

# Canadian Christian Meditation Community

NEWSNOTES WINTER 2007 VOL. 16 NO. 4 THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

## The 2007 John Main Seminar Celebrates the 25th Anniversary of Benedictine John Main's Life



*At Saint-Benoît-du-Lac*

The 25th anniversary of the life of Benedictine monk John Main (1926-1982) was celebrated at the John Main Seminar in Orford, Quebec, October 18-21. It brought together over 200 participants—speakers, teachers of spirituality, meditators and the general public from around the world—to join in a three-day colloquium on the influence of this extraordinary spiritual teacher and prophet. Keynote speakers, addressing a wide range of topics related to John Main's teaching, were: Sarah Bachelard, Anglican priest, holder of a doctorate in moral theology, and lecturer in theology at St. Marks National Theological College, Australia; Laurence Freeman, director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, and a Benedictine monk of the Olivetan Congregation; Balfour Mount, founding director

of the Royal Victoria Hospital Palliative Care Service in Montreal; Peter Ng, chief executive of the Singapore Investment Corporation; Yvon Thérout, professor of religion and former chair of Méditation chrétienne du Québec; and Charles Taylor, a Companion of the Order of Canada and eminent Canadian philosopher, recently awarded the prestigious Templeton prize for his groundbreaking work in connecting philosophy with social science and spirituality.

Today, the seeds planted in Montreal, where John Main founded a Benedictine monastery, have grown to embrace meditators in over 100 countries, with 2,000 Christian meditation groups meeting on a weekly basis. In addition a

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## John Main Seminar *continued*

flood of books on his life and teaching, and including works by him, have been published this year. They are: *Word into Silence; A Manual for Christian Meditation; Monastery without Walls: the spiritual letters of John Main; Door to Silence: an Anthology for Christian Meditation by John Main;* and a book with memories and tributes from meditators and friends around the world, entitled *John Main by Those who Knew Him*. In addition, a new book was launched at the John Main Seminar, entitled *Coming Home: Teaching Christian Meditation to Children*.

John Main believed the practice of Christian meditation creates community and felt this was of great significance for peace in a divided world. The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM), founded in 1991 and located in London, England, coordinates the world-wide growth of groups. Most recently the WCCM has been invited to teach meditation in countries such as Poland, Latvia and, next year, in Russia.

Many tributes over the years affirm John Main's contribution to contemporary spirituality. Before his death, the famous author of *The Golden String*, Benedictine Bede Griffiths, wrote from India: "In my experience John Main is the most important spiritual guide in the Church today. Fr. John has opened the way to the direct experience of God, of truth, of reality, from within the Christian tradition. He was a man of great wisdom, and above all of great love. I do not know of any other method of meditation leading to the experience of the love of God in Christ than that of John Main."

Dr. Rowan Williams, Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, has stated: "John Main effectively put the desert tradition of prayer to work in our day. The roots of his distinctive spirituality lie deep in the fourth and fifth centuries, especially in the works of that great expositor of the desert world, John Cassian. The World Community for Christian Medi-

tation which continues his mission is for me, as for many throughout the world, a taste of what a committed contemplative Church might look and feel like."

Franciscan Richard Rohr OFM, an American spiritual teacher and author, recently said: "John Main, by going to the roots of spirituality, laid a solid and radical foundation for social critique and social involvement. John Main teaches us to move beyond all images for the sake of powerlessness. I have personally been gifted by the wisdom of this man."

John Main's teaching on prayer is today being handed down primarily in small groups of meditators meeting weekly in homes, churches, schools, hospitals, work places and other locations. "Newcomers" can learn how to meditate, and ongoing meditators receive the support and encouragement to continue the daily practice of meditation in their own lives each morning and evening. Meditation bridges the gap between rich and poor, and is practiced in groups meeting in prisons in many countries.

Since his death on December 30, 1982, John Main's influence has coincided with a remarkable worldwide renewal and return to the practice of contemplative prayer. John Main tells us that to be with God does not require words, thoughts or images, but the silent consciousness of a Presence. He reminds us that the spiritual pilgrimage invites us to have the courage more and more to become silent. The journey starts, says John Main, when we accept the daily discipline of silence, stillness and simplicity.

Note: The WCCM sponsors an international website <[www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)> and has recently started a new website for young spiritual seekers <[www.thespiritualsolution.com](http://www.thespiritualsolution.com)>.

