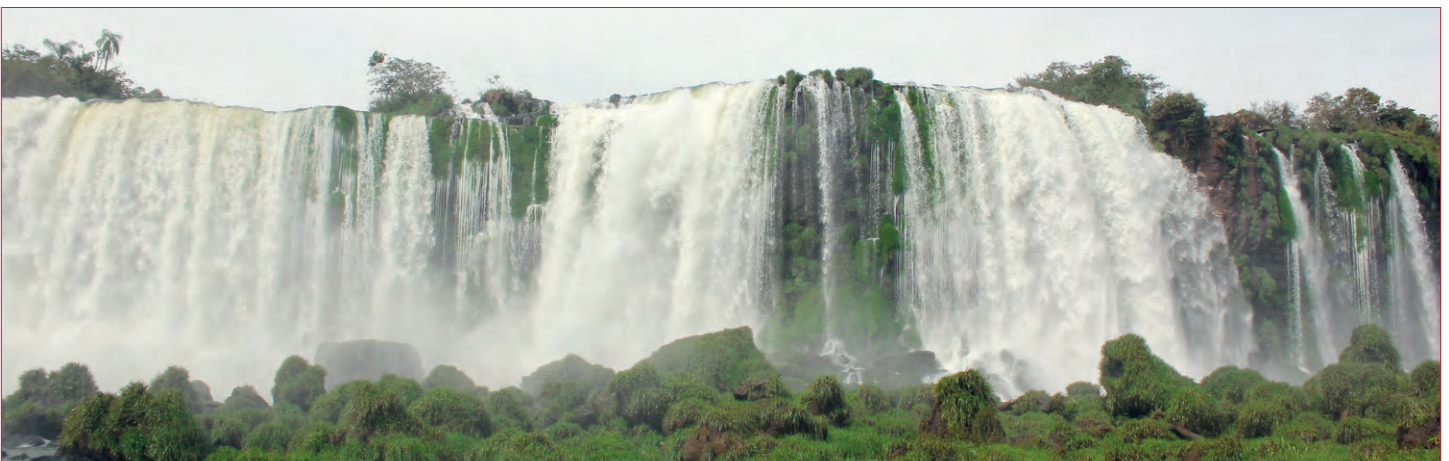




The Need to **reconnect** with Nature

The **John Main Seminar 2012** helped us to reflect on the environmental crisis and showed **contemplation is a real source of hope**



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A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

Early in the morning, as the thick Amazonian night was being redeemed by the light of day, I would go down to the small jetty to meditate beside the river. In Sao Paulo or Los Angeles, Sydney or London the working day also begins at this time as humans begin their commute, read their newspapers, grab a cappuccino and gear up for the business of survival. Here too, in the wilderness, there was an evident rise in levels of activity. The animal kingdom was waking for work.

But here it felt more like the transition from natural deep rest. It was a ritual of nature, a new beginning of an old celebration, an expansion of action in peace, rather than a battle. The conflicts of the species, the survival of the fittest and the killing and devouring that drives their life-cycle were sinless. There were predators but no oppressors, those whose time had come to finish their term of life but no victims. The freshness and purity of the morning reflected this natural order as the river reflected the strengthening intensity of the sun.

From the other side of the river came a noise that drew my attention away from the constant symphony of life - the river and the jungle it flowed through, the hum of the insects and birds, the splash of leaping fish rippling the smooth water and the endless, unidentifiable rustlings that populate night and day. The Amazon jungle is silent. But silence, as any meditator would know, is not the absence of noise; it is the essential innocence of being, existence in harmony with one's nature, a union between self and all that is other.

I found it hard to locate this new, oddly aggressive yet sad and disturbing noise. It came from *somewhere* - over there, or behind me, or downstream. For a moment it seemed almost human and in a flash of imagination I pictured a cargo of slaves being taken down river to their hopeless future. In a contrapuntal way individual voices occasionally dominated over the chorus of this pre-linguistic speech - the alpha males, I was told later, asserting their rights over their fellow

howling monkeys. It was reassuring to have the noise named and located. The literalists wonder how Adam could have named all the species of animals in a single day. But, as steward of creation, he needed to give them names in order to understand them and to see how wonderfully they formed a unified whole.

Those who read the biblical account of creation in the light of meditation know that there are many ways of measuring time and that the work of understanding life reinforces the sense of wonder. My associating the monkeys' howls with human melancholy became less anthropocentric. The noise took its place within the orchestra of the world's miraculous bio-diversity in which Man belongs to serve rather than exploit. So many species, so many parallel universes

"In its true nature all things are beautiful: God saw all that he had made and saw that it was very good"

around me. The more we see and understand, the vaster the world becomes, the more it reflects the effulgent glory and boundlessness of its origin. "In all natural things," St Augustine said, "there is something wonderful."

The crescendo of silent energy in the Amazon jungle builds up in the predawn light and settles down again at sunset. At both times it is intensely peaceful. You feel that peace *is* an energy, a power that vitalizes and renews everything it touches. It enfolds the world, but without possessiveness. Our capacity for this peace is boundless yet it has to be gradually expanded. To receive too much too soon would feel threatening and even, paradoxically, frightening. As energy it can, however, be transmitted (*Peace is my parting gift to you*). To be close to a person whose heart is filled with peace is to have our own heart opened beyond all the restrictions imposed by anxiety,

fear and anger. But even in the strongest presence of peace and of the mystery of love from which it flows - everything real derives from love - we are free and peace can also be refused.

To feel this natural peace by the glass-smooth river, as the birds sweep and dance above it, as the sky brightens like an irresistible human smile that you know won't let you down, is to find oneself anew. It is to be restored to the harmony of nature - the *shalom* in which we resonate with all creation, with all beings in the beautiful order of the cosmos. So, to understand peace in these conditions merely as an absence of conflict or as an escape from risk - as do urbanized human beings in their security compounds walking below the cold gaze of security cameras - is to not be there at all. It is to miss the gift of peace and to be far away in an illusory world.

This resonance with all forms of nature makes the human beings who experience it more present to themselves and to each other, more alive, more at home in the universe - and more natural. It forgives and blesses us. The wilderness, true nature, always gives us a second chance. It is a channel of grace. Its myriad life-systems and all its synchronised routines of life push relentlessly towards their fulfillment. The resolute determination of everything in nature to be fulfilled can seem impersonal. The human presence seems barely acknowledged. But in the human being who feels this resonance within herself it is a presence that is not self-conscious yet cannot be experienced without it awakening a deeper kind of consciousness. It is not trying to succeed at another's expense but simply *to be* because life exists in order to flourish.

What do we mean by 'nature' - the wilderness that modern people both fear and romanticize and often prefer to encounter through film than in reality? Our essential true self that, if we feel in harmony with it, makes us feel good? Natural is good, the unnatural is not because it is false. Buddha nature? The union of

divine and human natures in the one person of Christ? We often use the word 'nature' vaguely - and often contradictorily - yet it points to something that we experience continuously.

The 'true nature' of anything is its irreducible essence, its actual identity. When we are 'natural' we are unadorned, our masks have been laid aside and we have penetrated through the filters and

of being in which we are at one with our true self as the souls' nakedness. *The Cloud of Unknowing* says that when we meditate we come in time to a 'naked awareness of our selves'. In one of Rumi's poems he sings "And so this is love... suddenly to stand naked in the spotlight of truth." To be naked, spiritually, is, like being naked physically, a sign of trust, an embrace of that kind of authentic

the obvious: that we are who we are and nothing else. But the miracle of nature does not stop there. As we become more naturally ourselves (less self-conscious, more attentive to others, more capable of wonder) we also awaken to our harmony with all of nature - in other human beings and in the 'natural world' itself.

This deepening resonance of nature was the theme of the John Main Seminar in Brasil in August when we reflected on the link between spirituality and the environment. The truth we were led to understand better is that our ecological crisis has happened because humanity is simply acting unnaturally and unwisely towards its earthly home. We have failed to see and to resonate with the rich relationship between our human selves and the entire natural order. It is in this relationship the beauty of the world is revealed to us and, in that beauty, the mysterious radiance of the God whose being is in all things - who, as St Paul says, is "all in all". In its true nature all things are beautiful: God saw all that he had made and saw that it was very good. When we see this we see with the mind of God.

"We will be saved by beauty". In *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky this idea is put as a mocking question to the Christlike Prince Myshkin who does not reply. It is not a hope that can be lightly tossed out. It is not a platitude that can be used to cover up the ascetical work necessary to purify our ways of perception so that we can experience beauty in this redemptive way. Myshkin says only that 'beauty is an enigma'. But elsewhere Dostoevsky expressed his belief that 'the world will become the beauty of Christ'. In this he anticipated Simone Weil who felt the world's beauty so sensitively even (or especially) through the tragedies of her life and times: "The beauty of the world is Christ's tender smile for us coming through matter."

When we escape from a crowded and polluted city or rip ourselves away from the addictive and stressful routines of modern life-style, when we go into nature, sometimes even a city park or garden, the word 'beautiful' springs to mind. What better, simpler word can we find? We look at the view, smell the



layers of ego-identity that lead us so easily into self-delusion. To be natural, to be ourselves, is to sense the feeling of self-recovery. To discover our true self - again - is the heart of all recovery, all healing. It is the great *returning home* of life, as perhaps of all things in nature, the completion of the great swing back to the source. When this breakthrough happens in us - after hard inner work and abundant grace - we are blessed with a new degree of confidence and peace. Our 'false selves' that find it hard to deal with the disappointments and losses of life are relativised. When we take them for real we are led into bitterness or despair. Whereas, when we are in harmony with our self, we can be amazed at our capacity not only to survive life's ordeals, to endure them with hope, but even to flourish through times of affliction.

