



Fr. Laurence Freeman named an Officer of the Order of Canada

On July 1, Canada Day, the Governor General of Canada, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, announced sixty new appointments to the Order of Canada among which was:

“Laurence Freeman, O.C., O.S.B.
London, England and Montreal, Quebec
Officer of the Order of Canada

For his contributions as the spiritual leader and director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, and as a proponent of peace and inter-religious dialogue and understanding.”

The Order of Canada has three categories: Member, Officer and Companion. Fr. Laurence was appointed one of the 18 new Officers, a great honour indeed!

Sr. Kathleen Bolger: *My Meditation Journey*

A Christian experience is always the beginning of something new. It matters not if the inner movement is big or small, it still touches a new awakening, a new journey.

While I was teaching in Kingston, Ontario, I accidentally selected a little book from a dusty shelf in our parish church and became fascinated with the title, *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling*. Since most of my former studies had to do with psychology, it was the latter part of the title that caught my attention. Flipping the pages, I noted that contemplative prayer held a high priority and need not be complicated, or rigid, or lengthy, rather just a few repeated words resounding in the heart. At that time my Community prayer was the Prayer of the Church with many built-in novenas and extra tagged-on requests to numerous saints.

I occasionally read sections of the book and each time the simplicity of prayer seemed to fit my spirit and the desire within to become holy. My reflections made me feel closer to God. Then the year came for an amalgamation of schools and I became principal of three (!) in nearby area town-

ships. So, as I visited the schools I began saying, “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” This long mantra was my daytime travelling companion, but my usual meditation was the Ignatian style. I continued this meaningful, repetitious practice for my years in Kingston.

When I returned to PEI, I stopped the mantra and prayed the scripture-based Ignatian meditations of imagination, conversation and journaling. Even though a Christian meditation group met weekly at our Spirituality Centre, I did not participate. I thought I was too busy!

In the early 1990s a Christian meditation retreat was held with David Roffey as animator. His presentations brought me back in memory to my Kingston travelling days when the long mantra was my soul companion. But this mantra, *Maranatha*, was so easy to coordinate with my breathing or heart beat, I was happy I had, at last, a prayer that was short and fit my inner yearning. I felt called to spend 20 minutes daily on Christian meditation and a half-hour on Ignatian prayer. Of course, when my day was overcrowded I either

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Sr. Kathleen Bolger *continued from front*

neglected the meditation practice, or else the night hours found me struggling with sleep and *Maranatha*.

My next boost came when Rev. Glenda Meakin delivered a weekend retreat reviewing the practice of Christian meditation around the world. I witnessed how she lived her love for John Main's teachings and her faithfulness to the practice. Everything she said captivated my heart, my love of prayer and God's love for me. This was the turning point, because I knew I had found the simple prayer for which my heart longed and the commitment seemed to follow naturally.

A few years later, Norma Hannouch, a longtime meditator, and I attended a seminar in Cornwall, Ontario and I met George Zanette, then National Coordinator, who repeatedly asked me to become the Regional Coordinator for my area. I actually did not understand what he was asking me to do. However, with a lot of persuasion on his part, I consented to try, if Norma would help me, a team approach. Being Regional Coordinator for the Atlantic Provinces was a deepening experience of Christian meditation for me. As a consequence, I began taking part in National Council teleconferences, additional seminars and retreats and began to experience a connectedness to the World Community. I was particularly excited about the ecumenical

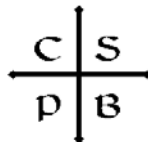


expression of our commitment to meditation because, in my younger years, I witnessed my father living inclusivity with our neighbours of different religions and faiths.

When I began organizing retreat weekends, prayer days, community social events, or anything that had the flavor of Christian meditation, my outreach included all faiths and orientations. Through involvements in Christian meditation my confidence and creativity grew, my prayer became more centered and relaxed, my life more peaceful and simple. Today I rejoice in knowing that each time I pray, I am a beginner. This attitude released all of the pressure of seeking for something to happen and helped to slowly, but surely, soften the hold of my ego over my prayer life.

