

Meditatio

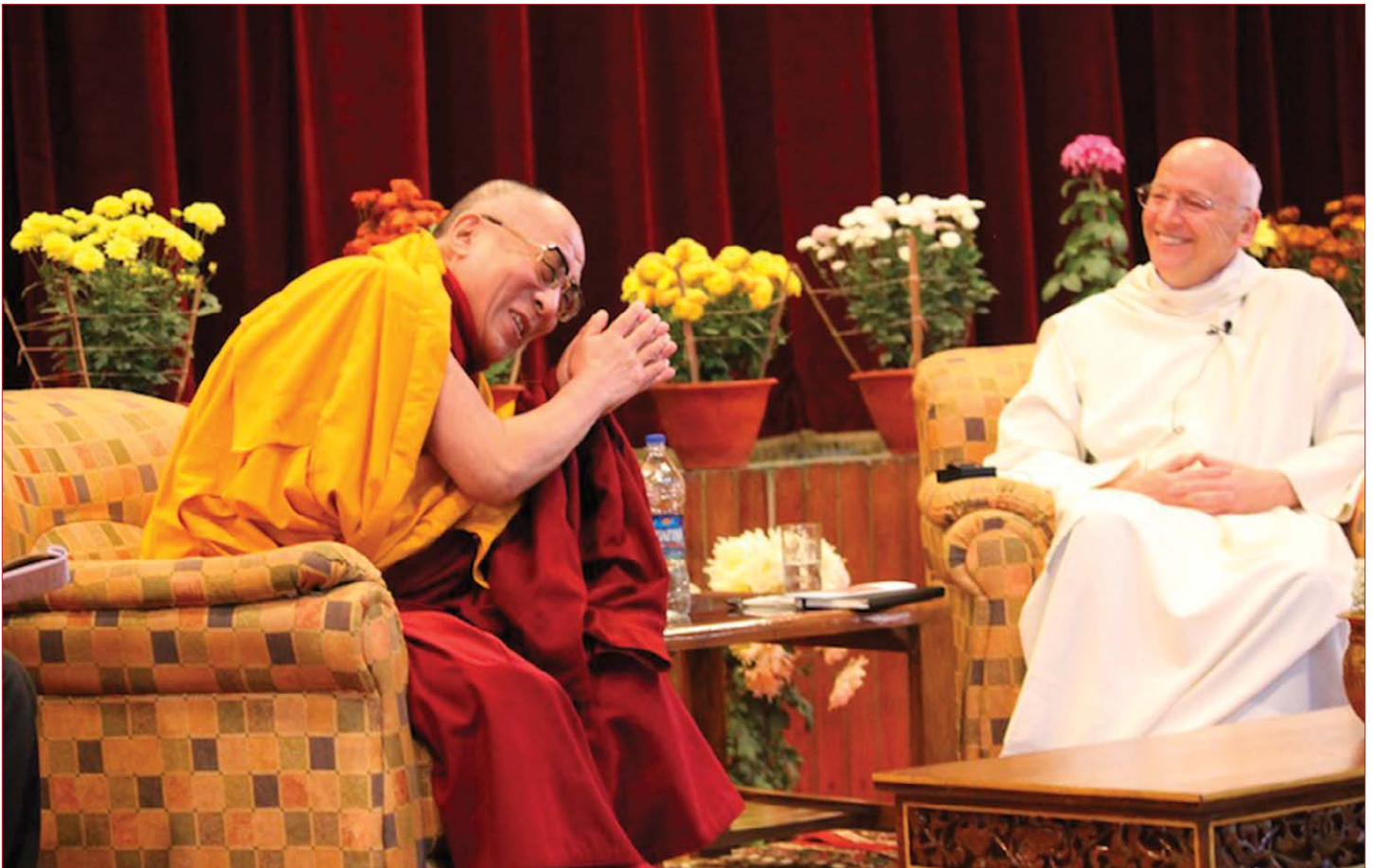
Newsletter of The
World Community
for Christian Meditation



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A Journey of **dialogue and silence** in India

The WCCM Pilgrimage and a powerful meeting between Fr. Laurence Freeman and HH the Dalai Lama in Sarnath



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A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

"Who invented meditation?" I had heard many questions over the years about meditation. Is it Christian? Does the Pope approve? Is it the same as self-hypnosis? But no one, before this eight-year old meditator sitting with his twenty schoolmates at their little desks in the Bere Island National Primary School, had put it quite like this. There is something wonderfully clarifying about meditating with children. The ease and immediacy with which, with a little of the right encouragement, they slip into the silence and stillness itself effortlessly reveals the stillness and silence of the presence we call the Spirit. Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of Love, Spirit of Peace.

I wanted to answer the questioner – more important sometimes than the actual question. So I tried my best and said 'God'. Human beings so often get it wrong, make mistakes, get violent, forget who they and God really are. And so God kindly invented meditation as a reminder to get us back to the truth the easiest and shortest way. God gave it to everyone freely and we just have to tell each other about it. And then, of course, we have to do it. I didn't need to tell the children that. The teacher in the school had told me that the children love meditation and many of them report meditating on their own at other times. This reinforced research that is being conducted in Australia that suggests that about seventy percent of the children who learn to meditate at school also freely meditate at home or elsewhere. With children we don't emphasize the discipline aspect of daily meditation as we do with adults. We just say 'you can meditate anywhere at any time'. The rest they discover themselves.

As I answered him the boy listened with that piercing look of open curiosity and discrimination that makes children such great judges of adult integrity. So in touch with his own experience and so little conditioned, as yet, to modify it in order to please others. I hope I gave him the answer he needed.

As I reflected on this learning experience I remembered a session I had led a few days earlier for a national group of distinguished physicians. They were interested in meditation as far as it might help them and their colleagues in the profession who were suffering increasingly from stress. The pressures induced by medical technology, budget cuts, dissonance between doctors and between doctors and patients, the incidence of drug abuse, depression and suicide – these gave rise to different questions from those I dealt with from the Bere Island schoolchildren.

I tried to present the teaching and respond to the questions in a way that

This unity of the essential teaching in diverse settings shows that simplicity is the great revolution the world is waiting for

kept it in the big picture – not only what medical research said about meditation but also the mystery of its origins and who might have invented it. The doctors were healthily skeptical but open-minded and sincere. It was a stimulating adult exchange, not as charming as the children but maybe leading to a greater influence on more lives. But again it was clear that the experience of meditating together was the crucial validating factor. You can say a lot about meditation from many points of view – theological, historical, psychological, neurological. But if the talking doesn't stop at some point and if the entry into the inner room doesn't begin, none of the talking gets anyone very far.

Nevertheless, I console myself with the thought that, even if the talking doesn't go anywhere in practice, which is perhaps much of the time, at least it's better to know about meditation – the new horizon on human life that it reveals – than not to know about it.

Both of these encounters, the schoolchildren and the physicians, are reflected in the priorities of our community's Meditatio program – the outreach, as we call it, of the World Community. It is designed to bring the fruits of meditation to the secular world – which means the world as it actually is today. We may not like it but we had better see the world as it is. Better to engage with it and its contemporary languages than try to rewind history or fast forward.

We are all secular - or dealing with secularism - today. Fundamentalists see it as a threat to religion; contemplatives tend to see it as an ally. To meditate in faith today is therefore to be a contemporary contemplative as much as any true saint of the past ever was. It is to be involved with both ends of this spectrum; and so the action that faith always demands will be either inreach or outreach depending on your audience and point of view. But the essential teaching remains the same in both cases. This unity of the essential teaching in diverse settings shows that simplicity is the great revolution the world is waiting for.

In many ways Meditatio is nothing new. Over the years we have responded to requests to teach meditation from many quarters and we have tried to respond to them all with our limited resources. It is a work worth doing and there is undeniably a great need, a great hunger and a great potential. Meditatio simply helps us try to meet this need, to focus our resources and share the essential teaching more effectively and promptly.

The new Meditatio Centre in London that opens this month is an example of this growing in-out reach. I hope that you will be able to visit it and, even if that is not possible, that you will benefit from the teachings and dialogues that will be held there. It is a centre for the whole community. A great deal of hope and effort has gone into its design and program and a wonderful group of young meditators are energizing it, so

please hold it in your heart as it begins its work.

A few weeks ago I led a School Retreat with Pauline Peters and Kath Houston for the meditators of the Asia-Pacific re-

arrived and slowed down sufficiently to have caught up with themselves.

There is an obvious question, the sort an eight year old might ask somewhat challengingly. Why intensify the practice

and in the next world, eternal life. If we sell everything we have and give to the poor, we will have treasure in heaven. If we take the lowest seat at the banquet table someone will come and lead us up



International School Retreat in Chiang Mai, Thailand

gion. These retreats are more intensive, eight-day experiences of deepening silence. We have one talk a day, seven or more meditation periods, a contemplative Mass and an individual daily meeting with the participants.

Some experience of meditation is necessary of course before embarking on this kind of retreat – enough, at least, to have got over the worst effects of the virus of perfectionism with which most of us are infected after, if not before we leave primary school. Naturally there is a certain anxiety on the first day of the retreat because for all of us it calls for a quick change of gears. Body and mind take time to adjust and synchronize to the new environment and routine. By the third day most of the people who started say they feel they have finally

like this at all? If the twice-daily norm is sufficient and guides a natural and deep process of integration, doesn't it betray a sense of impatience or egotism to think that more is better? Do you get more rewards for more effort? These questions take us to one of the most important paradoxes of the gospel, one that has troubled Christianity as a religion since the beginning and one that it is especially wrestling with today.

Is the way that Jesus taught and that we are called to follow, a way that rewards and punishes? If so, isn't it primarily an ethical rather than a mystical teaching? At first sight this seems to be the case. If we leave everything, house, family and possessions for the gospel's sake, we will receive a hundredfold in this life (although with persecutions)

to the highest. Love your enemies and your reward will be great. The Father who sees what is done in secret in the inner room will reward us.

