

Food for the Journey: Great Christian Spiritual Teachers of the Contemplative Tradition

Canadian Christian Meditation National Conference 2007

*“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”
So I did sit and eat. (George Herbert 1593-1633)*

In this 25th anniversary year of Dom John Main's death, 80 people from various parts of Canada met in beautiful British Columbia from June 29 to July 1 to receive food for the journey from the teaching and presence of keynote speaker Fr. Laurence Freeman, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation. Fr. Laurence skillfully explored the way we think about natural food and spiritual food and how important our choices are in regard to each. Since we become what we eat, so we are to eat often of Christ and become like Him.

The delegates were blessed and fed by three other persons who spoke of some of the great spiritual teachers of the contemplative tradition. Michel Legault, National Coordinator, led us in a workshop on the life and teaching of Bede Griffiths, mystic and prophet of our times. Bede's strong emphasis on inter-spirituality is highlighted in the following statement, “God has graced every tradition with insight into the divine mystery, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated—each has a gift for the world.”

In addition to Fr. Laurence, the following speakers presented sessions (which are summarized in articles within this issue): Rev. Glenda Meakin, Michael Hryniuk, Michel Legault.

— Ron Dicks
Ontario Coordinator



Keynote speaker Fr. Laurence Freeman

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Fr. Laurence Freeman

Keynote Speaker

Canadian Christian Meditation National Conference

Father Laurence spoke on three topics. The first was “Food for the Journey.” In the Gospels, says Fr. Laurence, Jesus repeatedly ate with sinners, and he feeds us even today in the Eucharist. For John Main, meditation was also food, simple food with no elaborate side-dishes. Meditation is inherently simplifying

Recently in Bombay, Fr. Laurence saw, juxtaposed with massive poverty, huge billboards advertising weight-loss programs – a warning that our proposed solutions to the problems of the world should not themselves become part of the problem. Consumerism is an infectious disease that can infect even spirituality. Children are introduced to a “poor diet” of excessive cartoons and video games. For them, as for us, meditation can be a taste of simpler fare. Introducing young children to meditation, not only do the teachers and school staff appreciate it, the children do too, and spontaneously ask for more.

The world in which we meditate is in some ways comparable to that of the Desert Fathers at the end of the Roman Empire. It is our duty to reassess our ideas about the contemplative life. Meditation is no longer only for a spiritual elite, nor is it a cozy escape, like reading a book by the fire while idly waiting for dinner. Jesus said, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.” (John 6:56). There is an obvious sacramental meaning to this. Yet a sacrament is a visible sign of a hidden, inner reality. No one can approach this reality for us. It is something we must do for ourselves.

Fr. Laurence also spoke about “Sharing the Gift.” Jesus, observes Fr. Laurence, is our ultimate teacher, our gift. Having received a gift, we have a responsibility to share it. If we don’t, it deteriorates into a possession. He reflects, on



the 25th anniversary of John Main’s death, that Father John was part of a deeply Christian tradition. Every time we meditate, we connect with this tradition. Our weekly groups may be simple and small, but they are also powerful, a new manifestation of contemplative Christianity.

Someone recently gave Fr. Laurence a GPS system to help him navigate his way in south London. At the slightest hint of any deviance, the GPS would politely say, “Turn around at the first opportunity.” Here, Fr. Laurence noted, is a metaphor for repentance, for us to re-examine our notions of sin and repentance. For St. Augustine, the punishment is within the sin itself. Yet where sin is, grace is also. The contemplative renewal points to this grace. It is not an ideology, but an experience of being overwhelmed by God’s love.

In his concluding talk, Fr. Laurence spoke about “three elements of the contemplative tradition.” First, there is a sense of mystery and the wonder of existence. The rediscovery of this wonder is the beginning of our journey, immediately connecting us with the mystical tradition. Second, we should consider asceticism as an important response to consumerism – our liberation from over-indul-

gence. We must free ourselves from mistaken notions of asceticism, involving unhealthy ideas of self-punishment. The word asceticism means ‘exercise’, as in the training of an athlete. Our society may have been numbed into a consumerist mentality, but asceticism in this literal sense of the word is our solution. Fasting, almsgiving and prayer are our weapons. Finally, we must pray. In the words of Origen, “We do not pray to get benefits from God, but to become like God.”