I believe if Ignatius were living in John Main's day they would have discovered the convergence of their two paths of prayer in the *Lexio* and *Contemplatio*. Both taught a practical method of meditation, yet I am more at home in the simplicity of the Psalmist's insight that we must "Be still and know that I am God." In sum, the Cloud of Unknowing has accompanied me for many years and, finally, it has settled in "Say your mantra."

Sr. Kathleen Bolger is a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha of Prince Edward Island.



CALLED TO SERVE

The seed You sowed inside of me from Your own heart
First sent its shoots up through the cluttered soil
When I was in my teens.
I hardly knew it then, like Samuel, that You were calling me.
And when I prayed so fervently,
Inside the laundry room,
And at Rockhead among the prisoners;
The day that I was moved to tears beside my radio;
Those prayers arose from deep inside of me.
Now I know that You were there with me
When I was still confused, unsure, even afraid.
You kept on calling me to take yet greater steps of faith.

Gladness fills my heart, in knowing that You love me as I am;
Waiting on You, may my whole being,
Filled with love and joy,
Rise up on eagle's wings,
To your great purpose and your plan for me.
I trust you in Your power to lead me home,
To guide me, use me, help me glorify Your name.

Ron Dicks
Ottawa, ON

From the National Coordinator

Horizons



I don't know what it has been like in the rest of the country, but spring has been very slow in coming here in Manitoba. One of the signs in our garden is the lateness of blossom. We moved into our present home 19 years ago on the

May 24 long weekend. There were two crab apple trees in the yard

which were stunningly beautiful in full bloom. This year the blossom just started to come out today, May 31, when the temperature crept up to 16. Everyone is itching for the hot weather to arrive to stay. There have been days of hope when I was even able to cycle in shorts, but the next day I'd be wearing gloves again.

There have been some benefits though. The tulips and daffodils are still looking fresh. As a birder, because the leaves on the trees have been so slow to come out it has been easier to spot the birds, especially the beautiful, colourful warblers. I haven't had to cut the grass yet, although I won't be able to put that off much longer.

Our journey of meditation can feel slow at times. We want to be further along than we are, but we just see buds instead of blossom. Distractions are ever present and at times they seem to dominate our meditation period. Some days it seems more difficult to actually set the time aside to do our meditation. We may have periods where it all seems easier or more satisfying, but then the difficulties or the excuses come back again.

During these times, we need to remind ourselves that we are not to be concerned about our progress or about the apparent quality of our meditation. We simply return to our practice in trust and in faith. We take it one meditation period at a time. Then, in the long run, we may be able to discern that some changes have taken place for us.

*We simply
need to keep
on meditating
and provide
enough space
in our hearts
and time in our
lives for God to
do the work.*

There are definitely some benefits from our practice.

Perhaps we have become more attentive to the world around us – the beauty of creation, or the people we are given to meet. Perhaps our approach to life is more gentle and accepting. Perhaps the gift of love has become more evident in our actions. These are some of the fruits of meditation, fruits of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Today happens to be the day of Pentecost, a day when we celebrate the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Our practice of meditation opens our hearts and minds to the work of the Spirit, and we are gradually being transformed into the person we are intended to become. It seems to be an awfully slow process at times, but we are most definitely on the journey. We simply need to keep on meditating and provide enough space in our hearts and time in our lives for God to do the work.

Phil Barnett
National Coordinator
Winnipeg, MB

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Ontario Coordinator Visits Belleville and then Kingston

Ten United Church clergy, an Anglican priest and ten lay people from seven communities assembled at Bridge Street United Church on April 2 to share in a two-hour workshop on Christian meditation. The meeting was arranged by the church's minister, Rev. Dr. Bill Smith. Ron Dicks, CCMC Regional Coordinator gave an introduction to Christian meditation. The group meditated, following which some viewed the video *Coming Home*. Plans are under way to follow up on the workshop. For some it was a first opportunity to hear about Christian meditation, and over tea and cookies many expressed appreciation for the time we spent together.

One Christian meditation group, led by Rev. John Flyndall, meets at St. Thomas Anglican, across the street.