This seems fairly clearly about reward – and, by implication, punishment. Ethically, the fundamentalist who thinks that eternal hell is an expression of divine justice might then be right. But the heart of the gospel is not as dualistic as this. There is a paradox at the living core of the good news that works an unpredictable transformation of our minds as soon as we run into it.

The paradox is already suggested by a counterpoint made up of the Master's teaching on prayer and his teaching on non-violence. The contemplative nature of his doctrine on prayer, that underpins meditation in the Christian tradition,

balances his injunction to love our enemies and bless those who persecute us. Placed beside each other we see how deeply they in fact intertwine and are interdependent. Without the moral command to non-violence, the teaching on prayer would become merely a pietistic escape from life's troubles. Without the teaching on going into the inner room and shutting the door, setting our mind on God's kingdom before everything else, and leaving self behind, the moral command to turn the other cheek would be empty idealism. We cannot love our enemies without doing so from a profound contemplative source of energy. We cannot meditate without becoming more loving and less violent.

In the same way the reward and punishment language of the teaching is offset by a call to follow and serve without any promise or suggestion of reward. If anyone comes to him without separating from family and indeed her own self, that person 'cannot be my disciple'. No one who looks back is 'fit for the kingdom'. Like the Son of Man the disciple has 'nowhere to lay her head'. There is a radical, even austere disinterestedness and unconditionality in the call to follow the gospel way of life.

How can we reconcile these opposing points of view? Could we say Jesus was appealing to our self-interest and spiritual egotism just in order to get us to sign up? And then he hits us with the truth? Is he stoking up our false motives in an attempt to be a best-selling teacher? Either we failed to read the small print; or we missed the truth that half the meaning of the teaching lies in the white spaces between the words.

Some people discover this soon after they start meditating, thinking that within days they will be levitating into the kingdom. Then they feel let down and disappointed by their own efforts and the results. They either just give up; or they give up and start again remembering what John Main said about letting go of their demands and expectations. The answer to the paradox is not, however, about different levels of

motivation. Self-centredness and self-forgetfulness cannot be reconciled. Nor is it enough to conclude that Jesus is saying that virtue is its own reward. Be virtuous and then you will be naturally rewarded. You soon find that the same chains of egotism are attached to this answer as well.

The ego's conception of desired and deserved merit, which so often lies at the core of religion, is in fact strongly rejected in the gospel teaching. The great summons to discipleship is to renounce everything 'for my sake and for that of the gospel'; not for any expected personal reward. The expectation of merit in the minds of the labourers who worked in the vineyard all day were rudely shattered when the employer gave the same recompense to those who came at the end of the day. Not fair, the ego murmurs.

The Cross liberates us from the violence of the ego simply by exposing it in its true colours

More effort does not mean more reward. However well or badly you perform, 'we are all unprofitable servants'. Reward, then, is not reward at all. It is grace. This clearly does not fit well with the ethical system of reward and punishment. The simplistic ego that likes its answers in yes and no terms reels at all this. In an attempt to get control of the paradox, rather than be sucked into it, the ego has one more attempt. Alright, it says, let's aim to be completely disinterested. I won't think of a reward at all. I will try really hard to forget and renounce myself. (Actually, I am doing it quite well already..)

This approach is as counter-productive as the other one that more crudely expects rewards. It also underlies some very false asceticism in all religions and perhaps even a distorted understanding of celibacy in some Christian circles.

Discipleship cannot be reduced to

strategy.

The idea of reward is strong in the gospel. But it is there to be ignored. The Cross liberates us from the violence of the ego simply by exposing it in its true colours. Similarly, the exposing of the teaching constructed on the reward-punishment model or the self-renunciation model sets us free from spiritual egotism. Exposure is liberation. Both are extremes but the way is a middle way, narrow but leading to life.

If we can avoid looking for reward and give up trying to look holy we stand a very good chance of getting onto the wavelength of the spirit. Like the bigger phone networks this wavelength operates globally, connecting our spirit to the spirit of Christ and his to the spirit of God. And so eventually we see how we are all connected and then real ethics can begin to work. 'In this breakthrough,' said Meister Eckhart, 'I discover that God and I are one.'

We learn from our first class in meditation that saying the mantra is learning to take the attention off ourselves. There are other ways to learn to meditate but this is the most direct. One could not say for sure that another, more reward-oriented way wouldn't take you there also or perhaps even more quickly. To say it would reduce discipline to technique and replace the liberty of grace with the mechanics of karma. But, accepting this radical simplicity of selfless attention as the basic principle of meditation from the outset, also means we will soon run into the brick wall of failure. Actually, the sooner the better.

Looking for rewards means that we are living in the past. We expect that the kind of reward we got last time will come our way again. Many people who have had spiritual experiences long for them to be repeated. The ego lacks the higher imagination of the spirit that lives in the present. If the ego had three wishes, as it does in some fairytales, it would blow them. In fact, the kingdom does not repeat itself because it never ceases. It renews itself continuously. Perhaps, in the deepest mystery of the Godhead,

the presence that is the kingdom stays eternally fresh through us and perhaps it is our discovery of it that makes it possible. But it doesn't come and go and come again.

When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, Jesus says. Giving to the needy deserves merit. It is an action produced by our right-hand. But the left, the contemplative side, is not concerned with the merits of the action. The king in the story of the Last Judgment rewards

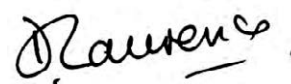
Then, perhaps, we stumbled across a path that might have first shown itself to us in any number of guises, secular, scientific, religious, spiritual, therapeutic, medical. It offered itself to us as a way back to innocence without abandoning our hard-won experience. It defied our ways of trying to reduce it to a tool that we manipulated. It taught us the wisdom to be harvested from failure and how to handle loss and disappointment. It showed us that self-knowledge lies deeper than self-analysis. Above all,

of Bere island there is a wilderness at the edge of Europe, looking out across the vast Atlantic. It is a relatively small island. But a wilderness doesn't have to be huge to restore us to ourselves. It just needs to be recognised and willingly entered.

At the end of the School retreat I have never known anyone cry and want to stay longer. We feel a certain sadness the time is up. We had learned to live from hour to hour in peace, equanimity and good purpose. But we also now have a strong wish to go and test what we have learned in the marketplace of life. This is very similar, I think, to what the disciples of Jesus might have felt after their first experience of the Resurrection. We never hear that they ran after him when he disappeared, feeling desperate because they had lost him again. Instead they ran back to the city, to their lives and their purpose in living with a new experience of meaning and energy.

As I wrote this there was white smoke coming from the Vatican chimney. Hopefully, it indicates a new era in the church's long life. The pain and domestic violence in this transitional era may be interpreted as signs of an emerging new naïveté in the global Christian mind. Let us pray that with Pope Francis leading the Catholic Church but serving all Christians, a simplified religion may emerge, with an authority flowing from deep spiritual experience at all levels of its life. A church that is aware that its morality derives from its mysticism. This church will be a light to the nations without trying to blind them with it. It will see the light of the world, that it recognises as its own, reflected all around itself, dancing in a thousand places. In the simplicity of a child asking a new question, the concern of professionals struggling to serve others better, and in all those who discover grace in silence and stillness.

With much love,



Laurence Freeman, OSB



Talk on meditation at the Royal College of Physicians in Dublin

those who had not know the full meaning of what they were doing.

What we are called to, then, is a kind of second naïveté. The first naïveté was really naïve, innocent of experience and operating on trust and intuition. Often it led us to flashes of wisdom and insight. ('Who invented meditation?'). But it was not adequate for the greater challenges and losses that come with maturity. When we left Eden and lost that primal innocence of childhood we wandered a long time in the wilderness, in scepticism and isolation. We rejected what seemed like the childish promises of religion that were further exposed by the moral failures of their official representatives. We searched for a religion-less religion, a doctrine-free spirituality

it helped us to take the attention off ourselves and get there without trying to get anywhere, to be ambidextrous but not let our left hand know what our right hand was doing.

Amazingly we discovered that this was all absurdly simple. Without knowing it we had become childlike (again).

That was a long answer to the question about the School Retreat and I hope it was clear enough to see why this time in more intensive silence and regular meditation reduces rather than expands the ego. After a time it becomes a discovery of being in a total experience, where the absolute and simple reality of God is lived as if it really were central to our daily life. Of course it is total experience but for a limited time. On the seaward side

Days of **sharing in faith**

The WCCM Pilgrimage in India was an opportunity for meditators to deepen their experience of silence. The highlight was the day of dialogue with Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB and His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Sarnath, where the Buddha gave his first teaching



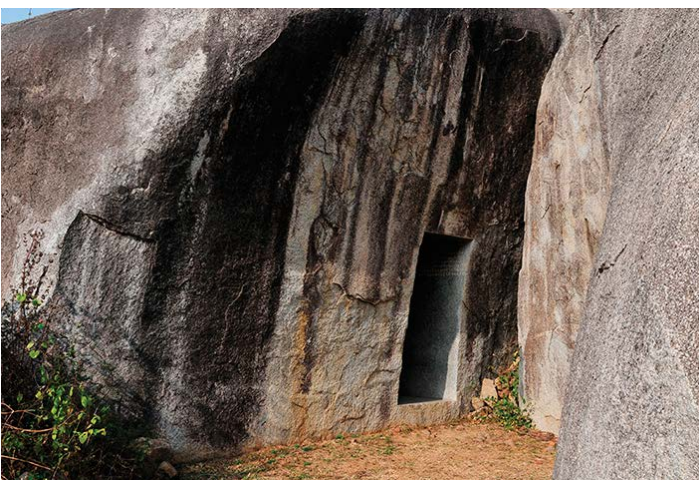
“When we speak about Jesus in our life, for many people today that sounds strange, or weird, about somebody that died 2000 year ago. But that is the essence of Christian faith. We know, we believe, that life does not end with death. The life of Jesus continues in a new way, with a new body, a new consciousness. And this new body, new life, new consciousness we call Christ, the Christ. For me the connection between the historical Jesus and the inner Christ is the most interesting and mysterious connection in my life. And to feel connected with that makes me feel connected with everything in this world”.