The mystics often speak of that state

strength that is found only in vulnerability and utter honesty. The shame of Adam and Eve when they stood naked before God showed how humanity began its painful journey to maturity. They had already fallen out of their innocent harmony with nature into an isolating and guilty self-consciousness. Of all God's many questions to humanity "who told you were naked?" is one of the most disarming because it reveals how God knows and loves us better than we know or love ourselves.

The basic human quest is always for our true nature. It is accomplished as much through reduction and renunciation as through acquisition and success. Not only big new experiences and achievements but also losses and letting go - perhaps even more through these - guide us to a joyful and peaceful homecoming, to the startling recognition of

pure air laden with new organic flavours, feel the texture of the plants with our fingers and watch the animal world, recognising ourselves in it. The collective experience from all these channels of awareness forms what we mean by 'beauty'. Immersed in the natural world we feel the unnatural habits of our mind dissolve. Perspective returns. Our true nature is recovered. While we are in this way of being we are unable to exploit or harm the environment because it would be and feel like self-harm. While we are in harmony with nature in this way we see it purely as gift, mysterious and natural, to be enjoyed, shared and protected equally by all.

In this sensitised state of mind beauty awakens the spiritual dimension. A sense of the transcendent merges with the sense of being deeply rooted in the very physical reality which reveals the beautiful to us. In classical thought beauty is the manifestation of the whole through a part. The healing and redemptive influence of beauty can be understood in this way. We don't merely go into nature for a weekend break from an unbalanced lifestyle, to get away from it all. We don't enjoy beautiful things merely at an elitist aesthetic level, like dressing up poshly when we go to a concert or opera. When we are truly open to the impact of beauty on our minds, souls and bodies, we are changed. The sicknesses of our soul begin to get well again. And as the whole gives itself to us in the part our whole being is caressed.

St Augustine said that we can only love what is beautiful. This means that love reveals the beautiful even in things or people that don't strike us as beautiful at first. How often do we find that as our first impression of someone fades, based as it was on superficial appearances or prejudices, a deeper insight comes to the fore and our response to this person is wholly changed. We feel bad about our misjudgement and shed it. Their true nature is now more visible and we resonate with it from a simpler, truer part of our self. Perhaps this is what awaits us all at the end of life, regardless of how mistakenly we have chosen to live. All our ways of seeing and knowing will fuse in a great

healing simplicity as we see God. In that instant of pure perception – of the beauty ever ancient, ever new – we will not be able to resist falling in love, with the love that has always surrounded us. And so we will be saved.

A life without beauty is a half-life, tragically and dismally deformed in its capacity for self-transcendence and tenderness. So much of the malaise and the dangerous patterns in our global



crisis arise from these radical interior deficiencies. The commercialisation of education, the failures of religion to connect with the people in crisis, the depersonalisation of our institutions and the paranoia of our concern with 'security', our loss of moderation in material things and our flight into entertainment rather than the encounter with our true nature in contemplation – these are symptoms that compound the root causes of our crisis. Financial instability preoccupies us most obsessively at this moment but behind it, and getting worse continuously, is the deteriorating environment, the branch on which all humanity is sitting. Like addicts fixated on maintaining their supply we deny the main problem and its consequences. How can we extract ourselves out of this spiralling crisis unless we remember what loving ourselves means and how can we love ourselves if we refuse to love the earth that nour-

ishes us and reveals such beauty to us?

Watching wonderfully made TV documentaries on the Nature Channel won't do it. The true wonder of nature lies in real time and personal encounter. When I told people I was spending time in the Amazon before the Seminar nearly everyone warned me of the dangers – the snakes and spiders and poisonous insects. Very few Brazilians have been there just as few Australians have been to the

centre of their country or Canadians to their vast northern wilderness. The still surviving tracts of unspoiled nature on the planet would re-enchanted our world if we visited them bravely, simply in the right way. They would challenge our self-destructive habits, not by making us feel guilty – modern people are generally immune to guilt – but through the experience of wonder and reverence for the beauty we find there.

Fear of the wilderness would then yield to a love of nature which includes human nature in all forms. It was this barrier of fear that the great pioneers of the spirit faced and overcame when they went into the wilderness, Elijah and Jesus into the desert, the early Christian monks into Scetis and Nitrea, Benedict into his remote cave, the Indian *rishis* into the forest.

The fear of wilderness reflects our fear of entering the silence and stillness at

the centre of our own being. Meditation is attractive – as is the jungle or the desert or the high mountains. But it is always easier to read about meditation or to do research on it than to embrace the discipline of a daily practice. This, however, is the consensus of all spiritual traditions: that there is no transformation without practice, no conversion, no enlightenment. External rituals, orthodoxy of belief, conformity to ritualistic conventions cannot substitute for a contemplative practice that goes to the heart of the person and through that to the heart of the world. As Evagrius, a master of desert wisdom said, keeping the commandments is not enough to heal the powers of the soul completely because we also need contemplation to penetrate to the deep centre of the heart. *Apatheia*, or health of soul requires contemplative practice. This teaching was central to our contribution to the Meditatio Seminar on mental health that brought professionals in the field in dialogue together with spiritual teachers from different traditions. It is central also to the Seminar on Addiction later this month. The mystery of wholeness and the powers of healing lie in our own true nature, in the wilderness of the heart.

The great truths need to be rediscovered and reformulated by every generation. We pass on clues and symbols to our successors but we have to relive the quest and thereby renew and expand the tradition we flow within. Humanity's history is therefore re-enacted in each individual's personal development even though the individual cannot know this until the work is well-advanced and the progress made irreversible. In our personal lives we see how times of breakdown are often related to moments of breakthrough. It does not always happen and there seem to be more breakdowns than breakthroughs; and that is why we must respond to personal crises with such tenderness and concern for the individual. Not everyone seems to get through at least the first time. But maybe breakdown is the necessary condition for all evolution and growth. If everything went smoothly we would not need to look for the new models

of reality which help us adapt better to changing circumstances. In a dull utopia of ultimate security and complacency we could never awaken to universal truths, never see beyond our own comfort zone.

Historically the greatest breakthrough in consciousness, whose influence humanity is still assimilating, was perhaps what historians call the axial age, the discovery of the human inner world. This was the result of many breakthroughs that disseminated this wisdom of the human heart through the great religious tradition and their iconic individual teachers, the Hebrew prophets, the authors of the Upanishads, Lao Tsu, Confucius, the Buddha. Yet these advances came at times of great social unrest and instability and their individual teachers – including Jesus who can be seen as their heir and cultural culmination - knew

“We need to sense that we are at home in the wilderness, the jungle beside the great river”

more failure than success.

This perspective of human history, part of the big story of the evolution of nature, is humbling and hope-giving. It may not prevent us from making the same mistakes again but it helps to understand better when we are making mistakes. It prevents us from the worst excesses of collective egotism, the anthropocentric delusion that allows us to exploit the natural resources and the more vulnerable members of humanity. These are the real moral issues of our time. But deeper than the moral is the spiritual. Our way out of the crisis calls firstly for a spiritually generated consciousness. This means one that is born of pure attention before it clothes itself in thought, that *is* good before it tries to *do* good.

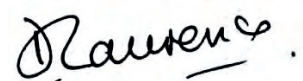
Evolution of consciousness from its earliest stages seems to be driven by our capacity for attention. As our attention deepens and broadens so our forms of social organisation and culture evolve.

When attention shrinks and becomes self-fixated the human is diminished and society dissolves. Our chronic distractiveness, our inability to pay attention to anything for more than a few minutes or even to remember and absorb what we have heard are symptoms of a widespread malaise affecting the spiritual dimension and that also undermines the core values of any civilised way of life.

Our capacity for contemplation – seen so clearly in the child and those who have humbly embraced their own healing process – is connected to this natural instinct to develop our gift of attention. In animals and perhaps even in plants we sense this power of attention. In the jungle you never feel alone. But as the human gift of attention is developed it expands into something pure and other-centred. It is inclusive. It opens the eye of the heart which enables us to see God in all things, to recognise the divine attention at all levels of consciousness and in all forms of nature.

Simply, these are the fruits of meditation. To gather them and replant them for those who come after we need human friendship above all – the community that meditation creates but which also supports the practice. But we also need friendship with the natural world. We need to sense that we are at home in the wilderness, the jungle beside the great river. We need to laugh at the playful exuberance of the surreally decorated birds wearing their *carnevale* headdresses and colours. We need to see ourselves in these earlier forms of life and to remember our capacity for play, for delight and for simplicity. When we turn our attention back, as we then must, to the complex issues with which our world is confronted we will feel less alone, less isolated on the island of human consciousness. We will in fact see more contemplatively and we will act more wisely.

With much love,



Laurence Freeman, OSB

The need for a reconnection to nature

The John Main Seminar 2012 showed **contemplation** as a **major source of hope** for the environmental issue



Spirituality and nature. These very related subjects were strongly present at the John Main Seminar 2012, held in August, in Indaiatuba, close to São

Paulo, Brazil. Representatives from 12 countries of The World Community for Christian Meditation were there to listen to Professor Leonardo Boff and Frei Betto OP. Before the seminar, Fr. Laurence Freeman led the retreat "Be Who you Are", also in tune with the main topic. After the seminar, a group of pilgrims went to Iguazu falls, at the "triple-border" (Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay), to live an experience of meditation and the power of nature.

We asked some participants to write about the experience of the JMS 2012. Next year this most important WCCM event will be held in Hong Kong.



Roldano Giuntoli, **Brazil**

By the end of 2010 we decided to take up the challenge to run the 2012 John Main Seminar. The natural choice for the venue was Vila Kostka a 110 km away from Sao Paulo city.

A subject connected to the environment sustainability entailed the choice of the JMS theme on "Spirituality and Environment" since 2012 was to be the year of the Rio Eco 92+20 World Conference in Brazil. Few names

would gather more international momentum to this theme in Brazil than Prof. Leonardo Boff and Friar Betto OP.

