

## Named as Beloved – Meditation and the Healing of our Identity in Christ

*Some highlights from a talk to WCCM-Toronto, February 24, 2011, by Michael Hryniuk, former Associate Director of the John Main Center for Meditation and Inter-religious Dialogue at Georgetown University in Washington DC. He is the author of Theology, Disability and Spiritual Transformation: Learning from the Communities of L'Arche. (Cambria Press, 2010)*

In the gospel of Luke, at the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22) Referencing the insights of Henri Nouwen, Michael suggested that this might well be the most important passage in the whole of the Gospels. (The same words are recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Mark.)

Baptism, Michael emphasized, is about dying to an old identity and being reborn into a new identity. In this passage, Jesus finds and claims his identity as the Beloved of God, and moves forward into his ministry. The passage provides the archetype for our own baptism. It gives an understanding that we too need to awaken to our identity as the beloved, as one who can address God as *Abba*. In our own baptism, we are anointed to awaken into our identity as “little Christs.” Awakening to this core identity and receiving grace is a lifelong process.

### Becoming the beloved

This process has at least four different aspects: entering into the experience of community, fasting, almsgiving and



*Michael Hryniuk*

prayer. Community includes the sacraments, as a means of grace and our hunger for the Word. In the broadest context, it is best understood as the beloved community of which Martin Luther King spoke. His was a global vision of a community of sharing where hunger and homelessness would not be tolerated, and where discrimination and bigotry would be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. Michael reasoned that the human spirit needs the discipline of community, the discipline of the Word and the practices of the ascetic tradition. Thus fasting, almsgiving and prayer are intrinsic to the awakening and transformation into our graced identity as beloved.

Our essential human condition is one of woundedness. This needs to be healed through our contemplative prayer life, defined as a time for moving into a fuller relationship with ourselves as we truly are. This is “the very simple process by which we prepare ourselves, in the first instance, to be at peace with ourselves so that we are capable of appreciating the peace of the Godhead within us.” (*Word into Silence*, John Main.) Becoming the beloved will heal us. Entering the silence, stillness and peace, allowing ourselves to be loved, will heal us. Becoming the beloved is the spiritual ground upon which every interaction can be filled with peace and the fruits of the Spirit.

**Joseph Clarkson**  
Toronto, ON

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# Calendar of Events

For regular updates go to [www.meditatio.ca/News/updates.html](http://www.meditatio.ca/News/updates.html)

## May 2011

**13-15 May, North Bay, ON.** *Sadhana – Journey to the Source.* Christian Meditation and yoga retreat, led by Lise Brown, Nicole Kearney-Manville and Carol Peterson. Time: Friday, May 13 at 4 p.m.–Sunday, May 15 at 1 p.m. Location: Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse, Main Street, North Bay. Contact 705-646-7028.

**20-26 May, Bloomfield Hills, MI.** *Getting Rid of God: A Christian Meditation Retreat with Fr. Laurence Freeman.* Time: May 20 at 7:30 p.m. till May 26 at noon. Location: Manresa Jesuit Retreat House, Bloomfield Hills, MI. Cost: \$525, includes non-refundable registration fee of \$50.00. Contact 248-644-4933 or email [office@manresa-sj.org](mailto:office@manresa-sj.org)

**26 May, Toronto ON.** *Heart to Heart: Meditation as a Universal Practice.* Speaker: Julie Meakin, WCCM-Toronto member. WCCM-Toronto monthly teaching meeting. Time: 7-9 p.m. Location: Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 George St. For more information contact: Maureen Casey-Rowed at 416-733-0233.

## June 2011

**10-12 June, Ottawa, ON.** Biennial National Conference of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community. *John Main and 20th Century Mystics.* Keynote speakers: Fr. Laurence Freeman and Rev. Glenda Meakin. With thanks for your support, we report that the conference is now fully booked.