“I Think it is very interesting see Jesus, “The Christ”, not just as a kind of historical symbol, but as each of us carrying something like nature of God, or a blessing of God. That is what Christ symbolises. We carry that cross in real sense in our heart. Because God blessed it. That is, in a different sort of words, but quite similar with Buddha Nature”.



“The cave resonates with the **inner room of my heart**”

By *Henriette Hollaar*



The murmur of voices died out, I managed to remain on my own for a while. Only a small batch of sunlight lightened the Cave, one of seven in the Barabar hills, 30 km to the North from Bodhgaya. For a few minutes I said my mantra

and besides that, nothing. Outside, in the sunlight, I realized how this cave resonates with the inner room of my heart, where the echo of the mantra has become familiar after 13 years. It was quite a long journey to my heart, and a lot of cutting, excavation and the chiselling to a high polish is still going on. Or as Fr. John puts it in ‘Word into Silence’: “We began to say the mantra in our mind. For modern Westerners there is no other way to begin. But if we progress with simple fidelity the mantra begins to sound not so much in our head, but rather in our heart! A gentle hand took mine, and I was taken by our Indian guide to a side track, He wanted to show me another cave where an ascetic was living and praying. He had not said a word for 25 years. So many people over the past years have been my guides and have taken me by the hand for a while. I am not excavating on my own anymore, and more and more I can let myself be carried by the word and it’s echo, and am less dependent on my own willpower.

“It is not enough to turn our minds to changing the image of the Church in the world, to be constantly thinking what effect will this have, what impression will that make. We have to begin not by changing the image of the Church, but by re-discovering ourselves as the image of God.” (John Main)

Mixed feelings under the Bodhi tree *By Roger Ferguson*

At Bodhgaya our group went to the place of the Bodhi tree. There was a contrasting silence as hundreds circumnavigated the bodhi tree and temple. Others sat in rows, led in their devotions by the chant of a monk amplified to fill the acres of this holy place with overpowering holy monotony. Dozens of muscular young Tibetan monks

in maroon vests and robes prostrated continuously on prayer boards. Our own group made its own act of devotion. We celebrated the Eucharist. Then there was a long silent meditation.

Humble pilgrims of any and every tradition and persuasion are accepted in this place. I walked with a steady tread back through the crowds. In the

dark, beggars crawled towards me, mutilated by their parents at birth for pity's sake. So I left with a mixture of unease and peace. This contradiction is typical of so much of India, yet held together in this extraordinary location of ancient pilgrimage. Enlightenment as the Buddha taught is the understanding of suffering and its release.

Happy silence with friends

By Pat Nash



There were 38 in our group from seven different countries. We had a great deal of laughter sharing our different modes of transport - cars over very bumpy roads, an amazing train journey - especially the getting on and off, a precarious race of 10 rickshaws rushing to see the sunset ceremony on the Ganges, and plane journeys with endless amounts of security checks. We shared meals experiencing different foods, and were warmed and comforted by the discovery of delicious lemon and ginger tea. In Bodhgaya at bedtime it was so cold our teeth chattered and we had to wear every bit of clothing we had, including Buddhist blankets bought in the local market.

All fun to recall but the life changing experience came with the times of silence. Meditating together in many different surroundings - ancient caves, temple gardens, and the awesome place of 'enlightenment'. The highlight

for me was the sunrise boat ride on the Ganges witnessing the moving ceremony of the dead and the bathing of the living. With no spare hotel rooms we meditated together in gardens, corridors, bedrooms and for me a first - in the bar! In Bodhgaya we meditated under the Bodhi tree with monks and pilgrims of different traditions and from many countries. The day of dialogue with the Dalai Lama and Fr. Laurence was very special. We had the privilege of meditating with His Holiness and 100 pilgrims sat in respectful. This depth of shared silence is a gift to ponder and truly difficult to explain. So what is the nature of a pilgrimage? I have heard it said that 'it is with a true friend you can sit in happy silence'. Our pilgrimage to India gave us an abundance of this shared intimacy and for me it was a life changing experience.

"We are all in this journey together"

By Cathy Nobleman

I had the opportunity to share the beautiful devotion of Hindus, Christians and primarily Buddhist pilgrims who had made their way to some of their religion's most sacred sites. I carry with me images of thousands of prayer flags silhouetted against the sky at the Monkey Temple in Nepal; the memory of a woman moving, again and again from standing position, hands extended above her head in prayer, to a fully prostrate position on her prayer mat at the Boudhanath stupa

in Kathmandu; the cacophony and colour of the thousands of monks and lay people praying at the Temple of the Enlightenment in Bodhgaya, India.

There is nothing more beautiful than people humbly and intently living and growing their faith. This trip served as a beautiful, colourful, noisy reminder that we are all on this journey together, no matter what form our worship takes and no matter where we are in the world.

Like prayer flags

By Kit Dollard,

We were an unusual group, aged 30's to 80's, eleven nationalities. We had never met before and yet that awkward silence was easily broken and we began talking to each other as old friends. We shared each other's stories, experiences and lives. One image I shall never forget: the Nepalese prayer flags that are hoisted up high, on lengths of twine so that the wind carries the prayers written on them up to God. "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going." [John 3.8] So it seemed to me, that we as pilgrims, represented those prayer flags. Each one being carried up to God.

And the gifts we received? From the increasing duality of thinking so present in our culture, we found the freedom of plurality, of acceptance, of forgiveness and kindness. Over our time together we surely became Christ for each other.

Meditatio News

Meditatio Centre is opened in London



The Meditatio Centre was opened on 19 March in London. Fr. Laurence Freeman gave a short talk and led a meditation session for a group of about 100 people. Based in Islington, the Centre will offer a rich program of workshops, talks and groups.

- When I was a little boy I was fascinated by the idea of centres. I started to keep a list with all the centres in London. So I am very happy to be here with you to celebrate the opening of this new Meditatio Centre. I am sure it will lead us, and those who come here, to their own personal centre.

Because any physical centre is simply a symbol of that.

- We all hope the Meditatio Centre will provide a space for people to offer and share gifts and talents. So we can develop our work in different outreach programs - said Brijji Waterfield special projects coordinator for WCCM.

The Centre is located in St Marks, Myddelton Square, London EC1R 1XX Tel + 44 (0) 020 7278 2070. See more photos of the opening and more information at <http://www.wccmmeditatio.org/> or contact meditatio@wccm.org

Forum for schools in Poland



The Meditatio Forum on Christian Meditation in Your School was held in Warsaw 31st January to 1st February.

Fr. Laurence Freeman, Dr. Cathy Day and Ernie Christie (from Australia) and Bogdan Białek (psychologist, from Poland) were the speakers. The event had about 150 participants, mainly teachers, psychologists and principals from school of all over the country.

"The general reaction was very positive. Ernie and Cathy gave a wonderful witness how meditation can be introduced to children in schools", said Andrzej Ziolkowski, national coordinator for Poland, adding that they were planning a follow up for this year in Warsaw.

Forum on addiction in Thailand

By Mike Sarson, Founder Director of UK charity East West Detox



Father Laurence visited Wat Thamkrabok in Thailand on the 25th January to meet the Abbot, monks, nuns and community and observe the various stages and elements that make up their unique holistic approach to treatment and recovery from addiction. The visit started with a tour around the caves where it all started followed by a visit to the 'Sajja' temple where a sacred vow of abstinence is taken by everybody before they can commence treatment.

A group of school children from St John Mary International School in Saraburi were invited to the Monastery to partake in drug preventative education. The children accompanied us to the treatment area to observe a group of patients partake in the herbal detox purging and cleansing ritual and afterwards engaged in meditation practice led by Father Laurence.

The following day began with meditation led by Father Laurence before the start of the Meditatio Forum on Addiction & Recovery. A dialogue followed on the importance of taking a vow in the recovery process between the Abbot, Buddhist monks of Wat Thamkrabok and Father Laurence.

Retreats and Events

International School Retreat in Asia



The first WCCM International School Retreat for the Asia Pacific region was held from 17-24 January 2013 at the Seven Fountains Retreat Centre in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Thirty nine retreatants from seven countries representing Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand shared this spiritually enriching experience, led by Fr. Lau-

rence and assisted by Pauline Peters, Kathy Houston and Leonardo Corrêa. Complete silence was the order of the seven days. The daily programme included seven periods of meditation, four sessions of walking meditation, Fr. Laurence's teaching each morning centered on the theme Who am I? Interviews with spiritual companions and celebration of the "Eucharist every

evening.