– Paul Harris  
Ottawa, ON

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### MORE SEMINAR REPORTS ON PAGES C6 and C7

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*Each time we meditate, we take a step further into this wakefulness, this state of being in light. And the more fully we integrate this basic Christian experience into our ordinary daily life the more deeply wakeful we become. This makes our life a journey of discovery, an exploration, a constantly renewed miracle of created vitality.*

– John Main, *The Present Christ*, page 73

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# From the National Coordinator

One day this fall I was looking after my three-year-old grandson Elijah. One of our regular excursions is to the pet store. I got everything ready to go in the car, but Elijah wanted to walk. It would take a lot longer, but it was a nice day and that was what he wanted to do, so off we went. Not ten feet down the road he paused to examine some stones on the roadway. These were quite fascinating to him so we spent a few minutes admiring the various colours and shapes and sizes. A little further along he stopped to watch some geese flying overhead—they were in an A-shape, he pointed out. Then it was balancing on the curb, followed by running up and down a slope. Then he spent ten minutes exploring the possibilities of the hitch and safety chain on a tent trailer that we passed. I soon came to realise that the purpose of the walk was not to get to the pet store, which was my agenda. The purpose was the walk itself, and all that happened on the way was just as interesting as the destination, maybe even more interesting. So I settled in and relaxed into the experience of the journey.

In relating this to meditation, we can sometimes become too concerned about getting to the destination. We have some goals and objectives about our life with God and

worry about how we are doing. Or we are aware of some personality traits which we hope are being changed as one of the fruits of meditation, and worry about our progress, or lack of it. The Elijah story would say “don’t worry about getting to the pet store, simply enjoy the journey”—enter into the practice of meditation and enjoy it for itself.

Another learning for me was about the importance of living in the present moment and savouring the experiences of life. Living attentively in the present moment is also an aspect of our meditation practice. Too often, though, I find that my attention is drawn to “getting to the pet store.” My mind wanders to the things that I need to do—the seemingly important agenda that I want to accomplish. So then it’s back to the mantra—again! At times the agenda items even seem more important than taking the time to sit down to meditate. The Elijah story says to me “the agenda can wait. Take time to enjoy the journey. Take time to meditate.”

Children have much to teach us. The trick is to put the learning into practice!

– Phil Barnett  
Winnipeg, MB

## The School: Workshops in Ontario Region 2008

Two School **Workshops on the Essential Teaching**, coordinated by Michel Legault, past National Coordinator of CCMC, will be held in Ontario in 2008.

The School takes place over a weekend and is for persons who have been committed to the twice-daily practice of Christian meditation for at least two years, and who are ready to share this teaching with others in weekly groups or in other venues. The weekend is designed to be very interactive and focused on small group presentations and discussions. Each participant receives a copy of *A Presenter’s Resource Book*. This resource book is designed to help the ordinary meditator with teaching about meditation in a simple and clear way.

The school will be offered at **The Marguerite Centre**, Pembroke, April 11-13, 2008. Cost: \$150 per person, including meals and accommodation. Deadline for registration: March 22.

The school will also be offered at **Providence Spirituality Centre**, Kingston, May 30-June 1, 2008. Cost: \$170 per person, including meals and accommodation. Deadline for registration: May 10.

For further information please contact:

Ron Dicks  
Coordinator Ontario Region  
email <rdicks@rogers.com>  
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### Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

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# NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR



*Advent retreat in Ottawa*

## **YEARNING AND LONGING: LIVING IN ADVENT TIME**

On December 1, more than 70 meditators from the Ottawa area made their way through snow under an aquamarine sky to the seminary chapel of St. Paul University for a day-long Advent retreat. On what, for many, would be the first big shopping day of the Christmas season, this group felt the desire to understand the gifts, as well as the discipline, of Advent, and to mark its beginning together.

Fr. Kevin Flynn, Director of Anglican Studies at St. Paul's and leader of a Christian meditation group there, facilitated the retreat. He divided the day into two, two-hour sessions. Weaving passages of Old and New Testament scripture into his reflections, he examined the ways in which Advent pulls us in two directions: Advent speaks of our deep longing for a more beautiful, more bearable world, but Advent also calls us to repentance, to change and redirect our disordered desires. After speaking on each theme, Fr. Flynn led us in Taizé chants, quiet reflection, yoga exercises, and 30 minutes of silent meditation.

The rhythm of the day, the chapel's pastel blue ceiling, stained glass windows and ivory columns, first illuminating, then shadowing with the sun's passing, all supported the Advent themes.

We begin Advent desiring to discover an ancient beauty forgotten or lost - nothing less, in Fr. Flynn's words, than "the beautiful vision of God." No longer children under the spell of Christmas decorations and long-awaited gifts, we still have "a deep longing to see, stare, behold, hold and

be held, which Beauty stirs up in us." But when this desire becomes a distraction or an addiction, we need the prophet in the wilderness reminding us to turn back, to redirect our desire to God, who truly satisfies.