**10 June, Ottawa, ON.** Retreat for Clergy. *One Thing Necessary: Contemplative Spirituality in an Active Ministry.* Led by Fr Laurence Freeman. Venue: Saint Paul University Amphitheatre, 223 Main Street, Ottawa, Ontario. Time: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Cost: \$20. Includes a light lunch. All clergy are welcome. Please register by May 31 with Charlotte Gupta at [cgupta@rogers.com](mailto:cgupta@rogers.com) or 613-841-2894.

**12 June, Ottawa, ON.** *Silence in the City: a retreat for Youth and Young Adults* facilitated by Fr. Laurence Freeman, OSB. Time: 3-6 p.m. Venue: Saint Paul University Amphitheatre, 223 Main Street, Ottawa ON. A light meal is included. Everyone is welcome and there is no cost of admission. For

information visit [www.meditatio.ca](http://www.meditatio.ca) and to register, email [ChristianMeditationOttawa@gmail.com](mailto:ChristianMeditationOttawa@gmail.com). Please register before June 4.

**23 June, Toronto ON,** *Encountering the Divine in Beauty – Part 2* (followed by our Annual Satsang) Speaker: Joseph Clarkson, WCCM-Toronto member. WCCM-Toronto monthly teaching meeting. Time: 7 to 9 p.m. Location: Knox College, University of Toronto, 59 George St. For more information contact: Maureen Casey-Rowed at 416 733-0233.

## August

**11-14 August, Cork, Ireland.** Alive in Christ John Main Seminar. Speaker: Timothy Radcliffe OP, Former Master of the Dominican Order, Author and International Speaker will lead the John Main Seminar to be held in Cork, Ireland. For more information, consult the JMS11 website.

## September

**14-24 September, Bere Island, Ireland.** In response to many requests for longer silent retreats the first Community 10-day meditation retreat will be held in the peace and beauty of Bere Island in the mellow month of September. It will be led by Fr Laurence and will be an opportunity for meditators to go deeper as well as to share their spiritual journey with others on the same path. For full details see details at the WCCM website.

## October

**14-16 October, Saint John, NB.** School of Meditation: The Essential Teaching Workshop. Learn how to share the gifts of meditation with others. This weekend retreat will be held at the Villa Madonna Retreat House, Rothesay N.B. just outside of Saint John. For more information please contact Deacon Len Moore at 902-434-0567.

## Regularly Scheduled Event

**First Thursday of each month, Calgary, AB.** *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-In* led by Engeline Piet at the 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.

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



## HELP WANTED

We are looking for someone to assist in the coordination of this quarterly newsletter.

Skills required include word processing and being able to download and print photos in black and white.

For more information, please contact [joseph.clarkson@rogers.com](mailto:joseph.clarkson@rogers.com)

# From the National Coordinator

## Horizons

In Winnipeg we have been warned to expect a major flood in the spring. It could be as bad as the “flood of the century” in 1997. We have never had any problems with basement flooding in our present home, but I decided to have a plumber come and check it. It turned out that we didn’t have any protection against a sewer backup, so he advised installation of a backup valve, sump and sump pump. He explained that even though we hadn’t had any problems, the city systems might become overloaded, pumps might fail and then we would be in trouble. We had everything arranged and then, to our delight, the City and Province announced a rebate program to encourage people to install flood protection. After a noisy day of hammering we now have the systems installed and are as prepared as we can be.

As is my wont, I try to make connections between the events of everyday life and meditation. Surely sewer backup is stretching things a bit! Well, here goes...

When a flood does happen here in Winnipeg we have lots of warning. The waters rise slowly day by day, spreading across the land, getting deeper and deeper. Our meditation is a slow, day by day process. As we continue our practice we move deeper into our relationship with God. It’s a gradual deepening that, most of the time, we don’t notice is happening. We might notice a difference in the flood waters each day, but our deepening in God is something that often takes years before we can see the difference. So we have to be patient and not expect results overnight.

Our meditation practice is a way for us to be prepared to handle the floods that will inevitably come our way in life. They may be events which come upon us gradually, or they may be like flash floods that come out of nowhere and threaten to overwhelm us. Meditation builds up our inner resources, our spiritual strength. We find that we have a resilience that we did not have previously. We notice a greater sense of calm when faced with difficult situations.

