Canadian Christian Meditation Community

WINTER 2013 VOL. 22 NO. 4

THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Meditation and Movement in PEI







Holding Hands, Dancing Feet, Open Hearts. Those were the movements expressed on November 7-9 – when twenty dynamic women, from various backgrounds, gathered at Belcourt Center in Rustico, PEI, to enjoy a silent weekend retreat of Christian meditation with yoga.

The agenda was full of moments to reflect, to be guided and to learn. The facilitators were Teri Hall, a certified Kundalini yoga teacher; Rachel Leslie, a teacher certified in various styles of yoga; and Sister Kathleen Bolger, a group facilitator of Christian meditation. We shared some hot almond milk and cookies, then retired early to bed.

Saturday we started our day with some gentle yoga, followed by morning prayer and meditation. Sister Kathleen had prepared a special booklet of prayer which was focused on yoga spirituality.

After breakfast we gathered once again in the yoga room and learned the movements and stretches to Father Ryan's peace prayer. It's a perfect mix of physical practice for the body and spiritual practice for the soul.

At lunch we broke our silence. I must admit, the noise level grew by a million decibels. In our afternoon session we practised a Kundalinistyle yoga which speaks to one's spiritual side. Sister Kathleen guided us through a visualization of hands. Hands we have encountered, hands that have made a lasting imprint on our hearts.

At 7pm, it was time to socialize in dance. As hands had been the focus of the afternoon, feet became the focus of our evening. Then we enjoyed a special home-made pizza provided by the Centre staff.

Prayer, meditation and breakfast started our last day together. As on many retreats, it was sad to leave the place of peace. Sister Kathleen led us in a candle ceremony using a Native American ritual connecting our hearts to the four directions of the earth.

My gifts, from the weekend, are simple: 1. Give yourself time just 'to be'. 2. God is within us, and 'letting go' gives you more control than hanging on. 3. Your feet and your hands are extensions of the heart, mind and spirit and can express them to others through care and love.

"Take a moment to listen when your heart, soul and body speak to you ... and ask the mind to be quiet for a while." (Ritu Ghatourey)

Charity Sheehan Covehead, PEI

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Letter from the Editor Gathered In My Name

This issue of your newsletter is quite a newsy one, with reports on the lives and journeys of our fellow members of the Christian meditation community from BC to PEI. There

are also announcements of upcoming major events like the School for Meditation in Winnipeg, the 2014 John Main Seminar in Chicago, and a quick visit to Canada that Fr Laurence will be making in June.

Breaking the newsy mold is a longer article by a leading writer and speaker of our community – Paul Harris of Ottawa – reflecting on the life and meaning of Holocaust victim Etty Hillesum.

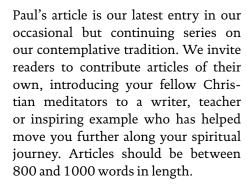
Etty (and it is hard to refer to her in any more formal way) was a young Jewish woman in Amsterdam who was murdered at the age of 29 in Auschwitz, and whose diaries, long hidden, only came to light in 1980. In them she describes a world that grew darker and

darker around her, even as, to her surprise, a light within her grew brighter and brighter.

Etty is no plaster saint – her diaries reveal her as an intensely modern woman, passionate and alive. Yet her spiritual transformation brought her to a fullness of life that was unexpected to her, and astonishing to her readers. Paul's

brief account will certainly encourage newsletter readers to pick up one of the published versions of her diaries, and learn more about this inadvertent but remarkable spiritual

teacher.



And don't forget to mark your calendars – there's a lot happening in our community over the coming year, as you can see on our calendar of events page. When we join with our fellow meditators we find spiritual refreshment, not only for ourselves alone, but

for the community of which we are a vital part, and which we enter again every time we say Maranatha. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matt 18:20)

Love & Peace, Jeff Ewener newsnotes@bellnet.ca



Paul Harris Speaks in Toronto and Hamilton

Paul Harris delivered the first in a special Advent Meditation Series of talks at the Scarboro Mission Centre in Toronto, November 27. His talk, "The Most Frequently Asked Questions about Christian Meditation", was based on his book by the same title, published by Novalis publishers in Canada.

