

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2011 VOL. 20 NO. 3 THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

The 2011 John Main Seminar and Retreat *Its Meaning for Two of Our Meditators*

The 2011 John Main Seminar was presented, this past August, by the former Master of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), Fr. Timothy Radcliffe. The seminar and preceding retreat were held in Cork, Ireland, and details are reported by Fergal McLoughlin in the international newsletter.

A small number of Canadians were able to attend, and two of them – Magda Jass of Montreal, and Vancouver’s Kathy Coyne – agreed to share their experience, and the meaning it had for them, with their fellow meditators in Canada. Here are their impressions.



The mosaic floor of Honan Chapel, where the meditation was held. Photo: Magda Jass

Meditation & Crisis

“Céad Míle Fáilte” – “A hundred thousand welcomes” – this we heard (and experienced) over and over again.

Before the John Main Seminar we attended a retreat called “Fruits of Crisis”. Fr Laurence named the fruits, elaborated on them, and applied them to our experience of meditation.

The three stages of crisis are Shock, Emptiness, and a New Order. Shock is disorientation. Emptiness leaves us with nothing to cling to, no security.

Yet meditation itself is a crisis. We let go of control – of our thoughts, our mental images – and open our heart-pov-erty of spirit, and open ourselves to what is unseen. We participate in our own re-creation. This transcendence of the ego can lead us to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

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Going Far to Come Home

The ferry is late. It’s the last long weekend of the summer and Vancouverites are making their last pilgrimage to the Gulf Islands. Islanders and visitors disembark at Long Harbour – dressed in gore-tex, looking every bit the west coasters they are. We make the windy drive up Vesuvius Bay Road to Sandpiper Lane, high above. A smiling Buddha greets us as we enter a luxurious oasis of Island hospitality. And thus begins my weekend role of facilitating a community planning workshop for a local Buddhist Meditation Group.

I feel quite comfortable in this group. Everyone is roughly my age: counterculture gone yuppy, and now gone spiri-tual. They’re part of the multitude of Canadians embracing Eastern spiritual community in search of meaning and wholeness. I am not.

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Going Far to Come Home *continued from front*

I often feel like I am running against a demographic tsunami. Our heroes are Gandhi, Thich Nhat Han, the Dalai Lama. Socially conscious businesses offer inspiring magazines, books, music and spiritual paraphernalia on Eastern and New Age. I am grateful and heartened that these opportunities are available in my community – but I am drawn elsewhere, a lone voice in my anything-but-Christian peer group. Why?

I have a child's experience of faith. Being Catholic meant piling into a car for Sunday mass, stacked three high. Wearing a saint's medal around my grubby little neck and treasuring the glow-in-the-dark statue of the Children of Fatima. It meant being a nice girl – when asked how much I wanted to be paid for babysitting, I knew I must reply (chokingly) "It's OK, I don't need to be paid." And of course, there was the "not till I get married" thing.

But I did grow up and I did ask questions. Why do I have to go to mass every Sunday? Why should I date Catholics? Why can't women be priests? Why can't people who are gay receive communion? And then the ultimate question: "How could they?" There was every reason not to be Catholic in a justifiably questioning and calling-to-account world. There still is. But yet, like a fish caught on a gill, I feel drawn back, kicking and squirming. Why?

The recent WCCM John Main Seminar and Retreat gave me some clues.

It was a very cold day when I arrived in Cork and, having expected the weather of my home on Canada's Wet Coast, I had to go out and buy additional layering. Fortunately, Ireland does have beautiful sweaters! And that was where the cold ended.

The Irish Organizing Community



One of the stained glass windows of Honan Chapel, setting of the meditation. Photo: Magda Jass

welcomed us warmly, with a program that was rich in Irish culture and Celtic mythology. They showed concern for our physical wellbeing, yet kept us focused on what we came for: to experience and understand the role of silence and stillness in Christ in times of crisis.

As the week unfolded, I began to feel a deep change within me, seemingly unrelated to the theme of the conference. I began first to feel hope: Hope that the Catholic Church really does have life. Hope that as Catholics we can be both reverent and cheeky. Respectful and provocative. Disciplined and bold. Prayerful and playful. A deep claustrophobia lifted, and I began to feel free.

I learned about my church. Where before I had experienced a rigid conformity to Catholic teachings, now I discovered its transformative role in creating a just world. As a Canadian of Irish heritage, I felt a connection of faith, of family and culture. And in the multiple periods of silence and stillness, I began to have a glimpse of what it might mean to just let go.