Advent, then, is about how "we both want God and don't want God." We experience this in our practice of meditation. We experience this in our failure as individuals and as a society to prevent or heal the horrors of the Holocaust, colonialism, and ecological collapse, and in our persistence in making idols of our religious longings. During Advent, "the way of meditation offers a salutary corrective: we leave behind the names, images, constructs we have of God, and rely simply on our longing for God to show Himself in the astonishing love of His message made human flesh for us."

As daylight diminished and the group dispersed, we took with us the message that "Christmas comes as the moment of recognition, when what we've always secretly known and longed for comes among us in fleshly reality." In our various places of worship we will sing "O Come, Emmanuel". And our mantra, Maranatha, will echo our song - "Come, Lord Jesus."

**– Suzanne Nussey  
Ottawa, Ontario**

## **PAUL HARRIS SPEAKS IN THE OTTAWA REGION**

In recent months, Paul Harris has spoken to three Ottawa, and Ottawa Valley Associations about the teaching and practice of Christian Meditation. The groups include the

deacons and wives in the Catholic diocese of Pembroke, an evening session with two Arnprior meditation groups led by Mary Sue McCarthy and Jean Anderchek, and a session, Saturday November 24 with Corpus International, a group of former Catholic priests and their wives.

The sessions have included a talk, meditation period, a question and answer session and the provision of hand outs and books on the teaching. In all these talks Paul attempts to get new groups started.

Paul advises that there is considerable enthusiasm for Christian Meditation within these various special interest groups.

### **DANCING WITH YOUR SHADOW: KIM NATARAJA**

After speaking in Ottawa on Oct. 23, 2007, Kim Nataraja repeated her presentation "Dancing with Your Shadow", this time with the Christian Meditation Community of Toronto. Kim spoke about becoming whole and understanding ourselves.

She spoke about integrating the self and the ego on the spiritual path to sixty five meditators. Her stated goal is to help meditators to understand the influences within themselves that can help or hinder progress on the spiritual journey.

Kim was received enthusiastically and answered many questions, even continuing beyond the regular meeting time of this meditation group. Her expertise and willingness to share were evident to everyone who attended this practical presentation.

**– Joseph Clarkson  
Toronto, ON**

### **FREEDING THE HUMAN SPIRIT: MEDITATION IN PRISONS**

On Nov. 29, 2007 Pineda Nenates, Asst. Executive Director of Freeing the Human Spirit, made a presentation to the regular monthly meeting of the Christian Meditation Community of Toronto at Knox College, University of Toronto.

Pineda explained that her work of teaching Zen meditation to prisoners is a part of the ministry to the incarcerated founded by Sr. Elaine MacInnes, a Christian Zen master/teacher. Pineda spoke about her own life in the Philippines and her new life in Canada. She spoke about the work of freeing the human spirit in twelve prisons across Ontario where two teachers work together to teach yoga and meditation.

Pineda talked about her work at OCI (Ontario Correctional Institute) in Brampton where she feels that the prisoners genuinely appreciate her outreach and where they express tremendous appreciation for her weekly visits and teachings. She also offered that the prisoners articulate that they

can feel the peace that radiates from her and look forward each week to her next visit.

During the question and answer period, Pineda explained that Zen meditation focuses upon breath awareness and that she feels a great kinship with members of the Christian Meditation Community.

**– Joseph Clarkson  
Toronto, ON**

### **COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY ROTHESAY, N.B.**

November 27, 2007 at Villa Madonna Retreat House, Sister Kathleen Bolger led a local community of meditators in a prayerful morning of Christian Meditation as taught and encouraged by Father John Main. We reviewed and discussed what Christian Meditation/Contemplative Prayer means in our life. Using scripture and a diagram of the human person, Kathleen, explained where CM both begins and ends. As we gradually tame the ego we will live more fully in the deep center of our being. Our grace will be an awareness of the joy and happiness we can find during our daily happenings. Part of the time was also spent on the great tribute given to John Main at the Orford Seminar.

This group of meditators is where I learned, about seven years ago, to participate in and appreciate Christian Meditation. Four months ago I moved to another city about 90 minutes from Villa Madonna and the Tuesday morning Christian Meditation prayer group. I continue Christian Meditation each day twice a day as a cherished part of my prayer life.

At my new parish in Fredericton, N.B. where I sing with the choir, we often sing a hymn composed by Carey Landry which emphasizes the essence of our Christian Meditation gathering at Villa Madonna. Some of the words in that hymn are:

We are companions on the journey  
No longer strangers with each other  
We are fed and we are nourished  
by the strength of those who care  
We are called by the Word of the Lord  
To act with justice, to love tenderly  
And to walk humbly with our God  
  
We are made for the glory of our God  
For service in the name of Jesus  
To walk side by side with hope in our hearts  
For we believe in the love of our God.

