he was dying, I count it the greatest blessing of my life that I was allowed to be in his room, sitting across from him. I would read to him, feed him sometimes, and speak very little. We were mostly in silence. He only looked with those amazing eyes – penetrating, understanding, loving.

“The only thing I am really good at, the only thing I know how to do, is to love,” he told me, years earlier, as we were walking on the mountain behind the Pine Avenue house. I remember being taken aback by his words, but when I looked up, his face was very serious – and I knew that it was not said lightly.



Father John with Mark and Polly Schofield and their sons, 1978

Yes, Father John was a man of love. Everything he did flowed from this. He said he was in love with everyone he spoke with. “The spirit that enfolds the whole universe is, in silence, loving to all. This is the spirit in my heart.” He often quoted this passage from the Upanishads. He became a monk, he said, so that he would be free – free to love – to be in communion – to become love.

Fr. John was also a practical man and he valued practicality in others. For him, “the way of the Mantra”, the pilgrimage that leads to one’s heart, was the most practical way to learn transcendence of self, and to know and become Love. This is what he knew without doubt from personal experience. This is what he passed on to his contemporaries with so much urgency, convinced of the essential need to open one’s eyes to what already is. “We don’t talk about meditation, we meditate,” he said. “We must be faithful to our pilgrimage” – pass on the teaching in its absolute simplicity. “Do not complicate the teaching. Offer no promises. Do not hand out receipts for deceit!” Just be faithful to the saying of the mantra. The only way to teach someone to meditate is to meditate with them. It is not a course one can take.

“There is no instant mysticism.” Prayer is participatory knowledge. I remember him telling us to beware “that mysticism begins in mist and ends in schism.” This was one of his little quips and his eyes sparkled when he said it.

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Remembering John Main *continued*

But he, himself, was a mystic and a practical one. He experienced reality as a whole – as the present moment. He lived in the Benedictine tradition by the Apollonian maxim: “all things in moderation, nothing in excess.” He often added, “except moderation.” Father John loved the good things in life, beauty in all its forms, good food, wine and friends. He was confident and joyful. He was free – to be. I remember him saying that we are going to be judged, not so much for the bad things we did, but rather for all the gifts and joy that we refused from God’s hand during our lives. For Father John, life was a great gift. He lived it with gusto, and was very grateful for it.

Father John often spoke of the absolute necessity of detachment from all things, especially from the ego. “What does wholeness need? – Emptiness!” Every Saturday I spent at the Priory on Pine Avenue, researching the magnificent Renaissance objects, and giving guided tours to visitors. Father John had a set of silver candlesticks that he liked very much, and one had to be very careful how one polished them. “They are Irish silver,” he said proudly. Asked how he came by them, he said, “They belonged to my family, the only things I took when I left home. There was a silver sugar bowl also. I left it at Ealing, I was getting too attached to it.”

Father John’s humour was on tap all the time – a wry sort of humour. The first time my family was invited to the Vendôme house for breakfast – the monks had just moved in – the phone rang. Father John answered and, with a serious face, listened for quite a while to what sounded like a very enthusiastic salesman. After hearing him out, Father John, totally deadpan, said, “Mrs. Main? She is dead!” The poor man on the line was most discombobulated and could not stop saying sorry. It was very funny – in a shocking sort of way.

The last time Father John came to visit was five weeks before he died. I had invited him to tea. I did not realize how ill he was. He appeared at the foot of the steps in his habit, supported by Fr. Laurence, obviously in great pain, hardly able to stand. He said quietly, “See, I came.”

When Father John knew the time had come for him to die, he made up his mind “to make death the biggest adventure of my life!” And he did. He promised me at the time, “You will never be alone, because I am taking you in my heart.”

Another thing about Father John is that he always kept his word.

– Polly Schofield
John Main Archivist, Montreal

Twenty-Five Years Later *Celebrating John Main’s Life and Legacy*

Extract from a letter by National Coordinator Michel Legault to all Group Leaders inviting them to find ways of marking the 25th anniversary of John Main’s death. Whether you are part of a group or not, you may find these suggestions stimulating, and they may lead you to some concrete steps.