They delivered equally profound speeches in complementary ways whereas the academic approach of Prof. Boff was balanced by the popular address of Fr. Betto. "Be who you Are" was the subject of the most appreciated lectures Fr. Laurence delivered during the Pre Seminar Retreat.

It was decided to prepare for an extension to the Seminar contemplating one of the many natural riches of Brazil. The Iguazu Falls were the natural choice. The visits to the Iguazu Falls National Park, to the exotic Bird Park and to the huge Itaipu power plant were much appreciated. We wish to extend warm thanks to all who have contributed to the success of the 2012 JMS and the best of luck to the Hong Kong community for the JMS 2013.



Jane Serrurier, **UK**

I experienced our Community as a 'World' Community in a way that I had not understood before. The warmth and energy generated by our coming together in Brazil filled me with a sense of awe and wonder on a par to the spectacular encounter with the Iguazu Falls! The quantum realities of our interconnectedness to one another and the world in which we live, and our place in this vast and expanding

(...) the harmony for example that you experience with nature when you see a beautiful clear day or wonderful view, the marvellous sky. In those moments of revelation, it flashes in on one that this is what it's about: a sense of oneness with nature, with oneself, with others.

That is why we meditate." (John Main)

Universe, demand that we search our hearts and minds with a new urgency. The 'cry of the earth' for a new ecology, mutuality and respect can only happen if we embrace the real challenge of a contemplative spirituality, opening ourselves to the Infinite.



Rev. Stuart Fenner, **Australia**

Coming from Australia, the driest continent in the world, to Brazil known for its water resources and rainforest, I felt strangely at home amongst the vibrant community of Brazilian meditators and the 40 or so foreigners from many different countries. Silence does that – it draws people's attention to their essential unity rather than their differences.

The alarm and anxiety we felt, listening to Leonardo Boff's exposition of the dire situation of the planet soon turned to hope as he assured us that joining together with others in meditation was essential to save the planet. The painful silence of isolation caused by individualism and consumerism must be replaced by the healing silence of contemplative spirituality.



Marina Müller, **Argentina**

It was an intense and wonderful experience that prevailed in harmony, sharing friendly coexistence of all the participants in their diversity and unity, with depth content transmit-

ted, beauty of nature and art, from the issues treated, the pleasant and comfortable house Vila Kotska and its beautiful park, the good food, the careful organization of the whole event. It was an experience of peace and grace, to disseminate and share in our national and regional communities, in our meditation groups, and to be thoughtful and deepened for personal and community engagement with the interior teacher from daily meditation. We deeply appreciate the WCCM, especially in its branch in Brazil, the organizers, the speakers and participants the opportunity to share this important event to feed our way in Christian Meditation.



Fred Jass, **Canada**

During the Conference it came to me that when the sciences figure out the importance that prayer, more so silent prayer, can clean the airwaves from crime and sin which pollute it, and if they will publish the results like the stock market, then we are on the right way to clean polluted mother Earth.



Magda Jass, **Canada**

Warm sun, warm people, beautiful surroundings, and a whole lot of people caring about each other, and the environment. Laurence talked about the necessity of being who we are, about beauty, and he stressed that we are part of nature. Leonardo Boff told us that we are using up the resources of the earth faster than they can replenish. Frei Betto shared some of his personal history. The pilgrimage to Iguazu falls was being immersed and part of beauty and nature. Everyone had a big smile on their face. It was like contemplative prayer in that it was an indescribable experience.



Lina Lee, Agnes Wong,
Pamela Yeung, **Hong Kong**

Our hearts are sparkled up through participating in the John Main Seminar. As meditators, we feel encouraged when Boff told us that while human resources are finite, the more we meditate, the more we grow in our 'spiritual capital' in order to love and care for all. Betto highlights that human rights and dignity are un-separated integral parts in these two arenas.

Thanks to our friends of the Brazilian community for your warm hospitality, for making this seminar so sparkling, so magical and filled with family atmosphere. Thank you Lord, for striking a chord of harmony through this seminar so that we can be strengthened by the noble spirit of John Main --as now that it is our turn to organize the Seminar 2013. See you in Hong Kong! Deo Gratias!

Meditation and Medicine

The Brazilian gerontologist physician Dr. Fernando Bignardi, a researcher at the Center for Medical Ecology "Florescer na Mata", Sao Paulo, gave a talk during the Seminar on the need for a multi-dimensional and transdisciplinary approaches in both physical and mental health.

A Meditatio Seminar on Meditation and Health in Brasil is being planned.

Interview



Frei Betto OP (left) and Leonardo Boff



By Leonardo Corrêa

Frei Betto: "Meditation takes us beyond the consumerist life-style"

You mentioned meditation as being against consumerism. So, it helps to drive the new paradigm in a good way?

Betto: It is true. Meditation is diving inside yourself, an introspection, and leads people to discover that happiness is not outside but inside themselves. Thus, in a society in which all advertising tries to induce an idea of happiness based on material possessions and certain pleasures granted by what is consumed, the spiritual density reached by a meditator creates for sure an anti-consumerism behaviour.

So in this case, helps to build a paradigm of solidarity?

Betto: Exactly. Because meditation must not be considered a spiritual narcissism, or space from reality or aim in itself. It needs to "render fruits,

and fruits of love, of service, of solidarity, of participation, building a better world. This is the challenge of meditation.

This would be my next questions. You spoke about these "dangers" of meditation. How to avoid that? Just being aware of it? Or does the community have a role here?

Betto: We need to be part of a community. And the community must not see meditation as a end in itself because in this case we fall into spiritual "solipsism". It is like the egocentric use of a meditation practice and could even be called another thing, but not Christian. Because in the Gospel Jesus frequently emphasizes "we know the tree by the fruits". So, it is not valid prayer if it does not lead us to a social commitment, a commitment with a better world.

Leonardo Boff: "Contemplation can heal the planet"

You highlighted the seriousness of the environmental situation. With the support of spirituality can you have more hope that we can reverse the situation?

Boff: We must think in the terms of quantum physics. In quantum physics matter does not exist, everything is energy. Even matter is energy, highly condensed. And energy organizes itself in networks.

The basic law of energy is that everything has to be with everything in all points, in all movements and in all circumstances. The energies intertwine. So, spiritual energy is probably the most powerful energy. And we can cultivate this energy. It does not get stuck in us. It enters into the energy network fructifying more feeble energies, fortifying those who are most threatened. So, I understand the mystics and the contemplatives to be those who make the molecular revolutions, the silent revolutions. In silence they generate energy that will be important for the couple to be faithful, to ensure the social militant is transparent, to keep the politician from being corrupted and continue to serve the people.

All forms give birth to energies that circulate. So, mysticism and contemplation are major sources for generating positive energies that can heal our sick planet and strengthen its energies and they will always help and strengthen all that is good, luminous, decent and holy.

Meditatio News

By Brijji Waterfield

The summer saw a flow of welcome guests and friends coming to stay at the new Meditatio House in London and despite the unpredictable English weather provided some happy times in the garden. We say goodbye to Francisco Wulf who has spent the last year as an oblate in the house and part of the Meditatio team as he returns to Canada and welcome to the house, Mike Rathbone, a music teacher from England and Lucy Beck from the USA. Meditatio house continues its daily round of meditation three times a day and has a new program of events.

Meditatio held a Seminar in York earlier this year on mental health with over 160 participants which brought together professionals from different faith traditions. London also hosted a lively dialogue between Fr Laurence Freeman and Alan Wallace a Tibetan Buddhism on Salvation or Enlightenment? The Meditation with Children program continues to

flourish as we held Meditatio Forums in Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Ireland – where teachers and principals gathered together to hear how we can introduce meditation to children. Next year Poland, USA and hopefully Canada will also host these in their countries with Cathy Day and Ernie Christie from Australia as the speakers. Meditatio now looks forward to developing the theme of Meditation and Addiction with a seminar in London on 30 October. All seminars are recorded and Meditatio publications made available via our website.

Meditatio looks forward to an exciting new venture next year – the launch of the Meditatio International Centre at St Marks, London. We plan to develop this as a public meeting space and a training centre. We hope that this urban setting will be a contemplative space where meditators can gather with others in community, friendship and outreach.

SUPPORT OUR WORK: Become a Friend

Our community is twenty-one this year. The simplicity of the essential teaching remains the community's living core and that, I believe, has shaped and guided our growth to date. The roots deepen as the branches spread - like the gospel's mustard seed.

At the John Main Seminar in Brazil, on spirituality and the environment we saw how necessary it is to develop a new contemplative consciousness for our global challenges. It clarified for me the significance of our outreach to children, people in recovery, prisoners, the mentally ill, the poor and forgotten and the developing world - as much as our work with thousands of regular weekly meditation groups.

Our mission is large; our financial needs are relatively modest. We have commitments for which a stable annual income is necessary. Please help us by becoming a "Friend". Your annual support gives us both inspiration and practical support in our mission every day.

Both the UK and the US now manage their own Friends programs on behalf of WCCM. For Friends' gifts in the UK, please go to www.christian-meditation.org.uk; for the US, please go to www.wccm-us.org. For all other Friends' gifts, please visit www.wccm.org. If you have questions about the Friends program, please contact Carla Cooper at cmcooper@gvvc.com

Thank you for sharing this vision and helping to pass on the gift by becoming a Friend of the World Community.

To donate online go to the Friends page at www.wccm.org/content/donate

Publications



THE BUSINESS OF SPIRIT

Based on the Meditatio Forum held in Georgetown University, USA where organisational leaders operating at a level of global responsibility talk from personal experience about the practice of meditation and its place in their working lives. They bear witness to the need for a truly enlightened approach to business in which spirituality informs leadership and where contemplation is inseparable from action.