I became more conscious of the gifts God has given me, including the strength to offer those gifts in community with others. I began to feel that I really could remain true to myself in a seductively material world. And I understood why I am Catholic and not Zen Buddhist, not Shamanist, not Pagan.

And now, on wobbly legs, I begin the next stage of my Catholic journey. The retreat sent me on my way with a vivid sense of affirmation, strength and so much awareness. Today I can even introduce Fr Laurence's Spiritual Community talks to a community of Buddhists – to help them plan new directions for their community.

We are one.

**Kathy Coyne
Vancouver**

From the National Coordinator

It was only a few months ago that someone in one of our groups told me what a pleasure it was to be in a community that wasn't always asking for money. I agreed. But unfortunately, in order to realize our mission – "To communicate and nurture meditation, as passed on through the teaching of Dom John Main in the Christian tradition, in the spirit of serving the unity of all" – we need worldly resources. And so we must make our annual appeal.

The World Community does not have a formal membership, because we see everyone who meditates in this Christian tradition of prayer as a member of the community our meditation creates. Our shared prayer is the heart who we are. This is the essential and immeasurable contribution from us all.

Yet in order to teach, nurture, encourage each other and welcome new people to this path, we require donations to support our ongoing work outlined in the enclosed brochure. If you are able to make a donation, please do.

When donating to the World or Canadian Community we recommend that donations be made out to Meditatio and sent to CCMC-Meditatio in Montreal at P.O. Box 52, Station NDG, Montreal, QC. H4A 3P4.

We are a registered charity and are able to issue income tax receipts for donations of \$25 or more. If donations are sent to the WCCM via London or the US, we are unable to issue receipts. Anyone making a donation will receive our Newsletter and may indicate whether they would like to receive it electronically or via post.

John Main said "...for the greatest act of neighbourly love of our life is to lead others to this purity of consciousness, to this clarity of vision. Nothing that any of us could do for our neighbour could be greater than this service of leading them to realize their enormous potential, if only they can clarify their consciousness in Christ's. If only they can purify their emotion in the warmth of His love." We participate in this experience through meditation on our own and with others. This is our work. This is our mission.

On behalf of the community, I thank all of our leaders and volunteers for their countless generous gifts of time and talent. And I thank all of you for your continuing prayerful and faithful support.

Colleen Donald
National Coordinator

THE FINANCIALS FOR 2010 CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE C6.

Meditation & Crisis *continued from front*

compassion, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, self control, and forgiveness. And these, in turn, can give us the qualities we need to pass through the external crisis.

Timothy Radcliffe theme for the John Main Seminar, "Alive In Christ", complemented the retreat very well. It was developed around the themes of evening, night, morning and midday. Evening is to remember the past in order to be free to let go. Night is the total letting-go, where there is no control at all. It is only here, and now, in the "dead" of night, that something new can happen. And that's when morning opens up to the future. We must find a way of praying that opens us in the same way. Look for it among the poor, suggested Fr Radcliffe. God creates everything out of nothing.

Personally I felt cared for and spoiled by the loving care to every detail, and the joy and friendliness of everyone. The retreat opened my eyes to the positive aspects of crisis. It matched with my experience, as a mother, a friend, and my previous work as a spiritual care intervener. It engaged me in the process, and gave me hope and fortitude both personally and my children.

To Fr. Laurence, Timothy Radcliffe OP, Sylvia Thompson, Fergal McLoughlin, Rita O'Connell, Rowena O'Sullivan, and all other organizers, UCC staff, and bus drivers, a big thank you.

Magda Jass
Montreal

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NEWS FROM

In Balance Together: Stratford Meditators Workshop

Meditators from around southwestern Ontario gathered on Sept. 17 at Central United Church in Stratford for a morning workshop on Christian Meditation and Balance in Daily Life. It was a time for sharing the silence of meditation, encouraging one another in the daily practice, and connecting with the wider community.



Stratford meditators gather to share their experience and knowledge together.

Pilgrims Catch New Way of Prayer

Our parish's pilgrims to World Youth Day in Madrid, this past August, wanted to prepare for their journey with a quiet, reflective, meditative retreat day prior to their departure.

We were asked by one of their leaders, Stacey Rhodes-Nesset, to provide an introduction to Christian Meditation as part of their preparation. After discussions, it was decided to schedule two meditation sessions for the pilgrim youth (all between the ages of 18 and 30 years old).