Our morning gathering concluded with a delicious lunch before we departed the warm hospitality at Villa Madonna. Joy and gratitude express our feelings for this time together. We are strengthened for the journey.

**– Eileen Higgins**

## Sarah Bachelard: John Main's Contribution to Contemplative Theology

*Sarah Bachelard is an Anglican priest, holder of a doctorate in moral philosophy, and lecturer in theology at St. Marks National Theological Centre, Australia.*

Any Christian meditator who has ever been challenged to explain the difference between their practice and Buddhist meditation knows how difficult it can be to put Christian meditation into a biblical and theological context. They also know how important their response is for Christians who are being introduced to meditation for the first time. Understanding the theology of meditation is not just important in teaching the practice. It is also essential in the doing. To know something of the “why” of our practice—its theological meaning and purpose—offers great encouragement in persevering. For that reason, John Main spent a great deal of energy placing meditation in its Christian context. While he always placed the practice above theologizing about the practice, he knew that theology was not an “optional extra” for meditators. Theology mattered to Fr. John, and his efforts to articulate the distinctly Christian meaning of meditation not only had great practical value for those who have followed his example, but have also made a significant contribution to contemporary theology as a whole.

Sarah began by citing Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, which she saw as summing up the animating drive behind John Main's teaching: “I pray that, according to the riches of His glory, He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through His Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:16). She then focused on a central principle in Fr. John's writings: that in meditation we verify the truths of faith in our own experience.

As a moral theologian and philosopher, Sarah undertook an “exegesis” on the meaning of this claim in Fr. John's work. She carefully set this statement in context by sharing her own spiritual journey. She struggled, as a young woman, to make herself believe the truth of certain theological propositions in the hope that she could feel she really belonged to the community of faith. Her description of this struggle, which so many Christians experience, opened up the crucial distinction that John Main makes between propositional knowledge and experiential knowledge.

On Christian theology, John Main wrote, a major problem is that so much is focused on thoughts about God that are not derived from direct experience. The solution, he felt, was not to abolish theology but to infuse spiritual life-experience into it, to make it again a living theology generated by

more than the function of reflections on other reflections. For Fr. John, modern Christianity needs a strong, contemplatively generated theology which can engage the intelligence with all of the ideas, problems and movements of modern consciousness” (Way of Unknowing, 115).

According to Sarah, Fr. John's distinct contribution was his unique understanding and emphasis on the need for a quality of spiritual experience that authenticates the truths that we claim to “believe.” Through a masterful analysis of the theological meaning of the term “spiritual experience,” Sarah showed us the importance of Fr. John's emphasis on meditation as the experience of “knowing oneself, in the whole of one's life, as in the process of being shaped by encounter with the Spirit of Christ.”

Meditation, for John Main, is not something we do to acquire a particular set of experiences. It is our pathway into surrendering the very self, the separate, self-conscious identity that looks for experiences to “have” in the first place. It is essentially the “way of unknowing”, in which we die to individual self-consciousness and awaken to the presence and power of the risen Christ dwelling in our hearts. We verify the truths of faith through this experience and the fruits of the Spirit that it bears in our lives.

The classical theological and spiritual tradition has always taught this. In Sarah's view, however, what is new in the teaching of John Main was his retrieval of this ancient Christian understanding of “pure prayer”, and his making it intelligible and accessible to ordinary Christians seeking to walk the path of dispossession in their daily lives. As he put it: “The invitation of Jesus is given to each of us to take up our cross, to follow Him to Calvary and to join Him in His sacrifice and to go through with Him, into the infinite love of the Father” (Moment of Christ, 114).

Hearing the depth and subtlety of Sarah's presentation I, and so many others, were immensely appreciative of the insight she gave us. Her grasp of John Main's contribution to theology offered us a more profound understanding of the gift we have received in Christian meditation—a gift that is more than the re-joining of spirituality and theology, or even the verification of our beliefs in the experience of prayer. It is the gift we receive as we leave self behind, opening to and participating in Christ's own consciousness of God who, as St. Paul reminds us, “has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us” (Romans 5:5).

– Michael Hryniuk  
Richmond Hill, ON



*Attendees from 16 countries*

## **JOHN MAIN SEMINAR 2007**

# **Peter Ng: The Contemplative Executive: Leading from the Heart**

*Peter is Chief Executive of the Singapore Investment Corporation, and a Trustee and Guiding Board member of the WCCM.*

Peter Ng spoke about the frantic busyness in today's corporate world and how travel is taxing the mental and physical health of today's executive. When Peter was in mid-life crisis, he came across meditation. It took him two years to adjust his lifestyle and routine to include two daily meditation periods. From spending long hours after work pursuing trivial activities and socializing with business clients, he learned to say no. "In giving time to meditation, I have gained time because I have discarded the things in my life that are not important." Another benefit: on business travels, the periods of meditation bring stability to his life.

