

# Meditatio

Newsletter of The  
World Community  
for Christian Meditation



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## In Pursuit of Health and Wholeness

How meditation enlarges the meaning of health and opens the way for contemplative medicine in the future. Pages 6 and 7



This issue

**2** Laurence Freeman

Teaching Business School students at Georgetown University

**8** Interview

Daniel Madigan SJ speaks about the John Main Seminar in Chicago

**10** News

Remembering Bishop Michael Putney, pioneer of teaching meditation in schools


 Jeppia Friends

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

When, at the beginning of this year, we started the course on Meditation and Leadership at the Georgetown McDonough School of Business I must admit I had my doubts. What was the real motivation of these second year MBA students? It is an intense and competitive programme and they were on the brink of re-entering their careers to discover whether their financial and time gamble would pay dividends. The course had filled quickly and there was even a waiting list. But, I wondered, did a course on meditation just sound attractively fluffy?

After opening the first class with meditation, as we would continue to do, I told the students I expected them to meditate twice a day for twenty minutes morning and evening for the next six weeks. They stared back at me non-committedly. I explained that, within the overall theme of leadership, I would give them a proper understanding of meditation: not as if it had been invented at Harvard in 1960 but in its historical, religious and social context as one of the great universal treasures of human wisdom with great potential in our time for rescuing us from our huge mistakes and offering humanity a way to a new unity and simplicity. But, I said, this is a course that, like meditation itself, could suit people of any belief or no belief.

We would then examine the modern research on meditation – which is not as rigorously scientific as some claim but nevertheless widely accepted to show its physical and psychological benefits. Then I would ask them to notice the effect of their new practice on their inner and outer lives. Finally, we would consider the ethical and social impact on their work and profession of being a meditating leader.

My first aim, I explained, was to help them develop a personal daily

practice. Their final grade would not be based on their 'meditation success' but on their papers, class participation and on how their journals and daily meditation log-counter showed they were making a serious effort to learn. As anyone who has ever taught meditation knows, the essential knowledge being communicated already exists within the students. All teaching is, like 'education' itself, about leading that potential knowledge out into the open. With meditation especially, it is about becoming more aware through one's personal experience. Teaching meditation in an educational institution, we were to discover, also throws

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light on the educational theory and practice of the school itself. The teacher learns more about what he is teaching as the students reflect back from their own experience. The message delivered is thus, hopefully, both reinforced and verified.

The students were young and ambitious. They were seeking greater success by developing their leadership potential (the latest theory we worked on identifies six types of leader). Taking time out to study, however, can also be an unexpected opportunity for re-evaluating life. For some it made them wonder what it is all for. And, with meditation in the equation, in the conventions of the career race allowed by an unforgiving business ethos, it could be the last opportunity to decide for oneself what one really wants

to do and what race to run in. The self-knowledge of meditation could be dangerous.

Leadership in business today is associated with stress, loss of personal balance, and often the disruption of family and friendships. The destruction of part of our humanity is often seen as the price of success – a strange kind of success where one gains the whole world (one hopes) but at the cost of one's true self. Dr Faustus sold his soul for knowledge and worldly power and then paid for it with his eternal life. Business success today is often a Faustian bargain, an ultimately bad deal. At the top of the corporate or political hierarchy huge financial rewards or status come at the price of a damaged humanity and the loss of ordinary happiness. Professional success often equates with personal ruin.

We make our own worlds. And yet, it could all be very different: this was the root message of the meditation and leadership course. A full and meaningful life need not be reduced to a 'successful career' that becomes exposed too late as a poisoned well from which the rewards are merely further stress, isolation and the corruption of personal values. Instead, it can mean an exploration of the mystery of one's own self as a being in relationship, working in an interdependent universe. In this world personal achievements take on a wider and deeper meaning because they are enhanced and magnified by the spirit of service. Personal values can be respected and resonate with timeless values.

The spirit of service is a like a magnifying lens that increases the magnitude of personal success, way beyond the smallness of the ego, into an enrichment of the lives and well being of others. The difference – and meditation makes the difference – is con-

sciousness. We live and work in conscious fields in which we each play our part in a spirit of service. This attractive sounding ideal is often mouthed but it is tested in reality by the size of the gap in the distribution of rewards. Relationship is subtle but it cannot be faked.

Motivation makes the difference. Usually this is taken to mean merely self-motivation as a boost to success. "Repeat to yourself daily 'I am a champion'" is the advice of one motivation website. But motivation means more. It is not boosting a weak and insecure ego but deepening personal commitment by understanding why one is doing what one is doing. The self-knowledge and clarity – let's call it humility – of the leader makes the difference. The originating quality of consciousness determines the quality of the work and above all the influence of the rippling field of relationships that extend from the boardroom to the marketplace.