The first session was a discovery into "What Is Meditation?" This was followed by an affirming, youth-oriented film, "Silence in the City". Remembering the words of Dom John Main – that one cannot teach meditation, but that it must be "caught" – we experienced a twenty-minute meditation together as a group. The prayer led to more discussion about why and how to meditate.

The second session provided another opportunity to practice Christian Meditation, followed by a Q&A. We realized that our beautiful youth are hungry for the truth, and open to deepening their experience of God.

We all discovered (and re-discovered) the importance of balance in our frenetic world, and of the need to create the time and space in which we can listen to God. In the silence of Christian Meditation, we seek to allow Christ's infinite expansion within us, through the discipline of our twice-daily practice.

The motto of the World Youth Day Pilgrimage – "Planted, rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith" (Saint Paul) – just as aptly describes the pilgrimage of Christian Meditation. It too is a journey of faith and trust. As Father John Main wrote, "The wonder of prayer is that, in selfless attention, we enter God's all-goodness and become good ourselves, not through any kind of platonic striving, but simply because we enter the radiance of the orbit of His goodness".

We were pleased to have had the opportunity to introduce Christian Meditation to these loving and enthusiastic pilgrims.

Louise & Jim Dudar
White Rock, BC



An Introduction to Christian Meditation to the World Youth Day Pilgrims, Star of the Sea Parish, Surrey, BC. July 2011

Back row, L to R: Louise Dudar, Fr. Edwin Kulling, Peter Anderson, Stacey Rhodes-Nesset, Kiel Magis, Deacon Pablo Santa Marie, Elizabeth Ingram, Ale Yanes-Pawlowski, Jim Dudar.

Centre row: Shenuri Nugawila, Isabel Alcuaz, Jessica Ingram, Anna Boots.

Front row: Ainsley Nesset, Katrina Brockman.

A Christian Wandering in the World of Zen

On Sept. 29 Fr. Roger Brennan, SFM spoke to members of Toronto's Christian Meditation community, gathered for our Monthly Teaching Meeting at Knox College, of his 25 years of experience with Zen meditation.

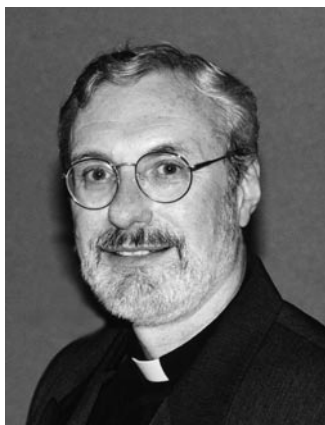
A committed Catholic priest with a strong prayer foundation to his spiritual life, nevertheless in the early years of his priesthood, Fr. Roger felt that "something was missing". He knew the stories of the saints, but thought mysticism was only for a few special people. Then he read about Zen Meditation, and met Sr. Elaine MacInnes.

FAR AND NEAR

Through the teaching of Sr. Elaine he learned to meditate, and has practiced now for many years. For Fr Roger, Zen Meditation opened “windows” and “doors” in his experience of Christianity.

He explained that the Christian faith offers us the possibility of an experiential intimacy with Christ, with God. St. Paul said, “It is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me.” (Gal 2:20) Hosea went further, making the possibility a demand: “I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6.) Thus, God wants us to know God – not as an intellectual exercise, but as an experience.

Zen can seem strange to Christians, with its absolute silences, its refusal to speak of God, or of much else, except in the tantalizing para-



Roger Brennan, SFM. *Zen meditation deepens and enriches his Christian faith.*

doxes of the famous Zen koans. Fr. Roger suggested that the parables are a little bit like koans – each one partially reveals and partially hides a deeper truth, within a very concrete example. He suggested that Zen has shown him that the sacraments are “fingers that point at the moon.” The sacraments are material expressions that point beyond themselves, to a heavenly reality that is not material – but which can be experienced in the “here and now”.

We listened with reverent attention to a meditator who had found, within a different tradition, a prayerful means to deepen and solidify his Christian faith, through the discipline of daily meditation.

Joseph Clarkson
Toronto, ON

Calendar of Events

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

Toronto

30 November–21 December. Advent Meditation Series at Scarborough Foreign Missions. Wednesday evenings at 2685 Kingston Road., Scarborough, ON. Time: 7-9 p.m. Contact: Fr. Terry Gallagher, terryg@scarboromissions.ca, or 416-261-7135 ext 266/239.