*We do not pray
to get benefits
from God,
but to become
like God.*

– Origen

– Derek Cameron
Vancouver, BC

From the National Coordinator

Support Your Christian Meditation Community

Dear Friends,

I must admit that it was a few years after becoming a meditator that I began to take an interest in the wider Christian Meditation Community. If I could manage to go to the weekly group meeting and do my meditation on some sort of a regular basis then that was the extent of it. It wasn't until I became more involved with the national community as a regional coordinator that I began to get an appreciation for the amazing work that the Canadian Community is able to accomplish. For example:

- The National Council keeps the regions in touch with each other, providing resources, support and encouragement.
- Members of the council organise the School for Meditators which provides an opportunity to deepen one's meditation practice and become confident in talking to others about meditation.
- The National Resource Centre provides a wide selection of material and publications which enrich our meditation practice.

Then I became aware that it actually takes money to do all

of this! I thought "Isn't it great that all those keen meditators support this ministry?" And then it dawned on me – "Wait a minute. I'm one of those keen meditators myself, so I could (and perhaps should) contribute to this work."

If my experience echoes your own in some way, then this is your chance! In this issue of Newsnotes we have our annual fundraising campaign to support the life and work of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community. It is named in honour of a person who was central to the early years of formation of the meditation community in Canada – Doreen Romandini.

Please take time to read the flyer for the Doreen Romandini Memorial Fund which you will find inserted in this edition of Newsnotes and consider whether you will be able to make a financial gift to ensure the continuing good work of our national network.

Thank you for your participation in and support for the Canadian Christian Meditation Community.

– **Phil Barnett, National Coordinator**
phil.barnett@mts.net

Practicalities of Practice

Q. What if I fall asleep during meditation?

A. Firstly don't feel guilty about falling asleep. God loves us asleep or awake. The very fact we are sitting to meditate is a sign that we are open to silence and God's presence. The problem of sleepiness can be bothersome to a small minority of meditators, but it can also be reassuring. It tells us that our nervous system and the chattering monkeys on our mind have begun to slow down.

Let's deal with the problem. In meditation we are trying to be open to two different things: be alert and yet, at the same time, be relaxed. When we doze off, the relaxation aspect of meditation has taken over from our alertness and concentration. As we persevere in the discipline and grow in atten-

tion to saying the mantra and listening to the sound of the mantra, wakefulness should deepen with the stillness, and there is less of a tendency to doze off.

Sleeping during meditation can have a number of causes. We need to ask ourselves a few questions. Did I get enough sleep last night? Am I meditating late in the evening when I may be extremely tired? Am I meditating after drinking alcohol? Am I meditating too soon after a heavy meal? The digestion of food slows down our brain wave pattern and metabolism. This leads to a lack of wakeful attention to the mantra and consequently dozing off. It is best to meditate

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NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR

COMING HOME IN OTTAWA

In April and May 2007, the Ottawa area committee launched its first six-week “Introduction to Christian Meditation” series. There was great response – 33 registrants – and a long waiting list. Below, you will find comments from participant Pauline Skinner:

It was a tiny advertisement on the back page of the local paper that caught my soul’s eye. An introduction to Christian meditation series was to be held at Emmanuel United Church. I called the following day.

“What is Meditation?” was the subject of the first session. I felt a strange sense of belonging and readiness as we meditated together for the first time. The following week we learned from Francie D’Annunzio about Father John Main. Murielle Smith came on the third evening to explain the “Roots of Our Tradition”. I left that night feeling I had received a rare gift that I might share with others. In the fourth session, Nyla Staulus introduced the “Wheel of Prayer”. From her enthusiasm on the subject I have retained this thought: ‘We go into the quiet center and come out transformed by entering the silence.’ If great art is the ability to make the complex look simple, then Ron Dicks succeeded with his enlightening talk on “Leaving the Self Behind” in the fifth session. He reminded us to set our hearts on God’s kingdom first and that kingdom is within us. To truly know that we are loved completely, always and unconditionally is very transforming.