In the evening another group of 20 met in the chapel for a Lenten Service. Bill Smith opened with prayer, and again Ron followed with an introduction to Christian meditation and led the group in the experience.

On April 2 Rosalind Weston, leader for the new meditation group formed in Kingston in December 2008, arranged for eight persons to meet at St. Luke's Anglican Church for a talk on Christian meditation by Ron Dicks. We were very pleased to have the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Ontario, The Right Rev. George Bruce, in attendance. In his greeting, the Bishop said that he has been meditating since his days as a priest at St. Richard's, Ottawa. He warmly endorsed our efforts and spoke of how important Christian meditation is to the Church's life.

Ron Dicks
Ottawa, ON

Introduction to Christian Meditation in Cornwall, Ontario

On a beautiful spring day in May, 25 people met at Trinity Anglican Church in Cornwall to learn about Christian meditation. The event, hosted by the Seaway Area Christian Meditation Community, was attended by persons from several towns and cities in the area. Robin Lane introduced Ron Dicks, CCMC Regional Coordinator, whose presentation led all into an experience of contemplative prayer – seeking God in silence and stillness.

Ron's talk was structured around four main points: meditation is a form of prayer that seeks the immanent presence of God; use of the mantra helps us focus; the ultimate goal of meditation is participation in the Divine Nature; we become integrated through the prayer of the heart. He

wove many quotes by various saints, mystics and religious throughout, providing effective metaphors for deepening our understanding of meditation. He summed up with a quote from John Main, that we are naturally built for meditation and silence. In meditation we are coming home to our true selves, where our deep thirst is quenched.

Following Ron's talk, Beth Smith, who facilitates a meditation group in Prescott, gave instruction in the practice, and we meditated for 20 minutes. After lunch we watched the video *Coming Home* and had a question-and-answer session. The day's events signaled the formal launching of the Seaway Area Community, with Robin Lane as Coordinator. With the assistance of Rev. Jessica Worden and Archdeacon Frank Kirby a new Christian meditation group, consisting of those at the workshop, has started in Cornwall.

Beth Smith
Prescott, ON

Ottawa's St. Barnabas Church Launches New Meditation Group

On March 10, John Miller and Fr. Stewart Murray welcomed 15 people to an introductory talk at St. Barnabas Anglican Church in downtown Ottawa, the forerunner to establishing a weekly meditation group at the church. Guest speaker Ron Dicks gave a talk on Christian meditation and contemplative prayer, telling how his own journey of meditation began, and expanding on the Christian tradition.

Ron recounted his experience of "fasting from the media" on Shrove Tuesday nine years ago and how, on that same day, he was led to read John Main's book *The Present Christ*. There he found out how to meditate, began, and has not looked back. He referred to his desire to go deeper in his spiritual life, recalling St. Augustine who searched for God but did not find him until "I found you within." Ron pointed out that we also share this belief with other spiritual guides, such as Rumi, the Turkish poet, who wrote:

*Deafened by the voice of desire
You are unaware the Beloved
Lives in the core of your heart.
Stop the noise,
And you will hear his voice
In the silence.*

Ron explained how the use of a mantra has been part of the Christian Church's treasure from the very beginning. John Main is credited with helping to restore it to our life within the church today. The purpose of the mantra, as Marcus Borg points out in *The Heart of Christianity*, is to help us

FAR AND NEAR

“descend to the deepest level of the self, of the heart, where we open out into the sea of being that is God.” Ron stressed that the purpose of Christian meditation is the transformation of persons from their false self to their true self, as God intends us to be.

Meditation, he said, is hard work requiring perseverance and discipline, but the Spirit effects the change within each of us as we are willing, like St. Paul, to “die every day.” Finally, Ron referred to John Main’s teaching that the goal of meditation is to bring about an internal unity within each person and thus also in the community (*Word Into Silence*). Love at work in our hearts resolves our alienations and unites our thinking and feeling powers. This is done through prayer.

The group meditated; then there was time for questions. Everyone enjoyed watching the film *Coming Home*. Fr Murray closed the meeting with a prayer.

A new group was formed which now meets every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. in the parish library.