Many is the meditator – the experienced as well as the beginner – who has found Paul's book an invaluable source of insight, reassurance, guidance and reading pleasure. It was an even greater pleasure to receive that wonderful wisdom directly from the author in person.

Paul's talk (like the book) covered an extraordinary range of material. Drawing upon his long experience and deep reflections, he opened new doors of understanding for his audience on such topics as distractions, children and meditation, the role of the mantra, practical tips on preparing for meditation, measuring one's spiritual progress, prayer and action, the vital role of the weekly group meeting, and the challenge of "letting go" on the path of Christian meditation

Corpus Christi parish in Hamilton was the site of Paul's second talk on Saturday morning, November 30. Two years ago Paul helped to start this Hamilton group, as well as another at Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Stoney Creek. Forty-five people (including members of both groups) turned out to enjoy an evening with Paul. Fr. Ed Mahony personally leads the Corpus Christi group, and also initiated the start-up of the group in Stoney Creek.

From the National Coordinator

Glad Tidings for the New Year

Happy news! Meditation with Children: We have experienced exciting beginnings and growth, particularly in the Hamilton School Diocese in Ontario, and the Prince George Diocese in B.C., where Christian meditation is being introduced into school programs. Teachers and students are open and enthusiastic: "What amazed me was as soon as the chime sounded on the CD, all of the children closed their eyes and sat still in perfect silence. Joining them in the meditation, I experienced an incredible surge of silent energy in the room, I had never experienced previously with any group of students in my 32 years in Catholic education - including some 14 years-plus in high school chaplaincy. This is truly a gift that we need to bring to our system and spread throughout the province." Paul Tratnvek. Faith Animator. Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board. (More on this subject on page C8.)

Anyone interested in more information about meditating with children should contact Marilyn Metcalfe, medit8rmm@aol.com. Also check out *Meditation with Children* on our Canadian Community website www. wccm-canada.ca. Under Links, look for "Meditation with Children" (www.theschoolofmeditation.org) and "Christian Meditation for Children and Young People" (www.cominghome.org.au/). The information is of interest to parents, grandparents and educators – meditators and non-meditators alike!

21 New Groups and Continuing Growth in Prison Ministry: We've grown over the past year with 21 new groups added to our list and website. New volunteers have taken on sharing meditation with prisoners. There is an interesting link on the World Community's international website, www.wccm.org: www.wccmprison.org, *The Monastery Without Walls, Behind Walls.* Take a look. It would be an opportunity to see the redesigned international website.

Renewal and Review: As an act of renewal in the coming months, we are asking leaders to consider presenting the six-week introductory course within their groups. The material is available online at www.theschoolofmedita-

tion.org/content/materials-introducing-meditation, or on our Canadian Community website, www.wccm-canada. ca, on the Links page – look for "Christian Meditation Groups". The weekly presentations might be shared among group members rather than the group leader doing the entire course. It does not have to be too formal nor perfect. Teaching is an incredibly effective way to deepen your own understanding and experience of our practice.

More good news! Fr. Laurence Freeman will be visiting us at the end of May. He will be leading a residential retreat in Ottawa, May 30-June 1, at St. Paul's University, making a visit to Toronto, and guiding a twilight retreat in Montreal. This will be an opportunity for many to experience the grace and spiritual renewal that Fr. Laurence embodies and shares so naturally.

Meditation in the Caribbean: Over the years, our outreach and support to meditators in the Caribbean has planted seeds that are now thriving. There have been new groups formed in primary and secondary schools, in parishes and in workplaces. Fr. Laurence will be visiting that region later in the year to encourage and reinforce this vibrant work. The Canadian Community would like to continue our support by offering bursaries to those who need assistance. There is an informative (and beautiful!) PowerPoint on Caribbean activity on our website, wccm-canada.ca, in Community News / Community Postings.

