

# Canadian Christian Meditation Community

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2011 VOL. 20 NO. 2 THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

## Canadian Christian Meditation Community 2011 Biennial National Conference: John Main and 20th Century Mystics

An event of central importance to Canadian Christian meditators, the 2011 CCMC National Conference was held at St. Paul University in Ottawa from June 10 to 12. The keynote speakers were Fr. Laurence Freeman, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, and Rev. Glenda Meakin who has long nurtured and served the Canadian Community. Several other leading figures in the community led workshop sessions. The fully booked weekend had 160 participants, while an additional 130 fitted into the auditorium for the Friday evening opening address.

On Friday morning prior to the Conference, about 70 clergy of various denominations attended a colloquium and, on Sunday afternoon, some 30 young people took part in a youth retreat. Fr. Laurence led both these “bookend events.”

General sessions at the Conference were interspersed with workshops, prayers and readings. The conference included a delightful play on Saturday evening on the life of Catherine De Hueck Doherty, an informal meeting with Fr. Laurence on guidelines and issues for group leaders, and a business

session on CCMC developments across Canada, including presentation of the new National Council. The Conference ended with Sunday Eucharist, induction of three new Oblates and meditation. Through the keynote speakers and the workshop presenters, the conference introduced John

Main in resonance with each of the following 20th century mystics: Simone Weil, Evelyn Underhill, Bede Griffiths, Thomas Merton, Swami Abhishiktananda and Henri Nouwen.

We are all grateful to the organizing team in Ottawa who worked hard for months to make the Conference the success that it turned out to be: Flora Benoit, Ron Dicks, Kevin Flynn, Michel Legault, Simon Losinger, Jean Murray, and Liz Tyrwhitt.

While it is impossible to give a comprehensive

account of all that was said in the various sessions, the articles which follow in this newsletter, prepared by volunteer rapporteurs, attempt to convey a sense of the activities as experienced by those attending.

**Stephen Woollcombe**  
Ottawa, ON



*Fr. Laurence and the Rev. Glenda Meakin*

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# 2011 CCMC National Conference

## Fr. Laurence on John Main – Refreshing the Memory

Fr. Laurence's reverence for his teacher and for his pivotal role in 20th century mysticism was obvious during both the opening assembly and the third general session.

John Main, he affirmed, presented a context for Christian mysticism in our era – in a time when new technologies have accelerated our lives; when the rise of secularism has marginalized institutional religions; when the relationship between religion and citizenship has been severed; and the strong sense of identity religion provided in the past has eroded. Referring to Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's work on secularism and identity, Fr. Laurence asked, "What is to provide us now, in this secular era, with a basis for social coherence versus fragmentation, confusion, conflict or the regression of an imposed morality?" According to Taylor, John Main changed the relationship between spirituality and religion. He gave us a new way: silence, stillness and simplicity.

John Main found his "pearl of great price" through his own spiritual exploration into the heart of silence. After being introduced to mantra-based meditation in the Far East, he incorporated a Christian mantra into his contemplative prayer. As a Benedictine monk, he revived the ancient Christian contemplative tradition, forgotten by the Church

since the 4th century, when hermit monks and nuns explored mysticism in the deserts of Egypt.

Community was central to John Main's teaching, and meditation creates community, he said. Since John Main opened the first Christian Meditation Centre in 1975 at his monastery in London, the community he founded has grown into a global "monastery without walls." Nearly 2,000 groups now practise Christian meditation in 114 countries around the world.

Meditation, by helping us enter the present moment, creates a conversion of consciousness. It brings a new way of seeing and being, of deeply understanding others. Through it, our personal spiritual direction expands. Through it, we can contribute to the spiritual direction of our time.

At the end of the third plenary Fr. Laurence gave a summary of John Main's simple teaching. Accept the gift of being, let go of it, and return the gift to the Giver. Return to your mantra. Let it sound in your hearts, as in the valley below while you climb the mountain. Eventually your thoughts will empty. "All you have to do is really want it. Nothing holds us back from entering the fullness of God itself."

**Marguerite Alexander  
Orleans, ON**

## Glenda Meakin on Evelyn Underhill

In Saturday morning's general session Rev. Glenda Meakin brought to life some of the parallels between John Main and Evelyn Underhill, a mystic of the early 20th century. Both of these spiritual teachers lived the path of silence as a way of participating in God's presence, and both were committed to bringing this awareness to ordinary men and women. They were prodigious writers and tireless communicators of the contemplative journey.

Evelyn Underhill wrote 39 books and over 300 articles, taught at Oxford and gave retreats – all this at a time when women's intellectual and spiritual capacity was not generally recognized. Her groundbreaking book *A Study of Mysticism* (1911) stands as a major contribution to the field and has never been out of print. In a shorter, more easily digestible work, *Practical Mysti-*



*Evelyn Underhill*

*cism*, published during World War I, she claimed that the hope for the future would depend on developing contemplative life.

She was convinced that just as the human being requires air and food to survive, he or she needs to be strengthened through contact with the Divine. Prayer is the "commerce of love" providing the currency to make contact with the Beloved possible. She recognized the need to "be" in the Presence, and the force of a community bound by the love emanating from shared silence. This insight resonates in those on the path of Christian meditation as they deepen their experience of the "poverty of a single word" allowing them to clear the temple of their own heart and bring deeper love to the world.

**Lucie Legault  
Cantley, QC**

# From the National Coordinator



Greetings from Colleen Donald, the new National Coordinator. I have replaced Phil Barnett, who led our community for the past four years. Phil has been a dedicated and generous coordinator. He travelled across Canada and to the Caribbean sharing the teachings of John Main, leading retreats and giving talks.

His leadership of our community was imbued by his own deep spirituality, and demonstrated clearly that our mutual silent meditation is the sustaining practice that unites and motivates us within John Main's "community of love." On behalf of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community I offer our thanks for a job very well done! (Phil continues to serve us by leading the School.)

As for my personal journey, the bad news is I've been told I'm no longer middle-aged. But having been married 45 years, with three nearly middle-aged children, five grandchildren and a 90-year-old mother, maybe I shouldn't be surprised.

I came to Christian meditation through a growing awareness of a need for silence in my own prayer life. There is a saying, "When the disciple is ready the teacher appears." This was my experience. John Main was the teacher. I joined a group and accepted the discipline of the practice and the intrinsic authority of the teaching. My discipline

is imperfect if sincere, but the effects of meditation in my life are many and ineffable. My ego image of God has been deconstructed – the mirror has been smashed.

There is a paradoxical simplification. Personal oral prayer is reduced to "That's amazing," "Help" and "Thank you." Community liturgy is vastly enriched. But in the movement of internal simplification there is a simultaneous movement to otherness and connectedness, a rich complex web of the life of the spirit. There is a flow in the universe that we join



through our prayer. In a nutshell, through meditation I've enjoyed and experienced the love of Christ and a community of wonderful people who share my journey.

WCCM celebrates its 20th anniversary this year with a program of consolidation, transition and renewed vision. The Canadian community will be reflecting these goals. We all have the opportunity to participate in the renewal of a contemplative consciousness so vital today. It is our faithful practice, the experience of God's love for us, that begins to transform us and that radiates outwards into our wounded world. I look forward to serving the Community and welcome your support and engagement.

**Colleen Donald**  
Vancouver, BC

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## Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

(5964 ave. Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Suite 208  
corner ave. Royal)

P.O. Box 52, Station NDG  
Montreal, Quebec H4A 3P4  
514-485-7928

christianmeditation@bellnet.ca  
www.meditatio.ca

## Editorial Team

Phil Barnett, Joseph Clarkson, Colleen Donald, Joy Gordon,  
Mark Schofield and Jeff Ewener

Send submissions to newsletter coordinators Joseph Clarkson and  
Jeff Ewener at <newsnotes@bellnet.ca>.

*échos du silence*, a newsletter for French-speaking meditators, is available.  
Send inquiries to Fr. Michel Boyer, editor,  
2715, chemin de la Côte Ste-Catherine, Montréal H3T 1B6  
or e-mail <info@meditationchretienne.ca>.

Page design: www.khatvanga.com

# NEWS FROM

## First New Group in Hamilton in Twelve Years

Since the departure of the Sisters of Social Service 12 years ago, there has been no ongoing Christian meditation group to serve the population in Hamilton, the eighth largest city in Canada.

However with the assistance of Paul Harris and Fr. Ed Mahony, pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in nearby Stoney Creek, a new group started Tuesday April 5, 2011 with 20 people in attendance.

Paul gave a Saturday morning session at the church on March 19, with a large crowd participating in a talk, meditation period, and question and answer session. Hand-outs were available, and books for sale. Four displays in the church foyer presented information about John Main, the teaching, and the WCCM. In addition, Paul gave a ten-minute homily on Christian meditation at the three weekend Eucharistic services.

One of the spinoffs of this Christian meditation weekend in the parish has been a number of people interested in starting additional groups in the Hamilton area. Follow-up work is in progress.

**Marylou Spence, Group Leader  
Hamilton, ON**

## GTA Meditation Group Leaders Sharing Session

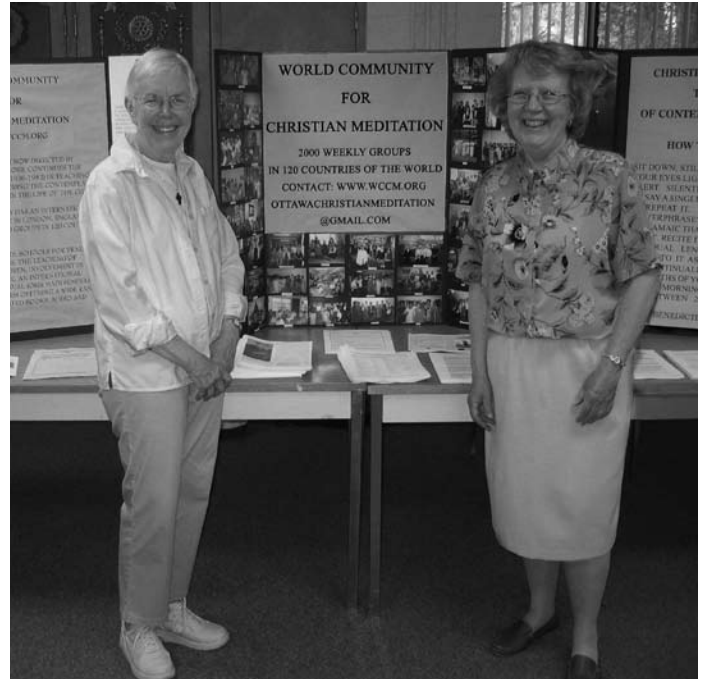
During the lunch at a Lenten Day of Reflection on April 9, ten Greater Toronto Area group leaders met with group liaisons Carolyn Murray and Julie Meakin to share what was happening with their groups.

There were a variety of practices. Some groups began with the meditation period first and then listened to the talk and then discussed it. One group printed out the weekly reading from the wccm.org website and read it in lieu of a CD talk. One group had a lending library of books on spirituality, and one group leader organized a seven-hour silent retreat which was well attended! Another group had a short Evening Prayer service and then meditated. Most groups remain small, around 6–10 regulars but sometimes going as high as 15–20 at a meeting. Group leaders talked about how to encourage and invite people to come to meditation groups, including the clergy.