Knox College Monthly Teaching Meetings

24 November Fr. Joseph MacDonald, OFM “Franciscan Spirituality and Contemplative Prayer”

15 December John Main tape or video, title TBA

Please note early December meeting date.

Location: Monthly teaching meetings will be in Room #4, Knox College, 59 St. George Street, University of Toronto (St. George Campus) – 7-9 p.m. Contacts: – Maureen Casey Rowed, 416-733-0233; email myetmoe@hotmail.com or Joy Gordon, 416-485-9718.

8–10 June 2012. WCCM–Toronto’s 2012 Weekend Retreat at St. John’s Convent will be led by Michael Hryniuk – theologian, author, inaugural director of the Henri Nouwen Society of Canada and the US. Michael currently directs Theosis Resources, a consulting practice. Registration details TBA in January.

Ottawa

3 December. *Advent as Anticipation: Foreseeing a Future*, a retreat led by Rev. Professor Kevin Flynn and Carol Edgar, spiritual director. On Saturday 10 am.-3 pm., Saint Paul University, Laframboise Hall, Main Chapel, 223 Main Street. Bring bag lunch. Information and registration with Rita Kuiack: quidnovi@magma.ca or 613-739-4020.

23–25 March 2012. *Keeping Faith: Reflections on Christian Meditation and Faithfulness*, a silent weekend retreat led by Rev. Glenda Meakin, sponsored by the Ottawa Area Christian Meditation Community. At Maison Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence, 1754 St Joseph Blvd, Orleans, ON. For further information and to register please contact Reta Hamilton 613-838-2401, meditation.r@gmail.com Registration deadline February 29, 2012

Calgary

Retreat: Christian Meditation Retreat Day
Saturday 10 December 2011
Time: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Monthly Booster: Meditation “Drop-In” Thursdays
1 September, 6 October, 3 November and 1 December
7-8 p.m.

All sessions are offered at the F.C.J.Christian Life Centre,
219 – 19th Ave. S.W., Calgary, Alberta
403-228-4215
Email: fcjcentre@fcsisters.ca

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

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for the Year Ended December 31, 2010

	2010	2009
Receipts		
Publications	\$ 19,400	\$ 19,194
Donations – Newsletter	4,749	7,846
Donations & Grants	40,484	27,659
GIC redeemed	10,010	0
Program revenues	3,803	12,191
Miscellaneous revenues	592	402
Bank Interest	262	620
GST & PST refund	2,838	7,199
Total receipts	\$ 84,138	\$ 75,111
Disbursements		
Publications	\$9,203	\$ 10,501
Newsletter	18,490	13,803
Donations:		
Friends Program	7,052	6,216
Other groups	1,470	1,025
Rent	9,291	10,985
Office expenses	4,191	4,890
Travel	10,519	11,960
Shipping and warehousing	2,127	1,731
Telephone and communications	3,541	3,884
Programmes	7,631	8,458
Insurance (two-year payment)	0	1,485
Equipment	0	300
Interest and bank charges	961	548
Miscellaneous disbursements	2,087	433
Total disbursements	\$ 76,563	\$ 76,219
Excess of receipts (disbursements)	\$ 7,575	\$ (1,108)
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash	\$ 16,950	\$ 17,630
Accounts and miscellaneous receivables	6,873	850
Investments – Term GICs	15,262	25,620
Pledges receivable	1,200	186
Prepaid expenses	821	3,285
Inventory	17,721	27,332
	\$ 58,827	\$ 74,903
Long-Term Investments		
Securities	\$ 49,760	0
Total assets	\$108,587	\$ 74,903
LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable	\$219	\$5,522

NOTES

It was decided to discontinue the January newsletter fundraising reminder. The \$4,749 donated in 2010 was mostly through the renewal form in the newsletter. All other donors received an automatic subscription.

Securities to the value of \$49,760 on December 31 were received from a long-term donor with the intention of the principle being retained and the income being split between the Friends Program and the CCMC.

The reduced value of the Inventory was partly due to the write-down of old stock.

The financial reports from the past ten years may be found on the Revenue Canada website under the Charities Division.