ISBN 978-0-9571040-6-8
Price £3.50



MEDITATION & ADDICTION

This booklet is a guide for those who are interested in the role that meditation can have in helping people to recover from all kinds of addictions. It provides information and encouragement for those – and their supporters.

ISBN 978-0-9571040-7-5
Price £2.00

Laurence Freeman, OSB

Events



Australian National Retreat

Melbourne held the Australian National Retreat, in July, under the theme Stages of Contemplation: The Way Up is the Way Down. About 200 people participated.

ONLINE: The talks by Fr Laurence are available to download at www.wccm.org



Meditation with Children Asian tour

Dr. Cathy Day, Ernie Christie (from Australia) and Fr. Laurence Freeman gave a series of talks on Meditation With Children in Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore to encourage the practice between teachers, students and parents.

ONLINE: check out a video on the tour in our YouTube Channel (at www.wccm.org)



Meditatio Seminar on Meditation with Children in Ireland

Ireland held a Meditatio Forum on Meditation with Children, "A Gift for Life", in Dublin, on 2nd October. The event had 220 participants. Charles and Patricia Posnett (UK coordinators for Meditation with Children), Laurence Freeman OSB, Mary Savage a teacher from Belfast and Kim Nata- raja (WCCM Director of the School of Meditation) were the speakers.



Retreat in California

On September over 80 meditators welcomed Fr Laurence to the San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, California, for a weekend of silence and meditation. His theme for the retreat was "First Sight - The Experience of Faith."

Retreat in Holland

In September Fr. Laurence led a silent meditation retreat for the first time in Holland for about 70 participants.



New programme at Georgetown

A meditation programme for the Georgetown University Business School was launched on 25th September at a session led by Laurence Freeman and Sean Hagan, General Counsel of the IMF (above) which was attended by numerous students and faculty. Dean David Thomas, who was also in attendance and participated in the entire hour-and-a-half meeting, addressed the group to express his strong support for the idea of including meditation in the training of future business leaders.

The high visibility of the launch was followed the next week in one of the Business School's lecture halls by a more low-key regular working session, that is to say, by a twentyminute silent meditation, preceded by an introductory talk by John Main Center director Gregory Robison.

The plan is to continue these late Tuesday afternoon sessions for the rest of the academic term, and in the spring term begin including meditation modules in courses in Organizational Behavior.

ONLINE: see videos of this event on our YouTube Channel (at www.wccm.org)

In Focus

Mick Lowcock, **Australia**



My first Retreat with WCCM was at Monte Oliveto which is a long way from Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia. Upon my arrival I met Fr. Laurence Freeman who greeted me with "I will be in Mount Isa next year" and Desley Deike on the front welcome desk "Did you really come from Mount Isa? That is where I come from and went to school before I ended up in England." No doubt I felt at home amongst friends I had never met before. Fr. Laurence did come to Mount Isa and the idea of sending an oblate novice in the meditation community for a kind of internship was born as Pierre Corcoran came to Mount Isa for three months.

Amongst the many things I remember was the first day that Pierre was

here and driving the car, with Pierre sitting in the back seat beside the coffin to allow for room for the coffin to fit in. It was a trip out to a funeral in an Aboriginal community. But Pierre made a big difference to some of our Aboriginal men whilst here. He went each Monday to the Aboriginal Men's Group and introduced meditation to them to end their meeting. That practice has continued mainly because I told him I would make sure it did not die. We end our "Yurru Ngaratthati Men's Group" with a time to reflect on the two hour meeting and

"I feel really sure that meditation helped me to relax and allow the physical effects of the accident to dissipate"

with a time for meditation. I would never have thought it could become so important to some men who needed the peace and inner healing it offers.

As I flew home after my six months away with various Retreats and experiences in my mind and heart, I remember reading on the plane a copy of 'Time' magazine that had a brain on the front page with an article that described how meditation can change the structure of the brain. My experi-

ence has certainly shown me that it is true.

I was involved in a fatal car accident a few years ago, when I had just swapped from being the driver to the passenger on what is known as Melbourne Cup Day in Australia. When I was taken to the local hospital in the country town for observation, I had some quiet time and I just focused on the window and with the mantra in my heart spent some time in meditation while the staff at the hospital watched the big horse race. The next day I had no soreness, nor hardly any effects of the accident, apart from the trauma I experienced over the time ahead.

I feel really sure that meditation helped me to relax and allow the physical effects of the accident to dissipate and to know that it can heal us in many ways we are never aware of.

My simple time of meditation most days allows me to focus for the day, be healed without being aware of it and to carry a load that I might otherwise not be able to do all by myself. It certainly puts me in touch with the basics of spiritual life and to end with praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for what was, is and will be. What a great way to begin a day and to see God within and without.

A short reflection from: Fr. Mick Lowcock, Good Shepherd Parish, Mount Isa. Diocese of Townsville. Queensland, Australia.



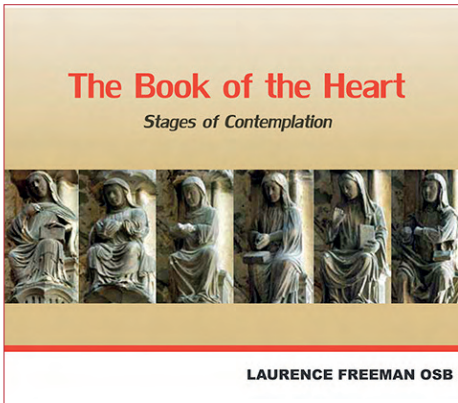
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Releases

The Book of the Heart Stages of Contemplation

Monte Oliveto 2012 Silent Retreat
By Laurence Freeman OSB

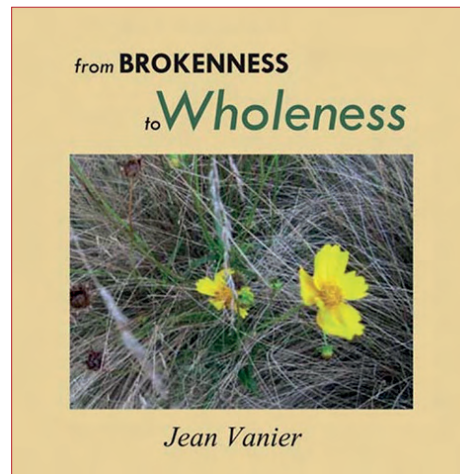


Although we cannot measure the spiritual journey, there are certainly stages that we can identify and that help us to persevere and understand what is happening to us. In these enlightening talks Laurence Freeman uses a series of medieval statues from Chartres Cathedral to illustrate this journey in a strikingly personal and contemporary way. The symbol of the book can be seen as the heart itself, opening in stages to a process of spiritual knowledge that leads to progressive transformation in love. By linking these stages to the practice of meditation Fr Laurence brings this ancient wisdom alive in our daily experience.

Catalogue #6244 ISBN 978-981-07-3822-8
6-CD set Retail Price US\$34.90 and £22.50

From Brokenness to Wholeness

By Jean Vanier
1992 John Main Seminar

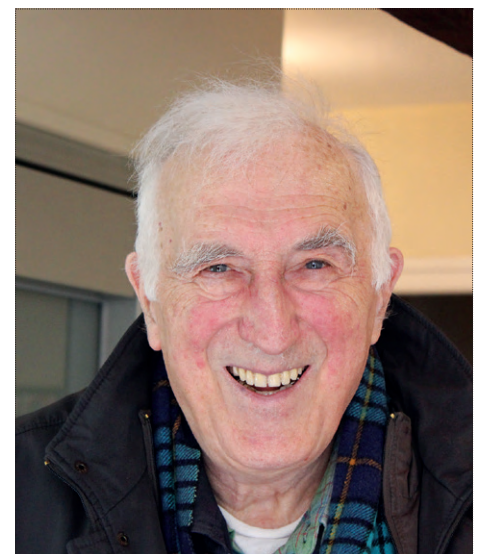


We close ourselves up in productivity and sterile activity to avoid looking at inner pain. And we deny our woundedness because we fear criticism. The deepest quest of the human heart, Vanier says, is for unconditional love such as the woman at the well experienced when Jesus asked her for a drink. We too need to experience such unconditional acceptance. Meditation, Vanier says, opens the space where we can meet the heart of Christ, be who we are in all our woundedness, and allow ourselves to be healed. This encounter then will free us to move from a vision of rivalry and competition to helping

others find their place and exercise their gifts.

Bio

Jean Vanier is a Canadian philosopher, humanitarian and founder of L'Arche, an international federation of group homes for people with developmental disabilities and those who assist them.



This is a digitally enhanced re-issue of the John Main Seminar led by Jean Vanier in London in 1992. Since then the friendship between L'Arche and the World community has deepened. He and Laurence Freeman will lead a retreat together at the international L'Arche centre in Trosly, France, May 22-26 2013.