Both long-time and recent group leaders were encouraged by these words from Fr. Laurence: “Seeing yourself as a student, a disciple of Christ who teaches you by meditating in you, with you and for you, is all the qualification you need to go ahead. Jesus encouraged his disciples to teach ‘in

my name,’ which means in his presence and with his spirit. You have a community and a tradition to support and help you.” For this we are extremely grateful!

**Julie Meakin  
Toronto, ON**



## Praying Congregations

The Anglican dioceses of Ottawa and Ontario co-sponsored a prayer conference May 13 and 14, at the Kemptville campus of the University of Guelph. The theme *Praying Congregations: the Heart of Christian Community* was developed by the keynote speaker, Rev. Jane E. Vennard of the United Church of Christ in five talks: *Learning to Pray*; *Experiencing Prayer*; *Intercessory Prayer*; *Wordless Prayer*; *Becoming a Praying Congregation*.

The Ottawa Christian Meditation Committee brought a display to distribute information to the 200 people who attended the conference and to answer questions they might have. Rev. Vennard referred to the practice of Christian meditation several times in the course of her talks, which may have helped pique further interest in our display.

It was a most welcoming environment in which to spread the word.

**Charlotte Gupta  
Orleans, ON**

# FAR AND NEAR

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## PEI Weavings

Belcourt Centre in beautiful South Rustico was the setting for 22 Islanders to gather for a Meditation Day on Saturday April 30. Meditation sessions were preceded by chair Kundalini yoga conducted by Teri Hall, a sister meditator and certified yoga and meditation teacher.

Teri explained that the word “kundalini” means awareness and manifesting the hidden potential of that awareness. She introduced us to the ritual of celestial communication, considered a gem in the tradition: graceful rhythmic movements accompanied by sacred mantra chanting – “I am the light of the soul. I am bountiful; I am beautiful; I am bliss; I am; I am.”

Meditation times as well as contemplative outdoor strolls allowed participants to experience the joy of spring and personal reflection.

Sr. Kathleen Bolger concluded the day with a presentation based on the story of the five loaves and two small fishes. She asked us to reflect on the scripture passage, addressing the question: “What are the loaves we each bring to meditation?”

In final farewells, participants shared their experience of the day. We departed inspired and looking to another gathering in the future.

**Eileen Clow & Gertie Purdy  
Charlottetown, P.E.I.**

## A Gift from God

A group of oblates and meditators from Montreal, Quebec’s Eastern Townships and Ottawa participated in a weekend retreat at the Abbaye Cistercienne in Rougemont, Quebec, May 20-22. It was a gift from God in that the surroundings were so beautiful due to the timing of this event. Apple blossom time is the last two weeks of May so we were in a

mini garden of Eden for these two days. Many of the bird species are only seen and heard at this time of year as they pass through the area.

We were treated to following the various offices of the monks, and they are sung rather than read. The plain chant is so in harmony with our silence. Polly Schofield led the two day retreat focused on the life and writings of Dom John Main. Polly is the official archivist of John Main’s many writings and talks so it is a wealth of knowledge and some unpublished works that we listened to with rapt attention.

The theme was sin and how we as meditators are turned to the light of Jesus in our lives by being able to appreciate Christ’s working within the silence in our hearts and minds. The repetition of our little word twice daily brings us to this light. The importance of community was also stressed so that by belonging to a meditation group we can receive the support we need to carry on. As we meet each week, we discover new insights to our meditative experience through recommended reading and the talks given by Fr. John and Fr. Laurence.

**Joan McKinnon  
Fulford, QC**

## In memoriam Barbara Stabler (1924-2011)

In 1993, after attending the John Main Seminar at Glendon College in Toronto, Barbara Stabler and Luella Hendershot returned to their home church, Fairlawn United, and began to offer Christian meditation there. Barbara welcomed all of us, and kept in touch with many who moved away. With her, it was always about the people. She made us feel worthy and appreciated. Barbara added people to her life, and never subtracted them.

Barbara cared deeply for those with psychiatric illnesses, and she sensitively understood how to offer help in an appropriate way. Her Christian meditation was a springboard to this vast well of love and connection.

When she was no longer able to attend our weekly group, we went to Barbara’s home each December and June. She opened her home to us graciously, sharing meditation time and celebrating with refreshments. Following Barbara’s death last February, her family gave her book and tape collection on meditation to our group. They are a generous legacy shared by the Fairlawn Group and some GTA meditators. Most important are our memories of a gentle friend who led us to our community of love.

**Carol Green  
Toronto, ON**

*News continues on C6*

## News from Far and Near *continued*

### **In memoriam Mrs. Teresa Coady**

Terry started to meditate shortly after a group was formed by Sister Louise Vanetti and Alice Ward at Avila Centre, the Sister of St. Joseph retreat house in Thunder Bay, in 1983. Terry was a faithful twice-daily meditator ever since. When the retreat house closed, she facilitated the group on the north side of the city at Our Lady of Loretto's church, her parish.

Terry developed heart trouble a few years ago. After a real struggle she has passed to that heavenly place that awaits the faithful. Her group misses her and keeps her in their hearts.

**Alice Ward  
Thunder Bay, ON**

### **Sign Posts for Snow Birds and Travelers**

Here I am in the beautiful district of Muskoka Lakes enjoying summer and why am I thinking about snow birds? On our winter travels we stopped in at the Christian Meditation Center, Neptune Beach. Here one is welcomed by friendly hosts, can browse the book room, join a meditation group meeting twice daily, attend special programs, drop in

to a yoga class or just enjoy a walk on the beach. For more information visit the website at: [www.wccmneptunebeach.org](http://www.wccmneptunebeach.org)

Then there are the summer vacationers from southern Ontario who travel into north eastern regions to commune with the rocks, trees and lakes. Check the [www.meditatio.ca](http://www.meditatio.ca) website for meditation groups in the areas of The Sault, Sudbury, Temiscaming Shores, Temiscaming QC, North Bay, Corbeil, Deep River and Bracebridge.

An annual retreat event was held in North Bay on Lake Nipissing in May – Sadhana - journey to the Center – practicing the disciplines of Christian meditation; yoga; lectio divina; body prayers; labyrinth walks and walking meditation in candlelight; a karma yoga practice of making belts of protection from the nine threads of life to exchange at the closing farewell; and a social time of fellowship and friendship. Excellent meals and accommodations at the Sisters of St. Joseph Mother House helped to make the retreat a time of learning, sharing and deepening the practices that sustain us on the journey.

Happy and safe traveling to all,

**Carol Peterson  
Bracebridge, ON**



## Contemplative Prayer for a New Generation

As part of an annual Lenten prayer and meditation series at Scarboro Foreign Missions in Toronto, Paul Harris made a presentation entitled *Contemplative Prayer for a New Generation*. The presentation was well attended and well received by all.

Paul was very pleased to notice that one of the attendees was Sr. Elaine MacInnes. Sr. Elaine, in her 80s, is a Catholic sister with Our Lady's Missionaries, but is also a highly trained teacher of Zen meditation (a Roshi). Sr. Elaine has been instrumental in getting Zen meditation as a program and as a daily practice into prisons around the world; she has appeared many times on TV and has written extensively on Zen meditation.

**Paul Harris  
Ottawa, ON**

## Doing What's Necessary Clergy Event at Ottawa Conference

On a Friday morning when the vicissitudes of air travel threatened to cause the cancellation of well-laid plans, Fr. Laurence Freeman finally arrived at the Saint Paul University amphitheatre (sans monastic habit) to an audience of 68 priests, deacons, pastors and ministers, eager to know more about this way of simplicity. He had spent 16 hours flying to Ottawa for this event preceding the CCMC National Conference, and had lost his luggage, but easily reconstructed his message, armed with his breviary and a trusted notebook: *One Thing Necessary: Contemplative Spirituality in an Active Ministry*.

In the Gospel narrative of Jesus visiting Martha and Mary, we can see that in many respects, clerics are Marthas by nature. They are organizers, at the service of their community, and responsive to parish needs. The story underlines the contrast between the active and contemplative dimensions of our lives. Martha lost touch with something important – the better part, which Mary chose. Yet both need each other. They are two halves of the human soul. How can we unite the Martha and Mary in us, and achieve a personal balance?

The answer: two periods a day of meditation. Our need for personal prayer cannot be substituted by our public prayer at the church services we lead. The risk of not devoting personal time to prayer is spiritual burnout, dryness – *acedia* John Cassian called it.

Clericalism is another danger that can have serious negative consequences – a perversion of the meaning of ministry, which sometimes our institutions

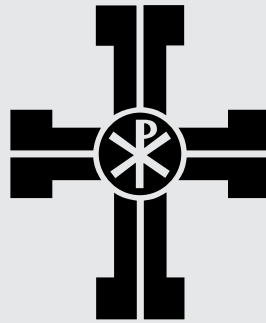
encourage. Meditation can discourage the ego from infecting the life of the Church. A contemplative life is necessary to rebalance and refresh the Church. Meditation “heals the wound of sin at its root” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*) and frees us for true service to our people. Our morning meditation prepares us for the day. When we return to it in the evening, despite lack of due mindfulness during the day, our sins can be embraced as channels of grace. This unique gift of Jesus is available to us all (not just in monasteries) and in all our prayer. His grace is given in proportion to our readiness to receive it.

### Integrating the contemplative life in ministry

In this way of prayer, in its simplicity, you don't see the results immediately. But the fruits become visible in you, your work with others and your understanding of God. You can proclaim it in the pulpits. You can incorporate more silence in the liturgy. Share it with people, start a group! The paradox is that if we give time to meditation, it increases our availability. It will transform the way you prepare and deliver a homily, as you become more in touch with the “living spirit of the Word” and your experience of it. Find the rhythm for the “one thing necessary.” When found, it carries you and will enrich and enhance every aspect of your life.