Dear Group Leaders,

In 1982, John Main passed away in Montreal at the age of 56, leaving behind a monastery that he had founded only five years before to teach contemplative prayer to religious and lay people alike. The growing community of monks and meditators was deeply saddened by the untimely loss of such a guide, master and friend. A deep sense of mystery and hope for the future was mixed with the sorrow in everyone’s heart: what would happen to the young monastery, what would happen to the meditation community that was associated with it? The Priory had to close nine years later finding the tension unsustainable between its role as a monastic house of formation and a centre of a rapidly growing global spiritual family. Laurence Freeman OSB was appointed Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation which was formed at this time and continues today to lead the Christian Meditation Community with an eighteen-strong international Guiding Board and a group of dedicated National Coordinators. Today, 25 years after John Main’s death, the WCCM is present in over 100 countries.

All around the world, Christians have found in his teaching of meditation a simple and profound path to the mystery of God.

In October this year, the John Main Seminar will celebrate his life and legacy. It will take place in Orford, not far from Montreal. You are warmly invited to attend this event to connect with other meditators from Canada and abroad. To complement this international gathering, we suggest that at the local level you also mark this special year. To this end, the National Council has prepared some material for you, and we invite every meditation group in Canada to launch one or more initiatives during 2007.

Explore, be creative, and... take action!

Michel Legault
On behalf of the National Council

Louise Menard, Vancouver; Rosemary Bishop, Calgary; Phil Barnett, Winnipeg; Ron Dicks, Ottawa; Michel Boyer ofm, Lachute; Mark Schofield, Montreal; Sr. Kathleen Bolger, Charlottetown.

From the National Coordinator On The Path

Even for a Canadian who likes winter, Igloolik, Nunavut, in January seemed pretty cold to me. When our plane landed in this hamlet 700 km north of Iqaluit at 2:30 p.m. that Saturday afternoon, the sun was already setting and the thermometer marked -35°!

From the warmth of the pickup truck that took me to the eight-bedroom hotel, the driver showed me an igloo that had just been built the week before to celebrate a traditional wedding. After unpacking, I decided to dress as warmly as I could and go for a walk in that direction. After ten minutes I arrived at the igloo and was impressed with its structure: there were actually three small igloos connected to a larger one, presumably where the wedding had taken place. As there was no one around to engage in conversation and from whom to obtain permission to go in, I continued to walk behind the snow building following a snowmobile trail. It led to an igloo block quarry: there were still a few broken blocks of hard snow, just like those used for the structure. The bitter cold and the rising wind quickly convinced me to turn back and, arriving at the igloo, I had no hesitation this time to go in to get some protection from the wind and to warm up.

There was no one in it, so I sat down for a few minutes, noticing how it was built, seeing the light in the cracks

between the blocks, and becoming gradually immersed in something sacred. That sense of awe came from the raw beauty of the construction for sure, but also and probably even more, from the connection with a tradition that is being preserved. Witnessing a people recovering with pride the ways of the previous generations inspired me.

As Christian meditators, we recover the contemplative roots of our tradition. We also reclaim them with gratitude and with pride. Through the pioneering work of John Main, we reconnect with teachers of the path of silence who go back several generations, even many centuries. We are like a people determined to keep its traditional wisdom, its language and its survival techniques well alive.

Still Present: The Life and Legacy of John Main. This is the title of the JMS 2007 to be held in Orford, Quebec this fall. There will be no igloos. Probably no one will talk or understand Inuktitut or know how to skin a caribou with an ulu. But we will be gathering to share traditional wisdom, to honour an elder, to continue to be inspired by his memory. Join us to celebrate with meditators from Canada and from around the World Community!

– Michel Legault
Cantley, QC

Practicalities of Practice

Q. I have been meditating for some years now and would really like to know whether I am making any progress. What are the signs of progress in meditation?

A. Fr. John was frequently asked this question. He suggests that the only progress that we can make is in increased fidelity to repeating the mantra. This is the only progress that we want to make within the time of meditation.