"Silence, stillness and simplicity. Words that I have heard before. Experiencing it in a group in TOTAL SILENCE is another thing! Being bonded to a group in SILENCE is a further experience. My experience in these areas has given me hope and has empowered me to realize that in our world"

Fr. Eugene Fernandez CSsR



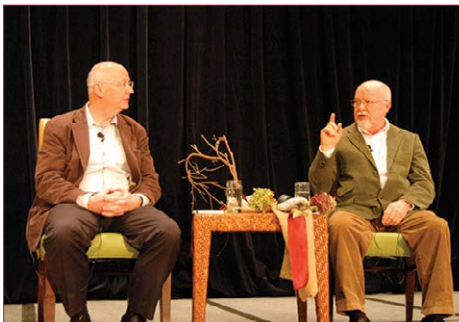
"In this week

I have been called to gentle solitude
In the embrace of community
In an oasis away from frenzied activity
To experience deep within- in myself, others, creation.
Rest and respite,
Healing and re-creation
In the silence of God's gentle love
To be sent out again
To live out my vocation of love"

Fr. Gerard Theraviam

All the talks of the School Retreat 2013 are available on our Meditatio Store (<http://www.meditatiostore.com/>)

Laurence Freeman and Richard Rohr in Chicago



Nearly 600 people attended the "New Thinking for a New Era" conference with Fr. Laurence and FR. Richard Rohr, in Chicago February 15-17,

2013. Laurence and Richard spoke on how the practice of contemplative prayer can change our own consciousness and can have the power to transform our world into a more loving, peaceful place. In addition to the teaching, there were seven periods of meditation, and it was powerful to experience the silence with so many in one place. Many were touched and transformed by the teaching and prayer. It was not just a conference, but a wonderful contemplative experience.



Reviews

By Jim Green

Love & Silence: Amour, by Michael Haneke



There were times while I was watching this miracle of a film that I did not know whether the breathing I could hear was coming from me, the person sitting next to me in the dark, or the characters up on the screen. It is that intimate; it is that silent; it is that inclusive. Not inclusive in a tired, politically-correct way, but in the simple and direct sense that this film – more than any I can remember seeing – is about you and about me. The point is subtly but profoundly made in the first few minutes of the movie. After a brief, heart-stopping prelude, we are confronted with a screen filled with an audience looking at us. Rows of expectant, fidgeting, settling faces – they are a mirror image of us. The performance, the playing, the story is about to begin. But, as always with Haneke (his film *Caché* in particular) the question hangs unsettlingly in the air: who is looking at whom here? And who is

this really about?

The story, as offered to us, is pared down to the bone. It couldn't be simpler and there could hardly be less going on, compared to say, *Skyfall*, *Life of Pi*, *Argo*, *Zero Dark Thirty* – indeed almost any film you can think of. The action – such as it is – takes place almost exclusively in the apartment of an ageing Parisian couple who are retired music teachers. Anne endures a number of strokes which render her progressively incapable and finally utterly dependent on her lifelong partner Georges. We watch as the machinery of their lives, like the elegantly grubby apartment itself, ceases implacably to function. But because this director (always the one watching us watching) refuses the ready-made tricks of the cinema trade (stock characters, manufactured suspense, the reflex impatience of most visual storytelling) it is easy to be overwhelmed by the sense that actu-

ally everything is going on here. We are being shown our life and our death.

Early in the film the couple's daughter tells her father how, as a child, she sometimes heard the two of them making love. It reassured her, she says. She knew they loved each other. This subliminal image of the couple's passionate grapplings of the past informs the way we see each of their new awkward embraces: hauling her up from the toilet, inching her into a chair, turning her over in bed, and then the final coming together of their bodies. This too is love.

In the hands of nearly every other director – especially one taking the Hollywood dollar – we know how this would play out. Can you think of any films featuring older characters which have avoided the swamp of sentimentality? Quite. And the chief offender is usually the soundtrack; the music that tells us what we are supposed to be feeling. But Haneke knows that the undoctored soundtrack of our lives – of love – is silence. We hear music in this film only as heard by the characters themselves, either performed at a piano or played on a CD. Each time – just as we anticipate the transformative epiphany with the couple listening and the Schubert Impromptu working its redemptive alchemy – the music is cut decisively short.

There is to be none of that ready consolation here. What redemption comes, if any does, is won by getting through each impossible moment, working out what new embrace is required of us now, not averting our gaze. This film teaches us how to do that by, in Matthew Arnold's words, "seeing life steadily and seeing it whole". Quietly telling someone a story as they cry out in pain – this too is love.

In Focus

by Francisco Wulff

A Journey into the Heart

The last three years of my life have been for me an extraordinary adventure. I left a very good job in South America, packed all my stuff away and went off travelling around the world. It was truly a journey into the unknown, since I did not have much of a plan for what I would do. I simply knew that I needed to shift perspectives and priorities in my life. I had recently gone over the mythical line of turning 40 and, while in many ways I was very happy and thankful for the opportunities and the life that I had built up to that point, I knew deep inside that I wanted the next 40 years to be fundamentally different at the core of my being.

I would go on to follow a very exotic itinerary – from Venezuela to Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, Indonesia, Nepal, India, Egypt, Turkey, France and England – before finally settling down in Toronto, Canada, where the rest of my family lives. However, the more meaningful itinerary was really a spiritual one, a journey one can make without ever leaving the living room of our house. It is the journey of discovery of our True Self, which is a process that requires that we rid ourselves of all concepts and ideas that we may have about who we think we are, and allow ourselves, perhaps, one day to stand truly naked under the Light of Creation, the Spirit of Life, God. For me, the path to follow in

this journey would be the practice of pure prayer, the prayer of the Heart, or Christian Meditation, as it was taught to me by Fr. Laurence Freeman, OSB.

I took the practice of meditation with me in my travels, and every morning and every evening, wherever I was, I would sit down in silence and stillness and sound my word into my heart. When I did this nothing ever happened, but somehow I felt I was learning something about letting go. Then I accepted Fr. Laurence's invitation to spend a year at the Meditatio

It was then that I began to discover another dimension of my journey

House in London, living in contemplative community, deepening my practice of meditation and welcoming others to our daily practice. It was then that I began to discover another dimension of my journey, a deeper and far more powerful one: it is the sharing of the journey with other travelers. Sitting in silence together or sharing the simple tasks of keeping the house in order, welcoming visitors or working for the broader Community around the world, my time at the Meditatio House took me to another

place of understanding of my spiritual life. But as I found joy in the simplicity of this life and in the sharing with other fellow meditators, I also found myself not very able to explain what I was experiencing.

It was during the recent Christmas holidays, when I joined other meditators in a unique pilgrimage to India, that I would finally find the words to express the revolution that was taking place inside me. There in Calcutta, we went to do volunteer work with the Sisters of Charity, Mother Theresa's remarkable organization dedicated to look after poor people at the ugliest margins of society. And it was there in Calcutta, tending to the most basic needs of people who no longer could properly look after themselves, without any hope of ever achieving anything great or being in anyway rewarded for what I was doing, that I finally understood the great mystery that gives meaning to the practice of meditation and to everything else in this life: God cannot be understood as a concept, it can only be experienced in relationship.

So I have now come home to my family, which is my oldest relationship in this life. I have come home after a very long journey, to begin everything again. From the silence and stillness to the daily acts of love, I am learning every day to be truly myself.



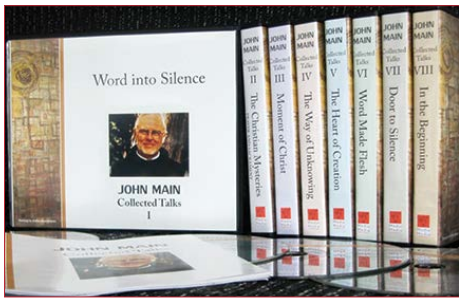
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Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org)
Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano
International Coordinator: Pauline Peters (paulinepeters2@gmail.com)
Coordinator, International Office, London: Susan Spence (susan@wccm.org)
The World Community Web page: www.wccm.org
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Releases

John Main's **Collected Talks**

All of John Main's talks have now been technically enhanced and their order reconfigured, by Peter Ng, to correspond directly with the books of the same title.



"Although it is more than thirty years since he died, as I re-listen to John Main's talks, I am still amazed at the power, clarity and radical simplicity of what he taught. How luminous they are. How fresh and joyful in their directness. How unchanged by the passage of a generation is the urgency of his message. I know of no other teaching in this form that carries the spirit of the gospel, as a living Word, so directly and purely into the heart".

Laurence Freeman OSB.

"It was these talks of John Main that inspired me to start meditating. There was a certain power and persuasive authority in his voice. Listening to the talk time and again sustained me in the wobbly early stages and has kept me steady on the path. I have put together this collection of John Main's talks so that both beginners to meditation and ongoing meditators may be encouraged

by the authoritative and yet gentle guidance of this contemporary master of prayer".

Peter Ng, Trustee WCCM

"Something in me knows that Father John knows what he is talking about, it doesn't always happen which may be my inattention, but often enough listening to his talks I have a sense of "yes, this is true and I need to hear this for my life, thank you!"... it is rare to find this in my experience".

Judi Taylor, Australia

"John Main always speaks with the authority of one who is able to access the depths of his being, he speaks from the same place where he prays, simple clear authentic".

Paul Taylor, Australia

John Main's spoken word is powerful because it resonates from 30 years of commitment to the daily practice of meditation. In addition he speaks not from the head, but from the heart, and his own lived experience. With his fine English diction, pregnant pauses, and teaching from the heart, John Main's spoken word continues to spread around the world."

Paul Harris, Canada

The **Collected Talks** on CD (and books with the same title)

- I Word into Silence
- II The Christian Mysteries: Prayer and Sacrament
- III Moment of Christ
- IV The Way of Unknowing
- V The Heart of Creation
- VI Word Made Flesh
- VII Door to Silence
- VIII In the Beginning

Available from Medio Media distributors

New titles for Meditatio Series pocket sized books



The new titles are being launched for the Meditatio Series, pocket sized books: The Prayer that Jesus Taught (Gerry Pierse), Meditation With Children (Laurence Freeman) and From Anxiety to Peace (John Main). You can order it through WCCM Amazon page (<http://astore.amazon.com/w0575-20>)

To order: Please contact your resource center or supplier for the price in your local currency

VISIT THE CHRISTIAN MEDITATION PAGE AT AMAZON: <http://astore.amazon.com/w0575-20>



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 email: christianmeditation@bellnet.ca
 Tel: +1-514-485-7928

ASIA AND REGION
 email: enquiries@mediomedia.com
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**The 2013 National Conference in North Bay, Ontario
June 7-8-9**

Register today! See inside, page C10.