All the teachers were gracious in sharing their personal journeys in meditation. Don spoke of the need to attend a weekly group, for there are dry, desert periods in each meditator’s journey when discouragement is the greatest enemy to meditation. He encouraged us to stay on the path of simplicity, to be forgiving of ourselves and to persevere. “Meditation will become a way of life and lead us to oneness with God, ourselves and others. When nothing happens we are on the right path,” he said.

The last evening we had a celebration with all the teachers present. Refreshments, including a “Ma-ra-na-tha” cake, were served. More importantly, we chatted, asked more questions and expressed gratitude for the gift of meditation.

– Pauline Skinner
Ottawa, ON

MIDSUMMER GETAWAY IN MONTEBELLO

The tranquil lake encircled by tree-lined hills was a perfect place to escape the busyness of the city, if only for an afternoon. On the grounds of Sedburgh Academy, a private school near scenic Montebello, Quebec, 30 meditators came from Ottawa, Montreal and points more distant on July 14.



Meditators share picnic activity

We shared one another’s company, a pot luck meal, a tape of a talk by John Main, and a time of silence.

With the lake in front of us, it was a peaceful place to meditate, though some were so relaxed they feared falling off the rocks and taking a tumble into the lake. They prudently moved to chairs. Afterwards, the attendees gathered at a long table to share a veritable feast.

No better way to work off the pleasant effects of other people’s cooking than with a paddle in a canoe (plus a few show tunes and songs remembered from camp days) and a swim. This July’s unpredictable weather put an end to the festivities by mid-afternoon with a sizeable downpour. But as we scurried back to the road, we carried with us the cumulative effects of meditation held in lush, verdant surroundings, good conversation and very satisfied tummies.

– Cathy Nobleman, Jonathan Kaplansky
Montreal, QC

MANITOBA

In sadness we share the peaceful passing of Yolande Rheault, on October 4, 2007 at St. Boniface Hospital. Yolande was a pioneer coordinator in Manitoba for several years. She made people feel full of life, she was an asset to the community. She travelled to many conferences in Canada. She helped organize workshops and conferences in Manitoba. She put together many photo albums for the community at her own costs. Yolande also picked up Father Laurence at the airport and many other people as well throughout her given time. Yolande led a meditation group and practised meditation for at least 20 years and shared the teachings. Yolande we love you and will miss your beautiful presence.

– Karen Deley

The School: Sharing the Gift



The 11th School for Christian Meditation in Canada was held at Belcourt Centre, South Rustico, Prince Edward Island from June 1-3, 2007. The event was organized by Sr. Kathleen Bolger and Norma Hannouch with the Resource Team, Rev. Glenda Meakin and Michel Legault.

There was a great diversity among participants in regard to religious backgrounds, spiritual stories, and years of involvement in the teachings of John Main. However, there was a definite commonality in the desire to become more open to the Spirit within us.

The School was very beneficial to me as a novice in Christian meditation. To recognize the different paths leading to Christian meditation, the unity within that diversity, the roots of that tradition and the key elements of the teaching of John Main was most enlightening for me.

I realized I am not alone on the journey, and the distractions and barriers which I experience are no different from others. To focus on the presence of Jesus, to listen and to allow that

relationship to grow, comes only with commitment and sincerity in following John Main's teachings. One of the highlights for me was 'Stages of the Journey', facilitated by Glenda. Her interpretation of the story of the Exodus and how it related to our spiritual development was inspiring.

On Sunday, before the liturgy service, we explored the teaching model from "A Pearl of Great Price", through a dialogue presentation, and found it contained a wealth of wisdom about groups. At the end of the morning, each participant was sent forth to communicate and nurture the practice of meditation.

I truly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the School. I encourage others, whether intending to facilitate a group or to deepen their own faith journey, to attend a School in their region.

**– Anna Duffy
Fort Augustus, PE**

Vancouver National Conference

Bede Griffiths

When Bede Griffiths' first experience of God in nature as a schoolboy led him eventually to the Catholic Church and then to a Benedictine monastery, he believed that he had reached the end of his spiritual search for God. However, as Michel Legault told us in his workshop focusing on this 20th-century holy man and mystic, Bede's journey had only just begun. For some years Bede had studied Hindu holy books and had become convinced that in the Western Church, "we were living from one half of our soul, from the conscious, rational level and [that] we needed to discover the other half, the unconscious, intuitive dimension." He jumped at the invitation in 1955 to go to India where he hoped, in his famous phrase, "to discover the other half of my soul."