Catalogue # 6246 ISBN (to be advised)
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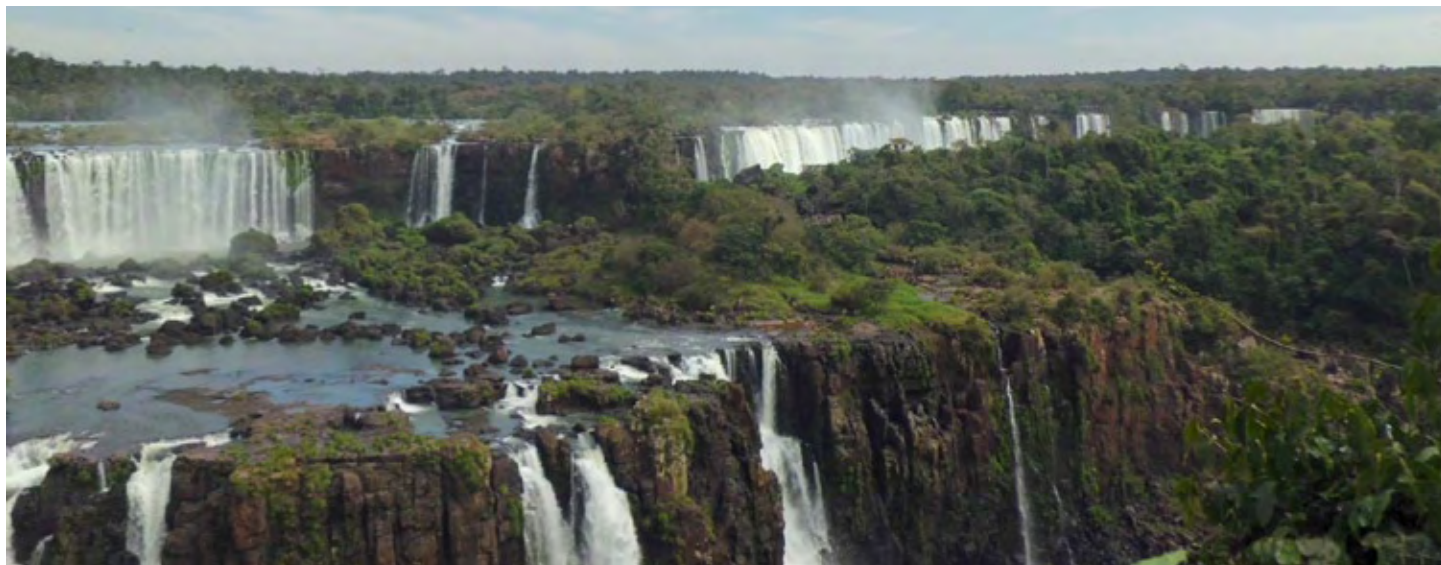
FALL 2012 VOL. 21 NO. 3

THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

This summer's John Main Seminar was held in Indaiatuba, Brazil – a land of astonishing beauty, complex history and wrenching human struggles. A land, in other words, much like any other, yet utterly and inexhaustibly unique.

The Seminar was delivered by the eminent theologian and writer, a pioneer of liberation theology, Prof. Leonardo Boff, together with his colleague in social justice work, Frei Betto.

A small contingent of Canadian meditators made the voyage, attending a silent retreat led by Fr Laurence, followed by the seminar itself. We asked two of the Canadians who attended to share with us their memories and impressions. Both are longtime practitioners and participants in the Canadian Christian meditation community. Magda Jass lives in Montreal, Rob Bedolfe lives in Toronto.



Iguazu Falls – Near the "triple border" of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay (Photo: Magda Jass)

Toronto's Rob Bedolfe at the John Main Seminar

The 2012 John Main Seminar was held in August in Brazil. But Brazil's a big country! Where were you exactly?

Rob: About 100 km from São Paulo, a place called Indaiatuba. The Villa Kostka there is one of the largest Jesuit retreat centres in the world. It's really quite the place, magnificent old architecture. But the facilities were very modern, it was all very well-run.

How were the accommodations?

Rob: The food was great. It was very comfortable. It's just a beautiful setting. And all very reasonably priced – once you've paid the airfare, of course. But once you were there, it was all pretty affordable.

Continued on page C2

We Are Stardust *A short reflection on the retreat, JMS 2012 and pilgrimage*

Fr Laurence gave us a retreat on "Be Who You Are." We learned how a retreat functions in terms of slowing down, being silent, and paying attention. He took us through the development of consciousness, the development of religion, and our relationship with nature, in order to learn to have a contemplative consciousness.

Leonardo Boff talked about the crisis we are in, how we are destroying ourselves. His solution is to link spirituality and technology. Only spirituality will enable us to be compassionate. We are using up the resources of the earth faster than they can be replenished.

Continued on page C4

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Iguazu Falls – A Garganta do Diabo – “The Devil’s Throat” (Photo: Magda Jass)

Who were the speakers?

Rob: There were two main speakers, plus Fr Laurence.

Leonardo Boff used to be a Franciscan priest, and one of the most famous theologians in the world. A towering intellect. He was the founder, or one of the founders, a developer, of Liberation Theology, which tried to get the Church to focus more fully on the terrible situation of the poor in Latin America, and in Africa and Asia. As well as right here in Canada – we have our own situations that are pretty terrible right here, you know. Well, the Church called him a Marxist, they tried to silence him, and so now he’s an ex-Franciscan!

Boff spoke on spirituality and the environment. He doesn’t speak English, so he had to be translated. (This was the first John Main seminar to need translation.) Again, the facilities at the Centre were excellent, you were able to follow him perfectly.

I remember he said that space and silence are completely entwined, and that we are not “here” in the simple way we often imagine. The world is a much more mystical place than that. He spoke of Clement of Alexandria, the “mystic of the senses,” and the way hearing and smelling and sensual beauty is all tied in with spirituality. We are enchanted by nature – literally and figuratively – because that is *our* nature. It’s an act of love. Yet he didn’t hide from the fact that people do terrible things – to nature and to each other. “The demons are immortal,” he said, so we mustn’t try to fight them directly, or we risk losing ourselves. We must never allow ourselves to hate, but we must love always. It was very powerful.

The other speaker was Frei Betto (“frei” is Portuguese for “friar”). He’s a Dominican religious, and he’s also long been involved in work with the poor in Brazil. He was a kind of spiritual advisor for the Lula government.

Frei Betto’s message was similar to Boff’s, but it had more of an anthropological skin on it. It addressed the whole of Creation, but focused a little more on humanity. And on faith. He made a distinction between having faith *in* Jesus, and having the faith *of* Jesus. It’s good to have faith *in*, but we should strive to reach the faith *of* Jesus, the faith Jesus had, to follow his model, which was his whole life – beyond his teaching and beyond the Passion. So it follows that how we act, our morality, is not something we choose, it’s not some way we regulate ourselves. Our morality, our actions, should be the consequence, the result of our striving to become like Jesus, to share in the faith of Jesus. It’s not a strategy, it’s how we become who we are, who we’re made to be – which is children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ.

Laurence’s retreat was before the seminar, and that’s where he made the deepest impression on me. “Who are you?” was the question he asked. Be who you are – that was the theme of the seminar, but it’s not something easy to do. Early in life we conform to social pressures, constant social pressures, and in the process we change who we believe we are. Meditation helps to free us, from the pressures and from the results of the pressures, the false ideas we have about ourselves. Meditation brings us into contact with our true identity. Without this, it can bury us. And we have to work at it. As Laurence said, “Idleness is the death of the soul.”

Continued opposite

From the National Coordinator **Make Your Money Grow ... in the Spirit**

How would you like to make a small investment with infinite returns? The venture is vital and full of spirit. Labor costs have been reduced to nothing. Nevertheless, the laborers need tools.

Each year we invite you to join in promoting and supporting the teaching and practice of Christian Meditation in Canada. We provide income tax receipts for donations over \$20, and all donors receive the Newsletter.

We have an active and dedicated community that carries out our work in many ways. The gifts of time and talent from our volunteers are generous. Your donations provide tools for those volunteers – enabling their talents to be shared among many. Here are a few examples of our core work, which your donations support:

- A national council with representatives from across the country who provide one another with practical support, encouragement and resources.
- I am happy to report that the national council was able to offer some financial assistance for Fr. Laurence Freeman's cross-country tour in October.
- While here, Fr Laurence was interviewed by Mary Hines for CBC Radio's Tapestry. It can be heard online at www.cbc.ca/tapestry/episode/2012/10/24/crazybusy/

- We have revised the group leader's manual, which will be available online and in print.
- Planning for the June 2013 CCMC Biennial Conference in North Bay, Ontario, is well in hand.
- I am happy to announce that we've got a new website, www.wccm-canada.ca. Make a visit!
- Our National School team organizes events that enable participants to deepen their meditation practice. They are working to integrate the Meditatio vision into our School teaching weekends and workshops – with a special emphasis on meditation with children. Your generosity helps with travel and resource costs.
- We maintain a national resource centre that offers a mail order book service, maintains a national database, and oversees the administrative area of our community.
- Our newsletter keeps us informed about community events across the country. The international section includes a letter to the community from Father Laurence and keeps us abreast of the life of the worldwide community.

Please take time to read the enclosed annual appeal brochure – and make your investment today! Thank you for sharing and supporting the work of your Canadian Christian Meditation Community.

**– Colleen Donald
National Coordinator**

Rob Bedolfe *continued from opposite*

What was the most impressive aspect of the trip?

Rob: Oh, the helicopter trip over the falls. Wow! That was really something!

Summing-Up: How did the trip help or influence your spiritual journey?

Rob: It was a wonderful experience. To listen to these

incredibly wise, knowledgeable people, with such an important message, an urgent message. The magnificent beauty of that part of the world. And the fact that you see a lot of people doing this, it's an inspiration. There are some people I know only from John Main seminars, like Peter Murphy of New Zealand, others from England. These relationships get renewed each time.