WCCM Florida meeting inspires leadership: In November, four of us represented the Canadian Community at the WCCM North American and Caribbean National Coordinator Regional Meeting, led by Fr. Laurence, in Jacksonville, Florida. The meeting discussed and considered ways to implement *The Way Forward* – the vision for the world community that has evolved collaboratively over the past two years. Each national community responded to the draft proposal. Nine aims and implementation strategies for the next 3-5 years were discussed. It was a powerful gathering that revealed the universality of our mission and the unity of our vision.

Continued on page C6

Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

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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

OUR CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION

Etty Hillesum

Meditator & Peace Activist (1914-1943)

In 1942, in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam, a young Jewish woman wrote: "God is not accountable to us, but we are to Him. I know what may lie in wait for us.... and yet I find life beautiful and meaningful."

Etty Hillesum was born in 1914, 100 years ago this January. In 1942, she was 28 years old. Her diaries chronicle her inner growth – from a preoccupation with worldly pleasures and sensuality, to an astonishing spiritual depth and wisdom. They have become an authentic spiritual classic.

They begin on March 8, 1941. Etty, a secular Jew, is going through a time of emotional turmoil, and feels a need for psychotherapy. She consults a Jungian-influenced therapist named Julius Spier, a Jewish refugee from Germany. Spier believes that human healing

and wellbeing requires a spiritual dimension in one's life, the courage to say, "I believe in God." Spier encouraged her reading of Dostoevsky and Rilke, and introduced her to the Bible and St. Augustine.

Etty falls in love with Spier, developing in the process a deeper religious sensibility. She begins an intense dialogue with the divine, a dialogue which calls her to meditation and prayerful silence. Spier tells her one day, "You know, meditation is beautiful". Etty writes, "Next time I'll ask him...'How does one meditate? Can I learn it too?'"

By June 8, 1941 she has begun:

SUNDAY MORNING, 9.30. I think that I'll do it anyway: I'll 'turn inward' for half an hour each morning before work, and listen to my inner voice. Lose myself. You could also call it meditation. I am still a bit wary of that word....

But it's not so simple, that sort of 'quiet hour'. It has to be learnt. A lot of unimportant inner litter and bits and pieces have to be swept out first. Even a small head can be piled high inside with irrelevant distractions. ... the clutter is ever present. So let this be the aim of the meditation: to turn one's innermost being into a vast empty plain, with none of that treacherous undergrowth to impede the view. So that something of God can enter you, and something of 'Love' too.

Spier dies suddenly in 1942, but Etty has already come to love the message more than the messenger. Eventually God becomes the most vital aspect of her life.

There are people who pray with their eyes turned to Heaven, they seek God outside themselves. And there are those who bow their heads and bury their faces in their hands. I think that they seek God inside.

Etty is one of the latter, seeking God inside: "All that is left is the will to yield myself up to God ... A desire to kneel down sometimes pulses through my body or rather my body seems made and meant for the act of kneeling."

Etty lived and died a Jew. Yet her insights into the teaching of Jesus are deep and incisive, and played a major role in her spiritual development.

Her inner development led her outward, into the world of activity and of giving

herself to others. Even in her own terrible place and time, she threw herself into concern for social justice, and service to the suffering and oppressed. Her commitment continued literally to her death. She had made a conscious decision "to share her people's fate".

In 1942 Etty voluntarily went to the German transit camp for Dutch Jews at Westerbork to serve those who had been detained. But on Sept. 8, 1943 she and her whole family were transported to Auschwitz. As she climbed into the dark car of the crowded cattle train, an eyewitness reported, "She walked lightly, bearing the burden of these her people, yet caught in an inner calm. She had not been deserted by her God."

Another survivor relates that she was "talking happily, a kind word for everyone she met ... full of sparkling humour. Then the shrill whistle when the train with a thousand victims moved out." She managed to throw a postcard out of the train, which a farmer found and mailed: "We left the camp singing."