Outside of meditation, there are many possible signs of the fruits of meditation, the most important one being an increase in the love and care that we show to others in our

daily interactions. Although Fr. John did not cite Scripture in his reply to this question, his response brings to mind Jesus' words to the apostles, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13.34-35)

– Joseph Clarkson
Toronto, ON

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NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR



The Ottawa Christian Meditation Community at their April 14 workshop

LENTEN RETREAT DAY IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO

On Saturday February 24, the Reverend Julia Gill led a Lenten quiet day at Renison College, University of Waterloo, on the theme *Dark Nights of the Soul*. All people journey through darkness at one time or another in their lives. The dark nights can be painful but God also uses that time to transform us. It is often in the quiet and stillness of meditation, which can seem like darkness, where God mysteriously transforms our hearts and minds and souls. When we are resurrected from the darkness, we are never the same person as when we began the journey.

The eighteen women who attended the day were an ecumenical group – Anglicans, Catholics, Mennonites and United Church. Thanks to Marilyn Malton, Director of the Renison Institute of Ministry, these days of quiet and reflection are offered to the Kitchener-Waterloo community.

– Reverend Julia Gill
Area Co-ordinator, Southwestern Ontario

OTTAWA GROUP MEETS

On April 14, the Ottawa Christian Meditation Community sponsored a workshop led by George Zanette from Woodbridge, Ontario. Members of various twelve-step programs and meditators from the Ottawa area attended. George shared with us the experience and knowledge he has gained by following two complementary paths in his life – the twelve-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous and the path of Christian meditation.

The topic was *Improving our Conscious Contact*. This is a part of the eleventh step, “sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God.” In both this step and the Christian meditation tradition, George said that we have to enter into the experience; we cannot express it by words, or understand it in our head. By practicing the eleventh step, using Christian meditation as his means of establishing conscious contact, he was able to do step three, “made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” He spoke of this as the state of being awake, present to oneself, meeting everything in life with full contact. Because of addiction, it is hard to be present to oneself.

It was a wonderful day and a real privilege to hear someone speak with such honesty and wisdom. I left the workshop filled with gratitude and much inspiration.

– Marilyn Sugden
Ottawa, ON

REMEMBERING JOHN MAIN

This year, on April 16, at our annual city-wide gathering at Providence Centre, we included a memorial for John Main: his picture and glowing candles of gratitude for his gifts of life passed on to us in meditation. The spirit was very much alive as we shared joy-filled stories and the silence, and the word *Maranatha* (Come, Lord Jesus). Blessing and thank you to Sister Alice Hurtubise for beginning the first series in our city after her visit in Montreal with John Main those many years ago.

– Terry McGhee
Edmonton, AB

A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

April 23, 2007 saw the beginning of the six-week series, *Coming Home: An Introduction to Christian Meditation*. This is the first time that the series, which is based on Father Laurence Freeman's book, *A Pearl of Great Price*, has been given in Ottawa. The response has been enthusiastic, with 34 participants. Six guest speakers from the Ottawa meditation community – all trained through the School for Teachers – were invited to give a talk on one of the six topics. At the time of writing, this series has completed its third session.

– Flora Benoit
Ottawa, ON

CHARLOTTETOWN COMMUNITY REMEMBERS JOHN MAIN

On May 8 a tree was planted on Mount St. Mary's grounds in remembrance of John Main's 25th anniversary. The planting of a red oak was to take place on June 23, when we are to have an afternoon of prayer, silence and meditation with Linda Redpath and Sr. Rosalia Kane, two people who had met Father John while he was in Montreal. However, we were advised to plant early in May rather than June. The origin of the tree has a story. In the 1940s a red oak stood

proudly on the Mount grounds. Four years ago some of the acorns were gathered, planted in clay pots and later transplanted in our garden. The sapling, in memory of Father John, is one of the shoots that survived and now it stands close to its "parent", a sturdy little red oak.

PAUL HARRIS SPEAKS AT SCARBORO MISSION CENTER

On March 28, Paul Harris presented an evening Christian Meditation session attended by 70 participants. The session included a talk, meditation period, a question and answer session and the sale of books and distribution of free materials on the teaching. Members of the group played an active part in sponsoring the evening.

For many years, a Christian Meditation group has been active in the Society at its headquarters in Scarborough, Ontario. Now led by Fr. Terry Gallagher, the group meets each Friday morning at 11.00 am.