John Miller
Ottawa, ON

Peace in a Violent World

On the first Saturday of March, as he has done for the past several years, Joseph Bergeron led a Lenten Retreat day in Toronto.

The event included two talks followed by periods of meditation, group discussion, instructions and a practice session of modified tai chi led by Margot Fish. The closing paralyturgy, with the theme *Sharing our light*, was led by Lisa Devan.

Joseph communicated with warmth and humility. Everyone in attendance appreciated his gift of presence. He spoke about how we can be on automatic pilot much of the time, going through the motions of living with little awareness of what is going on. And even as we try to quiet the mind in meditation we find ourselves analyzing, blaming, or trying to fix. Our inner noise can be deafening.

“Wake up!” called Joseph to us. Wake up to the present moment. As John Main said, “To be at peace is to accept the gift of being,” reminding us to be present to what is, allowing life to flow without blockages or impediments. In this vein, Joseph called us to focus in our meditative practice, which will lead to self-knowledge and awareness of the present moment, to “the reality of the now and the unreality of all the rest,” as Thomas Merton saw it. The work of meditation leads us to a sense of peace and a loving connectedness to all that is.

Lorna Devan
Peterborough ON



JOURNEY TO SELF

I kneel before you, Father
Fig leaves sticking to me everywhere
Guilt, distrust, denial,
Searching vainly for you in the dark
Ego calling the shots in my life
Prison bars surrounding me
of my own making
no key in sight
Each day more and more the need to
escape this prison strengthens
Be still and know that I am God -
the thought brushes against my heart
on butterfly wings
My soul cries “How?”
Meditate – Listen with the ear
of your heart.

Reta Hamilton
Munster, ON

(Author’s note: Fig leaves are used as an image of the ego.)

Contemplating Christian Art



On February 26, Joseph Clarkson made a PowerPoint presentation to the Toronto Community on the integration of Christian art into contemplative prayer. Joseph suggested that we could complement our daily meditation and other prayers by abiding with, or gazing upon artistic representations from Christ's life, images of Him, of the Virgin Mary, or the cross. He reviewed two books by Henri Nouwen, one on the contemplation of icons and another one which consists of an extended reflection on Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son. Joseph agreed with Nouwen that art can be very nourishing to our spiritual life. Images can guide, challenge and comfort us in our particular circumstances.

Where the eye is, so there is love.

Joseph explored the idea of seeing with the eyes of the heart. Our eyes follow our desires. Where desire is more like lust, we see things or others as something to acquire or control – “as the lion sees the stag, as something to be devoured” (St. Thomas Aquinas). William Blake also described this lustful kind of desire when he asked, “Can that be love that drinks another as a sponge drinks water?” By contrast, seeing with the eyes of the heart can help us to open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit. According to Sr. Wendy Beckett, a popular BBC-featured art critic, we can learn from a work of art by an attitude of openness to what art can teach us, “surrendering in loving trust” to the artwork. For contemplatives, the practice might involve sitting daily for 5-10 minutes, perhaps after our regular Christian meditation, being open to the chosen work of art. Joseph reflected that this approach to prayer is much like the approach to scripture through the practice of *lectio divina*. Some pieces may have nothing to say to us, and that is really not under our control, while others may teach or strengthen us. In this case, we can choose to be directed or affected by our experience with the art.

Joseph mentioned the instance of St. Francis of Assisi, praying before the painted crucifix at the church at San Damiano. In this poignant case, an image brought Francis to the presence of Christ. In our case also, images can enrich our contemplative prayer and have a positive impact upon our spiritual journey – as it did for St. Francis, Henri Nouwen and so many others.

**CMCT Member
Toronto**



Meditation with the Mystics



On May 23, a beautiful sunny Saturday morning, eighty meditators made their way to St. John Chrysostom Church in Arnprior for a day with Anne Kathleen McLaughlin to learn about Christian medieval mystics and, in particular, Julian of Norwich. The day was sponsored by the Ottawa Area Christian Meditation Community and was exceptionally well-organized by the Arnprior Meditation groups and church and school volunteers.