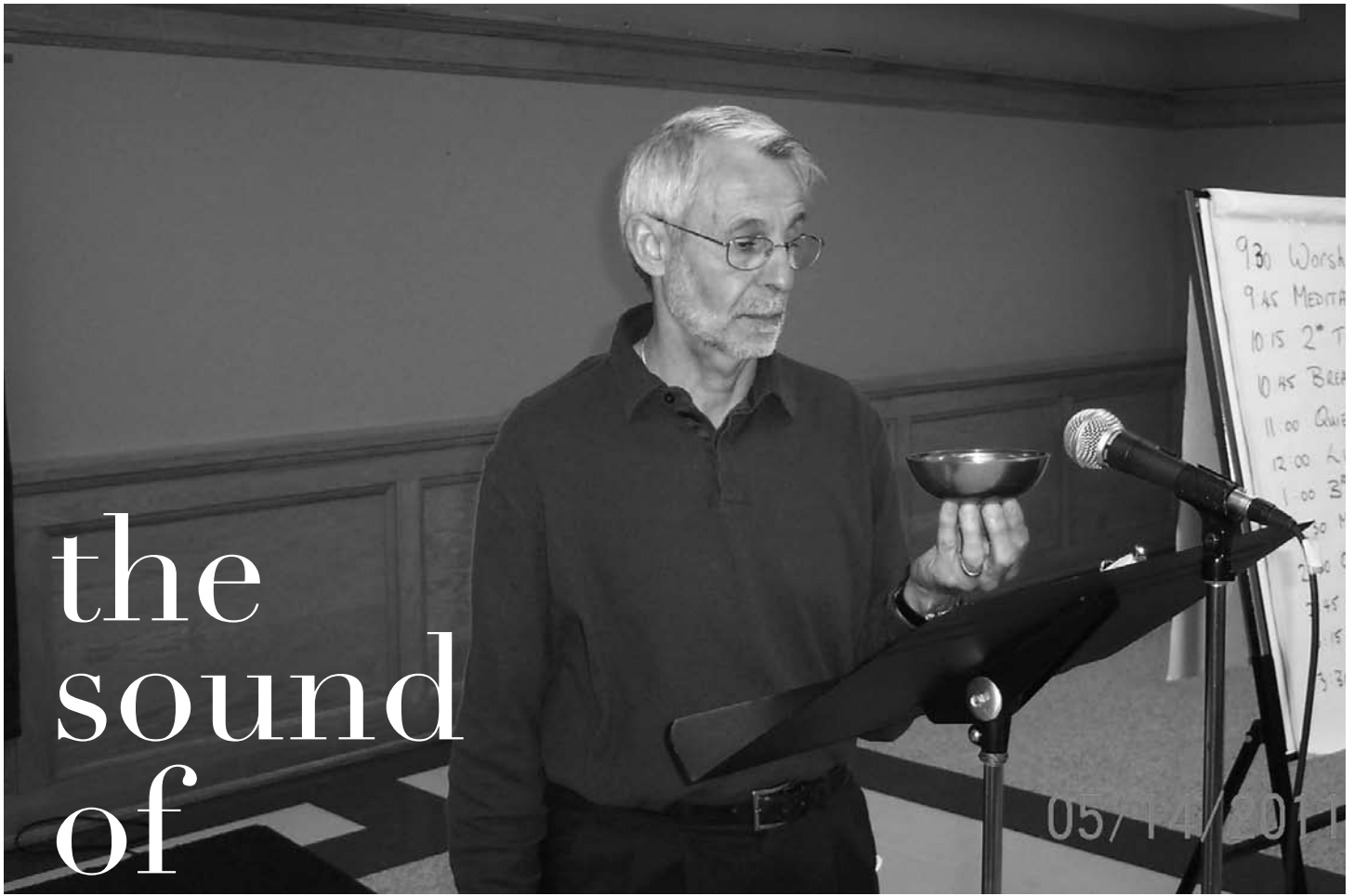
Fr. Laurence was graciously thanked by Fr. Joseph Muldoon, Episcopal Vicar of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa.

**Deacon James Kubina**  
Ottawa, Ontario



This unique gift which is in Christ is offered in its fullness to everyone. It is everywhere available, but it is given to each man in proportion to his readiness to receive it. Its presence is the fuller, the greater a man's desire to be worthy of it. This gift will remain with us until the end of the world, and will be our comfort in the time of waiting. By the favours it bestows, it is the pledge of our hope for the future, the light of our minds, and the splendour that irradiates our understanding.

– excerpt from the Office,  
treatise on the Trinity by  
St. Hilary, Bishop (c.300-368)



# the sound of

# SILENCE

In mid-May, 50 meditators attended a retreat focused on the theme of silence as God’s “natural language.” Rev. Phil Barnett led the weekend at the Christ Church Anglican church hall in Dartmouth.

Phil wove in anecdotes of his own life with reflections on the centrality of silence to Christian life. “Silence,” he said, “is the language of the spirit.” Silence is within us, as creatures of God, and what we have to do is enter into it. As people took their seats for each session, he struck a small singing bowl. The sound that would drift across the room was a clear, single note. That simplicity is an example of resonance, he said. In the simplicity of silence, “we place ourselves into a situation where we are receptive to God.”

Phil focused on several scriptural passages, including Elijah’s encounter with God (1 Kings 19) not in an earthquake, nor a fire, but “after the fire a still, small voice.” He spoke of a wilderness trip with his wife, encountering the equivalents in the human-generated noises of our world – a

jet plane or a snowmobile over a wilderness site. His advice is not to dwell on the frustration of these experiences, but to be accepting and know that God awaits us in silence. “Silence gives our soul room to breathe,” Phil added.

One starts to appreciate glaciers that exist for eons or mountain asters that bloom for mere days. “Acknowledging (in prayer) that I want to be in communication with God... I’m acknowledging other things are secondary.” “What does God require of you,” the prophet Micah asks, “but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

The return to silence then helps us remain alert and attentive to a gradual unfolding of where God would like us to use our gifts. When we participate in this humble walk with God, we also find our meditation practice is leading us to be less judgmental and more loving in our relationships. This builds a presence of Christ within us. And “it is Christ in us that touches Christ in another.”

**Michael Tutton  
Dartmouth, NS**



# Surrender to Love



Sixty people attended this workshop at Mount St. Mary's Spirituality Centre on May 27-28. The idea for the workshop emerged from a conversation between Sr. Kathleen Bolger and Tom Garland, a 12-step program member and participant in Sister's Tuesday meditation group. Asked what had motivated him to join the group, Tom credited Step 11: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God..."

The idea for *Surrender to Love* was born out of the prospect of attracting more 12-step members to the meditation group. Sr. Kathleen located a facilitator, Rev. Charles McMulkin, an Anglican priest from the Toronto area, who is also an addictions counselor. A pamphlet detailing particulars of the workshop was distributed throughout the Island. Tom personally carried the message to many of the 12-step groups in PEI, and each group decided on the merits of the workshop for their membership.

Charles led us in an exploration of love as the most powerful force in our lives. Through story-telling we came to understand that God is a power to be experienced. We learned to let go of common blocks to giving and receiving love. In Step 3 recovery we "made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God." There was a realization that we need to find the balance between obedience and surrender – Steps 3 and 11. We also gained greater appre-

ciation for the experience of love in our lives, and explored the importance of acceptance and trust in building our relationship with God and self.

For many of the participants this was the first time they had undertaken guided meditation – not only to learn a way of meditation, but also how to incorporate this learning into our ongoing recovery process. Surrender to love means surrendering to the "heart of the heart of the universe." Charles was sensitive to the fact that this experience might mean something different to each participant. He built time into the workshop to process these feelings.

This was Charles' first trip to PEI and he appreciated the strong sense of community at Mount St. Mary's and at meetings within the AA population. He had an opportunity to be a tourist for a few days, enjoying the splendour of our island and, especially, the seafood! And for all of us Mount St. Mary's provided a welcoming and relaxing atmosphere for learning.

**Darlene Porter, Workshop Participant  
Charlottetown, PE**

The Spirituality Centre of the Sisters of St. Martha is part of the Motherhouse, Mount St. Mary's. It is located close to downtown Charlottetown.

## A Woman in Love

### *A play on the life of Catherine Doherty*

Saturday evening's treat was a real highlight of the Conference weekend: a one-act play portraying the life and work of Catherine de Hueck Doherty, an extraordinary pioneer of Christian social engagement in Canada.

Written by Cynthia Donnelly, the play was given a superb interpretation in a solo performance by Anne Kathleen McLaughlin, GSIC (Pembroke). Sr. Anne Kathleen is a spiritual guide, retreat leader, author and, as we saw, a very accomplished actor. She is also known for her rendering of the play *Julian of Norwich* in 2009 for a large audience of meditators in Ottawa, and later in Norwich, England. On first meeting Catherine Doherty in 1980 she concluded that Catherine was indeed "a woman in love with God."



(On stage, the very shawl Anne Kathleen was wearing had been Catherine's.)

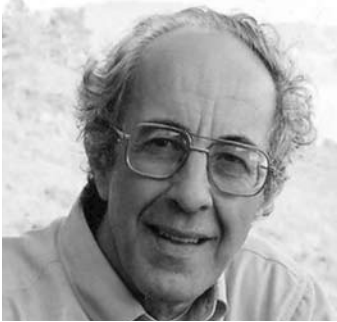
As depicted in the play, Catherine Doherty (1896-1985), daughter of aristocratic Russian parents, laboured, suffered and yet survived and grew in her love of God through the Soviet revolution, two world wars, the Depression, two marriages (one unhappy, then one splendidly happy), heart-breaking failures and, in the end, enduring achievement. Her pioneering life's work was to serve Christ by living the Gospel of social justice. Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario and the many hundreds of lives she has touched remain her tangible legacy.

**Stephen Woollcombe**  
Ottawa, ON

# 2011 CCMC National Conference

## Workshops: Four 20th-Century Mystics in Resonance with John Main

### Henri Nouwen *presented by Joseph Clarkson*



Henri Nouwen

Henri Nouwen's journey led him from his home in Holland to the United States, from a series of prestigious academic posts, to a Trappist monastery, then to live among the poor of Latin America. In 1985 he was called to join L'Arche in Trosly, France, the first of over 100 communities founded by Jean Vanier, where people with developmental disabilities live with assistants. A year later Nouwen came to make his home at L'Arche Daybreak just north of

Toronto. He lived there for the rest of his life.

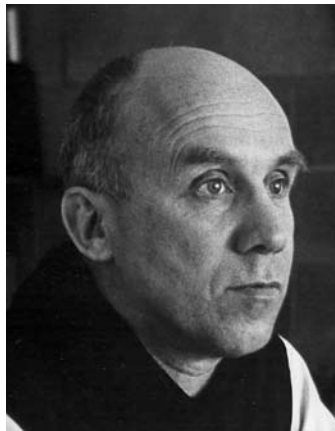
The lives of John Main and Henri Nouwen paralleled each other in many ways. If we study their lives and works we see that both men acted as guides to show us how to live our own lives. They had in common a love and understanding of silent prayer, a focus on meditation as a centre of their prayer life, and a deep understanding of the prayer life of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Both men struggled at times to discern the will of God.

Possibly the greatest similarity between the two men is that they were healers. They themselves were healed and, in turn, healed others through stillness, silence and solitude.

**Jack Murta**  
Ottawa, ON

### Thomas Merton *presented by Sr Janet Malone CND*

The lives of Thomas Merton and John Main were similar in many respects. Both were born in Europe in the first half of the 20th century, were educated in boarding schools, lived in the USA, became monks, travelled to the Far East, wrote books, and greatly influenced the world in the way of Christian meditation. Both encountered resistance to emphasis on *apophatic* or silent prayer, but eventually found a balance between it and *kataphatic* prayer (expressed with words, thoughts and images).



Thomas Merton

All meditators are called to become mystics.

Mysticism is a journey into the desert, a way of life, a way of prayer, a way of surrender. We are what we do, and only when we know what we do will we know who we are. Mystics plant seeds in God's garden and He cares for the garden. Bishop John Wu of Hong Kong taught Thomas Merton the *wu wei*, a Taoist perception of non-action and non-doing, not to be confused with "doing nothing." Merton identified this concept as a move to the true self.