In Kengeri near Bangalore, Bede embraced what he conceived of as a simple life and was shocked later to discover that this simplicity – studying at a desk with a chair, eating with forks and knives, sleeping on wooden beds – was 'unheard-of luxury' in the neighbouring village. Thus years later when he was invited to Kerala, South India to establish a monastic foundation, Bede decided to change his style of life and adopt the customs of the Hindu holy man, the *sannyasi*. Like them, he and his monks wore the

saffron-coloured robe, went barefoot, sat on the floor for prayer and meals, but perhaps most importantly, they took up the practice of meditation, spending an hour at dawn and at dusk in silent communion with God. Bede spent the last 25 years of his life in yet another ashram, Shantivanam, living according to the Rule of Saint Benedict while also integrating many elements of the Hindu tradition, focusing on contemplative prayer and inter-religious dialogue.

In the 1980s he met with Fr. Laurence both at the Montreal Priory and in Shantivanam and in 1991 Bede was the guest speaker at the World Community for Christian Meditation's annual John Main Seminar. He believed that through meditation people of different religious faiths could transcend their differences, and that 'the contemplative life must be seen as a calling for humanity today'.

An hour to hear about Bede Griffiths was too short. Michel Legault's presentation left us eager to learn more. *The Golden String* is Bede's autobiography telling of his early life and conversion. His sequel, *The Marriage of East and West*, details his journey to and life in India. You can also listen to Bede online at New Dimensions Media.

– Wendy McGee
Vancouver, BC

Evagrius Ponticus

Through his presentation on Evagrius Ponticus and the Roots of Christian Meditation, Michael Hryniuk allowed participants to understand how this fourth-century scholar's thought continues to influence our spiritual growth today.

Michael, who recently served as associate director of the John Main Centre for Meditation and Inter-religious dialogue at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., has recently been appointed as the executive director of the Henri Nouwen Society in Richmond Hill, Ontario. He spoke with gratitude of his introduction to Christian meditation at the age of seventeen. He finds that it has provided a method for him to channel his love for God into his life and that this grounding has allowed him to pursue studies in theology, psychology, and spirituality. This has allowed him to help others move through their brokenness to an awareness of God's healing love in their lives.

Much of his path has been influenced by Evagrius Ponticus. Though he is little known today Evagrius' influence on modern spirituality is strong since he advanced the idea that humanity can come into contact with the Divine which is the centre of its essence. He also influenced his student, John Cassian who taught Benedict and the many contem-

platives who have followed in his path. Michael spoke of this lineage and how these ideas remain active in the Christian meditation tradition.

One main precept is the centrality of the human being's capacity to centre on God. This connection allows the meditator to focus and to connect with the healing presence of divine love at the centre of his/her life. Through the repetition of the sacred word the meditator recovers this essential human nature which can easily be obscured through over-activity. This connection with the divine at the centre of our nature allows for a deep healing of the attitudes that separate us from ourselves and others.

This presentation left me with gratitude for the many thinkers and contemplatives who have gone before us. Even many centuries after their death, their lives continue to influence us as we use their inspiration to lead us to the Divine. This influence is evident in John Main's understanding of Christian meditation and in our return to our centre through practicing this way of meeting the divine at our centre.

– Lucie Legault
Cantley, QC

Vancouver National Conference

New Companions for the Journey

One of the workshops provided during the 2007 National Conference of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community was presented by Rev. Glenda Meakin. This interactive workshop's title was "Love Bade Me Welcome" after the poem called "Love" by George Herbert (1593-1633).

Glenda indicated the poet is describing a conversation between us and God (Love). While we often feel unworthy, the poet states God accepts and embraces us as we are. We can join the banquet that God wants to serve to us. God will serve us the food we require for the journey. We agree to join at the table of God's Love when we enter into our practice of meditation.

Glenda asked the group to consider individuals who have influenced us on our journey. While some indicated personal contacts, many indicated the writings of Fathers John and Lawrence, among other writers, as being a profound influence.