I challenged the students to meditate 'seriously' – as was John Main when he learned from his teacher. Serious means twice daily. They learned meditation not only as a tool for self-improvement or relaxation but as a personal, transformative discipline that would change the way they lived. Tools eventually wear out, lose their edge and are discarded. Disciplines are sustainable. The students quickly saw that they were being challenged and engaged with it with increasing commitment. Their daily meditation-log counted their percentage of daily meditation. There were a handful of hundred per centers, some under forty percent, but the average was a notable seventy percent. One accountant in the class questioned the integrity of the self-reporting. But (maybe in my willingness to be deceived) my personal meetings with the students made

me trust them.

Meeting this challenge, as best they could, redefined failure for them. Clearly they all wanted to meditate and they appreciated the challenge, the supports offered and the friendship of their fellow class members. What is 'failure' in this field of experience? If you fall below forty percent but understand why – because, for example, you

ing in a new subtle awareness, failure became less depressing and another way of learning. Some of the students were preparing to get married. Perhaps this helped them see meditation as a not dissimilar life-challenge, another kind of discipline. Just as love and relationship challenge us to be faithful and cannot be reduced to the success-failure model, so meditation comes to



*Jane Mooney, 2nd year MBA Student at the McDonough School of Business*

have long been addicted to distraction without knowing it and wake up with your smart phone in your hand because it is the last thing you check as you fall asleep – is this a waste of effort? Or if you notice that you are offering members of your project teams a ride home at night, something you never thought of doing before, is this kindness a measurable commodity? Elementary school teachers report that meditation in class makes the children nicer to each other. It seems to work at the MBA level too.

At first the feeling of failure hurt them. But as they felt themselves grow-

be seen as a demanding discipline, but one whose reward is liberation from the compulsion to see everything in terms of competing and succeeding. Some of these shared what they were learning with their future life-partners and they began to meditate together.

Some fell in love with meditation at first sight. They launched into it with a sense of discovery and enthusiasm that all new meditators understand. One recovered his religious tradition in which he had learned to meditate long ago. Others struggled with the humility of failure but learned through class work to see failure in a new light



as a step out of the compulsiveness of the ego into wisdom and freedom. All remarked that the new awareness that flowed from their discipline – whatever their performance score – could be felt in their capacity for attention on studies and personal relationships ('I found myself actually listening to a totally talkative old aunt at a family reunion last weekend'). They discovered and openly shared how the first and essential fruit of their new discipline was simply awareness itself.

One student saw the difference first by becoming aware of the interesting and beautiful things he walked past every morning on his way to school. "For more than a year I was so pre-occupied with my problems and plans I never noticed where I was". The discipline involved in learning this new awareness was sometimes compared with changing to a healthier diet or doing regular exercise. It takes time, they said, to build a good habit but it's the best way to push bad habits away.

Without this consciousness that we are illuminated beings, we grope for meaning in the dark light of the ego. As awareness grows, the light in which one is striving becomes brighter. It is always perceived to be a beneficial and benevolent light. Awareness itself is good. To become aware of one's addictions, such as the addiction to distraction is success indeed and the beginning of freedom. Growth in this awareness is a strong experience but hard to describe. Yet it can be recognized in others and, of course, it changes the way we see others. Thus, as we all felt through the six weeks, meditation creates community without expending unnecessary energy and expense on communication tools, meetings, executive retreats in luxury spas and, of course, more meetings

I wonder if there might one day be organized resistance to meditation if it became more an accepted part

of corporate life. If it worked it would initiate a downsizing of activities – the superfluous meetings, emails, regulations and protocols that nobody takes seriously. The compulsion to publish competitively in academia reflects this same trend in institutions to undermine their own purpose. As in the Soviet Union where waste and redundancy of information had to be defended publicly though no one believed in it, modern business bears a huge, unnecessary burden of surplus activity that the new awareness generated by meditation would expose and question. This is not to talk of mystical rapture but simply enlightened common sense. Meditating with others is especially an efficient and productive way of becoming friendly and of build-

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ing that most important element of all relationships, professional and personal: trust.

In learning about the history of meditation the students acquired the foundational understanding necessary for establishing an informed personal practice. We looked at other methods of meditation but the mantra and the twice-daily practice were recommended and, with one or two exceptions, accepted by the students. The reason for this recommendation was simply to focus. We cannot learn attention by being distracted. Better to dig in one well than scrape at a lot of different holes. Nevertheless, it was understood that there is more than one way to this goal of awareness and to an enlightened form of leadership exercised free of egotism.