Ottawa-area coordinator Flora Benoit introduced Anne Kathleen McLaughlin, a member of the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Pembroke. Anne Kathleen has been a teacher, has worked in the field of religious communication and for the last 12 years has been a spiritual guide to women. She offers workshops on women mystics. She is the author of two novels: *A Place Called Morning* and *Planted in the Sky*.

In the morning, Sister Anne Kathleen asked us why we came. Some answers were: curiosity; wanting to learn more of a woman's way of connecting to God; and to share the intimate relationship mystics had with God.

For inspiration on our spiritual path we can look to the mystics. What is our attraction to them? Theologian Margaret Brennan says mystics are people who come in touch with the sacred source of who they really are and are able to realize and experience that in their lives. Lawrence Leshan says the mystic perceives himself as one with the universe.

In the course of her informative talk, Sr. Anne Kathleen touched on a number of different mystics to show us what

they believed and perceived about God and about life on this planet. "What they tell us of their experience is a gift to us in our lives, especially in our prayer, our struggles with darkness and doubt, our relationships with all of life."

She spoke of Hildegard of Bingen (12th-century Benedictine abbess), Angela of Foligno (13th-c. third order Franciscan, Italy), Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955, Jesuit priest, paleontologist, France), Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941, England), Teresa of Avila (16th-c. Spanish Carmelite), Etty Hillesum (1914-1943, Amsterdam), Thomas Merton (1915-1968, Trappist Cistercian Monk), John of the Cross (16th-c. Spanish Carmelite), Hadewijch of Brabant (1220-1240, Beguine, Flanders), Julian of Norwich (14th-c. anchoress, England) and two mystics of other faith traditions: Rumi (13th-c. Sufi poet, Afghanistan) and Hafiz (14th-c. Persian poet).

The lion's share of the day, Sr. Anne Kathleen devoted to Julian of Norwich. Julian's experience was a steady growth in the love of God. John Main often quoted her, and in the last days of his life it was her words he most wanted to hear. She was born in 1342, an educated woman, but little is known of her life, not even her name. But her one night of visions provided the material for her devoted meditations and writings.

Anne Kathleen said, "Mystics were given to us because we need them." They may be of most value to us when they shared their dark periods. Julian lived through very

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Meditation with the Mystics *continued from C7*

challenging times: outbreaks of the black plague, the 100 years war, the peasants' revolt, burning of heretics, and church schisms. Julian wrote, "He did not say you shall not be tempest tossed, but he said you shall not be overcome."

Through her wish to enter deeply into the suffering of Jesus, she felt his immense love. Her words, full of tenderness are the words of a mother to a beloved child: "He is quick to clasp us to himself, for we are his joy and his delight, and he is our salvation and our life." "He is our clothing. In his love, he wraps and holds us. He enfolds us for love and will never let us go."

Thomas Merton wrote in *Seeds of Destruction*: "Julian is without doubt one of the most wonderful of all Christian voices. She gets greater and greater in my eyes as I grow older, and whereas in the old days I used to be crazy about St. John of the Cross, I would not exchange him now for Julian if you gave me the world and the Indies and all the Spanish mystics rolled up in one bundle."

Lunch was a delicious experience, organized by Jean Anderchek and her team. There was an opportunity to do an outdoor walking meditation, led by Joan McGuinness.

In the afternoon, Sr. Anne Kathleen performed the fictional play written by James Janda, based on the writings of Julian of Norwich in *The Revelations of Divine Love*. When Sr. Anne Kathleen visited Julian's cell in Norwich, England in 1999 she strongly felt the anchoress' presence, and later performed the play in Julian's anchorhold.

The play opens in Julian's cell where she is in conversation with Margery Kempe, another mystic who had stopped at her window to visit. Julian then shares with us her daily experiences of other visitors, as well as what she gleaned from her 16 visions. She references the *Ancrene Wisse*, the 12th-c. guide for anchoresses which was widely read and followed at the time. The language of the play is passionately inspiring, loving and reassuring. It informs, guides, mildly chastises and is deeply personal.

The end of the day was a time for sharing our thoughts, giving our thanks to Sr. Anne Kathleen, expressing our hope for further exploration of the mystics, and expressing our appreciation to the organizers.