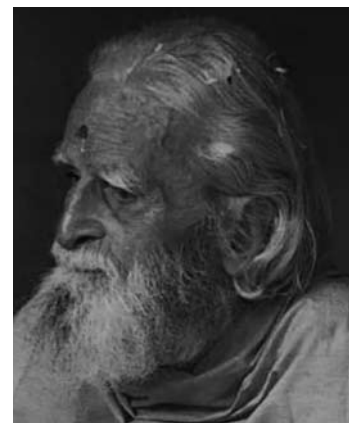
**Rosemary Bishop**  
Calgary, AB

### Bede Griffiths *presented by Rev. Kevin Flynn*

Bede Griffiths and John Main were pioneers of the spiritual life and of interreligious encounter. As Benedictines they were formed in the monastic tradition, with its emphasis on seeking God through the liturgy and divine office. Griffiths was a convert to Roman Catholicism before joining the Benedictine Order. In 1965 he was invited to set up a monastery in India. He later took over Shantivanam, (the monastic ashram in Kerala that had been founded by Henri Le Saux) and learned contemplative prayer, becoming a spiritual leader and writer.

As with John Main, Griffiths saw the centre of monastic life in the practice of meditation. He followed a path of contemplation that was deeply influenced by Hinduism and sought a marriage between the Eastern and Western tradi-

tions through the common language of contemplative prayer and mystical experience. The deepest form of dialogue is not with words, but in the 'ecave of the heart' (a mystical metaphor for this inner source of unity). It is the dialogue that occurs on the 'mystical spiral' on which all religions have a place.



Bede Griffiths

**Richard Haughian**  
Ottawa, ON

*Continued on next page*

# 2011 CCMC National Conference

## Four 20th Century Mystics *continued*

### Henri Le Saux *presented by Dr. Fabrice Blée*

French-born Benedictine monk Henri Le Saux (1910-1973) left for India in 1950 intending to found a Christian ashram and spread Christian monasticism throughout the country.

Le Saux soon met Ramana Maharshi, a Hindu sage, and deeply moved by this encounter, became Swami Abhishiktananda. For the rest of his life he sought to integrate Hindu and Christian spirituality. He was drawn to prayer and religious experience in solitude, to renunciation and to life as a Christian guru. He eventually left the ashram community and lived as a hermit in the caves of Arunachala. He remained deeply Christian and said mass regularly.

Prof. Blée noted similarities between Henri Le Saux and John Main. Both were Benedictine monks. Both were greatly influenced by contact with Hindu spirituality and were drawn to interi-



*Henri Le Saux  
(Swami Abhishiktananda)*

ority, silence and a mantra in contemplative prayer as a way of plumbing the mystery of God. They demonstrated their deepest beliefs with authority through the example of their lives. John Main called Le Saux's book *Saccidananda* one of the most inspired books of our time.

Nonetheless, the differences between the two are significant. Le Saux dialogued with Hinduism and struggled within himself to reconcile Hinduism and Christianity. He followed a path of renunciation and interior prayer similar to that of a Hindu guru, eventually becoming a recluse. On the other hand, John Main's contact with Hinduism led him to recover a similar form of interior prayer within his own tradition, and to dedicate his life to promoting its practice openly and widely among ordinary people.

**Archie Boyd**  
Ottawa, ON

## Ottawa Conference Dialogue and Q&A *with Fr. Laurence Freeman and Rev. Glenda Meakin*

The final plenary session on Sunday morning was a dialogue with Fr. Laurence and Rev. Glenda Meakin based on questions from conference participants.

The tenor of the discussion was deep and personal, on such issues as the distinction between "soul" and "spirit," the possibility or prospects of reaching permanent transformation in our spiritual journey; the distinction between suffering and affliction, and their connection with meditation. In this last instance, Fr. Laurence referred to the writ-

ings of Simone Weil, and also recommended the audio file of Sarah Bachelard's teaching on the WCCM website.

In his final words of advice for Christian meditators at the Conference, Fr. Laurence considered the possible impact of our practice on society and the world. Meditation cannot be imposed on others, and numbers may not be the measure of success. "Still," he emphasized, "there are enough people in this room to make a huge difference in the whole of Canada, enough to change the Church!"

**Stephen Woolcombe**  
Ottawa, ON

## Comments from the Conference

*The conference really stimulated and encouraged me in my meditation practice.*

*I very much appreciated... the spiritual nourishment provided by both speakers and the quiet prayer.*

# Calendar of Events

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

## September 2011

**14–24 September, Bere Island, Ireland.** In response to many requests for longer silent retreats the first Community ten-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.

**19 September–28 November, Ottawa, ON.** *Christian Meditation: Contemplative Prayer for a New Generation.* Lecturer: Paul Harris. Time: Monday evenings, 7:30–8:20 p.m. (including a 20-minute meditation period.) Ottawa School of Theology and Spirituality – Fall Courses. Fee: \$75.00. Register by cheque payable to Ottawa School of Theology and Spirituality, sending to D. Fisher, 481 Tweedsmuir Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Z 5P1 or register online at [www.ost.ca](http://www.ost.ca). Location of all courses: All Saints' Anglican Church, 347 Richmond Road, Ottawa, ON. For information call Pat (613-824-8780) or Flora (613-834-0152).

**21 September, Arnprior, ON.** Twilight Retreat: "Being Free – Searching for the True Self through the Christian Meditation Community." Speaker: Martin Malina, co-pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Pembroke. Time: 7 to 9:30 p.m. Venue: St. John Chrysostom Parish Hall, 295 Albert St., Arnprior, ON. Cost: Free-will offering. Please register by September 14 with Harriet Perfitt at [hperfitt@sympatico.ca](mailto:hperfitt@sympatico.ca) or tel. 613-623-5829.

**29 September, Toronto ON.** *A Christian Wandering in the World of Zen.* Speaker: Fr. Roger Brennan, SFM Scarborough Foreign Mission Centre. 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.

## October

**14–16 October, 2011, 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.

## November

**11-13 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 seventh year, it is led by meditators and certified yoga teachers, and is open to newcomers and seasoned practitioners. Venue: Providence Spirituality Centre, Kingston, ON. Time: 6 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m. Sunday. For more information, contact Casey Rock at 647-618-2909 or check [www.yogawithcasey.ca/retreats](http://www.yogawithcasey.ca/retreats).

**25-27 November, Kingston, ON.** *The School of Meditation: Workshop on Essential Teaching.* Venue: Providence Spiritual Centre, Kingston, ON. Time: 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 25 to 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov 27. For more information or to register, contact either Marilyn Metcalfe at 915-831-2945 or Phil Barnett at 204 261-9713.

## Regularly Scheduled Events

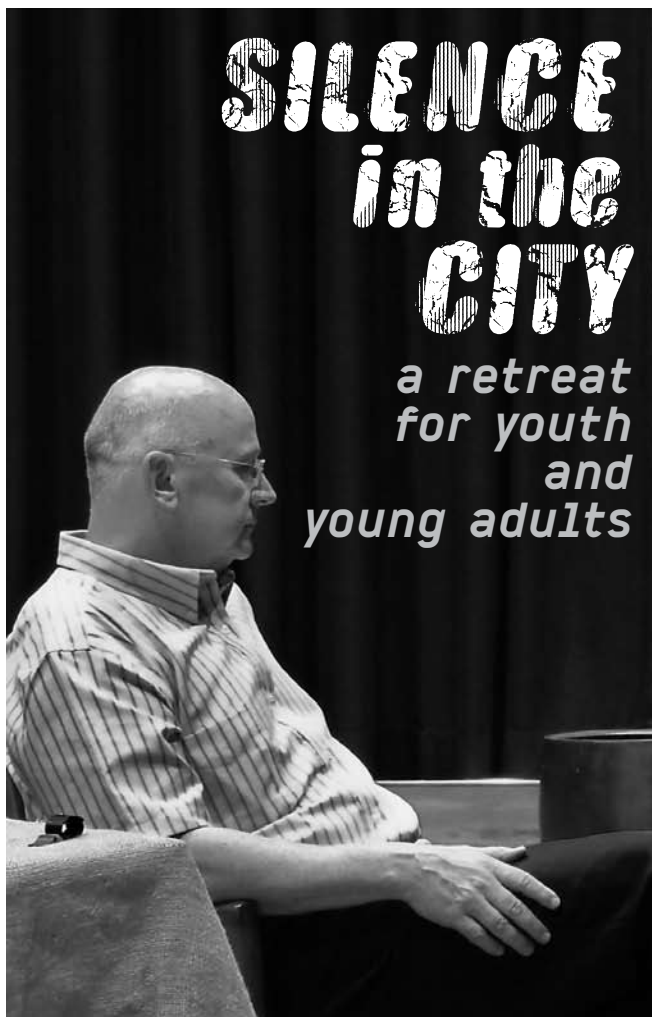
**First Thursday of each month, Calgary, AB.** *Meditation Booster – Monthly Drop-in* led by Engeline Piet at FCJ Christian Life Centre, 219-19th Avenue SW. Time: 12 noon to 12:45 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. Contact: FCJ Christian Life Centre at 403-228-4215.

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).

## Comments from the Conference

*Fr. Laurence had a presence of authenticity, candour, and a sense of humour when he spoke.*

*The conference and my steady meditation have led to further deepening and understanding.*



Fr. Laurence Freeman began his session with a group of just under 40 young people by speaking of a young Australian Aboriginal who approached him after a talk on Christian meditation. He had thanked Fr. Laurence for the talk and noted how it reconciled, for him as a Christian, the 40,000-year didjiri tradition of the Aboriginal people, where they face the direction of a river and let go of all thoughts and distractions. He said he knew that through their practice his ancestors were “listening to the word of God sounding at the heart of creation” – words Fr. Laurence said he will never forget.

Within the context of our modern society, where questions of identity and meaning plague not just the young, and a sense of crisis continually looms (e.g. environmental, economic and political), Fr. Laurence spoke of how a twice-daily meditation practice has the ability to change the way we think, the way we act and change our “self.” This in turn can positively effect change in our society. Through Christian meditation we are offered a sense of belonging to our self, to a community, our own time and place, and to a human spiritual tradition. These gifts respond to our questions of identity and meaning.

A 20-minute meditation and a Q&A between event participants and Fr. Laurence followed.

The other speaker was Tim Casey, director of the John Main Centre for Meditation and Inter-religious Dialogue at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. He gave a brief overview of his role at the Centre and his current work with youth.

The retreat ended with fellowship, food and more one-on-one discussion. The event highlighted what is best about our community. It was an opportunity to let go of the frenzied world outside and the on-going inner monologue, while coming closer in the presence of God that dwells within, and sharing authentic experiences from the heart.

**Krister Partel**  
**National Youth Coordinator**  
**Ottawa, ON**

Check us out on Facebook:  
*Canadian Christian Meditation Community*

# PUBLICATIONS

## Pilgrimage (see p.12)

New version of the 'Pilgrimage' DVD in NTSC format (North America) with subtitles in 11 languages.

## Practice Makes Perfect

Unpublished talks from the pre-2010 John Main Seminar retreat given by Laurence Freeman.

5097 ..... 6 CDs ..... \$40.00

## First Light: Seeing the World with the Mind of Christ

Meditation dispels illusion and re-informs our perception. It purifies the heart and recovers the wonder of seeing the new creation. Christian faith is nothing less than this. In these talks Laurence Freeman explores the meaning of faith and its power to heal. Talks from the Chateaugay Retreat, September 2010.

5098 ..... 6 CDs ..... \$40.00

————— CANADIAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE, ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY, OTTAWA 2011 —————

## John Main and 20th Century Mystics

The five-CD set consists of recordings of the open public lecture and question period of Friday evening given by Fr. Laurence Freeman. The two plenary sessions of Saturday and a dialogue session of Sunday morning given by Rev. Glenda Meakin and Fr. Laurence Freeman. See the descriptions on pages C1 & C2

5099 ..... 5 CDs ..... \$35.00

## One Thing Necessary: Contemplative Spirituality in an Active Ministry.

A set of two CDs of the presentation by Fr. Laurence Freeman to members of the clergy.