Glenda had chosen several mystics to introduce to us in order that we might be aware of other companions at God's

table, in addition to those we named, to nourish us on our journey. In small groups, we discussed several quotations from early, medieval and modern companions. The three groups learned from these Ammas and Abbas that we can among other things: let God in and take risks; let go of good and bad and be simple; let go of our neat gardens; enter wilderness and let go of control. However, we need to deal with the temptations of the world because they travel the journey with us and they need to be addressed. We can ask ourselves: does our life reflect God's love? Are the contemplative and action-taking parts of our lives in harmony?

Glenda provided a bibliography of the mystics' writings. This will lead us to learn more as we work toward enriching our journey. As always, Glenda reminds us that we can let others know they are invited to the table of love. It is always a blessing to engage in a workshop with Glenda who refreshes us as she nurtures and teaches.

– Karen Fraser
Winnipeg, MB

The Canadian Christian Meditation Community

MEDITATIO

La communauté de méditation chrétienne du Canada

Registered Charity

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures

	2006	2005		2006	2005
Revenues:					
Donations			Communications	1,031	1,637
Newsletter	\$11,609	\$10,900	Equipment	1,943	0
National Resource Centre	10,706	24,277	Insurance	0	1,291
School	960	5,321	Bank Charges	316	513
Friends	6,910	4,165	Transportation ⁵	0	1,733
Canadian Council	50	1,331	Newsletter (printing and postage)	14,611	17,430
Grants	32,386	12,500	Publications	16,984	14,209
Publications	18,714	26,214	Sales Tax Paid	3,584	4,363
School revenues	21,303	–	Grants & Donations		
National Conference	0	5,787	Donations to MCQ & WCCM	18,351	5,250
Royalties	267	805	Travel	7,306	5,827
Sales Tax Recovery	2,693§	2,619	School	15,254	5,157
Interest from GICs	270	–	Retreats	1,593	3,798
Total Revenues	\$105,868	\$93,919	Canadian Council	1,883	1,650
			National Conference	0	961
			JMS 2007 Loan	7,000	–
Expenditures:			Friends WCCM	3,320	4,390
National Resource Centre			Total Expenditures	\$104,065	\$79,128
Rent & Utilities	\$8,300	\$8,095	Excess of Revenues over Expenses	\$1,803	\$14,791
Office Supplies & Postage	2,585	4,557			

– Mark Schofield, secretary/treasurer

If you have any questions concerning the financial statement, please contact the secretary/treasurer at 514-485-7928 or at christianmeditation@bellnet.ca or by mail at P.O.Box 552 Station NDG, Montreal, QC, H4A 3P9

The past five years of financial reports can be found on the Revenue Canada website, under the Charities Division.

Calendar of Events

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

November 2007

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

3 Nov., Morrisburg, ON. Introductory presentation on Christian Meditation: *Living Water: Return to the Source*. Led by Ron Dicks. Time: 9:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Venue: St. James Church Hall, High Street, Morrisburg. RSVP and information: Robin Lane 613-543-3412 or <robin.lane@persona.ca>.

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

10 Nov., Winnipeg, MB. *Meditation as a path to inner harmony*, led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. St. Peter's Anglican Church, 755 Elm St.. Winnipeg. 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Registration via: Karen Fraser 204-831-0706.

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

21 Nov., Charlottetown, PE. *An Evening with St. Benedict* – Do you know how St. Benedict lived? A reflective evening on his life, rule, prayer as we prepare for Advent. Time: 7:00-8:30 p.m. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or <kbolger@peimarthas.ca>.

29 Nov., Toronto, ON. *Meditation in Prisons* led by Nenates Pineda, Asst. Exec. Director of Freeing the Human Spirit. 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>.

30 Nov., Stittsville, ON. *Introduction to Christian Meditation*. Led by Paul Harris. Directed towards members of Corpus, National Capital Region. Contact: Jim Noonan at 613-831-1760 or <jnoonan@can.rogers.com>

December 2007

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

1 Dec., Ottawa, ON. *Yearning and Longing: Living in Advent Time*. Led by Rev. Kevin Flynn. Chapel, St. Paul University, Main Chapel (2nd floor Laframboise Pavilion, south of main building), 249 Main Street, Ottawa. Free parking in the north parking lot, entry at the Hazel St. intersection. Time: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m, with registration starting at 9:30 a.m. Contact: Anne Louise Mahoney, 613-730-2060 or <annelou11@sympatico.ca>.