The function of a sump is to collect water that would otherwise gather in the basement. The water is then automatically pumped to the outside of the house. Over the course of our life we accumulate a lot of unnecessary and unwanted “water” in the basement of our personality. Meditation allows these traits to come to the surface of our consciousness so that we can take steps to let them go. When we meditate, by the grace of God we are gradually transformed. Meditation is like the sump pump which takes these unwanted aspects of our being and moves them away, outside of ourselves.

While most of us will have no need to implement an actual flood protection program, we will all receive peace of mind and other significant benefits through the safety features of our meditation practice.

**Phil Barnett  
Winnipeg, MB**



### **Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre**

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# NEWS FROM FAR AND NEAR

## Christian Meditation at Youth Leadership Conference

For the third consecutive year, Joseph Clarkson offered workshops at a Christian Youth Leadership Conference entitled *Voices that Challenge*. This conference is offered annually in Toronto for leadership students from schools within the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Each of the workshops attracted approximately 20 students and several teachers. Teachers and students enjoyed the peace and calm of meditative prayer as a balance for all of their high-energy activities. Several of the schools represented hope to implement optional meditation in their chapel as a follow-up to the workshop.

Toronto, ON

## Northern Ontario Christian Meditation Community

In 1985 the seeds of meditation were carried from Thunder Bay to North Bay by Sr. Mary O'Neil. Nurtured by many people, they spread into the communities of Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Sturgeon Falls, Deep River, Temiscaming and beyond. Over these 25 years we have met for day and weekend retreats, and to celebrate one of Sr. Mary's favourite sayings, "Meditation changes a person's life and flows outward, from each of us as individuals, to meet and enrich others and, as Fr. John taught, to call community into being."

We gathered again in North Bay last June to practise a *Sadhana – Journey to the Source*, using the combined disciplines of yoga and meditation. Nicole Mainville, Lise Brown, Carol Peterson, Madelaine Mageau, Chris Tanner and Merylyn Parker teamed up to lead the 25 participants in a weekend of meditation and yoga teaching and practice, accompanied by video presentations.

Roxanne Blais and Sandra Tessier from Sudbury share their appreciation: "As newcomers, we didn't know what to expect. It turned out to be a calming and quiet experience of oneself. We enjoyed the yoga sessions. The meditation times were challenging at first. We are not used to being quiet without letting the mind take over that time. With the mantra *Maranatha*, we were able to be in the moment."

We plan to continue the *Sadhana* with the next retreat, May 13-15, 2011. We invite all the Northern Ontario communities, and anyone visiting the north, to come and participate in the joy of the journey. New meditation groups have started. Check the Canadian website for listings. Their enthusiasm is contagious and they are already asking on behalf of friends "When is the next series?"

Lise Brown  
Sudbury, ON

## Ottawa Area Group Leaders Meet at Historic St. Bart's

The Ottawa Area Christian Meditation Community held a day-long group leaders' workshop on Saturday, February 19 at St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, New Edinburgh. Founded in 1866, the church is the Regimental Chapel of the Governor General's Foot Guards and is located across from Rideau Hall.

Rev. Canon David Clunie, rector – and meditation group leader – hosted the workshop. His welcome in the church was followed by reflection and meditation before the 28 participants moved to the church hall. The theme for the day was *Deepening our Spiritual Lives and Strengthening our Leadership Skills*. Facilitated by Liz Tyrwhitt and Diane Haughian, the program included group sharing and discussion. We had been asked to bring our favourite Christian meditation resource, and revealed them in a show-and-tell. Challenges encountered by group leaders were discussed and suggestions offered.

Our guest speaker, Richard Haughian, holds a doctorate in theology and has had years of experience in teaching, spiritual direction, leading retreats and social justice. His presentation articulated a clear Christian vision of faith, and the implications of our faith for our daily lives (finding God in all things, practising solitude, regular prayer, leisure/self-care, spiritual reading). Many aspects of his inspiring presentation stimulated questions and comments.