Friends treasured her memory, and after the war tried to find a publisher for her lengthy diaries, which had been kept safe. According to Canadian theologian Gregory Baum, editor emeritus of the journal *The Ecumenist*, they "are rare documents of religious faith and reflect a deep level of mysticism." Some excerpts:

But I refresh myself from day to day at the original source, life itself, and I rest from time to time in prayer. And what those who say, 'you live too intensely,' do not know, is that one can withdraw

WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY OF LOVE

Brazilian Meditators Visit Canada

Sergio and Valdelice Almeida, from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, visited several of the major cities in Canada. One of their desires was to meditate with a group in each city they visited along the way.

In the Vancouver area, they contacted our Regional Coordinator and the request was passed on to us. The Star of the Sea Meditation group, South Surrey, and the Sacred Heart Meditation group in Delta, jointly hosted an evening of meditation at Holy Cross Church in South Surrey. We meditated together, and concluded the session with the Our Father in English, which Sergio followed with the Our Father in Portuguese.

During refreshments, we shared our thoughts on Christian meditation and we all shared the sense that praying in this way is a unifying force around the world. Together we share in the worldwide Community of Love.

Here is what Sergio shared with us:

"We had the opportunity to meet a group of Christian meditators in a country different from our own, and to verify that meditation is indeed universal – as we experienced in meditating together, despite the limitations of language. Communication by silent contemplation made understanding between us all a reality. The reflection made on St. Peter's Day (June 29) by Pope Francis reaffirms the need for faith, love and unity among Christians worldwide."



Standing left to right: Sergio Almeida, Elizabeth Christian, Lester Roberge, Louise Dudar, Rosie Stiller, Jim Dudar, Muriel Whitty, Jean Paul Desjarlais, Mary Lord. Kneeling left to right: Valdelice Almeida, Hans-Ulf Schellhase

The visit with our Brazilian friends was a gift to all of us and we are grateful the effort was made to make contact. We are richer for the experience.

Louise Dudar South Surrey/White Rock, BC Meditation Group





Dom Main's Anniversary a tradition continued

This year, as for the past twenty-three, the Montreal Meditation Community celebrated John Main's anniversary in Loyola Chapel.

Fr. Gerry Westphal, who learned to meditate at Fr. John's feet, celebrated the Eucharist. Polly Schofield gave the introductory homily and, as Oblate Coordinator for Canada, she accepted the promises in community of Dorothy Wood and Jake Lapierre as Postulants to our Benedictine Monastery without Walls.

We listened to a recorded talk by Fr. John, then meditated together and gave thanks. The evening continued into the night by the traditional lavish 'Agape' amongst family and friends.

National Coordinator - Glad Tidings continued from page C3

"I came away from the weekend with a renewed sense of mission, a desire to put more time and energy into the work I'm doing presently. Having made new friends and new connections, I felt a part of the Body of Christ in a new and revitalizing way, more committed to the Canadian community and wanting to continue to provide whatever support I can. I came away giving thanks for John Main and for Fr. Laurence. The practice of meditation deepens my own faith in, and desire to share, the Gospel." – Rev. Julie Meakin

"Attending the Regional Conference in Florida has made me aware of the bigger picture. That we are a world community is a fact, but actually meeting and interacting with meditators outside of Canada is an intangible insight into the universality of the practice." – Noli Mababangloob, GTA Area Coordinator

"The meeting was an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas and for keeping up to date with the developments and challenges that other national meditation communities are dealing with. It was important for us, as a Canadian community, to be able to share our experience with newer meditation communities." – Rev. Phil Barnett, Canadian School Coordinator

Meditatio: Three years ago, Fr. Laurence Freeman in a spirit of courage and faith launched Meditatio, an expression of the WCCM's outreach to the wider world including people of any faith or no faith tradition. Sharing the universal gift of meditation, from the tradition we have been taught, enables positive change at every level of life and work. "Never has there been a more pivotal moment for our community, our outreach work or the future of humanity....The world's needs are great. People from every walk of life are increasingly receptive to the gift of medita-

tion as a way to fulfill their personal human potential and be of service to others." – Laurence Freeman, OSB.