See the description on page C7

5100 ..... 2 CDs ..... \$15.00

## Silence in the City: A retreat for Youth and Young Adults

A set of two CDs of the presentation by Fr. Laurence Freeman to a group of young people.

See the description on page C14

5101 ..... 2 CDs ..... \$15.00

### Canadian Christian Meditation Community – Newsletter – Publications

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_____	-	First Sight (Available September)	see p. 11	19.95	_____
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_____	6291S	Pilgrimage NTSC	see p. 12	20.00	_____
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# A Capital Lenten Series

For four Wednesday evenings in March and April, about 25 people attended a Lenten series on Christian meditation at Parkdale United Church in Ottawa. At each session, they heard from an experienced meditator, prior to a John Main tape and meditation.

**Week 1:** Eva Hegmann presented the wheel as a metaphor for prayer. Moving forward, as prayer moves us closer to God, the wheel's spokes represent different types of prayer – all good when done with a sincere heart. The hub in the still centre symbolizes the prayer of Christ, in silent communion with the Father.

**Week 2:** Francie d'Annunzio painted a delightful picture of John Main as a caring, down-to-earth man who enjoyed playing pranks, but who took prayer very seriously. We learned aspects of his life as a diplomat, lawyer, monk and founder of the Christian meditation movement, based on his discovery of its early roots in the 4th century writings of John Cassian.

**Week 3:** Christian meditation is simple but not easy. Ron Dicks spoke of the challenge to stop focusing on ourselves, to say the mantra and be still with the Christ spirit which lies within – to come to the practice of meditation without expectations or demands. Ron shared how his experience of leaving self behind in meditation had helped him in connecting with those he ministered to in his past role as a social worker.

**Week 4:** After meditating at first on his own, Don Myrick



came to understand that meditating with others is crucial to this path. Among the tips for integrating meditation into daily life he recommended connecting to the resources on the WCCM website and joining a meditation group.

## Gentle fruits

**Question (from a participant):** The speakers all seem to be so gentle. Does Christian meditation make people more gentle?

**Answer:** Well, gentleness, along with peace, joy and love are the fruits of meditation, which manifest themselves in God's time.

**Elise Mennie and Jennifer Payne  
Ottawa, ON**

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# Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org

Registered Charity No. 327173

INTERNATIONAL EDITION, VOL. 35, N° 2; JULY 2011

## Liberating Silence

*How meditation humanizes life in the arid environment of prisons*

Leonardo Corrêa

leonardo.correa@gmail.com

There is a cell where freedom speaks louder. Our inner room, where the word resonates with each practice of meditation. In several parts of the world, meditation makes prisoner's lives less inhumane and (why not say?) more divine. Because meditation puts them in touch with the One who forgives all our shortcomings.

James Bishop\*, 45 was incarcerated for 10 years in a prison in California, and now is on parole. He discovered Christian Meditation and became an oblate in 2010. He has recently written a commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict in the light of his experience in prison.

**IN: How did you connect with Christian meditation the first time?**

I was first introduced to Christian Meditation while I was incarcerated. I had felt that I needed to respond to a calling for a deeper spiritual connection. I began discussing this calling with the chaplain, and she had suggested that I meet someone who was going to come to our prison to teach meditation. I met with Benita, and we pursued discernment, eventually leading to me taking my oblate vows.

**IN: What changed in your life after you start to meditate?**

I started meditating while still in prison, and as you may have guessed, prisons can be very stressful places! I noticed not only a greater overall peace in my life, but I noticed that I began to look on others with a greater



Photo By Richard Camwood/CC

*"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."(John, 8:32)*

compassion. This was unexpected, and quite nice!

**IN: How can meditation help people who are in prisons?**

While I was in prison, I noticed that many inmates tend to not want to address their own issues. For example, they don't like to think about why they are there or how they can change their lives for the better. They tend to place their focus on others. By meditating, I think we begin to focus inside, and we are forced (in a gentle way) to confront some of these issues in a deeply personal way. It is a very powerful form of therapy, something the prisons here in the U.S. are really lacking. Of course, one has to be willing to look inside, even briefly. Later, we become surprised at what we find!

**faced in establishing a routine of meditation in prison?**

It is nearly impossible to find silence in prison. I am talking about physical silence, not the internal silence that comes with meditation.

Finding a place to not be distracted can be very difficult. At our prisons here in California, the guards have two main count periods (where they make sure none of us have found our way under the electric fences!). During these times, the buildings are almost silent. Additionally, I found that placing headphones on my head also helped (they weren't hooked up to anything, they were just there to increase the silence). I also would close my eyes and lay down, so others would think I was sleeping and wouldn't interrupt me.

**IN: How do you want to share the**

**IN: What were the difficulties you**

### gift of meditation? What are your plans?

I have been blessed with very few gifts, but one of them seems to be my ability to write. For this reason, I have decided that writing should be a major focus of my life, and one of the ways I can bring what I have learned to others.

#### IN: Why did you become an oblate?

I felt compelled to answer a call for a greater dedication from God. While I am always in a state of greater discernment, I believe that I have been called to oblation or possibly even greater dedication. It's one of those things that you can't ignore in life. Callings seem to come in two flavors: the gentle nudge and the sudden compulsion. I liken to thunder and, lightning

respectively. In my case I felt both, the lightning, followed by the thunder. It was something I couldn't ignore, and I think the timing and sense of urgency were strong evidence that I was doing the right thing by answering that call, and I hope to continue answering it, as it seems to be something we constantly do, not something we do and are then finished with. That is, in my opinion, what the vow of conversion and stability are about: a constancy in our dedication. Conversion is not something you do and are then finished with; it has to be done constantly, daily. And likewise stability is a constant striving to be still in all aspects of our lives.

\* *His pen name.*

## Meditation in prison website

A new WCCM website dedicated to meditation in prisons has been opened: <http://www.mannex.com/wccm/>. The website contains testimonials and reflections of meditators in prisons.

*"It is a feeling of flying in a space as warm as my own body, as dark as sleep, and as quiet as a baby a few months old in the arms of its mother."*  
(A.S., on meditation, published on the website)

## WCCM 2012 Calendar

The 2012 WCCM calendar will soon be available. You may order now at [www.wccmcalendar.com](http://www.wccmcalendar.com). (You will not be billed until the order is shipped).

The calendar showcases photographs by Fr Laurence from his travels as director of The WCCM. As always, the photographs give us glimpses of worlds and cultures often very different from our own. Photographs allow us a present moment of seeing through another's eyes. The inspirational quotes from John Main's teachings guide us to deeper understanding of what lies beyond all images.



## How important is the Friends Program?

*Paul and Judi Taylor\* (palmy@ozemail.com.au)*

Over the past 15 years, people in many countries, many in prison and others living on the margins, would not have received the gift of Christian Meditation without the financial support of the WCCM Friends program. These people are so grateful they have "Friends" in the wider community.

For them and many like them in coming years it is of vital importance. The financial and other difficulties so many people are facing today makes it urgent to share our way of prayer with them.

You can find out more about Friends in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org) and clicking on the Friends box. Through its funding support, Friends is able to:

- Enable Fr Laurence to travel to emerging Christian Meditation communities in the developing world.
- Train meditation teachers worldwide and provide resources
  - Regularly distribute resource material to meditation groups worldwide
  - Have our teachings translated into other languages
  - In this 20th anniversary year, support Meditatio the outreach that brings the fruits of meditation to the aid of the many problems of our time.



\* Coordinators of the WCCM Friends program



# A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

*Dearest friends,*

His quick blue eyes unexhausted after ninety years, Dom Benedict greets us enthusiastically with a full smile and waving arms. Despite the warmth of the day his legs are covered with a blanket. He finds it hard to move unassisted and his diet is restricted. But his trademark ‘alleluias’ still punctuate his speech with the blend of habit and freshness that spiritual experience brings. His charismatic healing group provides a constant flow of visitors who care deeply for him as he does for them. I have come with two of our young oblates from the London Meditatio House to wish him a happy St Benedict’s Day in his nursing home, his last cloister. They are entranced by him and smile when he tells them his ideas of reforming the monastic office and how oblates are the future of Benedictinism. This old monk’s sunny openness and vigorous sense of the contemporary nature of true tradition would recharge the vision and pierce the fearfulness of much of the neo-conservatism of our time.

One of the carers enters with an unappealing bowl of tomato soup. She reminds him he has some sandwiches in the fridge for his supper. She is courteous and present and you can see they have a trusting, respectful relationship. He thanks her with an ‘alleluia!’ and she replies with another. Sometimes, during their passing encounters, they pray briefly together. You can feel how the joy and faith of this room pervades the rest of the ward. After anointing and meditating with him we leave. In most of the rooms we pass on the corridor the aged inmates are hunched up in bed, asleep while the television twitters, not caring if anyone is listening to it. The sadness and loneliness of old age nevertheless feels consoled by the old monk in this care home who so warmly cares for those who care for him.

Caring was the theme of our Monte Oliveto retreat last month...

\*

*I think you have already felt a careful and caring welcome from the Abbot and monastic community here, the guest master and from those in charge of the retreat. A kind welcome makes it much easier to settle in and adjust. Yesterday I meditated with a*

*group of inmates of a prison near Florence. They have our schedule and as far as they are able they will be making the retreat with us.*

The word care is beautiful and many-layered. In a dictionary you find it means anything from a kind of worm to a Turkish musical instrument. But the essential, human meaning is rich and subtle and not so easily defined. As we investigate it in these coming days of prayer, silence and friendship – the new and old friendship we bring from our many different countries – we could be illumined by its meaning for each of us. Shady areas of our memory or personality could be awakened by these days of practice and reflection and, if so, we will all grow in wisdom. Wisdom is the fruit of integration and so whatever marries the inner and the outer dimensions serves her and leads us to a healing beyond the inner and outer divisions that are the legacy of our wounds. Because stories comes before ideas let’s begin with some ancient myths that teach us what it means to care. (Only in meditation do we dispense with stories altogether).

In Genesis we find two overlapping stories explaining creation in different ways. In the first God creates everything, matter and anti-matter, light and dark, hot and cold – all the 24 dimensions of modern physics. He created carefully and gave accurate names to everything. All exists precisely as it is. “Accurate” means ‘done with care’ and everything remains precisely itself even as biodiversity and complexity continue to grow. There is a crack in everything, perhaps, but also the presence of logos, a healing inner logic of being. The path of contemplation begins with the contemplation of nature – seeing things as they and not as we project them or try to recreate them. In zen this perception is called satori and even a passing experience of it can transform the mind permanently. For Jesus it is with a pure heart that we are able to see God in everything. Concluding the first account of creation, God makes the human, male and female, in the divine self-image. He saw all he had so carefully made and heaved a great sigh of Sabbath relief when he recognized it was all very good.