Over lunch and in the afternoon we discussed: welcoming newcomers; starting a new group; short talks for groups that can only meet for half an hour (e.g. hospitals, early morning groups); audio files; meditating with children – at home and church; building community within a group by having weekend retreats. The insights into all these issues and the increased connection between meditators from different groups were very helpful. Everyone expressed renewed inspiration for leading their group.

At the end of the day, we went back into the church for meditation and closing words. Those who wished to stay on enjoyed a presentation by Dr. Chelsea Honeyman on an historically and artistically important feature of the church. The work of Irish artist Wilhelmina Geddes, and unveiled in 1919, it is one of the most famous stained glass windows in Canada.

Stephen Woollcombe, Flora Benoit  
Ottawa, ON

News continues on C5

# The Word and the Mantra

## *A Two-winged Approach to God*

There were 33 Chilean miners who were successfully rescued. They learned faith, hope and discipline and were victorious in their trial, while the world watched mesmerized.

Pain, suffering, trials are great tools allowed, and used, by God. We can see them as challenges and opportunities by overcoming them and becoming stronger, victorious. Or we can be vanquished by them and become weaker, bitter and defeated. The choice is up to us. If we make the former choice, it becomes a game-changer. Our walls of Jericho will fall; we will conquer our Goliaths.

Not long ago, I went through my trial of excruciating pain and suffering. Helpless and hopeless, I was at death's door. But through it I did discover that when I am reduced to nothing, an empty, broken and in despair, God is there. Whether I know that, or could even believe it, it is irrevocable: He is faithful. He bandaged my wounds, healed and comforted me. It was there that I found in suffering the best way to cling to the mantra. I learned to transcend pain and, going beyond the self, the world and the devil. God empowered my belief and focus on the power of His Word. And by the experience of His mercy and healing love in exchange for the ashes of my suffering, with the humble recitation of the mantra, I had the audacity to transcend it all.

Out of this experience I would like to recommend a two-winged approach to God: 1. the Word of God/the Bible;

2. meditation and the mantra. I found out that these two avenues deepen and enrich one another. They are very different, yet they go together and balance each other. The Word of God is life and truth – it is God Himself. It is the mind of Christ, alive and active. Meanwhile, the mantra is discipline – it is not God.

We can't just read the Bible and understand it. It needs to be studied, explained in a way that we see the meaning that God wants to convey to us, so that we may apply it in our lives. It has to speak to us for the meaning to be implanted in the soil of our hearts, to grow and bear fruit. The blinders will then come off and we will see and speak, where before we could not have intimate conversations and relationships with our God.

Meditation too has a beautiful role to play. When we go into that inner room in our hearts and shut our minds and ears, we become dormant as in a cocoon, so we can metamorphose into a butterfly, and soar. It is being in the darkness, while we sit and say our mantra, that gives God the time and space to do His transforming, purifying work. He illumines our minds, expands our hearts and gives us new life. This is supra-natural life. Fully alive in Christ. Full of grace, mercy, love – a truly blessed life!

**Virginia Belmonte**  
Toronto, ON

## News from Far and Near *continued from C4*

### **BC leader Sister Edna Dohm dies at 93**

Sr. Edna Dohm, a Sister of St. Joseph, who started the first Christian Meditation group in Vancouver in 1983, and spent 17 years in sharing the teaching in British Columbia, died recently at the St Joseph's Mother House in Toronto at the age of 93. The impetus for her Christian Meditation teaching activities came from a sabbatical year in 1983 when she spent six months as a visiting guest at the Benedictine Priory in Montreal.

Upon returning to her Vancouver convent, she placed an ad in the BC Catholic newspaper and thus began an introductory course in the teaching of Christian Meditation, and subsequently the formation of a group at the Vancouver Oblates of Mary Immaculate community.

In September, 2000, during a three-day Christian Meditation retreat at Trinity Lutheran College in Washington State, USA, Laurence Freeman presented Edna with a plaque from the World Community For Christian Meditation for her outstanding contribution to sharing the teaching.