Barbara Dorrell
Ottawa, ON

Practicalities of Practice

Q. Can one say the mantra outside of the daily meditation periods?

A. Yes, the mantra can definitely be repeated outside of our daily times of meditation. This tradition ties in directly to St. Paul's admonition to "pray unceasingly" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

This means that we can take every opportunity during our waking hours, no matter how brief the time, to repeat the mantra. This practice will root the mantra more deeply within us, and it will more quickly become a companion on our spiritual journey.

There are many daily opportunities in everyone's life to say the mantra: on the bus going to work, cleaning the house, gardening, washing the car or dishes, exercising, brushing our teeth, sitting on a park bench, and many other mechanical or recreational tasks in our daily routine.

However there are other times when we need to give our full attention and concentration to the task at hand. There are times when we should not say our mantra: driving a car, operating machinery or using dangerous tools, and especially when we need to give our full attention to writing, reading, listening to music, conversation with others, and other concentrated tasks.

Many people find the recitation of their mantra an aid to falling asleep. The mantra can also be a great source of

consolation and strength in times of crises, trauma and even pain. Meditators constantly talk about the power of the mantra to divert our attention and therefore offer relief from pain and anxiety. But, beyond this, when we say our mantra we are calling upon God at the deepest level our being. This is where our faith and God's grace enter into the practice of meditation.

One meditator recently recounted an incident after surgery. As he woke up after the anaesthesia wore off, he was welcomed by the mantra sounding loud and clear within, without a need to consciously say it. More importantly, he felt it was like an old friend welcoming him back to the land of the living and offering him support and encouragement for the approaching convalescent period.

The mantra releases a deep inner spiritual strength when said outside our daily periods of meditation. This is a great blessing and gift of God. John Main once said: "First say the mantra at the time of meditation and then it will begin to sound within us at other times of the day."

Paul Harris
Ottawa, ON

From the book *Frequently asked Questions about Christian Meditation: The Path of Contemplative Prayer* (Novalis Publishers). Paul can be reached at paalturnerharris@aol.com.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For regular updates go to www.meditatio.ca/News/updates.html

September

18-20 September, Vancouver BC. *Living Grace*, a weekend retreat led by Joyce Rogers. Location: Rosemary Heights, Surrey, BC. This weekend live-in retreat offers an opportunity to begin the Fall season from a contemplative perspective. For more information or to register contact: Colleen Donald at 604-985-1592.

26 September, Ottawa ON. *The Camino de Santiago and the Way of the Mantra* led by Michel Legault. At Resurrection of Our Lord Church, Saunderson Dr. 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Registration starts at 9:30 a.m. Suggested donation \$10.00. For more information Jean Murray at 613-739-1046.

29 September, Toronto, ON. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7–9 p.m. Topic TBA. For more information contact: Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718.

October

5 October–9 November, Kanata, ON. *Coming Home: An Introduction to Christian Meditation.* Six-week introduction to meditation on Monday evenings. Venue: St. Paul's Anglican Church, Kanata. Time: 7–9 p.m. Cost \$30.00 for series. For more information contact Reta at 613-838-2401.

29 October, Toronto, ON. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7–9 p.m. Topic TBA. For more information contact: Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718.

31 October, Kitchener, ON. *Listening to the daily news with a contemplative heart*, led by Rev. Glenda Meakin and Rev. Julia Gill. Join us for a day of reflection on the ways Christian Meditation/Contemplative Prayer enables us to listen to the daily news and respond to the needs of the world from a place of compassion, justice and love. Venue: Church of the Holy Trinity, 237 Wilson Avenue, Kitchener. Time: 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Cost: \$15 (which includes a light lunch). Registration: The Rev. Julia Gill, 237 Wilson Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2C 1G9, 519-893-5241 or email: gilljrj@sympatico.ca. Please register by Oct. 15.

November

6–8 November, Kingston, ON. *Fully Alive: a Christian Meditation and Yoga Retreat.* This retreat is an annual event, sponsored by the Canadian Meditation Community. Now in its fifth year, it is led by meditators and certified yoga teachers and is open to newcomers and seasoned practitioners alike. Venue: Providence House, Kingston, ON. Time: 6 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m. Sunday. For more information, contact Casey Rock at 416-463-7110.