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Page design: www.khatvanga.com

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for the Year Ended December 31, 2011

	2011	2010
Receipts		
Publications	\$ 16,442	\$ 19,400
Donations – Newsletter	3,696	4,749
Donations & Grants	38,798	40,484
GIC redeemed	0	10,100
Program revenues	12,729	3,803
Miscellaneous revenues	190	592
Bank Interest	68	262
GST & PST refund	1,515	2,838
Total receipts	\$ 73,438	\$ 84,138
Disbursements		
Publications	\$13,188	\$ 9,203
Newsletter	17,916	18,490
Donations		
WCCM Meditatio	8,707	0
Other groups	1,108	8,522
Rent	9,545	9,291
Office	3,530	4,191
Travel	5,371	10,519
Shipping and warehousing	1,991	2,127
Telephone and communications	3,463	3,541
Programmes	3,348	7,631
Insurance (two-year payment)	1,589	0
Equipment	0	0
Interest and bank charges	708	961
Miscellaneous disbursements	229	2,087
Total disbursements	\$ 70,693	\$ 76,536
Excess of receipts (disbursements)	\$ 2,745	\$ 7,575
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash	\$ 20,948	\$ 16,950
Accounts and miscellaneous receivables	8,795	6,873
Investments – Term GICs	15,406	15,262
Pledges receivable	3,001	1,200
Prepaid expenses	949	821
Inventory	21,747	17,721
	\$ 70,846	\$ 58,827
Long-Term Investments		
Mutual funds	\$ 46,511	\$ 49,760
Total assets	\$116,951	\$ 108,587
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 5,395	\$ 219

NOTES

A special fundraising campaign for the WCCM-Meditatio Program raised \$ 8,707. This amount is included in the total donations and grants received.

The Trust for the Meditation Process did not give a grant for program support in 2011.

Full financial records for the past ten years may be found on the Revenue Canada website under the Charities Division.

Magda Jass *continued from front*



Fr Laurence at Iguazu Falls (Photo: Magda Jass)

Frei Betto said he was political because he followed a leader who was political – Christ Himself. Jesus did not die of old age in a hospital.

As Frei Betto pointed out, we are stardust, made of the same elements as all of the cosmos, all formed in the giant red stars after the big bang.

Our pilgrimage to the spectacular Iguazu Falls was like being in paradise. There was always more to see. The falls are a wonder of the world, more vast than Niagara, yet not commercialized, but set aside in a national park. The animals loved our attention.

We went as pilgrims not as tourists. Tourists consume, pilgrims connect. As pilgrims we experienced nature, in all its beauty and risk, as God created it, and were filled with the realization that we are part of it.

The people of Brazil are warm, gracious, and full of life. It was truly a community of love. I felt personally treated like a queen, they constantly looked after me, like the young man from the airline inviting me to go into the priority line, and personally conducting me there.

A woman offered to carry my purse, even to walk slowly with me. Then she thanked me for giving her a reason to slow herself down to my pace, because it was good for her.

Tourism is a transaction, trading money for service. Pilgrimage is a relationship, human beings coming into communion, heart to heart. The John Main Seminar was a deeply enriching pilgrimage for us all.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR REACHING OUT REACHING IN

Why should you opt for the electronic version of the WCCM-Canada newsletter?

Reason #1: It comes in bright, beautiful colour. This issue, for instance, has some gorgeous photos by Magda Jass from the John Main Seminar in Brazil. They look great in black and white – but in colour they're stunning. Unfortunately, given the prohibitive cost of full-colour printing, they can only be seen that way by readers of the electronic version.

Reason #2: You receive your electronic version just that much sooner than the paper edition, which has to be physically transported to you. Canada Post does a great job – but accidents happen, life is unpredictable, and even under the best circumstances, they can't beat the speed-of-light delivery of email.

Reason #3: You have to store or recycle the paper version. The e-version, on the other hand, takes up about 0.002% of today's average hard drive. At four issues a year, you won't have to worry about what to do with your old e-newsletters for a few centuries.

Reason #4: You'll save WCCM-Canada some money. Canada Post gives us a good rate, but it still costs us several thousand dollars a year to print and mail the paper newsletters – money we receive from you, our generous members, and which we could use to promote the practice of Christian meditation in many, many other ways.

Please e-mail us, or fill out the form below, and tell us **Yes, you would like to switch to the e-version**, or **No, not right now**. You'll also help us create a more up-to-date list of our subscribers – and help us make sure we're delivering exactly the kind of newsletter you want to read, in any format!

And speaking of new media matters, we have a beautiful new website online – www.wccm-canada.ca! It's a treasure house of information and resources about meditation and the Canadian meditation community, a go-to place for novices and longtime meditators alike. Suggestions and appreciation can be sent to the talented designer, Luis Zunino, at lzunino@gmail.com.

Love and Peace,
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MIRROR TO GLASS

John Main's Legacy



Photo: Laurence Freeman

December 30, 2012 marks the 30th anniversary of the death of Dom John Main, OSB. Today, we in the worldwide community of meditators he inspired reflect on his life, his legacy.

In my own reflections, I remember his journey with the help of two metaphors which Fr John highlighted in his talks on Christian meditation: the mirror and the glass. He wrote, "The essence of the practice of meditation is learning to take attention off your self and to look out from yourself.... The greatest hindrance is gazing into a mirror, seeing only ourselves and a backwards view of everything." Over time, we grow able to look beyond ourselves to God, our Source, as if through a clear pane of glass. "And sometimes," he would add, "there isn't any glass there at all."

Western society educates us to be successful, to push ourselves to the top. Christian meditation challenges us to lose ourselves to find ourselves. The more committed we become, the more the practice strips us of our ego, our false self. Fr John warned us of the difficulty of this challenge. "...There is a strong temptation to turn back, to evade the call to total poverty, to give up meditation, to give up the asceticism of the mantra and to return to self-centered rather than God-centered prayer." He encourages us to stand before God in utter simplicity with the poverty of the mantra. Only then do we live into the Christian paradox of losing our life in order to find it.

In his many talks, retreats, writings, Fr John never tired of repeating the essence of Christian meditation – of polishing the glass for his listeners. He reminds us again and again that Christian meditation is about the poverty and simplicity of

the single word of the mantra. Meditation is a process in which we discover who we are and why we are. "It is a way of becoming yourself, as you were created by God." In other words, "meditation is concerned not so much with thinking as with being."

As westerners we may see this practice as too simple – as not complicated enough for our busy minds. But the actual practice of staying with the mantra, for the full time of our meditation, is anything but easy. As soon as we quiet down on the outside, the volume on our inner din goes up. But as Fr John suggests, "The mantra is the way par excellence to handle distractions, because the purpose of the one word is simply to bring your mind to peace, silence and concentration ... like a plough that goes through your mind pushing everything else aside."

Fr John died of cancer on December 30, 1982. Today, 30 years later, his legacy of bringing back to the Christian tradition the apophatic type of prayer, with its simplicity and poverty of spirit, continues to bear fruit. Each of us contributes to that legacy as we move our attention, ever so gradually, from our self-adulating mirror, to the clear glass that reveals to us the Source of our true selves. As we continue our daily practice of Christian meditation we look through the pane of glass to the ineffable Mystery beyond. Indeed, it is a journey of mirror to glass.

– Janet Malone

To live
**TRUTHFULLY
& HONESTLY
& LOVINGLY**



Photo: Cymulliad Gymru on Flickr

On October 10, the Most Rev Rowan Williams became the first Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury to address a synod of Catholic Bishops when he was invited to speak to the Thirteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.

His half-hour presentation to Pope Benedict XVI, 259 cardinals and bishops from around the world, and representatives of 15 other churches, included some profound and personal reflections on the vital importance of contemplative practice for all Christians.

To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and ready to receive, with our self-generated fantasies about God and ourselves reduced to silence, we are at last at the point where we may begin to grow.

And the face we need to show to our world is the face of a humanity in endless growth towards love, a humanity so delighted and engaged by the glory of what we look towards that we are prepared to embark on a journey without end to find our way more deeply into it, into the heart of the trinitarian life.

Contemplation is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom – freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them.

To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.

In practice, this might suggest that wherever initiatives are being taken to reach out in new ways to a lapsed Christian

or post-Christian public, there should be serious work done on how such outreach can be grounded in some ecumenically shared contemplative practice.

In addition to the striking way in which Taizé has developed an international liturgical ‘culture’ accessible to a great variety of people, a network like the World Community for Christian Meditation, with its strong Benedictine roots and affiliations, has opened up fresh possibilities here. What is more, this community has worked hard at making contemplative practice accessible to children and young people, and this needs the strongest possible encouragement.

Having seen at first hand – in Anglican schools in Britain – how warmly young children can respond to the invitation offered by meditation in this tradition, I believe its potential for introducing young people to the depths of our faith to be very great indeed. And for those who have drifted away from the regular practice of sacramental faith, the rhythms and practices of Taizé or the WCCM are often a way back to this sacramental heart and hearth.

What people of all ages recognize in these practices is the possibility, quite simply, of living more humanly – living with less frantic acquisitiveness, living with space for stillness, living in the expectation of learning, and most of all, living with an awareness that there is a solid and durable joy to be discovered in the disciplines of self-forgetfulness that is quite different from the gratification of this or that impulse of the moment.

The New Dionysius

EDITORIAL NOTE: *This is the first in an ongoing series, exploring the writers and teachers who have formed our Christian contemplative tradition, or mirrored it in other faith traditions. We invite readers to share with us their thoughts or reflections on a significant person of your choice.*

One of the most influential mystical writers in the history of Christianity is known today by the magnificent moniker of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

The name comes from the bible, Acts 17, where Paul is in Athens, causing trouble with his preaching, as usual. Offended pagans haul him before the Areopagus (airy-AWP-a-gus), a local judicial court under the Romans.

There Paul delivers one of the most beautiful sermons in the bible, inspired by the pagan altars he has seen throughout the city, particularly one “to an unknown god”. This god you don’t know, says Paul, “this I proclaim to you.” [Acts 17:23]

The speech foreshadows some of the great movements in the coming centuries of Christian history – the meetings (or collisions) between “Athens and Jerusalem”, between philosophy and faith, which would roil the Christian world with what today seem like mind-numbing controversies, over the precise nature of Christ and the Trinity.

But it is also a memorable passage in its own right. Paul tells the elders and the crowd that “the God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made of human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything.” [Acts 17:24]

God is transcendent, says Paul, or as John Main put it, wholly Other. God is not a thing like other things – God is no-thing, beyond all being, beyond existence itself. (Next time an atheist tells you God doesn’t exist, just smile and say of course he doesn’t – that’s why you believe in him.) God is not in existence; existence is in God.