The Scarboro Foreign Mission Society was founded in Canada in 1918 with an initial purpose to train and send missionary priests to China. Forced to leave after the second world war, SFMS now works in the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America, with a combination of priests and lay associates.



Anniversary tree being planted in Charlottetown



Christian Meditation and Healing

Retreat with Deacon Derek Smith, March 9-11, 2007

Notre Dame de-la-Providence, Orleans, Ontario

Polish the mirror of your heart so you can see God more clearly. – Ancient monastic teaching

For the past 20 years, Deacon Derek Smith has enriched our lives as an outstanding speaker during our annual Christian meditation silent retreats. I was particularly looking forward to this year's theme *Healing and Meditation*. I had a feeling it would benefit me personally, as well as professionally, as a hospital chaplain in Winchester, Ontario.

Derek developed his theme over the weekend with a great deal of insight and wisdom. He began his series of four talks with John Main's interpretation of the word *heart*, defining *heart* as the uniqueness of the inner person or *self*. Unfortunately, we get caught up in the world of illusion – a world built up out of our thoughts. As we age, we become conditioned to accept views of those who are significant in our lives without question. Many of us equate who we are with what we think we are. Eventually we develop a heart that is fragmented. In the words of John Main, the heart becomes "cluttered and unhealthy." We gain an illusion of self and eventually tension builds up between true self and the masked self that others see. The good news is that an unhealthy heart can be healed, and made holy. Derek explained that healing is a derivative of the English word *holth* or *wholeness*. Health, wholeness and holiness are really aspects of one another and deeply connected in our language.

Jesus says, "Happy are those who are pure in heart." These words provide hope for us since it is possible for us to become authentic and transparent – alive in a whole new way. After all, it was recognized by the 4th and 5th century desert monks that prayer was a spiritual tool or "therapy" for healing unhealthy hearts. Thus, through meditation we

are able to shed the illusion and "polish the mirror" to find God. The work we must do in finding purification of heart is initiated by God within self and accomplished only by God's love and grace.

What I found particularly fascinating was Derek's and John Main's position on "sin" – referred to by both as the "S-word". Derek claims that sin is the condition of an impure heart which is in a state of disorder and at odds with self. According to Father John, sin is a condition within each of us as well as in the heart of broken humanity wherever there is a division. He defined this state of disordered humanity as "existential sin."

What is the origin of this "S-Word"? Derek's gift to me was his interpretation on the biblical story of the Fall. He traced how the state of brokenness in humanity began and became embedded in us. It is a story that tells about arrogance in attempting to be what in fact we are not. It is a story of deep, potential anger, greed and jealousy.

The first 11 chapters of Genesis describe the disobedience. No one accepted responsibility for action. And this state deepens in the next generation. The story of Cain and Abel can be seen as symbolic of conflict about fruits of our earth and who uses them. It seems that Abel was preferred by God, thus deep jealousy developed. We witness how the original blessing, created as good, was disrupted by chaos. The true self and false self were in tension. Derek pointed out that as we heal, by rediscovery of true self, we will experience the glory of being human. We will be fully alive in the moment, rather than lingering in a state of anxiety or,

Continued on facing page

Deacon Derek Smith *continued from facing page*

as John Main would say, “mucking about in the ashes of the past.”

Derek made us aware of the mystery of meditation – as we meditate together we gain “experiential wisdom.” Meditation is like love – it is a “wisdom experience on the wings of grace.” Our true self infuses the ego and we become integrated. Then we are truly healed and whole. We become who we truly are. The fruit of meditation is found in healing relationships with God, self and others.

Throughout the weekend I could not help but reflect on these profound teachings. I was deeply touched, as were many others. I have a deeper understanding of my patients whose selves become fragmented due to life-changing illness or threat of death. And as I continue my own journey of integrating self, I am grateful that I have the opportunity to attend retreats such as this and can meditate with such a loving community.

– Robin Lane
Morrisburg, ON

From the Canadian Coordinator of Schools **Pass It On**

Dear Meditators,

This column is the last one I will write as Coordinator of the School in Canada. It has been a privilege to serve the Christian meditation community in this capacity. I look back on the past seven years with great thanksgiving for the opportunity to work with Michel Legault and the fine resource teams in Ancaster, Kingston, Rustico, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, and North Bay. I also look back with great thanksgiving for all the meditators who have attended the School’s Essential Teaching workshops. You bring wonderful gifts to the meditation community and to your local community. In this 25th anniversary year of John Main’s death, you are a link to the future that ensures his legacy of the practice of Christian meditation will continue.