"Meditation," Peter said, "meets the needs of those who sense there is more to life than being producers or consumers." He mentioned that John Main was well aware of the predicament of people in the modern world "rushing around with a flame in their hearts that is always on the verge of going out until they stop to meditate and then the flame flares up and burns brightly." Meditation is an antidote to busyness.

Peter referred to John Main's caution against becoming dehumanized and losing one's freedom in the business world; to stop frantic activity and learn to be still. "Meditation put me on the road less travelled," Peter acknowledged.

Peter pointed out that one of the attributes of a business leader is possessing abundant energy resources. Speaking of the potential energy that flows from meditation, he confirms meditation as an energy source. A common thread in many books on leadership qualities in business is the extent to which the leader transcends or lets go of the ego. That is, in Peter's terms, learning to stand back and let God take over. "If we think we're at the centre of the world we'll never see anyone or ourselves as we really are. Because we aren't at the centre of the world. God is." In John Main's words, "When we meditate we move from self-centredness to God-centredness because meditation is an onslaught on the ego."

In today's business world there is a renewed search for the ethical mind. Meditation helps to develop the ethical mind. "The mantra," Peter said, "is like the needle of a compass, keeping you on the straight course, toward God. Then everything in our life becomes aligned on God. We are committed to 'live out what saying the mantra brings us to'."

It was evident to his audience that the need for the ethical mind is a need that would be well served by following Peter's worthy example.

**– Clare Duckworth  
West Bolton, QC**

# Calendar of Events

Note: For regular updates please refer to the Canadian website at [www.meditatio.ca/news/updates](http://www.meditatio.ca/news/updates).

## January 2008

Starting January for 8 weeks, Ajax, ON. Introduction to Christian Meditation, led by Carolyn Kennedy, psychotherapist, CMCT member. Venue: The Centre for Mindful Therapies, 109 Old Kingston Rr., #14. Time: TBA. Contact Brenda Gregory at (905) 428-1404.

**31 Jan., Toronto, ON.** Introduction to Meditation: A Pearl of Great Price led by Julie Meakin, Christian Meditation Community of Toronto member. Time: 7 p.m. to 9.00 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](mailto:clems@interlog.com) or Joy Gordon at (416) 485-9718.

## February 2008

**8-10 Feb., Orleans, On.** Annual Silent Retreat Weekend: *Meditation—A Path of Silence*, led by Michel Legault, past National Coordinator, Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC). Venue: Maison Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence, 1754 St. Joseph Blvd, Orleans, ON. Time: Friday evening from 6:30 p.m. (supper is not included) to Sunday (after lunch). Cost: \$140 (includes accommodation, meals and retreat). Registration deadline: January 28 with \$35.00 deposit. Registrar: Laurie Grice at 613-836-6553 or E-mail: [laurie-grice@rogers.com](mailto:laurie-grice@rogers.com). A registration form is available from [www.meditatio.ca](http://www.meditatio.ca).

**15-17 Feb., Charlottetown, PE.** Lenten Retreat—God's Healing Presence. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Fee: \$90.00. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or [kbolger@peimarthas.ca](mailto:kbolger@peimarthas.ca).

**28 Feb., Toronto, ON.** The Bible and the Koran, led by Dr. Schuyler Brown, Church of the Good Shepherd. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Venue: Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, U of T (St. George Campus). Contact: Clem Sauvé 416-921-0367, [clems@interlog.com](mailto:clems@interlog.com), or Joy Gordon at (416) 485-9718.

## March 2008

**1 Mar., Toronto, ON.** One day Lenten Retreat, led by Joseph Bergeron. Details TBA. Contact: Joy Gordon at (416) 485-9718.

**27 Mar., Toronto, ON.** Dying to Live, led by John Callaghan, Christian Meditation Community of Toronto member. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Venue: Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, U of T (St. George Campus). Contact: Clem Sauvé 416-921-0367, [clems@interlog.com](mailto:clems@interlog.com), or Joy Gordon at (416) 485-9718.

## April 2008

**3 April, Charlottetown, PE.** Across Interfaith Boundaries. An evening of exploring our commonality found in the Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions. A panel representing the three religions will enhance our understanding of prayer. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or [kbolger@peimarthas.ca](mailto:kbolger@peimarthas.ca).