The Meditatio initiative focuses on education, business, health, interfaith dialogue, ecology, science and technology, peace and justice. Collectively, these highlight the institutional and professional areas of society which are often in crisis but have the potential for profound transformation. Through seminars, workshops, teacher training and the creation of educational resources, Meditatio is producing positive and tangible results. To learn more or view available resources, visit our Canadian Community website, www.wccm-canada.ca. Under Links, look for "Meditatio" (www.wccmmeditatio.org/).

Thanks to all for your continuing support of our meditation community.

Colleen Donald, National Coordinator, CCMC cmdonald@telus.net

The paradox is that the more deeply we enter into the mystery of Christ within, the more we meet him in all the external activities of our life. The dichotomy between contemplation and action is in fact only an intellectual concept, when we see that the Kingdom of God is both within us and among us – an 'ambiguity' found in the words of the Gospel to show us that, in Christ, we are all one.

This is an exciting and unpredicted time for all Christianity – a return to the basics of the gospel. These basics are exemplified in the person of Jesus – a man of action whose activity was defined by his prayer and flowed from his communion with God.

– Laurence Freeman, September 2013

Etty Hillesum continued from page C4

into prayer as into a convent cell and leave again with renewed strength and with peace regained.

- There is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there too. But more often stones and grit block the well, and God is buried beneath. Then He must be dug out again.
- And I know for certain that there will be a continuity between the life I have led and the life about to begin. Because my life is increasingly an inner one and the outer setting matters less and less.
- I keep following my own inner voice even in this madhouse, with a hundred people chattering. There is a vast silence in me that continues to grow.
- And isn't it true that one can pray anywhere, in a wooden barracks just as well as in a stone monas-

tery, or indeed, anywhere on this earth where God, in these troubled times, feels like casting his likeness.

 True peace will come only when every individual finds peace within themselves, when we have all vanquished and transformed our hatred for our fellow human beings into love one day. Although perhaps that is asking too much, it is, however, the only solution.

On November 30, 1943, Etty died in a swirl of Zyklon B gas at Auschwitz. She had shared her people's fate. The drop of water that had been Etty Hillesum fell into the ocean of love ... and returned to her God.

Paul Harris



Montreal

Fr Laurence Conference (avec traduction en français), Tuesday 3 June, 6 p.m. to 8:45 p.m., Loyola Chapel, Concordia University, 7141 Sherbrooke St. W. Cost: \$25 advance; \$30 at the door; Students free! Contact: Magda Jass – magda.jass@gmail.com – 514-489-0998

Ottawa

Fr Laurence Spring Retreat: The Big Choice – Distraction or Attention? Friday 30 May to Sunday 1 June, St Paul's University, 223 Main Street. Save the date! Details to follow. Contact: barbara_chouinard@hotmail.com

Toronto

Fr Laurence: Teaching Meditation to Children. Monday, 2 June. Fr Laurence will meet with teachers, children and parents, on meditation with children. Details to follow – More info online at wccm-canada.ca (Events). Contact: Marilyn Metcalfe – medit8rmm@gmail.com – 905-831-2945

Fr Laurence Twilight Retreat: *Health, Healing, Wholeness – and Holiness, Monday, 2 June:* 6 p.m. to 9:15 p.m., St Michael's College Chapel (beneath St Basil's Church), 50 St Joseph Street (just south of Bay & Bloor). Cost: \$25 at door, no advance registration. Contact: Clem Sauvé – 416-921-0367

Winnipeg

The School of Meditation: Essential Teaching Weekend, Friday 9 May, 7 p.m. to Sunday 11 May, 1 p.m., St. Charles Retreat Centre, 323 St. Charles St., Winnipeg. Resource Team: Meditators Phil Barnett, Betty Currie, Mia Klein-Gebbinck.

Why? To deepen your understanding of John Main's teachings

- Learn more about the history of meditation in the Christian tradition.
- Understand the stages of the spiritual journey.
- Know how to respond to common questions.
- Be more confident in talking about Christian meditation.

Sessions are interactive and informal, with meditation periods at their heart. Cost: \$180 – includes 2 nights' accommodation, 5 meals, snacks.