Twenty-two years ago, the Reverend John Kerr invited me to a weekly meditation group at the Church of the

Redeemer in Toronto. It was a simple as that, yet I could not begin to express the richness of the gift that simple invitation has brought and continues to bring to my life. So while I will no longer coordinate the School activities, I look forward to continuing to teach, offer workshops, and lead retreats. I believe that the contemplative path that Christian meditation sets us on, leads to the peace and harmony the church and the world so desperately need. That the gift of meditation comes in such simplicity and love means we all can participate in passing it on.

I close this last column with a quotation from John Main: “The mantra, if you say it with generosity, with faithfulness, and with love, will always point you in the direction of God and it is only in God that our true destiny can be revealed.” (*The Way of Unknowing*)

– Rev. Glenda Meakin
Stratford, ON

John Main Seminar 2007

18–21 October, Hotel Cheribourg, Orford, Quebec

Still Present – The Life and Legacy of John Main

Preceded by a silent retreat 16–18 October

Grand Poverty - Living in the Mystery of the Way

Registration:

John Main Seminar 2007

P.O. Box 205, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario M4T 2M1

Tel: 1-416-485-9718

Email: joyg@sympatico.ca

Downloadable brochure and registration form at: www.johnmainseminar.org

Calendar of Events

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

September 2007

4 Sept., Charlottetown, PE. Tuesday Christian Meditation Sessions. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Time: 9:05 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. Contact: St. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>.

6 Sept., Calgary, AB. *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-in* led by Engeline Piet. Time: 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre. Contact: FCJ Christian Life Centre 403-228-4215 or <fcjcentre@fcjsisters.ca>.

18 Sept., Charlottetown, PE. *Introduction to Christian Meditation.* First of three weekly sessions for newcomers to this form of contemplative prayer. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Time: 6:30 p.m. Contact: see 4 Sept., above.

October 2007

4 Oct., Calgary, AB. *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-in* led by Engeline Piet. Time: 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Venue and contacts – see 6 Sept., above.

16-18 Oct., Orford, QC. Pre-John Main Seminar Retreat led by Fr. Laurence Freeman. Venue: Hotel Chéribourg, 2603 chemin du Parc. Contact: 514-481-8746 or <jms2007@bellnet.ca>.

18-21 Oct., Orford, QC. John Main Seminar 2007: *Still Present – the Life and Legacy of John Main.* For registration, see the International Newsletter in the center of this issue. Venue: Hotel Chéribourg, 2603 chemin du Parc. Contact: see 16-18 Oct., above.

23 Oct., Ottawa, ON. Kim Nataraja: Dancing with the Shadow. For registration, contact Ron Dicks at: 613-739-1046 or <rdicks@rogers.com>.

25 Oct., Toronto, ON. Kim Nataraja: Dancing with the Shadow. For registration, contact Joy Gordon at: 416-485-9718 or <joyg@sympatico.ca>.

November 2007

1 Nov., Calgary, AB. *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-in* led by Engeline Piet. Time: 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Venue and contacts – see 6 Sept., above.

6 Nov., Calgary AB. *Workshop: Introduction to Christian Meditation, Part 1*, led by Engeline Piet. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre. Contact: FCJ Christian Life Centre 403-228-4215 or <fcjcentre@fcjsisters.ca>.

13 Nov., Calgary AB. *Workshop: Introduction to Christian Meditation, Part 2*, led by Engeline Piet. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Venue and contacts – see 6 Nov., above.

December 2007

1 Dec., Calgary, AB. *Christian Meditation Retreat Day.* Time: 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Venue: FCJ Christian Life Centre. Contact: FCJ Christian Life Centre 403-228-4215 or <fcjcentre@fcjsisters.ca>.

6 Dec., Calgary, AB. *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-in* led by Engeline Piet. Time: 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Venue and contacts - see 6 Sept., above.

Want to list an event? You will find a user-friendly form to submit additions at www.meditatio.ca/Forms/EventForm.html.