Or as Paul puts it in the closing of his speech, “In him we live and move and have our being.” [Acts 17:28]

Athenians’ reaction to the speech was mixed. Some scoffed, others wanted more. But a few joined Paul that day, among them “Dionysius, the Areopagite” – a member of the Areopagus, a leading citizen.

Some 500 years later, writings appeared in Syria, signed with this very name: Dionysius the Areopagite. They dealt, in a bold new way, with subjects similar to those discussed by Paul – the utter transcendence of God, the impossibility of saying anything truthful about God, and how we as mere



beings can find a way to God, who is beyond all being.

Today we know that the author of these writings was not the 1st century Athenian – hence the “Pseudo” part of his name – but that’s nearly all we know. He was probably a Syrian monk, living about a hundred years after St Augustine. Yet over the centuries his works gathered a huge influence, especially in the western Church.

It was the monks of St Victor in Paris who helped to promote him. The new scholastics, from Peter Lombard to Bonaventure, took him up with enthusiasm. Thomas Aquinas alone, admittedly an industrious writer, quotes him some 1700 times. It was the author’s spirituality that attracted people. The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* translated Dionysius’s *The Mystical Theology* into English, as *Denis’s Hid Divinity*.

Traces, implicit or explicit, can be found throughout the western tradition. The very phrase “the cloud of unknowing” is from *The Mystical Theology*. Elsewhere he coined the word “hierarchy”. His focus was two-fold. His metaphysical texts describe the creative action of God, cascading downward from non-being into being, then breaking into individual and temporary beings, like us. This is the part of the work usually described as neo-Platonist.

The Areopagite’s other focus, though, is on the upward path, the pilgrimage of beings yearning for divinity. This is a process of progressive apophaticism – of saying less and less about God, of sinking deeper and deeper into the divine silence, coming closer and closer to the presence of God. These are the insights that have kept his writings alive – despite the passage of time and the modern anti-neoplatonic attitude, despite even the deception of his pseudonym.

It is what Bede Griffiths referred to when he called the work of the Areopagite “the nearest equivalent in the West of the Vedantic tradition of Hinduism in the East.”

Benedict XVI agrees. At a 2008 General Audience he said, in words that Bede could have written, “Today, Dionysius the Areopagite has a new relevance: ... a great mediator in the modern dialogue between Christianity and the mystical theologies of Asia ... like he was between the Greek spirit and the Gospel. ... When one finds the light of truth, one realizes that it is a light for everyone.”



Calendar of Events

For regular updates go to www.wccm-canada.ca under Events

Orleans, Ontario

15-17 March 2013: "This Is My Story" – Silent Retreat. The Ottawa area Christian Meditation community invites you to a silent retreat, led by Rev. Glenda Meakin. Maison Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence, 1754 St Joseph Blvd, Orleans. Cost: \$190. Register by February 28, with \$50 non-refundable deposit. Mail to Reta Hamilton, PO Box 276, Munster ON K0A 3P0. For Info: Reta Hamilton 613.838.2401, meditation.r@gmail.com

Edmonton

8-10 March 2013: School of Meditation: The Essential Teaching. Cost: \$245 for accommodations and meals. Early birds! Register before January 8 for \$20 off admin and meal cost (\$225 total). Required deposit: \$100 (not refundable after February 15). Location: Star of the North Centre, St. Albert. Contacts: Monique Eng: moniqueeng@hotmail.com, Mia Klein-Gebbinck: miklge@telus.net; 780-354-2108.

Montreal

30 December. Celebration of Fr. John Main's anniversary, Loyola Chapel of Concordia University, 7141 Sherbrooke Street West, 7:30 p.m. Contact: Polly Schofield, 514-481-8746 – polly.schofield@gmail.com

17-19 May 2013. Cistercian monastery at Rougemont, Quebec. Silent retreat for Benedictine oblates and meditators with talks based on the unpublished writings of Fr. John Main. Presented by Polly Schofield. \$150 room with bath, \$130 shared bathroom. For registration call Magda Jass : 514-489-0998 – magda.jass@gmail.com

India

January 2013: WCCM Pilgrimage to India and Nepal. Discover the spiritual riches of the subcontinent, including a full day of dialogue, prayer and meditation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Fr Laurence Freeman OSB. Information and registration: www.wccm.org

School of Meditation: Toronto, January 18-20, 2013 Weekend Workshop on the Essential Teaching

Here's a wonderful opportunity to deepen your understanding and practice of meditation, and to build community with other meditators!

A weekend workshop on the essential teaching will be held in Toronto, January 18 to 20, 2013, at the Convent of the Sisters of St. John the Divine. You are warmly invited to join us!

This weekend workshop has been held successfully 17 times across Canada, beginning in 1999. It's one of the important ways we learn to share and strengthen the Christian meditation tradition in Canada.

Over the weekend, an experienced resource team will help you:

- deepen your understanding of John Main's teachings
- enrich your knowledge of the history of meditation in the Christian tradition
- learn to recognize the stages of the spiritual journey
- develop your ability and confidence to respond to frequently asked questions

You'll also have a chance to practise telling others about meditation, through a friendly chat, or a short talk to a small group.

The sessions are interactive, warm, friendly and supportive, with group meditations forming the heart of our time together.

Register now! For information, or registration forms, contact:

Marilyn Metcalfe, Regional Coordinator, Ontario

medit8rmm@aol.com or 905-831-2945

Rev. Phil Barnett, Coordinator for the School in Canada

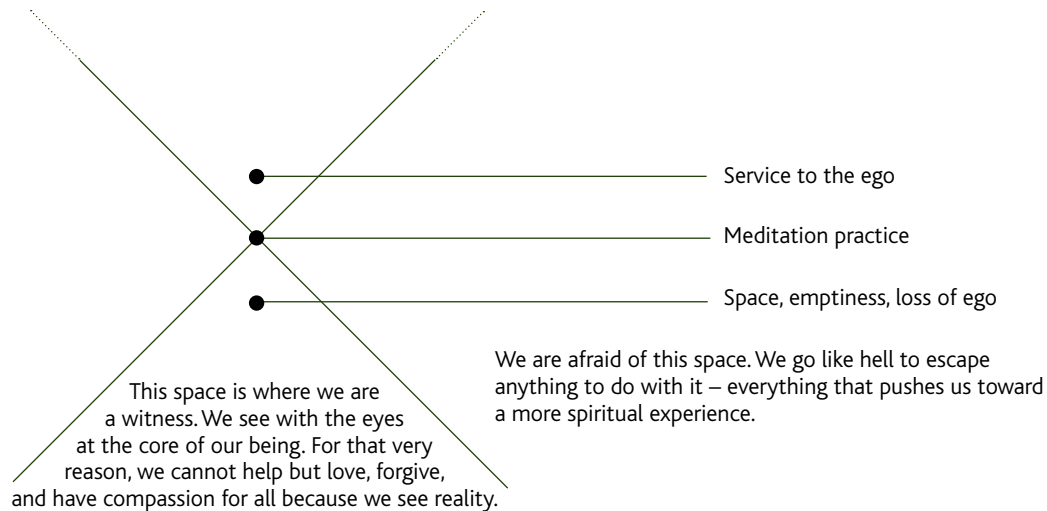
phil.barnett@mts.net or 204-261-9713

The Kingdom Within You

New Season of Monthly Meditation Talks at Knox College, Toronto

The Toronto audience who attended the last-Thursday-of-the-month meditation talk at Knox College, September 27, were quite literally thrilled by John Callaghan's heroic effort to put into words the experience that is beyond words.

The evening was well attended, thanks to John's reputation as an affable, humorous and insightful speaker. The venue was the usual classroom in the University of Toronto's Knox College, and John began his talk by drawing a simple diagram on the chalkboard:



We spend our lives, he explains, in the upper triangle, in service to our egos, seeing and thinking and acting in the world through the screen of our desires and fears. This screen is invisible to us or, at best, seems completely natural to us, part and parcel of the world itself, the way a fish sees water.

But if we are pulled toward something deeper, we begin to gradually narrow the world of the ego, moving toward the point in the middle of the diagram, the crossing. This is our meditation practice. And as we continue our practice – despite the resistance of the ego, which feels itself under mounting threat of extinction – at some moment we move through it, into the silence and emptiness on the other side.

There, the screen of the ego drops away. We expand. We see clearly, fully, without distortion. We love. We cannot help but love – not because we ought to, or because we think it's good. We think nothing at all, so nothing prevents us. There is nothing to interrupt the spontaneous flow of love – or to distort it, or question it, or qualify it, or justify it. We are in direct contact with reality, and love is reality.

What do we call this space, this emptiness? We don't have the words. But it seems to match what Jesus talks about as the Kingdom of Heaven, what Zen masters call the Buddha-mind.

As one continues to look deeper inside, eventually one sees the outside with the eyes of spirit. As we witness, love, compassion, forgiveness flow through us to the world. The world around us experiences our authenticity.

With time, we develop the capacity to relate to our passing

experiences – whether in meditation or in daily life – with deepening clarity and kindness. We realize that throughout the day, in every moment, we have the choice: we can be open or closed.

John cited the late spiritual writer Judy Cannato, that meditation is about becoming a witness – not attached to any particular sense of self. It is not about being in control, but about being in the heart – and in the hands of the uncontrollable.

Or in Catherine of Siena's words: "To see is to love. To see deeply is to love deeply."

The emptiness, the seeing, has no history. There is a history of how we think of that space, how we approach it or talk about it. But within the space itself there is no history. It is the same when we experience it today as when John of the Cross experienced it, or Abraham, or Isaiah, or the anonymous spiritual seekers who have entered it by their own paths, in their own traditions, for thousands of years.