In the second version the human is explicitly made from the dust of earth and became a living creature because God breathed the breath of life into its nostrils. But then God noticed that the human was lonely and from within the new creature formed a new other-self. Before Eve Adam was not male. From this new ying-yang of sexuality a paradoxical capacity for union is created. “It is not good for the human to be alone. I will make a partner suited to it.” The animal world is no substitute for the human and cannot provide the necessary level of intimacy. God cared for this aspect of the creature

because the human cannot be fully divinized without intimacy just as God cannot be love without it.

So there is the care of accuracy and precision, mindful action and attention both to detail and the big picture. There is also the care that is compassion. God is in the attention to detail and in the loving of the needy. The great idea of caring runs through the spectrum of human experience, from indifference ('I couldn't care less') to curing oneself and others ('cura te ipsum', heal yourself, as Jesus quoted the proverb in Lk 4:23). Life is 'full of care': problems big or small are always there and only for brief carefree moments are we unaware of them. Sorrow, anxiety and grief, the cry of lamentation. But also concern, management, healing and curing. We say 'take care' as we leave someone as a shorthand for a friendly attitude. We respect caring professions and often in marriage or community it is our vocation to become a carer for another.

Caring is divine but also human and earthy. Another myth illustrates this. The goddess Cura was crossing a river. She fell into deep thought and moulded a figure from the mud. While she was thinking of what to call it Jove appeared and she asked him to give the figure 'spiritus', the breath of life. Having done so, he forbade her to give the human creature her own name and insisted on naming it after himself. While they were arguing Mother Earth (Gaia) appeared and demanded that she name it because it was made from her body. Saturn then turned up and resolved the argument. Jove had given the human spiritus so would possess it after death. Terra Mater would recover the body when it died. But Cura would keep it for as long as it lived. As far as the horizon of life is visible to us we are in the care of Care.

\*

*Part of the silence of the Monte Oliveto retreat is gained by the absence of television, emails and text messages. During this week, we fast from these cultural habits. Because we are addicted to them we may at first feel it as a deprivation. But soon, perhaps already after one day here, you sense that this silence is revealing a*



"GOD IS IN THE ATTENTION  
TO DETAIL AND IN THE LOVING  
OF THE NEEDY."

*spaciousness that the ordinary twittering mind obscures. Because it is a big space we may even feel frightened of exploring it. But with encouragement we can venture into it and then realise what uncomplicated friendliness it contains. But we have first to face the cares of life before we can address their cure.*

The recent Royal Wedding – unless you were on Mars or in intensive care you will know what I mean – was a media event. In London it was also a social, streetwise time to take a fairy-tale break from gloom-saturated economic bulletins and social spending cuts. What the media wounds it can also help to cure. This is why we need to see websites and Apps as part of spiritual ministry today. Without a caring spiritual dimension to the media we would be overwhelmed by the complexities and cares of life.

Global media wallpaper our life with the problems of the world in which we are meant to see our own issues reflected. The danger of this is that we become desensitized and less capable of compassion, real attention and caring for others. Our hearts harden. Or, we become disconnected from our own issues and take flight from reality in a virtual world. So, the first step to true care is to sit and face ourselves without judgment or comparison. We may feel waves of shame or sadness, grief or anger. These we must accept but we should dismiss the self-indulgent temptations of guilt. Stillness gradually bestows detachment from our problems. It saves us from having to wallow in them, like water-buffalo, in the mud of self-centredness. Constantly turning over our problems obsessively is exhausting and can be a sign of mental disease. If we see that we are unable to detach from our problems we need to seek care.

But generally we have some measure of control. We can let go of our worries and anxieties as Jesus advises us in his teaching on prayer. These anxieties are manifold, the daily glitches that pass with a good night's sleep, the losses that are still awfully present when we awaken, the deeper patterns of our character with their roots in pre-conscious memory. Wisdom and forgiveness begin their work as soon as we step back from them and stop blaming the world or our parents or our enemies and realise that we are the problem. This first step on a mature spiritual path may take years. Once taken, however, we are able to discern the different levels of suffering and dissatisfaction we have to work through, those we can handle ourselves, those we have to seek help for and those we simply have to transcend.

Meditation sharpens and accelerates this discernment. In all traditions deep, silent, non-conceptual prayer is seen to occupy the heart of faith and to open the door to union with God. The Sufis speak of 'dhikr' or the remembrance of God which is arrived at through the repetition of the name of God. In its simplicity it is said to contain all forms of prayer and 'frees us from all confusion and discomfort'. The Qu'ran reminds us that 'no object is worthy of worship except God' and therefore there is no other ultimate goal or real existence. Seeing this, we also see why we should 'attach no value to

anything you have lost...but never lose your time'. Jesus' commandment of love – God, neighbour and self – and the urgency of his teaching tone similarly translates into the mindfulness with which we pay absolute attention to God. We can then willingly sell all we have in the sheer joy of finding the treasure of the Kingdom buried in our heart.

Nevertheless, the cares of life easily overwhelm us. They can make us self-fixated, forgetful, insensitive, ignorant and stupid. We forget that God exists. We ignore the needs of our neighbours. We lose the capacity for wonder. We sleepwalk to the grave. Ascesis – spiritual work – is the cure for the careworn. It teaches us to handle problems and to live in freedom despite them. It dissolves hardness of heart as we become more sensitive and responsive, more open to the beauty of the world and the needs of others including those who greedily grab before they ask. Ascesis – like our twice-daily meditation – transforms the energy blocked in our ego and negative patterns of thought and behaviour. Wisely we come to accept that we will not - in this life of cares - ever have everything we want. But then liberation dawns as we accept that the real problem lies not in the not-having but in the wanting itself.

This is the big leap from the burden of care to cure. It happens when we make conscious contact with a source that cares for us. "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest." When the deep cares of our lives are touched by the caring of another we experience healing.

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*As we share with each other during the conversation of the evening meal we reap the fruits of the silence that we are growing during the day. We couldn't do this without some self-restraint. There are lots of little things we might like to say after meditation or yoga but we trust that silence is a field of greater communication than we can imagine. This virtue of self-control is the secret of caring for ourselves –and it is the necessary foundation of being a person who cares about others.*

It's surprisingly hard in a complex culture to know what caring for oneself means. Immigrants from more traditional and simpler societies are often mystified by the self-alienation and the self-destructive force in the psyche of the affluent and educated. Because there is so much woundedness and unrootedness we have developed a therapeutic culture in which the search for inner healing and meaning is paramount. The problem is that while we seek healing we do not give up the behaviour that does us the harm. We are like the old chain smoker whose lungs are now so bad he can hardly walk. When someone caring for him tried to take his cigarettes away he protested saying that they were his sole pleasure and consolation.

We are all looking for something. Some have a clear sense of it, at least a conscious awareness of something missing. But much of the time and for most of us, it remains a dull ache and a vague longing that endures through good and hard times

alike. 'My soul is restless, till it rests in you', was St Augustine's expression of this longing for wholeness, for the resurrection that transcends the birth and death cycle of desire. Seen in this way this longing is a gift not an affliction because, when seen and recognized, it is the turning of a spiritual corner. Today in a culture conditioned by consumerism from the earliest age, this understanding of desire should be at the heart of all religious education.

Bookshops are full of the latest advice on self-help. The bestsellers use lists like *good boundaries, handling self-criticism, expressing your feelings, developing balance, asserting yourself, eating well and doing exercise*. The best list I know is found in a book that doesn't top the charts but has not been out of print for 1500 years. In St Benedict's Rule the fourth chapter is on the Tools of Good Works, seventy-five short statements which he describes as the 'tools of the spiritual craft' that, when seriously applied, lead to the transcendent realization of the promises of Christ – "what eye has not seen, nor the ear heard and that God has prepared for those who love him".

The Tools begin with the Ten Commandments because the moral life is the foundation of the contemplative path.

"EVERY FORM OF CARING IS AN  
ENERGY OF FAITH: IT TAKES THE  
ATTENTION OFF ONE'S INDIVIDUAL."

Next come the corporal works of mercy, the minimum effort we are expected to make for the well-being of others. Then the guarding of the heart against thoughts of anger, revenge or deception. As he lived in community he understood how important it is to practice love of enemies and how self-control in speech as well as in our ordinary physical habits facilitates this basic Christian practice. Conscious mindfulness is assisted by keeping death always before your eyes and promotes a deeper level of peace and joy. The temptations of spiritual egoism are also recognized and offset in Benedict's injunction always to yearn for the fullness of life.

These tools of good works are also the means of caring for oneself. Every form of caring is an energy of faith: it takes the attention off one's individual wants and feelings and transfers it to a higher good. It is therefore a way of transcendence. It extends over time, which tests its sincerity and authenticity. It is therefore a way of transformation because we are changed by persevering in an act of faith.

All Benedict's tools, and caring itself, are designed to release our capacity for love. Saying the mantra unifies these many forms of caring in the external dimensions of our life. It concentrates them in the nexus of the heart where the love of God creates and enters us and spends itself in care for us. Having found that, we are awakened to our true source and begin to act in accordance with our true nature. As the mantra takes root in us it opens us to the gift of continuous caring where caring for oneself merges with God's care for us. To know, in any fashion, that we are known and accepted is a rare gift in human experience. We are not so good at showing it to each other. But community - even the brief form of it we create on retreat - reminds us that we do have this gift both to receive and hand on to others.



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*Of course, to want to do good is a worthy intention but it can only be realised if we move from wanting to being. Retreat times bring us to this experience of being. They allow us to slow down and detach from familiar anxieties, to write haikus, to meditate several times a day, to be at ease with people at serious depth. There are more 'intensive' retreats, like our school retreat or the ten-day retreat which serve a good purpose at the right time if approached with the right frame of mind. But there is something to be said for the ordinary kind of retreat too. In the experience of a newfound interior harmony and the understanding of spiritual friendship we see grace at work in our human nature, pure grace that we do not earn but have to learn to be thankful for.*

*Cura personalis* – whole person care – is a fundamental element of Christian education and of care for others. We don't just try to get children through exams to enhance them as economic assets. Nor do we attend to people's physical, psychological or social needs only at the level of the symptoms. Each person is a unity and if one aspect of this unity is in need the resources of the whole person should be involved in the cure. This sense of the whole person is being re-appropriated in many areas of life today from which it has been excluded. The confusion of efficiency with depersonalization and of competition with callousness has wrought human havoc in many of our institutions and social systems, including education and business. A search for new guidelines and a new way of thinking has started in many secular groups. It is in fact a yearning for, not just new 'values' necessary as these are, but for the spiritual dimension itself which, as the pearl of great price, is the source of all true value.

The search for this new way of living is part of the crisis of change that has entered into every area of life and all our institutions. This social upheaval causes suffering and so it too is an area where the spirit of gentle, wise caring is needed. We need to care for all those means by which we live together so that peace can be sustained on the foundation of justice. Social policies are driven by statistics and opinion polls. But the test of a humane society is the way the marginal and voiceless are respected as having equal rights and dignity. There is no wisdom without compassion.

The contribution of spiritual communities to this crisis

is the simple wisdom that social balance and growth cannot be separated from the personal dimension of our search for integrity and health of soul. Institutions and society are composed of people who are capable of incredible selfishness and cruelty when they are fragmented and unloved. Never have so many people in ordinary times felt so uncared for, alone, inadequate, disposable or unwanted. But when they feel restored to their deep, personal wholeness; when being cared for has restored their sense of integrity, these same people can manifest immense altruism and generosity.