Going Deeper: P.E.I. Workshop for Meditation Leaders

May 4 was an unseasonably cool day but that did not dampen the enthusiasm of the 25 meditators who met at Mount St. Mary's, Charlottetown. We came from all over the Maritimes, anxious to share with each other and learn from Michel Legault about leadership roles in meditation.

Sister Kathleen Bolger, Regional Director, organized the day and kept us on the task while engaging us in some lively exercise and song. Sr. Marie Cahill added her special touch in creating a sacred space. The day was filled with information and laughter. Michel made us feel comfortable with his wit and the personal stories he told. By the end of the day we felt like family!

Beginning with a brief history of John Main, we were reminded by Michel of how the origins of this prayer

practice help to make our present experience more meaningful. Participation in groups brings a reinforcement of the commitment and faithfulness required of this discipline. Being silent with others brings that depth of connection. We experienced in small groups the importance of each person's welcoming response to new members. This, we saw, should be a shared responsibility and not just the role of the leader. The day ended with the 'Quiet Mind' video. In it, I was touched by these words of Fr. Laurence: "If we change, the world changes." When we radiate to others the love and peace that is expanded in us through meditation, we give testimony to this powerful form of prayer.

– Eleanor Myron
Charlottetown, PE

Christian Meditation group leader Kevin Flynn speaks at Canadian National Prayer Breakfast

OTTAWA: Kevin Flynn, Director of Anglican Studies at St. Paul University, and a leader of a weekly Christian Meditation group at this same school, gave a talk on Christian Meditation/Contemplative prayer, May 3, at an annual Canadian Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast. Over 200 members of the Canadian Parliament, Supreme Court Justices, ambassadors and clergy participated in the session and also meditated in a period of silence.

This National Prayer Breakfast marked its 42nd year with a stated goal of building a relationship with Christians from various denominations, as well as with people from different faith groups. This annual breakfast flows from a group of members of the Canadian Parliament from various political parties who meet to express their common religious faith at a breakfast each Wednesday morning while parliament is in session.

In these non-partisan gatherings, members not only get the chance to know each other better, but also have an opportunity to recognize the presence of God in each others lives. The exercise of effective political leadership in Canada has always demanded that such positive relationships need to be fostered across party lines to facilitate the working of government.

In his talk at this special annual Prayer Breakfast, Kevin Flynn highlighted the meeting in Calcutta a few years ago when a group of Canadian meditators met with Mother Teresa to learn about the religious and spiritual base of her well known work with the poor, the sick and the dying.

One early evening, Flynn recounted, she talked to the group outside the headquarters of her religious community, the sisters of charity, about the impossibility of finding God in

noise and excessive activity. She pointed to the setting sun and drew their attention to the fact the sun was setting in silence. She added that the moon and the stars would soon appear in silence and that the next day in nature the trees, the flowers and the grass would all grow in perfect silence.

She then revealed the secret of her lifetime work, and simply said "God does great things in silence" and then pointed out that coming to silence and stillness in meditation was a tradition in many religions of the world including Christianity. Mother Teresa also emphasized to the group the importance of setting aside a time in the morning and a time in the evening to open ones being to God and to find a new energy, the energy of love.