The excitement in the Knox audience was palpable. There was a vivid sense that something was being put into words that we knew – but had never said ourselves, or heard spoken. During the subsequent Q&A, the first question set John back on his heels: "Could I get a copy of your talk?"

The thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Dogen described his spiritual practice as "thinking of that which does not think." Perhaps that was what John was doing – what he was showing to be possible, though a constant challenge – and which so excited the audience at Knox that evening.

Only when man realizes that he himself is an inscrutable mystery – that is, that his true being lies beyond any thought or consciousness that he may have of himself – only then can he discover in the depths of his experience the inscrutable mystery of God. Man's unknowable being is of the same order as God's, for man comes from God and has been created in his image. His is the 'beyond all' of Being itself.

Abhishiktananda – Saccidananda

For information on new titles please see page 12 in the international section.

Electronic version of this newsletter

You are reading the electronic version of the complete Newsletter – Canadian and International sections combined. Please let us know by ticking the "Electronic version" box on the renewal form that you wish to continue receiving this version. The latest issue will be sent to you by email as soon as it is available.

Canadian Christian Meditation Community – Newsletter – Publications

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A tax receipts will be issued for donations to the Newsletter of over \$15

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO AND MAIL TO:

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P.O. Box 52, Station NDG, Montreal, QC H4A 3P4

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The Way of – and to – the Path of Meditation

Anyone attending the twilight retreat held June 4 at Trinity United Church in Ingleside, Ontario, will not soon forget the inspiring stories of the speakers, the warm friendliness of the meditators, and the beauty of the sanctuary of the church, as day gave way to evening.

Organized by Robin Lane, coordinator for the Seaway Valley Area of the CCMC, and attended by people from Ottawa, Lancaster, Cornwall, Prescott, Morrisburg, Brockville, and surrounding areas, the event also included a period of silent meditation, and a “yoga trinity stretch” led by Cathy Jarvis, incorporating spiritual insights and bodily positions.

The first speaker was Bernadette Hymus, a public health nurse from Belleville, Ontario. Working in a hospital was stressful and led her to Japanese Zen meditation. It convinced her that “I need to get out of that job.”

She discovered Christian meditation thanks to Google, learned to meditate twice a day, read John Main and Laurence Freeman, and eventually started a new group. “I wanted to share my experience.” People came, and people stayed.

“Meditation has helped me live more deeply. It gives me a sense of perspective, and helps me to seek humility. I am being healed through my commitment to meditation.”

The second speaker was Beth Smith, formerly a vice principal of the Iroquois District High School and now a chaplain at the Correction Centre in Brockville where she works in the forensic and the secure treatment units. Beth has been meditating 14 years.

She told the group about how her daughter recently got married in Las Vegas, and the entire family went to the

wedding. Beth confided to the group, “I found it was very hard to meditate in Las Vegas.”

As a child she loved the stories of the Bible. She was in an Anglican Cursillo group in Ottawa, and read Christian classics like Teresa of Avila and Thomas Merton.

But her greatest teacher of meditation was her own mother, when she was dying of pancreatic cancer. “She became centered, focused. She forgave everybody. She was so peaceful, gracious. She looked at you with pure love. You could see the light of Christ shining through her eyes.”

She spoke about her present work in the facility at Brockville. “Everyone has a darkness in their life. We have to learn to embrace the darkness. Then our own self-acceptance helps us to reach others.”

Ron Dicks, of Emmanuel United Church in Ottawa, was introduced as the “godfather” for Christian meditation in the Lancaster-Cornwall-Brockville area.

Ron quoted Richard Rohr in reminding us that “we have to let go of who we think we are, and be the naked self we are before God. And that self, each of us, is the beloved child of God.”

Ron shared the difficult times in his life when God has spoken, through the experiences we are a part of.

And, as Rev. Dan Hayward reminded us at the close of an evening devoted to so many different journeys in the practice of meditation, “How is your own journey going?”

Something for us all to ponder on our way!

– Rev. Doug MacKay

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
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Annual Appeal



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Montreal, QC. H4A 3P4
514-485-7928
christianmeditation@bellnet.ca
www.wccm-canada.ca

The Website: www.wccm-canada.ca

The website provides easy access to information about Christian Meditation in Canada, including

- a complete up-to-date listing of meditation groups and contact information.
- a calendar of events
- the latest issue of the Newsletter and archived issues back to 2003
- a catalogue of publications and order information
- Group Leaders Corner.

Support of the work of the WCCM

A separate annual appeal is made through **The Friends Program** in the spring of each year. Pledges of \$130 are encouraged. The Friends Program is administered by the Canadian Coordinator.

How can you help continue the work of Christian Meditation in Canada?

Your ideas, input, suggestions and contributions both financial and volunteer are most welcome. Many members of the Community have been most generous over the years. Are you one of them? Will you continue to be?

Annual Appeal: The Canadian Christian Meditation Community

I would like to make a donation of \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of over \$25.

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What do your donations support?

- The Canadian National Council
- The National Resource Centre
- The School
- The Newsletter
- The Website
- International outreach

The Canadian National Council

Headed by the National Coordinator, it consists of six regional members representing the Atlantic Provinces, Quebec, Eastern and Central Ontario, Northwest Ontario and Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and British Columbia, plus the Coordinator of Méditation chrétienne du Québec.

The Council meets every two months by conference call, and face-to-face every two years at the National Conference.

Council members lend their encouragement and direction to the many activities held throughout Canada, including:

- Coordinating national/regional events, retreats, conferences, and seminars.
- Visiting the various regions to meet with local meditators.
- Organizing and leading Schools.
- Editing and distributing the quarterly newsletter.
- Coordinating national tours by Fr. Laurence and other teachers.

National Resource Centre

The National Resource Centre was established in 1992 under the direction of Doreen Romandini to provide support to the Canadian meditation community. A small group of volunteers at the Montreal location, and others at a distance, nurture and support Christian meditation by providing the following services:

- Maintains and distributes a range of books, CDs, DVDs and other materials to individuals, groups and events.
- Accepts donations and issues tax receipts through the registered charity MEDITATIO.
- Supports communications through mail, telephone and internet.
- Holds regular scheduled meditation group meetings at the Montreal location.

The School

The purpose of the School is to guide and support those who feel called to share the gift of meditation, be it one-to-one, as a group leader or by giving talks to newcomers. .

A resource team organizes and conducts Schools across the country.

The School enables participants to:

- deepen their knowledge of the tradition
- understand more fully the experience of meditation.
- gain confidence in their ability to share the gift

The Newsletter

Published four times a year, the Newsletter includes:

- news from meditation communities across the country
- a calendar of up-coming events
- personal reflections on a broad range of topics
- information on new publications.
- The World Community for Christian Meditation International Newsletter

The National Resource Centre maintains a mailing list database and oversees the printing and distribution of 3,000 copies to individuals and institutions throughout Canada and to Canadian nationals in other parts of the world.

The Newsletter is funded through this Appeal and by donations received through the renewal form in each issue. A complimentary subscription is given to all who contribute more than \$25 to the Annual Appeal.

To remind you of the status of your subscription, your membership number and the subscription year is printed above your name on the address label.

International Outreach

In recent years, the Canadian Community has expanded its support of communities, mostly in the Caribbean, through the supply of publications and organized speaking tours. Major funding is supplied through grants from both individuals and foundations. Individual donations are always welcome.



Canadian Christian Meditation Community

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2013

Hosted in North Bay, Ontario at St. Joseph's Motherhouse
2025 Main Street West, North Bay, Ontario

June 7-9 2013

Situated in the solitude of the northern landscape
overlooking the beautiful shores of Lake Nipissing.

Meditatio – Rooting and Reaching

As a deeply rooted Christian community in Canada, meditators across the country have a transformative yet simple gift to share with others. Join us at the National Conference as we explore exciting new ways to branch out and bring others the peace, harmony and new consciousness that meditation brings.

Keynote Speaker: Glenda Meakin

Deeply Rooted and Branching Out

In her talks, Rev. Glenda Meakin will reveal how the deep roots of our tradition and our experience in Christian Meditation lead to a branching out and sharing of this contemplative gift with wider communities.



Opening and closing ceremonies will be conducted by

Sr. Priscilla Solomon, CSJ

*Preparing the Soil / Planting the Seed
Linking with Aboriginal Spirituality*

Friday, June 7	1-4 pm	Registration
	5 pm	Dinner
	6pm	Evening Session

Saturday, June 8 All day and evening

Sunday, June 9 Ends after lunch

Branching/Reaching Out to the Community

Plenary sessions:

- Meditation with children & youth
- Meditation with the Eleventh Step
- Reaching out to diverse faiths, cultures and vulnerable communities.
- Meditation and the Workplace



Just as the roots of trees hold the soil firm and stop erosion, so it is the roots of love that hold the ground of our being together.

– John Main *Essential Writings* p. 174

For more information: www.wccm-canada.ca

Email: 2013CCMC@gmail.com

Phone: Gisele 705-476-2173 - Sharon 705-752-1540



Canadian Christian Meditation Community

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2013 REGISTRATION

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED

- \$245 Residential - Accommodation at Nipissing University residence
- \$145 Commuter
- \$100 to reserve a spot

Fees include coffee breaks and meals.
Final payment is due by April 15, 2013. No refunds after that date.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Dietary restrictions: _____

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DONATION

I wish to make a donation of \$ _____ to support a participant in need of assistance.

Please make cheque or money order payable to CCMC 2013 Conference
and mail this form with payment to
Catherine Young, 555 MacPherson Drive, Corbeil, ON POH 1K0

John Main OSB (1926-1982) believed that contemplative experience creates community. His genius was to recover and re-present a way into this experience for ordinary people from within the Christian contemplative tradition.

In the words of John Main, What we have to discover for ourselves is that God is the root from which we are sprung.

– John Main *Essential Writings* p. 62