Toronto: Lenten Retreat Group Leaders Meeting



Toronto Group Leaders Sr. Tina Neves and Marilyn Metcalfe

At the Lenten Retreat on February 23, 12 group leaders met with Julie Meakin and Carol Watson, group leader liaisons, to discuss a variety of items relating to our meditation groups.

There is a range of formats and practices across the groups. Some do a bit of meditative walking before the meditation time, some copy and distribute the weekly reading from the website, and others welcome pets!

There is also one Portuguese-speaking group, and the leader gets the material directly from the Portuguese meditation centre. In such a multicultural city as Toronto, perhaps this is something to work towards – information about meditation in different languages?

Leaders mentioned that the meditation pamphlets with contact information were very helpful when newcomers came. It is also good to know which talks are suitable for beginners when new people show up, and have them ready to go at each meeting. There is a group leaders' manual available on our website wccm-canada.ca, which has plenty of resources.

Leaders said they would keep an eye out regarding opportunities to teach meditation to children and young people.

In terms of promoting Christian meditation, the usual avenues were: Sunday bulletins, posters, the church

Continued on page C2

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Toronto Group Leaders *continued from front*



Toronto Group Leaders discuss their common challenges, solutions.

website, inviting the clergy/leaders of the parish to a meeting, Facebook, parish newsletters and information fairs.

Some suggestions were made regarding the importance of mentoring and how to do it. We need to be continually training people to be leaders. At first this may simply mean asking them to read the opening or closing prayer. Eventually people may feel confident enough to give a brief introduction to newcomers. Some groups said they had two or three people who were comfortable leading.

The Knox monthly meetings were another topic for discussion. Nighttime travel, distance, transportation issues were all reasons for not attending the Knox meetings. Everyone agreed that the physical layout of the Knox meetings should be more of a half-circle pattern. The lecture-style format seemed too formal.

Even though attending the Knox meetings might be difficult, people appreciated other opportunities to get together, such as the Lenten retreat, the School for Teachers, and the June retreats. It's a vital part of making us a community!

Ottawa: Group Leaders Hear Stories of John Main

On February 23, approximately 35 group leaders from the Ottawa area met at Good Shepherd Parish in Blackburn Hamlet.

The guest speaker for the day was Polly Schofield, who became involved with Dom John Main and his small community in 1978. Polly is a trained art historian and took charge of the archives and Father John's papers. She stated that one of the great privileges of her life was being with Father John during the days leading up to his death.

(Polly Schofield will be a featured speaker at the national conference in North Bay in June. See the flyer and application form in this edition of the newsletter, or online at wccm-canada.ca)

Polly's reminiscences of her personal contact with this spiritual man gave us an insight into some of his thinking,



and opened up for us his humorous, loving, playful side.

Polly recalled his thoughts on silence, love and communion – a true relationship of love devoid of sentimentality. Polly also disclosed that he made dying the biggest adventure of his life. There were many thoughts for us to ponder.

In the afternoon session, Polly shared John Main's reflections on sin. There was one phrase, in particular, that we all wanted to remember: "Christ's forgiveness of sin is not the repeal of a judge but the embrace of a lover." Any disharmony caused by sin disrupts – leaving us sin-centered and

separated from God.

Yet forgiveness is the gift of grace. Sin is dried up in the love of God.

Jenny Cookson

From the National Coordinator

A Dance of Many Movements

As I write this, it is an early west coast spring. Here, unlike other places in Canada, spring is not sudden, yet it is always surprising. From my window, it is as though all of nature is preparing for a glorious performance.

The leaves are ready to unfurl, the buds to open. Shoots peep from the ground. Soft grass stretches towards the sun before bowing in the rain.

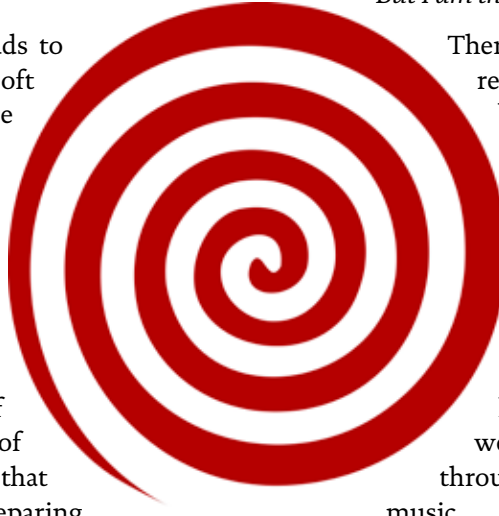
Just before dawn, birds begin tuning in their orchestra. The conductor starts the lead note and each morning the orchestra swells as more join and practice for a grand crescendo. The light swells. The air has lost her winter weight and covers all with a whisper of newborn scents. There is a great sense of expectation. Almost as if nature knew that Easter was near and the universe was preparing to join in with the Lord of the Dance:

*I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
And I danced with the moon and the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem I had my birth.*

This past winter the stripped and gnarled landscape looked abandoned and barely alive. Too much death afoot. It was the theatre bereft of magic.

But hidden from us, death is being transformed. What we thought we had lost will reappear. Fullness needs emptiness, from which to emerge again. Nature and its creatures know this. It is the humans who forget this eternal silent rhythm. Some of the moves in the dance are painful, and without practice we forget the steps.

*I danced on a Friday and the sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back;
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
But I am the dance and I still go on.*



There is a glory in this spring performance, a resurrection of hope as we see all the new beginnings, familiar yet new. Without winter our awareness would be dulled. We need the emptiness of death. Our movement is strengthened through loss.

We learn to make the leaps, to master the steps, both slow and quick, until we are ready to join the dance. Then we learn that all of creation is the dance and we have always been dancing. It is only through the silence that we begin to hear the music.

*Dance, then, wherever you may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.
And I'll lead you all wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.*

In this issue of the Newsletter there is a letter and brochure about the Friends Program. Please consider making a donation, either individually or as a group. It will help all of the dancers and their teachers in our World Community for Christian Meditation.

And don't forget: June 7-8-9 – sooner than you think! – the CCMC National Biennial Conference, in North Bay, Ontario: *Meditatio: Rooting and Reaching*. Registration Forms are available on our website wccm-canada.ca. It's time to act now!

– Colleen Donald
National Coordinator
cmdonald@telus.net

Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

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

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

christianmeditation@bellnet.ca
www.wccm-canada.ca

Editorial Team

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

Send submissions to newsletter coordinator Jeff Ewener
at <newsnotes@bellnet.ca>.

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

Page design: www.khatvanga.com

St. Albert: Essential Teaching, Essential Practice



St. Albert School: Back row: Mia Klein-Gebbink, Diane Reid, Ginny Letendre, Lesley Washington, Phil Barnett, Derek Cameron.
Middle row: Thelma Borromeo, Sr. Lise Veillette, Collyne Bast, Sheila Soulier, Lorraine Hebert. Seated: Lise Risbud, Monique Eng, Maryleen Macrae

I love Google! Years ago I googled *meditation* and was led to a publication from the Canadian Christian Meditation Community. I ordered the publication in 2003 and have been keeping up with John Main's teachings ever since. Last summer I was excited to discover an Essential Teaching Workshop, being offered in St. Albert, Alberta from March 8-10, 2013. My daughter and I were looking for a weekend away together and this looked like the perfect setting for it. Little did we know what we were getting ourselves into, especially for my daughter!

The setting for the weekend workshop was the Star of the North Retreat Centre. This centre has an ideal environment, a wonderful atmosphere of tranquillity and the food was absolutely delicious. One had the privacy of one's room – plus the open areas in which to sit and talk with other people.

There were ten of us attending the workshop from all over the prairie provinces. Our resource teachers were Rev. Phil Barnett (Winnipeg), Mia Klein-Gebbinck (Beaver Lodge), Monique Eng (Edmonton) and Sheila Soulier (Prince Albert). It was nice to finally be able to put faces to some of the names in the newsletters.

(Phil Barnett will be a featured speaker at the national conference in North Bay in June. See the flyer and application form in this edition of the newsletter, or online at wccm-canada.ca)

The weekend showed how qualified and skilled our resource teachers are. They could take a group of strangers

and make everyone feel comfortable, accepted and able to speak freely.

Meditation to me is an intense personal relationship. The thought of meditation has always seemed to be that it was “over there” – never “a western thing.” In my mother's day it would have been unheard-of, and in my day it has gone from “iffy” to something much more acceptable. This weekend I realized that meditation is actually becoming a way of life for the everyday person.

I had never approached meditation before in a group setting. What an experience! I really enjoyed the sense of sharing and being together while meditating. It was a much deeper, more meaningful meditation for me.

Reviewing the history/tradition of the Christian meditation and John Main's teachings meant a lot to me. I also love the Canadian connection. I found learning to recognize the stages of the spiritual journey has helped me to better understand my own growth. The labyrinth analogy was especially enlightening.

We now have so many resources available at our fingertips to help us move forward on our meditative journey. I may never start a group meditation but am now better equipped to share my experience of meditation with someone else.

It was pure pleasure to meet everyone and share this experience together. We even had the added bonus of guitar accompaniment for our group singing. It was certainly the individual uniqueness of all of us (teachers/students) which made this such a special time.

Maryleen Macrae

Knox College Seminar finds common ground with Islam

Toronto: An ecumenism of silence

Toronto meditators were invited to share in an “ecumenism of silence” on February 28, when for the first time a Muslim scholar was invited to the monthly Knox College Seminar, to talk about the connection between meditation and Islam.

Laury Silvers is the author of *A Soaring Minaret: Abu-Bakr Al-Wasiti and the rise of Baghdadi Sufism* and teaches in the University of Toronto’s Department for the Study of Religion. She converted to Islam as a young adult, attracted almost as much by the beauty of the faith and its deep culture, as by the spiritual fulfillment it brought her.