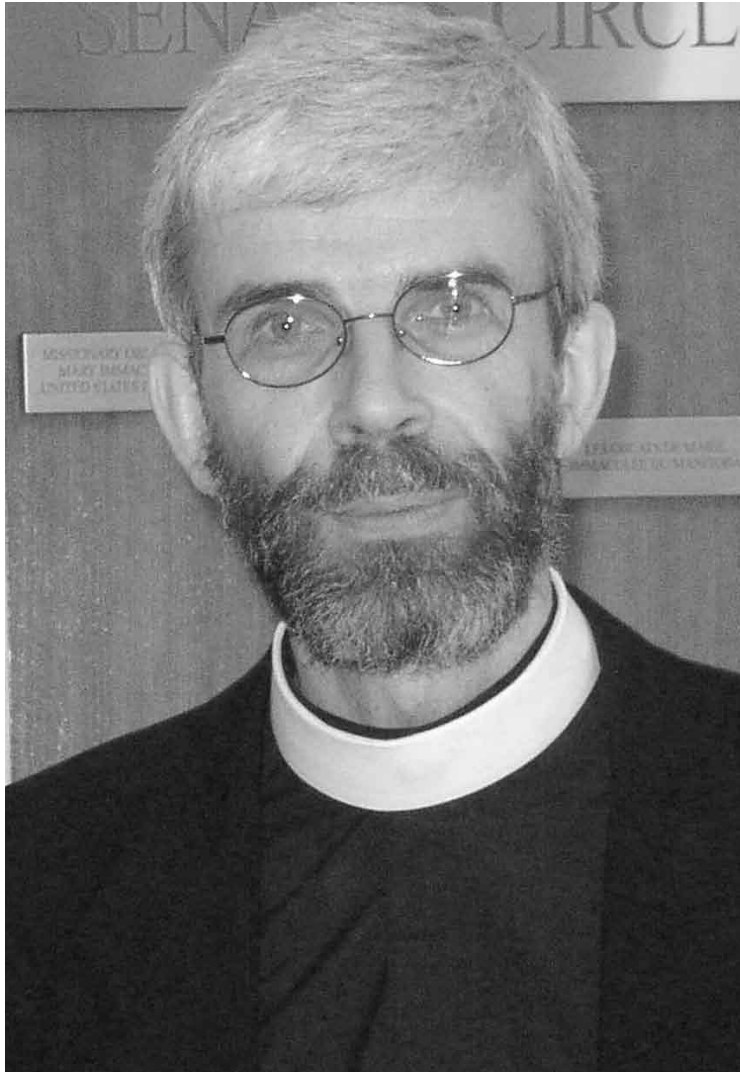
The speaker also drew the attention of his audience to the important words of the American Buddhist scholar, Ken Wilber in stating, "When you can find a truth that Hindus and Christians, Buddhists and Taoists, Sufis

in Islam and Jews all agree on, then you have probably found something that is profoundly important, something that tells you about universal truth and ultimate meaning, something that touches the very core of the human condition."

Kevin then went on to quote Wilber's answer to this truth. Said Wilber: "The truth we all share, despite our differing beliefs, is the direct experience of the spirit deep within us in the practice of meditation. Meditation then is part of the universal spiritual culture of all peoples in the world."

The guest speaker then talked on other aspects of the teaching and ended the talk with an explanation of how to enter the silence followed by a short period of meditation.

– Paul Harris
Ottawa, ON



The Infinite Spaciousness of God

Fr. Paul Geraghty, for nine years in Fr. John Main's community, is chaplain at the Montreal Children's Hospital. He is the priest responsible for St. Anthony of Padua parish in Montreal, which hosts PADUA, a Centre of Urban Spirituality.

On the May 11-13 weekend, Fr. Paul Geraghty led 50 members of the Toronto community on a retreat. He invited us to enter into our own depths, to abandon the finite narrowness of desires and fears, the finite world of words and images, to go beyond the word "God" to the reality the word points to: the spaciousness of God. The image of spaciousness for God may be unfamiliar, but helps us to reflect on God as God is, not as we make God out to be. Fr. Paul paralleled the infinite spaciousness of God with concepts in emerging cosmology, suggesting the infinitely expanding universe as a helpful model towards thinking about God. He invited us to enter more fully into the continuous expansion of spirit which is our potential and our destiny.

Another word describing God is the Greek word *kenosis* – self-emptying. God is most God in emptying Godself into creation, into us. St. Paul said, "Though he was in the form of God... [Jesus] emptied himself... being born in human likeness" (Phil. 2:6-7). Our task is also kenotic. The mantra guides us to self-emptying silence and, beyond meditation, to self-emptying service and love. One Christian symbol of emptiness is the empty tomb. There was no body there. As well, the tomb was absent of all that we fear and are afraid to face in ourselves.

Jesus challenged the narrow, religious convictions of his time. He called people to expand their vision of God. Jesus used images of growth to describe this vision. A mustard

seed grows tall and strong enough to hold many birds. His image of leaven also explains the kingdom is about expansion not contraction, and also about values such as inclusion and acceptance rather than exclusion and rejection. So, we should see the world as a communion, not as a collection of separate events and objects. Everything belongs. When speaking of God, we are meant to engage with Jesus' experience of God, one of non-separation. In John's gospel, the contemplative vision of reality is a unified vision, "...the Word was God... all things came into being through Him." (John 1:1-3).