3-17 Dec., Charlottetown, PE. *Labyrinth Walks – A gift to ourselves during Advent to set aside time in busy schedules to come to a quiet place within*. Time: 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 2:00-4:00 p.m. Intro evenings on Mondays only from 6:00-6:30 followed by the Walk. Venue and contacts – see 21 Nov., above.

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

7-9 Dec., Sarasota, Florida. *Unity in Contemplation – A Dialogue on Contemplative Prayer and the spiritual urgency of our age*. A special weekend with Laurence Freeman and Thomas Keating. For details, please see International Section, page 1.

13 Dec., Toronto, ON. *The Life and Teaching of Dom John Main* led by Joseph Clarkson. Venue, time and contacts – see 29 Nov., above.

30 Dec., Charlottetown PE. *Christian Meditation Memorial Service* – To celebrate John Main's life and legacy on the 25th anniversary of his death, all PEI Christian meditators are invited to a time of prayer and special memorial service. Time: 1:30-3:00 p.m. Venue and contacts – see 21 Nov., above.

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



Our new National Coordinator, Phil Barnett, is presented with service apron

National Coordinator – Rev. Phil Barnett

During our National Conference in Vancouver, Sr. Kathleen introduced Rev. Phil Barnett, our new National Coordinator, to the wider Canadian Community. This is a summary of her introduction.

Phil was born in the UK, married Barbara, and in 1965 they emigrated to Canada. They have three children and six grandchildren. He was employed as an engineer by Canadian General Electric, and later became manager of the computer centre at Whiteshell Nuclear Research Ltd.

During his years of work, Phil discerned a call from God to become a priest. He studied Theology at St. John's College, Winnipeg, and was ordained an Anglican priest in 1981. Phil has served in three parishes in Winnipeg, and will be retiring, in February 2008, from St. Peter's Anglican Church where he has ministered for the past sixteen years.

He has carried out love and service, not only as a parish priest, but also generously served as an Archdeacon, Canon of St. John's Cathedral, member of the General Synod, of the financial development committee and of Primate's World Relief and Development Fund. Squeezed in among his priestly commitments he enjoys curling, cycling, camping, cross country skiing, photography, yoga, plus other interests.

Besides his minimal time for social activities, you are probably wondering if he has taken any extended free time for himself? The answer is yes. He took a three-month sabbatical in South Africa eighteen years ago (1989), and a one-month internship at the Centre for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, seven years ago (2000).

Phil has been a meditator for fifteen years, is presently Regional Coordinator of Christian Meditation for Manitoba and northwestern Ontario and a member of the editorial team for NewsNotes.

Addendum: At the National Conference in Vancouver in June, Fr. Laurence presented him with an apron, decorated with an artistic symbol representing the World Community and each Canadian region. We hope that this apron assures Phil of our love and support in his new role as our leader, and in his continuing service to WCCM and CCMC.