FAQs on the Journey of Prayer

Q. How does the practice of Christian Meditation relate to other ways of prayer?

A. Christian Meditation is one way of prayer but obviously not the only way of prayer. There are many forms of prayer including vocal prayer, petitionary prayer, liturgical prayer, the prayerful reading of scripture, the rosary, novenas, Charismatic prayer, the Ignatian exercises and various other methods of prayer.

It is important to note that one who begins to meditate does not have to give up other forms of prayer. Meditation does not preclude praying in any other way. What usually happens though is that the daily practice and discipline of Meditation becomes a priority and other forms of prayer take a secondary role on our spiritual path.

John Main makes this comment in his book *Word Into Silence*: “I do not wish to imply that meditation is the only way, but rather that it is the only way that I have found in my own experience to the way of pure simplicity that enables us to become fully integrated and aware of the Spirit that Jesus has sent into our hearts”.

The late spiritual teacher and author, William Johnston, says that sooner or later all ways of prayer must lead to that silence wherein one rests in the presence of God. In his book *Being in Love* Father Johnston says: “All forms of prayer converge finally on contemplative prayer. No matter where you begin, you end with contemplation.”

BC Meditator Celebrates 90th Birthday



Phyllis O'Neill has been meditating for approximately 14 years and has been a member of our BC Christian Meditation Community Guiding Board since 2007 representing St. Joseph the Worker Meditation group in Richmond, BC. In her 90th year she decided to retire from our Guiding Board earlier this year.

Phyllis continues to be a great role model through her spirituality and zest for life. She has competent computer skills, swims three times a week, walks to church and is comfortable taking public transit. She is the matriarch of her beautiful family of 8 children, 16 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

She has been a valued member of our Guiding Board and we thank her for sharing her humour and wisdom with us for many years. Phyllis continues to meditate with the St. Joseph the Worker meditation group.

**Louise Dudar
White Rock, BC**

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Poverty of Spirit: The Heart of Desert Spirituality

“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 5:3) Poverty of spirit involves leaving everything behind, being free to pay attention to God, here and now. What we have to leave behind is immense – our social conditioning, our accomplishments, our family ties, our ideas and images – it’s hard to grasp it all. Yet we must let go of everything that defines us, limits us. We must become free to live with complete openness to the Spirit.

Fr. Laurence led a silent retreat at the Poor Clare Monastery in Fara Sabina, near Rome, Italy from Sept. 3–9, with assistance from Kim Nataraja and Kath Houston. Some 40 Christian meditation coordinators, leaders and teachers from around the world joined them for an International School Retreat. Participants focused on deepening their experience of silence and meditation to become more attentive to the self-communication of the Spirit. Fr. Laurence gave daily talks on Poverty of Spirit – reinforced by daily scripture reflections from Kim.

Fr. Laurence made it clear that the kingdom for the “poor in spirit” is not a place, and it is certainly not a reward for being good. Living in the kingdom is living in the presence of God, a place of freely given grace. Understanding ourselves authentically, as poor in spirit, helps us to see who we really are. That means stepping out of our social identities, to understand that there is more depth within us than any cultural notions can ever support or provide.

Meister Eckhardt, the 14th century German mystic, said that one who is poor in spirit “is a person who wills nothing ... who knows nothing ... who has nothing.” Fr. Laurence

suggested that these three points are a good description of poverty of spirit, and also a good description of Christian Meditation. Fr. Laurence also recalled a description of the person in prayer, by Eckhardt’s English contemporary Julian of Norwich, as someone in “a condition of complete simplicity ... requiring not less than everything.”

Normally, on a retreat, the talks enlighten us, strengthen, encourage and direct us. This was different. The focus on poverty of spirit was a direct challenge to all of us – to give ourselves up fully to contemplative spirituality. It was enough to strike fear into the faint of heart or those who were not prepared to totally commit themselves.

To encourage us, Fr. Laurence reminded us that when this authentic spirituality asks for more and more from us, and then wants more again, our only real option is to “love the meditation practice.” With acesis, the perseverance and discipline of mind and body, will come in their season the fruits of peace, joy, calm, kindness. And these will sustain through the dry seasons, the challenging times, which will return, again and again, each time the same, and each time utterly new.

“Poverty of Spirit” is at the heart of desert spirituality. It is the historical all-or-nothing source of contemplative spirituality. Fr. Laurence’s latest book, *First Sight*, carries the same message, calling on us to give up everything, in order to be open to the Spirit and to who we really are. It is only by needing everything that we come to receive it.

Joseph Clarkson
Toronto

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