The plaque reads: "Congratulations to our dear friend and Sister of St Joseph, Edna Dohm, on her 17 years of sharing the teaching of Christian Meditation in the Vancouver area and for having started the first meditation group in Vancouver in 1983. With great thanks for your generosity, dedication and devotion over the years and for touching the lives and hearts of so many who have come to the path of meditation. The World Community sends you our love and blessings. Laurence Freeman. September 23, 2003."

Sr. Edna had a great sense of humor and the wonderful capacity to laugh at herself. She received a Masters in Education in 1972 and her religious life included a wide variety of teaching assignments and pastoral outreach work in both Ontario and British Columbia. During the final year of her life she suffered a series of small strokes and died peacefully, with her niece Lynn Hyde from Vancouver at her side. Fr. Robert Foliot SJ was the celebrant and homilist at the funeral.

**Jackie and Art Missler**  
Vancouver, BC





## Meditation Introduced at Ottawa's Trinity Anglican Church

For three Wednesday evenings last Advent, spiritual seekers from the Ottawa area were invited by the pastor of Trinity Anglican Church, Rev. Andrea Thomas, to learn about and practise Christian meditation. The series was attended by parishioners from Trinity and other churches (Parkdale United, St. Margaret Mary's, Southminster United and the Society of Friends) as well as meditators from Aylmer, Quebec.

Ron Dicks, a longtime leader in the Christian Meditation Community, led the sessions. His personal experience of meditation proved more important than theory, as he led the group through the steps. Being still and quiet makes us aware of the busy-ness of our minds and of itches and twitches in different parts of our bodies. Saying the mantra helps us to stay centered and aware of the Presence within. This is the purpose of meditation, to come to the centre of our being where we get to know our true self. The outcome is that we find more of the fruits of the Spirit, such as love and patience, in our lives. Often others see this in us better than we do ourselves.

Through video presentations we heard stories from meditators all over the world – why they meditate and the benefits they have received – including a diocese in Australia where children meditate as part of their school day. For me, the most moving testimonial was from a British woman who, after meditating for a while and not knowing if it was making a difference, realized one day that the quality of her

life had changed. There was an inner peace and tranquility that had not been there before. She recalled describing the experience to John Main, "I felt as if I'd fallen in love." He smiled and said, "That's exactly what happened. You've actually met God, as it were, and have fallen in love with God."

This was borne out by one of Ron's key messages – the importance of recognizing when we must leave the self (the ego) behind. While the ego is important to our daily functioning, when it becomes central (self-centred) instead of subservient to the true self (God-centred), we must let go of it. Meditation is really all about love. Some changes are made within us secretly, like the seed growing in the ground; others are more conscious, such as when we become more aware of unloving ways in our behaviour.

At the end, some participants spoke about the difference meditation has made for them. One person shared this memorable description of the profound impact of meditation on her life: "Before I started meditating, I felt like an empty barrel where all that mattered was the exterior and what people saw on the outside. Inside, there was a huge void. Now, after practising meditation, I feel so full inside, to the point where the barrel is almost overflowing."

**Jennifer Payne**  
**Parkdale United Church Christian Meditation Group**  
**Ottawa, ON**

# Practicalities of Practice

*Q. What is the "Gethsemani sleep" about in the practice of meditation?*

A. The "Gethsemani sleep" is all about attention at our time of prayer. Certainly attention was what Jesus was asking his disciples for in the Garden of Gethsemani when he said to them: "Wait here and watch with me." In Matthew's gospel he said to his disciples before going to pray: "My soul is very sorrowful even to death" and he asked them to keep watch nearby. They tried but fell asleep.

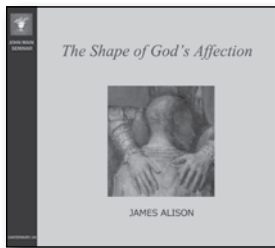
Jesus was asking them for the spiritual discipline of staying awake and being with Him. "Could you not watch with me", asked Jesus. "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26: 40-42)

Jesus was calling them to simple attention, to watchfulness, to be with Him. This is exactly what the call to meditation is about. It's about answering the call of Jesus to his disciples to watch one hour with Him, to stay awake and be attentive. The continual repetition of our mantra will help us to this attention and keep us from falling into the "Gethsemani sleep."