Because of this, friendship is an essential element of caring. To care in a truly human way means to be friendly – towards ourselves, others and our environment. A friend in ancient wisdom was seen as 'another oneself'. This is because caring happens when the centre of consciousness ('where your heart is there your treasure is too') shifts from the small space of self-interest to the great space of the other. Like the desert monks we then 'find ourselves in others and others in our self' and the Trinitarian dynamic of caring is seen at work.

When we come to the end of a retreat or get up from our daily meditations it often seems that we have a big adaptation to make from being to doing, from stillness to movement. At first it seems such a big shift that we find all sorts of reasons for not meditating so we don't have to deal with it. With experience, however, we adapt almost unconsciously. The underlying unity of consciousness makes itself felt across all the different modes of being and action. Being itself is then seen not in opposition to action but as pure action.

In this continuum of caring, for oneself and for others, the mystery of Christ becomes visible to the vision of faith. He who is within us is also within others and his presence extends as far as the borders of the universe. To know - both from personal inner experience and from within the collective experience of the community - that all is in His care is saving knowledge. It saves us from the isolation of illusion.

Meditation is care for ourselves and love for the world. It is more effective in changing the world than just piety or devotion and so religion needs to be contemplative as well as devout. Meditation makes each of us a point or channel for the divine energies to enter the human and natural worlds and to bathe them in the love that simultaneously creates and redeems. The human heart is the supreme test of this reality. It is the real place of pilgrimage and the sacred space of all worship. To find our heart is our first task. Then we can carry out the work we are meant to do, the particular care we are entrusted with. This caring of the heart brings us to our full identity. It is also the finding of what we knew we were missing. It is a dwelling in a compassion so inclusive that nothing exists, or would want to exist, without it.

*With much love,*

*Laurence Freeman OSB*

## NEWS FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY

The following is a small representation of the life of the Community. For weekly news and more information visit the Community web page: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

### BERE ISLAND HOLY WEEK RETREAT

The WCCM Easter retreat assembled meditators from different parts of the world on Bere Island, Ireland. It was a week to reflect on the meaning of Easter and especially to experience silence in community. Here are some testimonials from participants of the retreat this year



#### KNOWING BY HEART

*Christophe, France*  
*christ.faille.net@gmail.com*

It sounded like something that could be a crossroad of my life weeks ago: Bere Island, Christian Meditation, a retreat there.

The Cross is to meet different people with a language. I don't really understand, where we meet beyond knowledge. I can feel a mysterious silence beyond words, a presence that includes all.

Despite all our differences, in the Spirit, we are all One.

And the Christian proclaims the resurrection of Jesus so that He may be in us through the Spirit.

So, we try to pray in spirit and trust, to make us One in Him. I am still learning to go beyond knowledge trying to know what is beyond everything, with the intelligence of the heart.



#### "PLACE OF HEALING"

*Marion Burkhardt de Koivisto, Brazil*

This is my first time in Bere Island and I feel like I have to come back here. The beautiful and untouched nature and the purpose of a retreat combine perfectly. Bere Island is a place of healing and a sanctuary

### AN ISLAND OF DEPTH AND STILLNESS

*Samantha Arbuckle, UK*  
*samarbuckle2005@yahoo.co.uk*



Going to Bere Island on retreat with the Christian meditation community gave me an opportunity to take time out, to reflect on my life and find personal meaning in the Easter mystery.

Bere Island is a perfect place for Easter to be celebrated. At first glance it's hills seem bleak and stark: but the beauty of the island is in its depth and stillness. For me, Bere Island itself supported the creative shape of the inner work that took place within me on the retreat. The dark layered rock formations that envelop us as we walk and pray and meditate together reminds us of our inner layers and depths that are to

be both respected and cared for. In this landscape we cannot ignore who we are or who we are called to be. The presence of the hills that stand against the light of dawn captivate: it is no effort to pay attention and to be present to their command and stillness. I look at them and I am in prayer.

And all these experiences; the respect and awareness of the body in yoga, the deep insights shared by Father Laurence, walking and talking with friends and the meaningful Easter services allow the mysteries of Easter to take root in my heart. The lived experience of awareness that love is a true reality is what I will take away with me from the retreat.

### LIVING THE TRADITION OF SILENCE

*Sean Lydon, Ireland*  
*sean.lydon@live.ie*



During this Holy Week Retreat on Bere Island, I had the privilege of being temporary resident in a Monastery without walls, with fellow Christians from Brazil, Australia, Poland, Holland, UK and Ireland.

Many Christian disciples have over the centuries borne witness to the truth.

Between the 7th and 12th Centuries, the monks on Skellig Michael bore witness to it, and many came to Ireland to hear the wisdom. In the 12th century, St. Peter of Damascus, a Christian monk of the Eastern Church, wrote a description of the eight steps on a contemplative spiritual journey. It has been a blessing for those of us present on the retreat, that Fr. Laurence, a monk of the West led us in prayer and meditation, and enlightened us with insights from these ancient texts.

### THE SPIRIT BLOWS IN VENEZUELA

*Antonio Sosa ( wccm.venezuela@gmail.com )*

The highlight of this year in Venezuela was a weekend retreat of silence and meditation for 60 people in Mazzarello Retreat House in Caracas, led by Fr. Laurence. The title: "When I meditate nothing happens, but my life is transformed". On this visit we also organized a talk by Fr. Laurence at the Bodai Shin Zen Center in Caracas on "The



void of fullness and the fullness of void: the Christian understanding of Meditation". Fr. Laurence was also interviewed by a Catholic radio station and by the most widely read weekend lifestyle magazine *Estampas*. You may find more details of these activities reported in our blog:

[www.meditadores.blogspot.com](http://www.meditadores.blogspot.com)

*\*Antonio Sosa is Venezuela's National Coordinator.*

## LAURENCE FREEMAN IN HOUSTON , US

*Carla Cooper*

*(cmcooper@gvtc.com)*

Fr. Laurence was greeted at multiple venues in Houston and Beaumont, Texas in May with large audiences and much enthusiasm.

### *Who is my Neighbor?*

On Tuesday evening, May 17, Fr. Laurence addressed the topic of "Who is my Neighbor? The Politics of Fear and the Contemplative Insight" with more than 350 people at St Theresa Catholic Church in west Houston. Suggesting that the ancient way of meditation sheds considerable light on our contemporary culture wars, he first spoke to the hallmark of the culture wars: our penchant to identify an enemy from among the boundless differences that contain us: race, religion, class, gender, sexual preference. But the hallmark of the contemplative way, he explained, is not identification of our enemy, but recognition of our neighbor, especially where we least expect to meet him.

### *The Nature of Forgiveness*

On Wednesday May 18, he led both day and evening events at St Martin's Episcopal Church on "The Nature of Forgiveness: Healing and Reconciliation in the Light of Meditation." He spoke of how the cycle of violence on every level—personal and global---is rooted in fear and the refusal to recognize the inevitable similarity of the other's needs and fears.

### *Meditation with children*

The children of St Theresa School gathered for mass on Thursday morning, May 19, and Fr. Laurence co-



celebrated with Fr. Philip Lloyd, St Theresa's pastor. Fr. Laurence then taught several primary school classes the practice and purpose of meditation. Underscoring one of the priorities of the new Meditatio outreach effort, Fr. Laurence described for his adult audience later that evening how marvelously open the children were to the teaching. They didn't seek elaborate explanation or justification: they simply welcomed the silence and stillness as aspects of their being alive. The children's very moving responses to Fr. Laurence's teaching can be found on the [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org) website under "News."

## NATIONAL RETREAT IN GERMANY

*Christiane Floyd (christiane.floyd@alice.de)*

We were a group of 25 meditators and our new coordinator Mathias Beisswenger, meeting with Father Laurence in a Franciscan convent in Fulda.

The retreat, featuring lectures, meditation sessions and a contemplative Eucharist, followed a familiar pattern, but there were some novelties: Yoga sessions in the breaks, a different balance between times of silence and communication, and more interaction of participants.

Father Laurence gave inspiring talks on forgiveness. In the process of forgiving we allow the poison of anger and hurt to dissolve and the situation to transform. The model was taken from St Francis and the wolf of Gubbio, a fierce animal, who had plagued the town, but was confronted and tamed by St Francis and fed by the townsfolk for the rest of his life. We left – resolved to confront the wolves in our lives – with our hearts open to one another, with new commitments for community work and awaiting the spirit of Pentecost that brings about all transformation.

## NEW NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN CANADA

*Colleen Donald*

*(cmdonald@telus.net)*

I'm Colleen Donald the recently installed National Coordinator. The Canadian Christian Meditation Community began with John Main, in Montreal before his death and has continued as part of the WCCM since. Just as it is a time for consolidation, transition and vision in the International Community, the Canadian Community will be reflecting these goals. We will be continuing with our School program, with two weekends planned for the fall in the Maritime provinces; our quarterly newsletter and an outreach program to the Caribbean. We'll be revamping our website and relocating our Resource Centre. One of our continuing priorities is a Youth and Children's outreach. In respect to spirituality and children, it will be exciting to implement a version of the vision and format of Meditatio, in teaching Christian meditation to children.

Read the full version of Colleen's text in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)



## US NATIONAL RETREAT

By *Lucy Beck* ( [stoltzhouse@gmail.com](mailto:stoltzhouse@gmail.com) )

At the USA National Retreat May 20-26: "Getting Rid of God", Fr. Laurence led 55 participants from around the US in a week long silent retreat at the beautiful Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in Michigan. The title refers to getting rid of our construct of God, that is, in the various ways we have objectified Him and opening to experiencing Emmanuel, or God with us. Jesus' call to "lose yourself for my sake" is a call to relationship or communion.

During this powerful week Fr. Laurence led us progressively deeper into a real understanding of these teachings about non duality as they applied intimately, individually to each of us through our meditation practice, walking meditations, the nightly Eucharist and the haiku we wrote as we walked about the beautiful grounds. In exposing us to "pure experience", and challenging us to recognize the ways in which we objectify God, challenging



us to an "unknowing", he helped us to begin to come into communion with the God that Jesus commits himself to.

## MEDITATIO NEWS

# Meditation and Mental Health

Don Boyle ([don.boyle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:don.boyle@hotmail.co.uk))

We would like to thank the 600 WCCM members worldwide who shared their experience in our 2011 mental health and wellbeing survey. 300 respondents reported experience of mental health problems and another 300 no mental health problems. We were gifted with a wealth of information and personal experience that is allowing us to explore the fruits of meditation with regard to mental health and wellbeing. This information is completely confidential and cannot be traced to any individual. There is further work to be done with the analysis but what is clear is that regular practice of meditation is great for our mental health without diminishing in anyway its spiritual nature as deep prayer. Respondents report that regular meditation facilitates more stable mood, lowered depressed and anxious thinking, consistent physical relaxation, more hope and increased capacity to manage the challenges life throws at us. The majority of respondents told us that the Christian nature of their meditation was most important, and while this is not surprising given that we are a Christian community, it means we now have the beginnings of evidence to suggest that the physical and mental benefits of meditation may be enhanced when this practice is rooted in one's own faith tradition. This is important as some health initiatives seek to develop a purely secular practice without reference to personal spiritual beliefs.