And this was no accident, she added, for a sense of beauty is part and parcel of the Islamic approach to the world.

In the Qur’an and other Islamic texts, said Silvers, “the words *good* and *bad* are not generally used in a moral sense. Instead, things that are morally right are described in terms of beauty.”

“So an act of compassion is a beautiful action,” she explained. “Selfishness or greed is something ugly.”

As for the word ‘meditation’, she said, the closest equivalent is the Arabic word *dhikr* (pronounced like the English “dicker”). *Dhikr* is usually translated as *remembrance*, but the word opens outward into many meanings.

“*Dhikr* is a process,” said Silvers, “not a goal. It is our constant approaching, or returning to, God.”

“In Islam, the ‘original sin’ – or the closest thing we have to that Christian concept – is forgetfulness.”

“It’s the result of life, but that means it’s not all bad! Desire, ambition, greed all make us forget God. But so do things like love, our connection to the world and people, even the baby’s first instinctive connection to her mother. They’re good things, but our enjoyment of them distracts us from God, and we forget.”

Dhikr, then, or remembrance, carries the idea of repentance. The prophet Muhammad said that the very simple, inward act of remembering God is greater than any other act of piety.

This is common ground indeed with Christians, as in Matthew, chapter 6, where the Father, who sees in secret, knows our needs, and recognizes our truest acts of faith.

For Sufis, especially, she concluded, “beauty comes from *dhikr*, from our constant turning and returning to God. What’s important is the constant transformation.”

So Sufis engage in numerous forms of prayer and meditation – chanting, singing, dancing, whirling – to focus their entire selves on God. It’s all *dhikr*.

Silvers is a practicing Sufi. Today Sufism is a major branch of Islam, though one often attacked by modern originalist theologies, which venerate and even make a fetish of the original practices of the first Muslims – a peculiarly modern impulse, ironically, which shows up in almost every faith tradition today.

“So today Sufism is sometimes looked upon as a kind of add-on, the ‘nice’ face of Islam!” But, she said, Muslims themselves don’t see it like this. “For centuries, Sufism *was* Islam. And today it’s right at the heart of it.”

It was this Sufi sense of God’s beauty acting in the world that first won Laury Silvers’s heart. Brought up in a very secularized family, she found she had too many questions about life and reality, and not enough answers.

She experimented with different traditions, including Orthodox Judaism, perhaps partly because her father was Jewish.

Then a course at university introduced her to the work of Meister Eckhart and al-Arabi. Many Christian meditators have studied the rich spirituality of Eckhart.

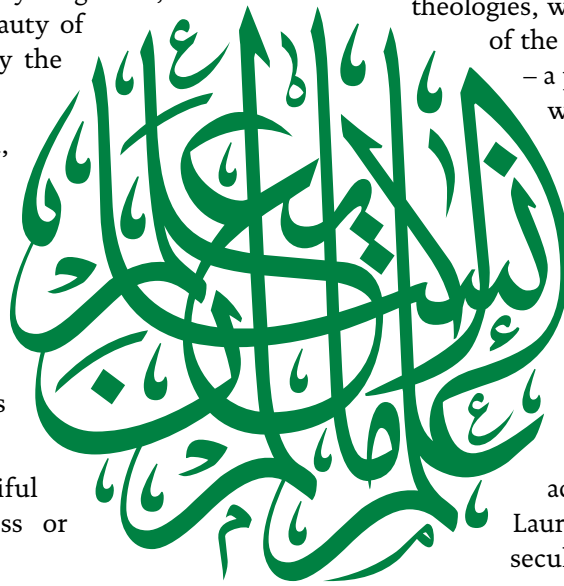
But for Silvers, it was al-Arabi – considered one of the greatest scholars, philosophers and scientists of all time, as well as a brilliant Islamic theologian – who caught her attention. In a sense, this was *dhikr* forcing itself upon her.

Silvers was warmly received by the assembled meditators, who all experienced that sense of something new becoming familiar and, with the gift of this perspective, the familiar things of their own faith appearing new again.

So while Silvers may have been the first member of another faith tradition to have addressed the Knox Seminar, she will certainly not be the last.

With notes from Marie Dyach

The illustration is a Muslim calligraphic device meaning “Allah has taught man that which he knew not.”



Calgary: Fr Laurence Freeman's Twilight Retreat

Engeline Piet, a meditator for thirty-two years, introduced Fr Laurence to the 57 attendees at the Chapel of the FCJ Christian Life Centre, Calgary.

Fr Laurence reiterated the simplicity of Christian meditation, and reminded us of the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

He referred to the example of St Brendan, a monk who in the sixth century sailed from Ireland into the unknown Atlantic. Similarly, for any serious journey we undertake, we must push off into the unknown – away from all the familiarities of our life, towards a distant shore. Yet we carry with us our hope.

The same is true of our journey into Christian meditation. We must focus on our mantra and lay aside all thoughts.

Fr Laurence reminded us of the story of Jesus with Martha and Mary, and their different personalities, like two halves of ourselves, which should be balanced. As we know from this story, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to him. Martha was in the kitchen preparing a meal by herself, and became frustrated and resentful and complained to Jesus. We too can become distracted by our emotions, but the discipline of Meditation helps us to focus on the moment, on our mantra, to the exclusion of everything else, inside or outside.

We then meditated together for 20 minutes. There was a fifteen-minute refreshment break, then we reassembled for questions and comments. The evening concluded shortly after nine o'clock.

Rosemary Bishop

Charlottetown: Stretching Our Horizons

Fr. Laurence began his ten-day cross-Canada tour in PEI on Friday, October 19. The theme of his tour, *The Further Shore – Stretching the Horizon of Hope*, seemed so appropriate, as he would travel from our eastern shore across to BC and Canada's western shore.

Saturday morning our retreat began at the parish hall of Holy Redeemer Church in Charlottetown. More than 100 meditators gathered, and the organizing committee had done a marvellous job.

Sr. Kathleen Bolger welcomed everyone to the day, then opened with a prayer of listening and quiet and a reflection on the Jan Novotka song *In this Holy Place*. Then Tom Garland, one of the committee organizers, introduced Fr. Laurence and our retreat began, with morning and afternoon sessions of talks by Fr. Laurence, meditation, and a dialogue of questions and answers.

Fr. Laurence began by speaking of meditation as a way of addressing both our personal problems and the problems of our times – it can bring harmony and integration to both. Meditation is a way we learn to be present to the moment, and this prayer of presence allows inner transformation to happen. To live contemplatively is to live with our feet on the ground – the ground of knowing who we are, and that we are of God.

Fr. Laurence also talked about caves – mysterious places of refuge, and one of the greatest symbols of the human heart. Meditation is a journey into that cave, a journey from the head into the heart, into the discovery of our true self.

He also spoke of the gift of attention, which enables us to focus and thus to stretch the horizons of our heart. In meditation we are stretching our attention, strengthening and developing it as we are faithful to our daily practice.

After lunch we gathered outside for a contemplative walk and focused our awareness on each step. It was a moving experience to see over 100 meditators walking in silence and communicating in their hearts with a loving God.

As the day drew to a close we were challenged to “stretch our horizons and reach for the further shore.” As Jesus taught us by his life to both go aside and pray and then return to others to listen and to heal, so the WCCM is working worldwide to address the hunger within the human spirit.

A number of outreach programs are bringing meditation to a wider environment – children, the homeless, the marginalized, students, business/financial workers, the sick, prisoners, 12-step members and more. We were encouraged to speak of meditation in any setting, not just churches.

The imagery of the retreat was particularly vivid for us as Maritimers. Setting out from land on our journey to the further shore, at times we encountered turbulent seas. We have experienced the ups and downs of everyday life, as well as the way the mantra restores calmness to our spirit. As we stretch our gaze to the far horizons we feel privileged to be chosen to experience this silent prayer, in communion with other people and groups, across the nation and around the world.

Lynda Fitzgerald

This Is My Story

Ottawa: Fresh Water from the Old Well



Rev. Glenda Meakin and attentive audience

On the weekend of March 15–17, fifty meditators gathered at La Maison de Notre-Dame-de-la-Providence retreat house in Orleans, Ontario for a weekend silent retreat led by Rev. Glenda Meakin.

The theme for the weekend was “This is My Story” – meditation and reflections on the foundational stories through which we view the world.

Do we view the world through the lens of the prevailing cultural narrative – a narrative which no longer makes any reference to God? Or do we see reality through the alternative narrative vision put forward by a faith perspective? What are some of the ways Christian meditation helps us to discern competing narratives and where we are in the story?

Rev Meakin helped us to see how the stories of the Gospel can cast new light on our own narratives. She unwrapped and refreshed for us a number of Lenten stories, in particular the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, the man born blind, and the Prodigal Son. She also made use of the highly spiritual and evocative poetry of Mary Oliver.

(Rev. Meakin will be the Keynote Speaker at the National Conference in North Bay in June. See the flyer and application form in this edition of the newsletter, or online at wccm-canada.ca.)

The lessons were many and powerful. Jesus offers an alternative vision of what it means to be human. God’s joy is to have us in relationship. Pay attention to the presence of Christ in our hearts and the incredible freedom God gives us. It is a no-holds-barred embrace when we turn back to God. It is very hard to accept the depth to which God loves us. The Old Testament is about God’s fidelity and the people’s infidelity to the covenant. Jesus is forever moving us into a wider and wider circle of God’s love. The extravagance of God’s love is always meant to be given away.

The experience of the weekend was enhanced by the beautiful setting of the retreat house, with snow on the ground and a herd of resident deer. All in all, a wonderful preparation for the Easter season.

Charlotte Gupta

.....
Jesus said, “Know what is in front of your face,
and what is hidden will be disclosed to you.”