Perhaps the Psalmist summed it up best, "Wait for the Lord: be strong, and let your heart take courage: Wait for the Lord." (Psalm 27:14).

From the book *Frequently Asked Questions About Christian Meditation: The Path of Contemplative Prayer*, by Paul Harris (Novalis Publishers). Paul can be reached at paulturnerharris@aol.com

## PUBLICATIONS



### 2010 John Main Seminar, Canterbury, Kent: The Shape of God's Affection James Alison #6206 \$42.00

James Alison, in four stimulating sessions, reflects on the experience of God's presence as encountered in Hebrew scripture and the New Testament. His scholarship is matched by his sense of contemporary questions, and his sense of humour. In the fifth talk, Alison discusses issues related to being gay and Christian today. A dialogue between James Alison and Laurence Freeman, moderated by Denis McAuliffe, concludes this enriching and thought-provoking recording. The sections make for easier personal selection and group listening.

### 2010 Monte Oliveto Retreat: Return to the Centre Laurence Freeman #6020 \$30.00

What knocks us off-centre is often what re-centres us more deeply than before. What uncentres us is a crisis of some kind. Nobody wants to be in crisis. However, it is often the means by which renewal takes place.

In these talks, Laurence Freeman explores the rich metaphors that are generated by different aspects of the symbol of the Centre. Giving balance, it is the symbol of wholeness, a place of convergence, a place of peace. A centre is relational; it cannot exist outside of what it is the centre of. It is a moving point within a dynamic system. A sailor will tell you that navigation involves the daily discipline of checking a number of points in order to safely reach the destination. Our practice of twice-daily meditation is a discipline that acts as a 'beacon' that directs us, and keeps us centred within ourselves – within the universe – within God.



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# The Answers are All Here by the Fire



John Callaghan began a presentation on *Simply Being*, at the January meeting in Toronto, by quoting Pema Chodron, an American Buddhist teacher. She is famed for saying *Don't just do something, sit there*.

John reflected that when we have meditated for some time, we occasionally experience “simply being,” when the mind just sees or hears, without judgment or preconceived ideas. In this context, he asked his audience to think about the last time each of us looked into the eyes of the person we love and saw him/her without the entire history of our personal relationship intruding into the moment. How often do we see the person we love for who he/she really is?

Preconceived ideas, John explained, usually intrude on our experience, so that “I am,” “I want,” or “I wish I had” dominates and colours the intimacy of a moment. In such

cases, “simply being” eludes us. For another way of seeing, he referred to Meister Eckhart, “The eyes that you see God with are the same eyes as those that God sees [you] with.”

John recounted two personal incidents of the significance of “simply being” brought to one’s awareness. The first was in Yellowknife, on a bench where usually just one person sits at a time. One day there, John was in the company of a Native medicine man who, after some time, said thoughtfully, “It is important to give thanks when things go badly.” In bad times! There is the wonder of it! There can be, as John put it, “moments of radical amazement” even when we are not appreciating what is happening.

Once on a visit to Ireland, John’s aunt said to him, “I don’t know why you want to travel. The answers are all here by the fire.” This brought back to him these lines from T.S. Eliot, “We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” (*Little Gidding*)

What these incidents reveal is that our practice does not end when we stop meditating. In every moment, we choose one thing or another. When we realize that the ego is present, we can turn away from it and choose independently. We are often in a prison cell of our own making, too full of our own ideas to comprehend or be aware of what is really happening. We need to be open to sacred stillness. As long as we are having moments of awareness of our self-absorption we are making progress.

John ended by quoting Thomas Merton, “The fact remains that we are invited to forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnity to the winds and join in the general dance.” (*New Seeds of Contemplation*)

**Joseph Clarkson**  
Toronto, ON

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