**10 April, Charlottetown, PE.** Across Interfaith Boundaries. An evening of exploring our commonality found in the Buddhist, Hindu and Christian traditions. A panel representing the three religions will enhance our understanding of prayer. Venue: Mount St. Mary's. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or [kbolger@peimarthas.ca](mailto:kbolger@peimarthas.ca).

**11-13 April, South Rustico, PE.** Christian Meditation Retreat with Yoga. Venue: Belcourt Centre, South Rustico. Time: 7:00 p.m. Friday till Sunday noon. Fee: \$180. Contact: Sr. Kathleen Bolger 902-892-6585 or [kbolger@peimarthas.ca](mailto:kbolger@peimarthas.ca).

**11-13 April, Pembroke, ON.** The School: Workshop on the Essential Teaching. Venue: Marguerite Centre, Pembroke, ON. Cost \$150.00. Please register by Mar. 22, 2008. For more information, please contact Ron Dicks at (613) 739-1046.

**24 April, Toronto, ON.** The Scriptural Roots of Christian Meditation, led by Rev. Glenda Meakin, former coordinator for the School for Christian Meditation in Canada. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Venue: Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, U of T (St. George Campus). Contact: Clem Sauvé 416-921-0367, [clems@interlog.com](mailto:clems@interlog.com), or Joy Gordon at (416) 485-9718.

## May 2008

**29 May, Toronto, ON.** Roots of Christian Mysticism: Evelyn Underhill, led by Canon Gerald Loweth, Trinity College, University of Toronto. Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Venue: Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, U of T (St. George Campus). Contact: Clem Sauvé 416-921-0367, [clems@interlog.com](mailto:clems@interlog.com), or Joy Gordon at (416) 485-9718.

**30 May-June 1, Kingston, ON.** The School: Workshop on the Essential Teaching. Venue: Providence House, Kingston, ON. Cost \$170.00. Please register by May 10, 2008. For more information, please contact Ron Dicks at (613) 739-1046.

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



# Christian Meditation and Coping with Addiction

At the invitation of the BC Christian Meditation Community, Fr. Joe Pereira from Mumbai, India, gave a lecture on Christian Meditation and Coping with Addiction and introduced the KRIPA Foundation's addiction treatment programs which incorporate yoga and Christian meditation.



Regional Coordinator Colleen Donald welcomed Fr. Joe and over a hundred people to the event, which was held in September at St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Vancouver.

A short film was presented on the KRIPA Foundation which began humbly with just three patients. It has now grown to over 50 locations in India. The film gave testimonies of recovering addicts who revealed that "you can climb back

into life" and "have a life beyond addiction."

Fr. Joe noted that the 12-step programs, with their origins in the Oxford Group, included five steps that referred to spirituality, though not to any specific religion. In the Indian context, Fr. Joe discerned that yoga would both be culturally appropriate and, providing it was a pure and "no-nonsense" style of yoga, would be acceptable to people of any religion. He also observed that this physical component would by-pass the ability of "clever" addicts to talk their way around their counselors. The sheer stillness of the postures is valuable in treating addicts. This stillness is deepened in Christian meditation and the individual discovers that the body is the temple of God's spirit.

A full program at the KRIPA Foundation lasts a minimum of three months. Thirty-eight percent of participants are substance-free after five years, which sounds low until you realize that the general five-year success rate for addiction treatment programs is only 2%.

For more information, visit <[www.kripafoundation.org](http://www.kripafoundation.org)> or write KRIPA Foundation, 81/A Chapel Road, Mt. Carmel Church, Bandra (W), Mumbai, Maharashtra 400050, India.

– Louise Menard  
White Rock, BC

## Oneness with Creation Retreat in Northern Ontario

The Northern Ontario Christian Meditation Community returned to the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre on Anderson Lake near Espanola for their annual retreat. It rekindled friendships and memories for some, and held delightful anticipation for others. We were welcomed by our new area coordinators, Madelaine Mageau and Chris Tanner.

The retreat was directed by Fr. John Duggan SJ, lecturer at Laurentian University in Sudbury and priest and spiritual director of the Sagamock Native Reserve in Massey.

After an introduction to Christian meditation for newcomers, Fr. Duggan captured our attention with a new word: *cosmotheandric*, and later with *christophany*, *ecophany* and *theophany*. Using scripture from Genesis to Revelations, we were guided into a deeper awareness of our call to Oneness and to the cosmotheandric experience—union of God, humanity and the cosmos—a return to our universal home. This epiphany is an experience we share with the human family through the practice of meditation and by responding with action to: *be responsible, be attentive, be reasonable, be open, be intelligent* (free to ask a

question) and the final action, *be love*. We have a role as co-creators and stewards of our universal home, empowered to become spiritual warriors.