26 November, Toronto ON. Regular monthly teaching meeting at Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Time: 7–9 p.m. Topic TBA. Contact: Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718.

27-29 November, Kingston ON. *The School: Workshop on Essential Teaching.* This workshop will help you gain experience in sharing the gift of meditation with others. For more information or for a registration form, contact: Ron Dicks at 613-739-1046

28 November, Ottawa, ON. *Advent: Celebrating the Coming One – Christian Meditation Retreat* led by the Rev. Professor Kevin Flynn. Place: St. Paul University, 223 Main St – Main Chapel, 2nd floor Laframboise Pavilion. Time: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call Jeanette Deyell at 613-733-6755 or jeanettemeditation@rogers.com

Regularly Scheduled Events

First Thursday of each month, Calgary, AB. *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-in* led by Engeline Piet at FCJ Christian Life Centre 219-19th Avenue. Time: 12 noon to 12:45 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. Contact: FCJ Christian Life Centre at 403-228-4215.

Last Thursday of each month, Toronto Ontario. CMCT monthly teaching meeting. Location: Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 St. George Street. Not held in July and August. Individual events are described above. For more information contact: Joy Gordon at 416-485-9718.

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



Evagrius Ponticus and the Roots of Christian Mysticism

On March 27, Professor Michael Hryniuk spoke to the community in Toronto about the significant contributions of Evagrius Ponticus to our meditation tradition. Michael drew on his wide academic background to synthesize the writings of Evagrius and make them relevant to us, asking “What does this mean to our practice today?”

Evagrius was a scholar and thinker whose articulation of the practices of the more experienced desert fathers and mothers was a foundation for the contemplative life. He was John Cassian’s teacher and an important influence on St. Benedict. One of the basics of the spiritual life which originates with Evagrius is the insight that the spiritual path consists of three interwoven components: purgation, illumination and union.

He developed a spiritual anthropology, integrating into his view of what it meant to be human, the ideal that humanity was capable of union with God. This optimism underlies a profoundly mystical approach to prayer and Evagrius’ understanding of the workings of the psyche. He made a categorization of eight temptations or passions which helped the contemplative deal with inherent human weakness through understanding, and suggested proper patterns of behaviour. Thus, he was the first Christian “depth psychologist.”

That being said, Michael came to the question “So what would Evagrius say to us today?” First, he would tell us to pay attention. He would tell us to bring our mind and heart back to an attentive focus upon God, and ask us to pay attention to how our daily business is affecting our soul. Further, he would ask us how our meditation is leading to emotional wholeness. Evagrius did not want us to avoid or evade our emotional life but understood the need for healing our obsessive/compulsive patterns of behaviour. Evagrius’ spirituality would move us from distraction to concentration and from frantic behaviours to stability. His psychological insights revealed a profound understanding of the human condition and his spirituality showed the path to union with God.

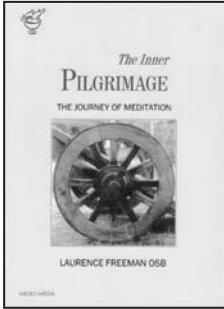
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What would Evagrius say to us today?



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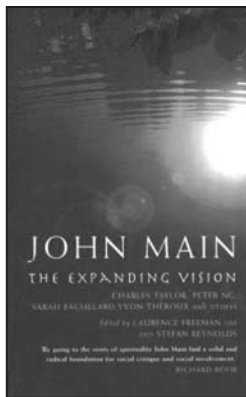
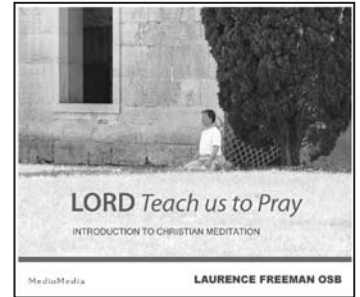


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Fr Laurence invites us to go deeper in prayer. To pray deeply, he says, we need to discover what prayer really is. For prayer to be Christian it has, obviously, to correspond to the teaching of Jesus on prayer. With his insight and clarity, Fr Laurence draws on the Sermon on the Mount to identify seven essential elements of Jesus' teaching on prayer: silence, interiority, humility, simplicity, trust, attention, transcendence. He then shows how meditation responds to these teachings. In saying the mantra we go beyond the ego to a place of deep trust; we pray with the mind in the heart, in the silence of God's presence.