Gospel of Thomas, 5



TO LIVE WITH THE SPIRIT IS TO BE A LISTENER

Br. Ignatius Feaver, OFM Cap., led the afternoon session of the Greater Toronto Area's Saturday Lenten Retreat. Br. Ignatius facilitated sessions on *Lectio* and *Visio Divina*.

He began with background music and a meditative reading of Sr. Jessica Power's prayer "To Live with the Spirit is to be a Listener." Sr. Jessica reminds us that "the soul that walks where the wind of Spirit blows turns like a wandering weather-vane towards love." We walk in "waylessness" and "unknowing" – surging Godward, and holding "as moving earth holds sleeping noonday, the peace that is the listening of the soul."

Br. Ignatius described *Lectio* as reading scripture, not only with our eyes, but with the eyes of the soul. Paraphrasing Ezekiel 3:3, it is "eating God's Word, savouring it, being filled with it." The practice has monastic roots and was highly favoured by St. Benedict.

To get to the heart of the matter, Br. Ignatius challenged us to approach *Lectio* as contemplative living. He pointed to the definition of Jesuit writer Brian McDermott:

By 'contemplative' I am not referring to a deep mystical experience, but rather the kind of relationship with God in which you are able to notice what God is

like and what God is doing, be affected by it, notice how one is affected, and respond to God out of that awareness.

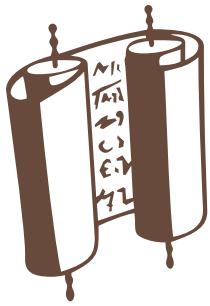
After this introduction, we followed a *Lectio Divina* guide to listening to John 13:3-14 where Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.

In the second part of the session, we were introduced to praying with a visual representation, or 'holy seeing'.

Br. Ignatius cited several artists who explained the source of their art as inspired by God. For example, the 19th-century symbolist painter Charles Marie Dulac wrote that "I am nothing, my art is given to me as an expression of the Lord. ...if He withdraws, I can do nothing." Canada's Emily Carr wrote that "all real art is the eternal seeking to express God, the one substance out of which all things are made."

If so many artists are actively engaged with the mystery of God, it follows that viewing their art can bring one into the presence of beauty, light and truth. For this session, Br. Ignatius brought us an image of the San Damiano cross which inspired and had a transforming effect upon St. Francis of Assisi.

Joseph Clarkson



Our Website Needs You!

Ancient Truths Meet New Media

Our gorgeous new WCCM-Canada website wccm-canada.ca is getting bigger and better!

So we are looking for editor assistants to help out. The hours are few, but the satisfaction is huge.

If you can help out, please contact **Luis Zunino** at lzunino@gmail.com



PASSAGES

“And He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey . . .” Mark 6:8

In recent months, a number of members of our community have passed on, leaving us to reflect on their contribution to our lives and our practice, the depth of meaning they brought to their actions in the spirit, and how we may continue along our own paths, enriched by the grace of their example. We include two of those here.

RON DICKS was an Anglican church member who worked as a social worker. Having grown up in the coastal village of Burgeo, Newfoundland, he loved the ocean. Throughout his life, he continued to appreciate nature and going for walks or a ski outing in the forest. He would connect with the sacredness one finds hidden in animals, trees, or waves. But he went further, he would appreciate the scene fully, he would recognize it as a treasure, and he could be totally present to this encounter, let the moment sink profoundly into himself in order to savour it.

It's not a surprise then that when Ron encountered the path of silence in meditation, some 10 years ago, he immediately recognized it as the discipline for him. One could say that practicing meditation for him was like skiing on a track-set trail: such a clear path, based on the simple and regular

FR JIM RENT CSB was a Basilian Father who had come to meditation in recent years. He once said that praying the Office over the years had provided a focal point for his prayers. It had also drawn him deeply into the prayer of the heart, and the practice of meditation.

A teacher for many years, he worked with young people in Thunder Bay and elsewhere. In recent years, he retired to work on the Congregation's archives, work he found deeply peaceful and satisfying. He also assisted at St. Basil's parish, next to the University of Toronto campus. His celebration of the mass was always reverently unhurried, always inviting the assembly to offer periods of silence, both before and after the Proclamation of the Word, and after the eucharist.

Fr. Jim was a priest who smiled easily, especially as he greeted people before and after Mass, and he never seemed

repetition of a mantra, just like the cadence of skis and poles in the rhythm of cross-country skiing.

The path of meditation soon became central to Ron's life and he found ways to help others discover the practice. He started a meditation group, and later became the coordinator of the meditation community for the Ottawa area, and then for Ontario, supporting both meditators and group leaders. He helped in the creation of new groups, and in the formation of teachers, and chaired the organizing committee for the National Conference in 2011.

His love of silence, his deep connection with nature, and his moments of stillness in meditation did not isolate him. Rather, those periods of quiet time led him to build community with others.

Michel Legault

too preoccupied to extend a warm hand of friendship to everyone he encountered.. Meditation had become important to his faith, and he attended the Kingston School in the fall of 2010. He began to be a familiar and helpful participant in the activities of the Toronto meditation community.

During a Toronto retreat at the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine Centre, he gave a well-appreciated homily. His last homily, given at St. Basil's just a few weeks before his death from cancer, emphasized the need for each of us to allow our childhood faith experiences to mature to a more adult level in our lives. It was a principle he never ceased to apply in his own faith journey.

Eugene A. Sendelweck

MEDITATE ON THE BEAUTIFUL SHORES OF LAKE NIPISSING

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The **Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Conference 2013** promises to be an unforgettable weekend of wisdom and spiritual growth.

The conference theme – *Meditation: Rooting & Reaching* – captures the essence of germination, growth and aspiration that lies at the heart of our meditation. The deeper our roots go in the soil of our practice, the higher and farther our branches can reach, casting the seeds of our faith abroad.

Along with the acclaimed and popular keynote speaker, Rev. Glenda Meakin, the 3 days of the conference will be crowded with many of the most requested speakers in the meditation community – see below.

Put your faith into action, and some action into your faith. Fill out and mail the registration form in this newsletter – or do it electronically online, at wccm-canada.ca.

Don't miss this extraordinary experience! Come to the National Conference in North Bay. **Register today!**

Come share the wisdom of these seasoned speakers

Rev. Glenda Meakin, keynote speaker – Retired Anglican priest, and meditator since 1985, Glenda has served the Christian meditation community as a member of the Canadian Council and Coordinator of the school program. She currently leads retreats across Canada and the United States and serves as a member of the International Executive Group of the WCCM School Council.

Priscilla Solomon, CSJ, Opening & Closing Ceremonies – A sister of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, Sr Priscilla works in the justice ministry – a constitutive element of the Gospel – focusing on ecological justice; human trafficking; indigenous rights, healing, right relations, and reconciliation; and the elimination of poverty. She works in the faith and justice office of her congregation. Priscilla is Ojibway, one of 10 children of elders Eva and Art Solomon.

Phil Barnett – retired Anglican priest, former Canadian national coordinator, and currently Canadian coordinator for the School. In 2010, he went to Trinidad, Barbados and Curaçao where he gave introductory talks, group leader workshops, a retreat weekend and local TV interview.

Joseph Clarkson – recently retired with over 30 years of teaching experience at the elementary, secondary and adult levels. Since retirement, he has completed a master of theological studies at the Toronto School of Theology. Joseph has spoken to numerous groups across Canada on topics such as mysticism, spirituality, prayer, contemplation and the Trinity, illuminating their scriptural roots in his presentations.

Ted Dionne – life-long resident of Oshawa, graduate of University of Windsor, philosophy. Ted worked as a police officer for 30 years and taught at Durham College for 10 years. He is familiar with the 11th step, and throughout his life, has supported many people who have traveled the AA journey. He participates enthusiastically in many sports and activities, including dancing with his wife, Linda.

Kevin Flynn – Anglican priest, director of Anglican Studies at St. Paul's University, Ottawa. Kevin has led meditation groups in Toronto and Ottawa and co-leads the annual "Fully Alive" retreat that introduces yoga to Christian meditators. He is a member of the Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue since 2000 and was formerly a member of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. His interest in yoga and Indian spiritual tradition has led him on three journeys to India.

Joyce Hardman – life skills coach and former elementary teacher who lived and practised in a yoga ashram for over ten years. **Cathy Nobleman** works with chaplaincy at Correctional Services Canada. Both are active

members of a United church in Ottawa. Together with Liz Thyrtwitt, they co-lead a very inclusive and ecumenical meditation group there.

Paul Harris – former Canadian Christian Meditation national coordinator, Paul is the author/editor of eight books on Christian meditation, including the bestseller *Silence and Stillness in Every Season: Daily Readings with John Main*. His most recent book is *Frequently Asked Questions About Christian Meditation: The Path of Contemplative Prayer*.

Michel Legault – While he was Canadian National Coordinator, Michel was invited to visit the Christian meditation communities in Barbados, Trinidad, Curacao and Haiti. In these countries, he met with and provided support to current meditation groups and introduced the practice to numerous groups including children and youth.

Sister Mary Sammon – born and raised in North Bay, Ontario, the youngest of four children. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie after high school. She taught high school music for many years (strings, band and vocal) and has been involved with liturgical music as choir director, organist or pianist since the age of fourteen. She has been a follower of John Main for over 20 years. She is retired from teaching but still teaches violin, cello, guitar and piano to children whose parents cannot afford lessons.

Polly Schofield came to be involved with Dom John Main in 1978, through her two sons, whose religious instruction Father John and Brother Laurence agreed to take on. They formed the nucleus of the now worldwide children's meditation program. She was one of the first oblates of the Montreal Priory with her husband Mark. An art historian, she was asked by Father Laurence to curate the papers of Father John and the Priory. Polly is the director of Meditatio – the Montreal Meditation Centre, and Canadian Oblate Coordinator.