We were invited to nurture this teaching through a quiet environment, silent meals, walks in the woods, canoeing, and walking the Hopi labyrinth. Early morning yoga was offered to the young and young-at-heart. Carol Peterson led the group in salutations to the moon and the sun.

Margaret Toulouse, a Native teacher and healer, gave an evening presentation in the chapel. She explained the chapel design of the four directions of Native spirituality, and taught us about the Ojibway medicine wheel, used as an aid for "walking in balance" of spirit, heart, mind and body. We all participated in a native purification ritual using the smudge pot. The weekend closed with Eucharist in the chapel.

Thanks to all, especially Fr. Duggan, Madelaine and Chris, for hosting a memorable retreat.

– Carol Peterson  
Bracebridge, ON

# Practicalities of Practice

*Q. What is the role of Mary on the contemplative journey?*

A. In this Christmas season we become more aware of the central role of Mary and wonder about the role of Mary in the contemplative journey. John Main felt so strongly about Mary's role in our spiritual journey that he wrote a beautiful treatise entitled "The Other-Centeredness of Mary." It is contained in the book *Community of Love*. In this treatise John Main points out that Mary is really the mother of the contemplative life for Christians because she is essentially described in the Gospel as a person of prayer. He goes on to say that the secret of Mary's universal appeal in our day is her interiority and her other-centeredness.

In expanding this understanding of Mary, John Main says: "The essential Christian insight which Mary exemplifies in Luke's Gospel is poverty of spirit." This is purity of heart because it is unsullied by the intrusion of the egotistic will seeking for experience, desiring holiness, objectifying the spirit or creating God in its own image. Mary reveals the basic simplicity of the Christian response that consists in turning wholly to God, wholly away from self.

Christian meditation is often referred to as "the prayer of the heart." Mary's entire life was lived in her heart. St. Luke

mentions Mary's heart twice in his Gospel. At the nativity, Mary reflects on the words of the shepherds, "As for Mary, she treasured these things and pondered them in her heart." At the finding of the child Jesus in the temple "His mother stored up all these things in her heart."

In our final view of Mary in the Acts of the Apostles we see her still at prayer with the apostles in the upper room in Jerusalem, waiting for the coming of the Spirit. Perhaps that is ultimately her role with those who meditate: to bring that Spirit to us in the silence, to give birth to Jesus in our hearts. Our role in meditation is to wait in silence and faith for the utterance of His word within us.

Mary spoke few words in her humble, hidden life. Flooded with contemplative love, she enjoyed being for the most part silent before the Lord. In that respect she becomes the fully conscious, integrated human being worthy of imitation by all meditators.

From the book *Frequently asked questions about Christian Meditation: The Path of Contemplative Prayer* by Paul Harris (Novalis publishers)

## Recovering Our Essential Unity, Harmony, Wholeness

Winnipeg's St Peter's Anglican Church welcomed Rev. Glenda Meakin last November 10, for a day of reflection and meditation, food and fellowship. Using the Gospel story where Jesus heals a man with demons (Luke 8:26-39), Glenda guided us through "naming our demons" to being "clothed in our right mind." She explained what Christian meditation is for those starting out—the benefits and what to expect. Through meditation, she says, "Recovery is in us. Inner harmony is in us. We already have the essential unity, in Christ." On the path to the three harmonies—personal, social and cosmic—a war is going on inside us. How do we get so that our inner and outer lives are congruent?

"Who are we in this story?" Glenda asks. None of us wants to consider ourselves a demonic being. Like the man in the story, we have no clothes to meet what the world is handing us. Jesus says, "Name your demons" i.e. your negative energy separating you from your true self. The evil spirits were sent away. The man found his centre. All was in harmony.

We are called to see ourselves and each other in harmony, unity and wholeness. Glenda encouraged us to enquire: "What is distracting us, preventing us from being present

to this inner harmony?" There is a prayer inside us. We simply join into that prayer. It is all being said by Christ.

In the silence of meditation we begin to see our innate harmony. We begin to be shaped into who we are meant to be. Clothed and in our right mind, in meditation, we are sitting at Jesus' feet. We let go of our busyness. He begins to open us. It is Christ who purges our demons, calling forth our true nature into our higher ground of being. Many responses came as to why people were afraid after seeing the man clothed, sitting at Jesus' feet and in his right mind. For us today, the answers would be that we are afraid of God's power, afraid of being changed, of being loved and overwhelmed so much that there would be nothing left of who we have been... a death. Fear of so many things separates us from receiving God's grace.

But this is not the end of the story, for Glenda reminds us of "whose we are." God clothes us, re-covers us, and shows us our center. He commands us to go out from our center and witness what He has done for us. In meditation, we find our quiet center.