**– Sr. Kathleen Bolger
Charlottetown, PE**

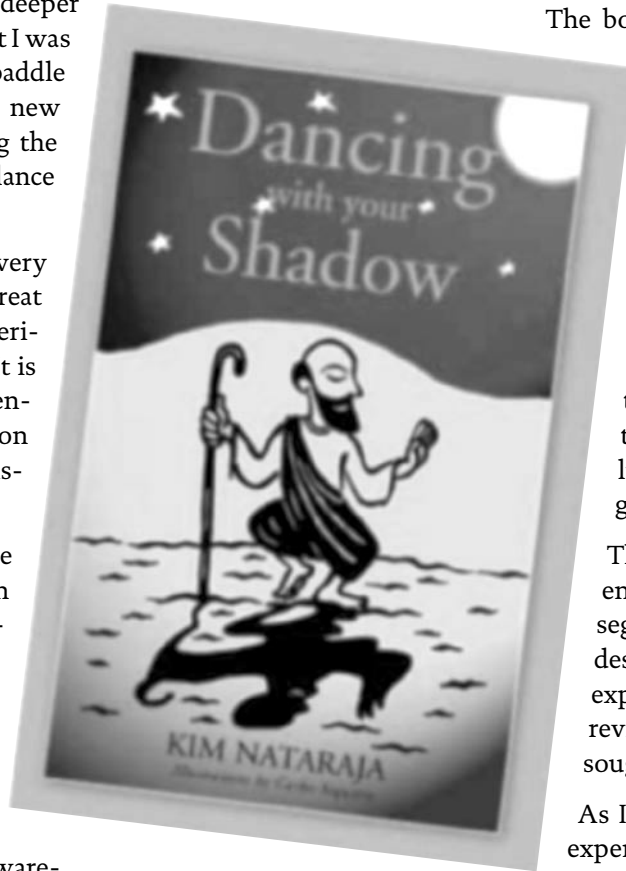
Response to a Summer Reading of *Dancing with your Shadow* by Kim Nataraja

I read this book during the summer and compare the experience with a canoe trip on a mighty river. Reading this book, I felt carried into the depths of deeper knowledge. At times, I felt that I was drifting and would suddenly paddle around a bend and receive a new revelation which would bring the mind and heart together in balance and harmony.

The book is written by a very experienced and insightful retreat leader with many years of experience in teaching meditation. It is a very practical and comprehensive explanation of meditation and its revolutionary and transformative effects.

The book clearly articulates the integration of the whole person through the practice of meditation. The use of frequent quotations from literature, philosophy and wisdom traditions adds flair and is a real treat for anyone who enjoys reading. I resonated positively with a quote on awareness from the Wizard of Oz, “but you are home, cries the witch of the North, all you have to do is wake up!” (pg 131). A liberal sprinkling of John Main and Laurence Freeman was to be expected and I particularly enjoyed Kim’s use of their explanation of the ego and living at the level of ego as a level “of our surface thoughts, images and feelings: [the]

chaotic din of a mind ravaged by so much exposure to trivia and distraction” (p. 142).



The book’s structure includes a foreword by Fr. Laurence and an introduction to meditation. The author argues that our transformation is a like a dance, “a dance of integration of the ego and its shadow, of the ego and the self, of the self and the Ultimate Reality” (p.19). The eight major chapters include tremendous depth from a number of wisdom traditions to explain the transformative effects of meditation. The epilogue reviews the topic of the roots of Christian meditation. Her listed bibliography is a comprehensive guide to future reading.

The content is very practical for experienced and for new meditators, including a segment on preparing for meditation. This description is concise but the instructions explaining the technique of meditation reviews the mind/body harmony that is sought and encourages good practice.

As I completed the last page, I felt that the experience of reading this book was like being given a great gift and as the journey was completed, I had a desire to reread the book. I am certain that I will return again to this book in another season and look forward to enjoying where it takes me.

Editor’s Note: Kim will be speaking in Ottawa and in Toronto in late October 2007.

– Rea Lane
Charlottetown, PE

Practicalities of Practice *continued from page 3*

before a meal or, if this is not possible, to wait at least one hour after a meal before meditating.

One way to counteract sleepiness is to splash cold water on your face or even take a quick bath or shower before meditation. At times though one will need to dispel drowsiness and make a real effort to be alert. When you feel a doze coming on, check your posture and breathing, and make a

conscious effort to deal with the problem.

But one must not feel guilty about falling asleep. Again, God is present in sleep as in waking. Our role is simply to make the effort to stay awake and perhaps recall the words of Jesus to his disciples, “Could you not watch one hour with me?” (Mark 14:37).



Metamorphosis

Today I watched an amazing event – the first flight of a monarch butterfly, newly emerged from its cocoon. The story began a few weeks ago when my wife Barbara brought a caterpillar indoors. We had watched the yellow, black and white striped caterpillars grow day by day. Grandchildren were excited and delighted to see as many as 30 on the milkweed at one time. Then the caterpillars began to disappear as they crawled away to find a place to pupate, so Barbara brought one inside for us to watch. One day, the caterpillar moved to the top of the enclosure and hung down in a j-shape. The next morning it was still the same when I came back from my bike ride, but 10 minutes later when I glanced at it there was already a dramatic change. Before our eyes, it seemed as if it was being covered in a smooth green skin. In fact, the caterpillar was shedding its skin, a process that was all over in just two or three minutes and the cocoon became a beautiful dark green with a thin gold band.