Beth Smith – former educator and high school administrator, now working as a chaplain for inmates at a secure treatment unit in Brockville. The facility is run by Corrections Canada and is also staffed with medical professionals from the Royal Ottawa Hospital, to treat these inmates for their various mental health issues.

Francisco Wulff – born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, came with his family to Canada in 1988 at age 20. In 1995, he worked in Washington, DC for the World Bank. In 2001, he went back to Venezuela to continue working in international development. In 2001, he spent a year at the Meditatio House in London, UK. Francisco has a special interest in the link between meditation and the business world.

C H A N G E S

Have you ever made a change that instead of producing good results, made things worse?

We've all heard the phrase: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." This certainly encourages us to do nothing if everything is working fine. When something is not working, we either fix it carefully without affecting the parts that are well, or we replace everything and start over, discarding the defect, along with the good. At times, we approach changes with caution, afraid of the consequences, and the blame that comes with making mistakes. Other times, we take the risk for the possibility of success and the satisfaction from doing the right thing, or making an improvement.

We have various reactions to change: Fear: *I'm not used to this. Something may go wrong.* Anger: *Who did this? Why can't people mind their own business?* Sadness: *The goodness that was, is gone.* Pleased: *This is refreshing!* Analytical: *How is this compared to the usual? Is this the best anyone can do?* Supportive: *Let's make this work.* Or, if it is beyond our control, we may simply not care.

Is change necessary? It is often inevitable. Fact is, without change, there is no growth.

In Luke 5:4, Jesus asked Peter to put out into deep water. Peter, an experienced fisherman, naturally objected because they had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus asked him to change his thinking. It was against his normal procedure to keep trying if his experience told him that there are days like this, when the fish are simply not there. We know what happened. He obeyed, and the fish were there, more than ever. Peter accepted the change.

In Luke 10:40, Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her.

Since Mary was just "sitting there" we might normally expect Jesus to help Martha out. But Jesus's response was different. He knew what was important at that time and so, he could see, did Mary. He did not ask her to change what she was doing.

In John 2:3, Jesus's mother told him "They have no more wine." This time, though the wine situation was not Jesus's problem, His mother Mary did the unexpected and put Him in a spot, asking the servants to follow His instructions. It was from this obedience that the water changed into wine.

My wife sometimes comes up with a gem of a dish. I compliment her and express my pleasure. Her natural response is to keep making it and serving the same dish. However, she knows when I am about to get tired of it. She keeps me happy by making changes, knowing when to make them.

Change is like death. It will come. We can't have the same pope forever, and the pope does not always have to die before he is replaced. He does not have to be from Europe. Professionals need periodic re-certification. Our shoes will wear out. Autumn leaves will be replaced.

God makes and allows changes. Not for the sake of change, but because he is good and loving. As God's creatures, we facilitate his expression of love and goodness.

In meditation, we allow God to change us. It brings us into an awareness of the timing of changes in our lives. With that new awareness, we become able to accept the new as we let go of the old. It is this interaction of awareness and acceptance that makes our life's journey worthwhile, and exciting.

Noli Mababangloob

For information on new CD titles listed in the order form below, please see **page 12** in the international section.

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Toronto: Finding God in Our Daily Routine

Marilyn Metcalfe led the morning session of the Greater Toronto Area's Saturday Lenten Retreat. Her reflections on Benedictine spirituality encouraged us to see the Rule of St. Benedict as a guide towards gentleness, with ourselves in the process of deepening our relationship with God.

Trying to combine an active prayer life with family responsibilities and work obligations can be an overwhelming juggling act. It really requires some trustworthy guidance. Marilyn offered us the guidance of St. Benedict and Br. Lawrence, author of *The Practice of the Presence of God*.

She emphasized that the place we meet God is in our daily life experiences. Moments of divine in-breaking can happen when we're washing the dishes, reading the Psalms, spending time in silence, or finding breadcrumbs in the margarine. The occasion doesn't matter. God can embrace, instruct, heal or transform us in each of our daily routines.

Yet we have to be ready. Marilyn used the metaphor of tree roots to demonstrate the kind of determination that

is needed to remain open, humble and receptive to God's in-breaking. The tree roots do not stop for obstacles, but find ways around them. Thus the roots end up not stopped by their surroundings, but shaped by them.

So too we must be persistent in our efforts to be receptive and open to God, in our lifetime pilgrimage of change and transformation. Every day is a new opportunity to become more loving and receptive, more able to move towards 'the other.'

We are on the path of coming to be who God wants us to be. Our daily routines can take us away from this, or can lead us into transformation. In this process, the heart is a little like a cell phone which can connect us immediately to others and to God.

During Lent, we are encouraged to be awake and aware, to repent (change) in a joyful manner so that our daily routines can deepen our relationship with God and with others.

Joseph Clarkson

Thunder Bay: Unity and Continuity

On the evening of Monday, December 3, members from Thunder Bay's four Christian meditation groups came together in the church hall of Our Lady of Loretto for an Advent meditation. The gathering created an opportunity for us to honour the memory of Terry Coady, who died in Spring 2011, and to celebrate the presence and continuing work of Alice Ward.

Together, Terry and Alice helped to bring Christian meditation to this city, through more than thirty years

of dedication to the work. In Alice's view, it was all God's doing: He wanted this form of prayer to come to Thunder Bay, so that was that. However, as one member pointed out to her, "You could have said no."

Some pleasant social time followed with tea, coffee and snacks. The evening gave us an opportunity to meditate as one larger group, and afterwards to get to know each other better. It was a gentle, happy occasion – one which we hope may become an annual event.

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
Canadian Christian Meditation Community
P.O. Box 52, Station NDG
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Dear Friends,

The simplicity of the essential teaching remains the Community's living core and that, I believe, has shaped and guided our growth. The roots are deepening as the branches spread wider – like the gospel's mustard seed. It all grows out of our personal daily practice,

building our lives on the foundation of silence, stillness, truth and compassion.

As we develop our outreach work it is becoming clear how necessary it is to develop a new contemplative consciousness for solving our huge global challenges. Our seminars and discussions have clarified for me the deeper significance of our outreach to children, people in recovery, prisoners, the mentally ill, the poor and forgotten – as much as our work with thousands of regular weekly meditation groups around the world. In every case, we are helping people live in the full wonder of their individual human potential and our common one together.

There are so many creative new ways in which our Community is responding to the spiritual needs of our time. To serve those needs, we have developed a set of teaching and outreach priorities for the future. Many volunteers and a few full-time individuals work very hard to realize this. While our mission is ambitious and substantial, our financial needs are relatively modest. But they exist, and we have financial commitments for which a stable annual income is necessary. For all this we rely on your friendship and generosity.

I am inviting you to join more fully in this spiritual family we call the World Community for Christian Meditation by becoming one of its Friends. By making at least one gift to WCCM each year – no matter the size – you will be joining many others around the world whose help gives us both inspiration and practical support every day. Please, if you can, become or remain a Friend.

Laurence Freeman OSB

The World Community for Christian Meditation

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**The Canadian
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What does a Friend do?

A Friend provides vital annual financial support to The World Community for Christian Meditation towards sharing the gift of Christian Meditation worldwide.

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Please make donations to **CCMC – Friends** by cheque, money order, credit card, or direct deposit. You may choose to make monthly or other regular donations, annual donation, or a one-time donation.

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MEDITATIO is our outreach which takes the fruits of meditation into the worlds of business, mental health, addiction, education, environment, prisons, and inter-faith dialogue.

DISTRIBUTION OF REGULAR RESOURCE

MATERIALS to 2000 meditation groups in more than 100 countries worldwide, including the quarterly WCCM International Newsletter or audio recordings of talks.

TRANSLATION OF RESOURCE MATERIALS into different languages to support our local community and reach out to a wider audience of meditators.

PUBLICATION OF BOOKS & AUDIO/VIDEO

RESOURCES which may not be commercially viable, but are necessary.

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE TO RAISE AWARENESS, promote understanding and bring about harmony.

TOUCHING LIVES OF THE MARGINALIZED, THE SICK, the imprisoned, in the hope of bringing them to wholeness.

Meditation is our way of leaving behind all the illusions about ourselves, about others and about God which we have either created for ourselves or received from the past.

— John Main OSB

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Canadian Christian Meditation Community

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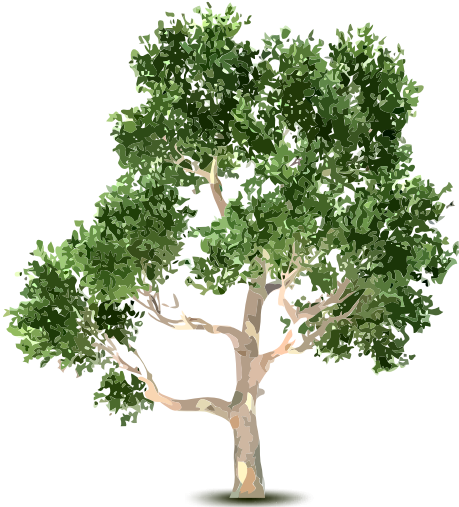
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As a deeply rooted Christian community in Canada, meditators across the country have a transformative yet simple gift to share with others. Join us at the National Conference as we explore exciting new ways to branch out and bring others the peace,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

Keynote Speaker: Glenda Meakin

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In her conference, 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.



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Friday, June 7	1-4 pm	Registration
	5 pm	Dinner
	6pm	Evening Session
Saturday, June 8	All day and evening	
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- Meditation with children & youth
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- 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

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Canadian Christian Meditation Community

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- \$245 Residential - Accommodation at Nipissing University residence
- \$145 Commuter
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Fees include coffee breaks and meals.
Final payment is due by April 15, 2013. No refunds after that date.

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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