It is the "ego" that prevents us from making spiritual progress. In contrast, God is not self-important or pompous. God does not take "Godself" too seriously. The ego operates under its self-centredness and, more so, fears that it might not be the "only show in town." Yet, we know from science the universe is omniscient. There is no centre. As contemplatives, we are called to be in communion with the rest of reality, to a depth that the ego cannot know. This is accomplished through self-emptying. Minimizing the ego's influence is hard work, but better than believing the ego's story that we are the centre of the universe. With our awareness in the "now" and our mind open to the vast and sacred reality that God created, we engage in the superabundance of God.

– Joseph Clarkson
Toronto, ON

Slow me down, Lord: *Reflections on Christian Meditation and Multitasking*

Rev. Glenda Meakin led 35 participants in a Lenten day of Christian meditation and reflection on March 24, at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Winnipeg. They included members of Christian meditation groups throughout the region.

Glenda asked us to examine the ways we understand time in our culture. We treat time as a commodity to be spent, saved, or wasted. She challenged us to see time as our gift from God – time when we enjoy God's world.

Our faith story, through the Scriptures, gives another perspective on time. We see God's creative activity, and time for rest, in the creation story. We see God acting throughout human time. We hear prophetic voices urging us to repent. Christian meditation calls us to deepen our

relationship with God and be open to God's activity in our lives. The priority is being over doing. What a contrast this is with the norms of living in our culture, when we often experience frenetic activity to convince ourselves that life has meaning. While we are challenged to understand our lives as a feast to which we have been invited by God, we are also called to be present to those in our communities who are not experiencing life as a joyous banquet.

Glenda also provided time for meditation and periods of quiet and reflection during the day as, approaching Holy Week, we remembered the necessary suffering and pain which precede the joy of Easter.

– Virginia Platt
Winnipeg, MB

NEW PUBLICATIONS



The Cave of the Heart: The Life of Swami Abhishiktananda Shirley du Boulay

This is the moving account of the extraordinary life of the French Benedictine and Indian sannyasi, Henri le Saux / Swami Abhishiktananda, whose search for the Absolute carried him beyond the boundaries of established religion. He became a bridge between Hindu Advaita and Christianity. But his own experience of awakening 'in the cave of the heart,' and his example has still a prophetic value for the meeting of religions at the spiritual level.

Book 276 p. \$27.00

Swami Abhishiktananda: Essential Writings Shirley du Boulay

Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri le Saux, 1910–1973) is one of the most intriguing spiritual figures of the twentieth century. A Breton-born monk who moved to India in 1948, he initially hoped to Christianize India along Benedictine lines. Instead, his deep encounter with Hindu spirituality led him on an even more challenging and adventurous path. Abhishiktananda's writings reflect an extraordinary search for God who finds reconciliation in the truth beyond opposites.

Book 205 p. \$22.00



The Spiritual Roots of Yoga Ravi Ravindra

Each section in this compilation of articles is informed by the philosophical background of yoga; especially the two great texts of yoga, the Yoga Sutra and the Bhagavad Gita. They range from an exploration of rita (cosmic order) in the Rig Veda and its relation to yajna (sacrifice and exchange between levels) and dharma (law, order; sacred obligations). This volume will be valuable to those who wish to learn about the roots of yoga and the cultures from which it arose.

Book 178 p. \$20.00

The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way Translated by Helen Bacovcin

This enduring work of Russian spirituality has charmed countless people with its tale of a nineteenth-century peasant's quest for the secret of prayer. Readers follow this anonymous pilgrim as he treks over the steppes in search of the answer to the one compelling question: How does one pray constantly? *The Way of a Pilgrim* is a humble story ripe for renewed appreciation today.

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The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, lives and stories of early Christian women Laura Swan

In this book, Laura Swan illuminates the desert mothers stories and teachings with insights drawn from her own experience of the same struggles in the context of modern religious life. It calls the reader to a path of spirituality sorely needed in today's clamorous world: slow down, be quiet and listen for the voice of God deep within your heart.

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