Save! Register by 31 March and pay only \$160! Registration closes 30 April. Registration form available online at the Canadian website (wccm-canada.ca), Events, or call or write Phil Barnett – 204-261-9713 (phil.barnett@mts.net) for registration, questions or requests.

Chicago, USA

2014 John Main Seminar: Thursday to Sunday, July 24–27, Elmhurst College, Elmhurst IL USA 60126. Presenter: Daniel A. Madigan SJ.

Fr Madigan is an Australian Jesuit, Director of Graduate Studies in Theology at Georgetown University, and Senior Fellow of the Al-Waleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. The Seminar will explore what Muslims and Christians have in common, and what distinguishes them from each other, reflecting the esteem expressed for Muslims and Islam at the Second Vatican Council.

Fr Laurence will lead a Silent Retreat from Monday to Thursday, July 21–24. Register or find more information on the international website – wccm.org – or contact Sharon Nicks – 520-829-3197 – sharon@mediomedia.org

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•••••	For some information on new publications,	please se	e page 12 in the internat	ional se	ction.	•••••
	Canadian Christian Meditation Co	l Newsletter	suggested annual contribution \$		<u>-</u>	
J	Province Postal Code	on three is the reg Fr. Lauren	In a series of talks given at a Montreal retreat in 1995, Fr. Laurence Freeman dwells on three aspects of love – love of self, love of others, love of God. Meditation is the regular discipline that gradually leads us to love ourselves, others and God. Fr. Laurence relates the practice of meditation to love, as the very meaning of our creation and our lives.			
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LISTEN! A SOWER WENT OUT TO SOW...

Meditation with Children Growing in Ontario Schools

Last February my wife and I attended a conference in Chicago led by Fr. Laurence Freeman and Fr. Richard Rohr entitled "New Thinking for A New Era". There we were introduced to the WCCM and the practice of daily meditation. Our communal experience of meditation at the conference moved us into daily practice. Experiencing a renewed centering of our lives led us to share the practice, along with the Lectio Divina, to colleagues in the Catholic education system in Ontario.

In my recent role as spiritual animator with the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, I was drawn to the possibility of introducing Christian meditation with children to staff and children, after having read about the experience of the Catholic School Board in Townsville Diocese, Australia. When the opportunity arose to attend a one-day workshop on teaching Christian neditation to children, last October, we were able to bring with us three principals and seven teachers, all eager to pilot this practice in their classrooms.

The workshop was led by Cathy Day and Ernie Christie, who had spearheaded the meditation initiative in their diocese. Their experience and stories of how children naturally embrace the practice of Christian meditation inspired us all. Thanks to the workshop and the excellent resources they made available, we have since begun the practice in three schools.

Our experience to date, with both children and staff, has been very encouraging. The principals have introduced the practice to their entire staff. The teachers have been very receptive, and the practice has expanded into other classrooms, beyond our pilot classes, in just two short months.

Children in other classes are asking when they can do meditation too. One teacher told me that three children

in her class with ADHD have become much more focused during the practice. Another remarked that she wanted to begin meditating herself, so that she would know what the children were experiencing. We have begun to experience some of the fruits of Christian meditation in a very brief time.

Of course, there is so much more to do, and we have been corresponding with Ernie Christie in Australia to set up a mentoring system. Over the next two years, our intent is to have our principals share their experience and understanding with their colleagues, and spread the practice throughout the school board. I have had requests from Religion and Family Life consultants and superintendents from other boards, and one of our local bishops has expressed a sincere interest in coming to participate with the children and to learn more about it.

In a digital era filled with distractions, insatiable consumerism, economics that exploit the environment and erode human relationships and values, the teaching of Christian meditation can provide our children with the experience of a coherent world view, rooted in a Christian anthropology, focused on a loving God in our midst.

Christian meditation is a gift we can provide our students as they fulfill the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations: to become discerning believers and effective communicators; reflective, creative and holistic thinkers; self-directed, responsible life-long learners; collaborative contributors, loving family members, and responsible citizens.

Thank you to Marilyn Metcalfe and the WCCM, for the workshop and for introducing us to Christian meditation with children.

Paul Tratnyek

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