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The influence of the Benedictine monk John Main, who helped the church rediscover its contemplative roots, continues unabated more than 25 years after his death.

The spiritual family of groups he founded, united in their daily practice of meditative prayer, consists of over 110,000 members in more than 100 countries. Each year, many gather at the John Main Seminar, a major conference that promotes his vision and teaching.

The 2007 conference, held in Quebec, hosted some outstanding speakers and their talks are collected here in this new volume. They include

- **Charles Taylor**, the leading contemporary philosopher, who considers the place of religion and spirituality in human society.
- **Laurence Freeman**, John Main's successor, who reflects on spirituality in a globalised world.
- **Sarah Bachelard**, and Anglican priest and lecturer in theology in Australia, on the contemplative dimension in theology.
- **Yvon Theroux**, Professor of Religion in Montreal, who asks whether John Main is a prophet for our times.

Together, these and the other essays clearly demonstrate the breadth and depth of John Main's thought, and its increasing relevance in our world today.

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Becoming Who I Am: Christian Meditation and the Return to Self

The Ottawa Meditation Community's annual spring retreat, held from March 27-29, drew a record-breaking crowd, with some traveling hundreds of kilometres to be there. It's safe to say that had something to do with the weekend's leader, Rev. Glenda Meakin.

Anyone who has taken a course with Glenda at the School will know she makes Scripture come alive and feel relevant to individuals today. "Do we pick up our Bible and expect to be transformed?" she challenged the group. An astute teacher, Glenda is frank and not afraid to deliver some hard truths. She explained that this retreat was not about escape. The journey to our true self, we learned, involves seeing ourselves clearly and honestly.

The underlying theme of her talks was openness; being willing to let go of our entrenched beliefs and ways of seeing the world in order to discover the treasure that lies within. "This weekend we are on a journey home," she told us. "Christian meditation is our means of transport."

She explained that the problem is not that we are poor, wounded and insecure. The problem is that we deny it. As a result, we spend our lives constructing a false self that is tied up in doing, and in trying to fulfill the expectations of others. "We try to cover our insecurity with power, fame, wealth... We spend so much time manufacturing our life that we don't hear God calling us into the fullness of life. Meditation allows us to let go of our striving, our impressing, our pretending."

She invited us to see ourselves in the person of the blind man whom Jesus heals (John 9). He had the humility to acknowledge that he needed help. She contrasted this with the Pharisees in the story, who are representative of our

own metaphorical blindness and the need to admit that we may have things wrong. Being willing to release our grip on our own certitude is difficult and often frightening, but critical to our spiritual growth. Like the Pharisees, "when we can't acknowledge our own blindness, we remain alienated from God... There is so much more for us to see but we have to admit we are not yet fully conscious [or] open to the life we have been given."

In letting go of all but the mantra, we can be open to what God wants to show us about ourselves. In John chapter 1, Jesus invites us to come and see where he dwells. In accepting this invitation, there comes a journey of gradual awakening, of consciousness. One of the biggest hurdles is to accept that God loves us as we are. It is difficult to trust that who we really are is God's beloved, she said.

"We can spend much of life looking outside ourselves for answers because we cannot see what is right before us." Like the prodigal son, we can cover vast distances in our searching, and attempt to bury our pain in distractions. But Glenda noted that he finally found what he was looking for when he decided to go home.

It felt appropriate too that, as Holy Week drew near, she spoke to us about the importance of death and resurrection. If we can enter into the poverty of the mantra, and are willing to die to our ego self, there is resurrection and new life, she assured us. God loves us just as we are but God is also waiting to bring healing to the woundedness that we spend so much time and energy attempting to avoid. "In meditation, Christ makes our poverty rich and our brokenness whole."

Cathy Nobleman
Ottawa, ON

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