After almost two weeks, we could see the orange colour of the wings inside the cocoon. Later, we saw the butterfly outside the cocoon with its wings still somewhat crumpled and hanging limply down. It was quite breathtaking to see this sight and to have witnessed the transformation that

had taken place. Gradually the wings began to strengthen and there was some tentative movement as the wings opened slightly. The colours were so vivid. Two hours later we witnessed the moment of first flight – a short, uncertain journey across the garden, alighting on a flower. The colours were even more brilliant as it flew in the sunlight. The butterfly rested for a while, flexing its wings slowly, then another short flight. It seemed to stay for a longer time now, perhaps resting after its exertion. Then it flew up and over the fence and away. What a privilege it was to have seen all this take place and to marvel at the complexity of life and to be in awe of the Creator.

For almost two weeks there seemed to be nothing happening as the cocoon just hung there. But the transformation was taking place. We can often feel that “nothing is happening” when we meditate. But transformation is taking place within us, by the grace of God. It does seem to take longer than two weeks though! In fact it is a lifelong process, which we enable by our daily practice of meditation.

– Phil Barnett
Winnipeg, MB

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Remembering John Main

Rest in the Lord

Like most of us, my first introduction to John Main was by audiotape. The previous ten years had been a time of spiritual searching and finally, in John Main's teaching, I had found a spiritual path that made sense. It brought with it a sense of homecoming and of having found at last what I had been seeking. It wasn't long however, before there were questions that needed answers and a real need for some kind of support. At the time there were no meditation groups in Ottawa and I didn't know anyone who was on a similar path, at least not in the Christian tradition. On a hunch, I found Father John's phone number in the Montreal phone book. I made the call and arranged to meet him at the priory in Montreal.

I remember the visit to this day. It was a beautiful Saturday in May. Following noonday office and meditation I was invited for lunch, and then after lunch Father John and I had our little chat on the veranda of the old house on Rue Vendome. What initially struck me most about him was his authenticity and authority; an authority that actually gave authentication to his teaching. But there was also the air of a happy camper, at ease with himself and others, with great kindness and an impish sense of humour.

On one particular visit, I was seeking answers to a very specific issue. Just as the fruits of meditation flow into our daily lives, for some of us there are also times – especially (but not exclusively) in the early stages – when things seem to go in reverse and the busyness of day to day life can inundate our meditation like a tidal wave. This is exactly what was happening. I was in what was arguably the busiest period of my life; a father of two under the age of two, a husband, a homeowner, in mid-career in my work situation, as well as having some community involvement and maintaining

an active social life. It was all taking a toll on my meditation practice. My response to all of this was to “attack” the meditation in much the same way a construction worker would attack a block of granite with a jackhammer. Needless to say, this did nothing but increase the speed of the treadmill that I was trying to get off. Father John listened patiently to my rant and then gave me four words of advice that I still remember to this day. In fact it is a phrase that I recall often, especially during these times when I seem to be getting pulled in several directions all at once. His advice to me was to simply “rest in the Lord.” “Rest in the Lord”, so simple and yet says it all. Perhaps they are words that all of us need to hear at certain points on the journey especially when life gets a little crazy or when we go through one of those periods when things are a bit stormy on the psychological front.

It was in those private little chats that I came to realize another of his perhaps not so well known gifts as a teacher, and that was the way he dealt with people on a one-to-one basis. He had a wonderful ability to zero in on a problem and formulate a solution that was clear, concise, and simple. It wasn't till many years later that I realized that this was how his monastic forebears, the desert fathers, most likely taught (not the only parallel between his life and theirs). The monastic adage from that desert era “Father, give us a word” would generally be met with a similar teaching by one of the desert fathers. Whether it was a conscious decision on his part to teach in this manner, or if it was just his own natural way of dealing with questions I don't really know; in any case, it was a way that I personally found very effective.

– Don Myrick
Ottawa, ON

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