We were able to share our preliminary findings at the Meditatio Seminar on Meditation and Mental Health on 4th



and 5th May at Regents College London. Delegates travelled from The US, Australia, Ireland and Europe as well as from around the UK to consider Christian, Sufi, Buddhist and Transcendental (TM) meditation traditions and their potential for transforming wellbeing and mental health in our health services and our communities. We also heard about the challenges facing mental health services and about Mindfulness initiatives that have recently been approved by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence in the UK. Over 100 psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, chaplains, priests, teachers and people recovering from mental health problems came together in a spirit of openness and respect on each day. Periods of silent meditation punctuated the talks and workshops and this balance of practice and the discussion of the emerging evidence base were valued highly. One participant described the seminar as "Beautiful, simple, life changing." The keynote talks and workshops are currently being transcribed for publication as a journal to record this unique event.

The Mental Health Special Interest Group met in June to develop a work plan based on key themes from the survey, seminar and retreat. We are currently working on guidance on mental health issues for group leaders, preparing a paper on the survey findings for publication in a peer review journal and planning a one day seminar for the North of England. Please contact the chair Don Boyle if you are interested in contributing to this work in the field of mental health.

## MEDITATIO NEWS

### MEDITATION WITH THE YOUNG

*Kim Nataraja*

Ever since the Meditatio Seminar in London on 'Meditation and Education', when Ernie Christie and Cathy Day shared their experience in the Townsville Diocese and offered their materials generously to all, the interest in teaching children to meditate in schools in the UK has been more than could have been imagined. Charles and Pattie Posnett rose to the challenge to co-ordinate this initiative in the UK. 75 schools are actively exploring the possibility of introducing meditation into the curriculum and another 25 schools have already fitted an in-service training day into their programme for 2011. The majority of these days are aimed at the teachers to teach them to meditate with their charges. Some are designed for chaplains and heads of Religious Education in both the Primary and Secondary sector.

The key to encouraging this project to flourish in any country in a substantial way seems to be to organize an event or establish a pilot scheme. This is often a consequence of an individual having worked quietly and consistently over some years in a particular institution. A larger event will then attract attention and generate further interest and enthusiasm, such as was the case with the Townsville initiative, the Meditatio Seminar in London or Jeannie Battagin and Cynthia Comiskey being invited to address the National Catholic Educators Association at their large, annual meeting. The outcome of the latter is already 19 requests for follow-up in the U.S., for teachers, a diocese and some principals.

The next important step following that is to train a group of meditators, who are willing to support the requests for follow-up. In Australia a tremendous effort is made to continue to train and support the teachers in Townsville and now in many other states there as well. In the UK Charles and I organized two training days for meditators, who were willing to go out and train the teachers. Charles took care of the overall organization and I took care of the contents of the day by designing and presenting two power points. The result of this is that we now have a group of thirteen meditators, who are involved in the scheduled training events around the country.

These power points are available for any one, who would like to use them and adapt them to local conditions. When I prepared them I relied on the work done by Ruth Fowler teaching teachers in Australia. I adapted and altered them to suit our UK audiences. Then these were altered even more in response to suggestions made on the two training days and those made on two subsequent in-service training days the Posnetts and I did, which involved 40 teachers from 9 schools. This is an example we need to keep in mind. It is important that we support each other and share resources in this wonderful project of bringing meditation to the young world-wide. It will preserve the consistency and integrity of our teaching and save us from reinventing the same wheel. This applies to many individuals over the world, who are working to bring meditation to the young.

*Kim Nataraja, International Co-ordinator, WCCM 'School of Meditation' (kimshankarnataraja@gmail.com)*

### IN FOCUS

*Antonio Sosa (wccm.venezuela@gmail.com)*

The experience of meditation has changed for me along the years as it has become more and more part of me. It is different now from what I experienced five years ago when I started. I am not worried now so much with distractions during the practice. They always will be present in some degree. Nor do I care if I have a "good" or "bad" meditation session, since the only "bad meditation" is the one you don't do. When you are into the practice of meditation, all meditation sessions are good.

Meditation for me is getting out of myself through the inner silence. I don't care so much about outer silence since it is so rare and I seldom will enjoy it: sounds and noises will always be with you and they are distractions coming to you from the outside. The inner silence I get with attention to the word repeated continuously in my heart, connects me with the source of my being, "with the mysterious silence where the Father's love is revealed to all who call". That connection with the heavenly Father in my heart fills me with the fruits of the Spirit and they express themselves with more intensity in my life, even in difficult moments. The two daily meditation sessions

help me to resetting my heart and filling me with energy for going forward with faith, hope and love. Some days are harder because I feel drier or worried and nervous in my stressful life in development banking. On these days meditation is more difficult, since worries are stronger and they get to invade my inner silence. The important thing in those moments is continuing with the practice and not letting go. I have to go back continuously to focusing on my word so that I may get out of "me" and connect myself with the source of my being.

Being connected for 20 minutes with this, means I am connecting with my true self. Being connected with this deep and complex reality of my total self, allows me to better know myself more simply, my vocation, my instincts and inclinations and my fears. Finally, this union allows me to know and reconcile the different parts of myself and become more balanced, longer.



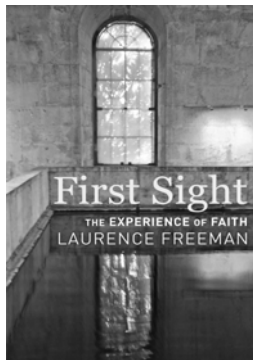
## REVIEWS - FILMS, BOOKS, ART

## FIRST SIGHT

*The Experience of Faith*  
Laurence Freeman OSB

In his latest book, Laurence Freeman shows that the basic experience of contemplation is the experience of faith and that we all need to develop this in order to become fully human. We are all capable of it – indeed we are designed for it.

Freeman defines faith for our secular age. He draws on his wide experience and travels in the modern world to show how a new sense of the spiritual dimension can transform



the way we approach education, business, mental health, the environment, inter-religious dialogue and our view of ourselves in society.

Moving from this new vision and fresh thinking, illustrated vividly from his own life experience, he leads to practice. Meditation, he shows, offers an accessible and attractive antidote to the current cult of speed and distraction. He does not deny that this needs discipline but because it is radically simple it is a path that all can integrate.

First Sight is the sequel to Laurence Freeman's acclaimed book *Jesus: the Teacher Within*.

*Published by Continuum, £10.99 US\$16.95*

## Contemplating Cinema

*Jim Green*

*jg@greenjim.co.uk*

There is a scene in the critically acclaimed French film, “Of Gods and Men”(2010) which has been picked out by many as the most outstanding and beautiful within this two-hour movie. (For those who haven't seen it, here's the plot-summary: “Under threat by fundamentalist terrorists, a group of Trappist monks stationed within an impoverished Algerian community must decide whether to leave or stay”).

The scene in question takes place towards the end of the film, just before their critical decision is to be made. In a version of the Last Supper, the monks eat and drink wine together in silence while listening to the joyous frenzy of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake ballet music. The camera moves from face to face in long-held close-up. We are invited to gaze at the mysterious revelations and concealments of their expressions – their tears, their amusement, their confusion...their humanity. I had heard about this stand-out scene beforehand, and so I prepared myself to be moved, to empathise, to cathart. I was, in short, ready for transcendence.

It didn't come. The fact that it didn't had to do with more than just that scene. The truth is that many critics (and friends) are right. The film is “beautifully shot”, “wonderfully paced”, “thought-provoking” and so on. And yet, and yet...why was it that I alone of my meditating companions felt an insistent sense of dissatisfaction, unease - even impatience?

For me, I think it's something inherent in the narrative form. This is a feature-film. One that tells a story, a drama. As such, it must compress ‘reality’ into the demands of its structure. Meaning has to be generated. Actors have to imagine their way into their parts and try to reproduce behaviour

appropriate to a given situation. All the time I was watching this film, documentaries set in monasteries kept forcing themselves onto my inner screen. “Into Great Silence” (2005) of course, but also “Essene” (1972). This latter, made by Fred Wiseman, shows life in a Benedictine monastery in Michigan. I urge people to see it. ( <http://www.zipporah.com> ).

Is there something ‘truer’ about documentaries? Is the form more ‘real’? It sometimes feels that way. But of course, in documentaries, shaping and editorial selection are still at play. A story is still being told. And perhaps the question which

most interests the contemplative is this: “What happens when the stories stop?” Can there be a contemplative cinema which adequately responds to this challenge?

We might all have our favourites which we can cite as fulfilling this brief. I would offer, for instance, “The Quince Tree Sun” (1992) directed by

Victor Erice, along with all of the work of Andrei Tarkovsky. What such films have in common is a readiness to look and look and to be “distracted” by what lies beyond “the story”, outside of our usual point of focus.

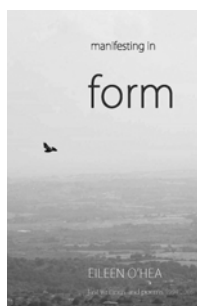
And now there is a new candidate for admission to the canon of contemplative cinema. “Le Quattro Volte” – The Four Times - (2010) seems to start to tell the ‘story’ of a dying Calabrian goatherd (photo above), but then becomes the ‘story’ of a young goat, then of a tree, then of a huge pile of smoking charcoal... Displacing the human from centre-stage in this way is a clue to what a truly other-centred form of consciousness might be like.

Alternatively (as the Desert Fathers would remind you), instead of going to the movies, you could go to your own cell, which will teach you everything.





# MEDIO MEDIA - NEW TITLES



## Manifesting in Form

*Eileen O'Hea CSJ*

"Eileen's last writings capture the distilled wisdom of a woman who has been seeking God all her life and who had come to know the God who was also seeking her within her seeking. They possess the clarity, precision, even terseness of a teacher skilled at her craft. They carry that sweet pain

that truth cuts us with as it slices through old fixed patterns, melts down comfortable self-deceptions, and opens us to the wonderful formlessness of the real. They also have that radical refreshing humility of a genuine teacher who is in love with the truth, not her reputation." Laurence Freeman

EILEEN O'HEA (1936-2005) was a Sister of St Joseph of Brentwood, New York, a psychotherapist, and a spiritual director. She served as a member of the Guiding Board of WCCM, and was an inspirational force in the setting up of the "School of Meditation". She travelled widely giving retreats and workshops and led the John Main Seminar 1990. Her works include In Wisdom's Kitchen, and Silent Wisdom, Hidden Light.

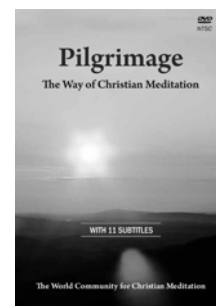
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## Words by John Main....

*Only if we are free and so restored to our divine likeness can we know the love of Christ. Our freedom is the condition of our being real, being in harmonious contact with the ground of our being, our source and origin" (from Community of Love).*

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*General Editor:* Leonardo Correa ([leonardo.correa@gmail.com](mailto:leonardo.correa@gmail.com)) and Gregory Ryan ([gjryan@wccm.org](mailto:gjryan@wccm.org))

*Graphic Design:* Carlos Siqueira ([carlos@wccm.com.br](mailto:carlos@wccm.com.br))

*International Coordinator:* Pauline Peters ([paulinepeters2@gmail.com](mailto:paulinepeters2@gmail.com))

*Coordinator, International Office, London:* Susan Spence ([susan@wccm.org](mailto:susan@wccm.org))

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