We did. And we were sent forth. Thanks be to God!

– Jackie Drever  
Winnipeg, MB

# Dancing with your Shadow



On a rainy fall evening, October 23, 2007, about 80 people arrived at the Good Shepherd Parish in Ottawa to hear Kim Nataraja enlighten us on her new book of this title. Kim is a Benedictine Oblate who, among many activities, has been assisting Fr. Laurence

Freeman with the International School in London, England, leading three Christian meditation groups and working as a spiritual director. She also has directed retreats in many countries.

## Integrating the Ego and the Self on the Spiritual Path

Kim began by looking at what helps and what hinders us on the journey of meditation. With the help of meditation, we integrate the whole being, enabling us to experience life in all its fullness. We are not isolated beings; we are one with all creation and with the divine. We are one being, but end up fragmenting ourselves. We need to become aware of, and acknowledge, our outsides and insides.

She spoke on the importance of thoughts—the limits of our language (thoughts) are the limits of our world. From an early age, thoughts of others about us determine how we think of ourselves. All sense of identity comes from the outside. This image we have of ourselves is not necessarily who we are. We suppress, and then project onto other people everything we don't like about ourselves. However, parts of ourselves come out unexpectedly, so we need to acknowledge that suppressed part, e.g. our anger. Our thoughts can change our life, they can become destructive, and they are very powerful. The good news is that we

are free to choose. We have the freedom to shape our reality and become whole. We need to move from the outside to within, and we do this by meditation.

Meditation is a way of breaking through from a world of illusion into the pure light of reality; discovering who we truly are, not ego (surface people), but children of God. Kim talked about two ways of knowing—with the mind and the heart. In the silence of meditation, we get in touch with the intuitive mind of the heart. We let go of the rational mind and move into the heart where we are pure being with God. We let go of knowing, and access wisdom.

After a 25-minute period of meditation and a short break, Kim gave another talk on self-knowledge, using the example of the desert fathers and mothers. She stressed that we need to watch our thoughts to know what our ego is up to, then bring questions about our thoughts into our meditation. Christ within us helps us. She spoke about our demons, thoughts that arose when we did not have basic needs met when we were young. Through meditation we become aware of these demons, thus opening the door to experiencing the presence of God. When we get to know our demons, befriend them, we rob them of their power.

Finally, to the wonderful title of her book. When there is no suppression in us, we are free to “dance with our shadow”, becoming one with ourselves, with others, and most importantly, one with God!

The evening ended with a question period and Kim kindly signed copies of her book. It was a peaceful evening led by a serene, gracious woman who filled us with inspiration to continue our journey of meditation.

– Marilyn Sugden  
Ottawa, Ontario

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## Zofia Zawidzka: from World War II to the practice of Christian Meditation

Sitting in her Barry's Bay, Ontario home, leading a Christian meditation group in this small town of 2,400 inhabitants, Zofia Zawidzka belies her 81 years. She has an infectious smile and energizing manner that hides a life of high drama, excitement, and service to others.

Born in Warsaw, Poland in 1926, she became embroiled in World War II at age 14. Deported with her family to the USSR by the Soviet occupying forces, she spent the following two years in captivity. Following a British-Soviet agreement for release of Polish prisoners and deportees, she left the USSR for Iran in 1942. From 1945 to 1948 she lived in a Polish resettlement camp in Kolhapur, India, and after Gandhi's assassination moved to Uganda. In 1949 Zofia immigrated to Canada. From 1961 to 1987 she was head of the Hematology Unit, Health Protection Branch, Government of Canada.

These bare facts hardly reflect her deeply spiritual bent. The teaching and practice of Christian meditation has been a consuming passion and interest for Zofia. Each Wednesday evening, Barry's Bay residents gather in her home for a Christian meditation meeting. The silent meditation period

is the focal point, and Zofia notes that through the daily practice many people in Barry's Bay discover a deep inner peace and sense of the presence of Christ in their lives. Zofia, a Catholic who attends nearby St. Mary's parish, likes to emphasize that there are 20 sections in the new Catholic Catechism commenting on this way of contemplative prayer.

Zofia's focus and spiritual odyssey has been told in the book, *Christian Meditation by those who practice it* (Templegate). In addition to her interest in this spiritual path of prayer, Zofia co-edited for 30 years a quarterly Polish newsletter distributed to Polish missionaries around the world, under the auspices of St. Hyacinth Church in Ottawa. The newsletter enabled donors to assist missionaries financially in their projects in various countries and kept them abreast of developing world and church related news.

For information about her weekly Christian meditation group, contact Zofia Zawidzka <zzawidzka@hotmail.com>

– Paul Harris  
Ottawa, ON

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