Some people seek, with a variety of techniques, to enhance mindfulness in daily life and they find the practices make a big difference. It can be rewarding but also difficult to sustain on one's own. Our approach was to patiently learn the simple discipline of meditation in a supportive environment that is always there for the person learning at each of the different stages involved. Mindfulness is then discovered as a natural by-product of the discipline of meditation. As it opens up awareness beyond the immediate goals of the ego, the meditation reveals a horizon of altruism and other-centredness. In moving towards this horizon one discovers the power, not only of self-management but also of self-transcendence. Happiness, as the most ancient human wisdom testifies, is found in becoming concerned for others.

I drew a distinction between pre-meditation techniques of mental calming and physical relaxation and the discipline of meditation that becomes a transformative part of one's life. If the accelerating sense of the need for such awareness is to be sustained in modern life – and it is not to become another media-fed fashion - we need to understand and incorporate this distinction. "I am so happy to have found a discipline" one young woman said to me. Maybe 'discipline' is not such a frightening word any more.

More frightening to many people is the taint of religion.

For those who meditate as a spiritual path and understand it as a very pure way of prayer, it is not hard to see the physical and psychological benefits of meditation in terms of the spiritual fruits. Stress reduction is seen as the beginning of discovering the peace that passes understanding. Clarity in problem solving is seen as the gift of discernment arising from purity of heart. Improved relationships and

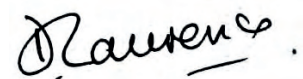
care for oneself are linked to a greater capacity for giving and receiving love. Improved attention to people and work is the fruit of patience. Reduced dependence on alcohol or 'relaxing'

would prefer to return to a theocratic society and the secular age represents many advantages. Yet secularism is often misrepresented as the exclusion or segregation of religion. Healthy secu-

than an unemployed monk who has nothing better to do than nothing. One of these mentors described the benefits he found in meditation and added that it had a spiritual dimension for him too. As a Catholic, he had first learned to meditate in the East and had then been pleased to discover it existed in his own tradition. A student asked him how he saw meditation in a religious sense. Jose Maria's reply was "as an Argentinean, football is an important part of my religion. On the football field the players wear their particular team or country's jersey. But they are all playing the same game. Similarly we may meditate wearing a religious or non-religious jersey but we can all meditate together. This does not undervalue the importance of the jersey but it recognizes the unifying power of the game.

The immense problems of modern life call for wisdom, spiritual discipline, a new simplicity. To recognize this in our institutions of finance, business, education and health – not to say religion, too – we need enlightened leaders. They will champion the new way of seeing and doing that is so urgently needed. But it takes courage to change the ways things are seen and done. Sunk costs, like old sins, are the most resistant.

The students left the course with encouraging signs of wanting to continue learning what they had begun. I had tried to impress upon them it didn't depend on the class or the teacher but on himself or herself because – as meditators have known for a long time – 'experience is the teacher'.



Laurence Freeman OSB



George Megre, 2nd year MBA Student at the McDonough School of Business

stimulants comes because we unearth the spring of joy within ourselves. Moderation in things we use to excess happens because we develop self-discipline and, with it, the most important knowledge of all, self-knowledge. This is the foundation of the highest knowledge, the knowledge of God through participation in the divine life.

Self-knowledge is the basis of filtering and evaluating all other kinds of information and acquired expertise. Without self-knowledge anything we learn or acquire risks being corrupted. It can turn us into one of the foolish experts who make life more stressed and complex than necessary and who have plagued the world since the beginning of institutions.

Religion is seen today as a personal choice and has been privatized in modern culture. No sane person

larism is in fact about choice and freedom in religion as in other things such as lifestyle, sexuality and aesthetics. In the course, meditation was not misrepresented as having no religious and spiritual context. It was also shown in a scientific light and people were free to relate the practice to whatever belief system they had. (Everyone has some belief and value system.) Meditation is compatible with any belief system that respects universal values – such as tolerance, acceptance of others and concern for the greater good.

In fact, therefore, meditation promotes integration and supports diversity in the workplace as in society at large. In several classes I invited a successful businessperson who meditates to speak to the students about why they meditate. I reckoned they would take these role models more seriously

## "Healing is when you integrate all things within your body, your mind and the essence of who you are."

*An interview with Dr Barry White, National Coordinator, Ireland*



### **How can meditation help patients and doctors?**

Barry White: We have a problem in healthcare. We face challenges in delivering it to patients. Because healthcare is not deemed to be safe enough. It is not deemed to be compassionate enough. It is deemed to be too expensive. This impacts the key measures of health care: quality, patient experience and costs.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a stage of complete physical, psychological and social well-being and not just absence of any infirmity. The problem with this is that in our experience of life – and ancient wisdom tells us – is not achievable. So, even when things are going well we suffer from boredom.

We will always experience some level of imperfection in our social, psychological and physical well-being. If we believe that we can achieve this stage, which is the WHO stage, this reflects society's understanding of what health is. But this is an illusion, because it can't be achieved.

### **What are the consequences of this illusion?**

The problem is that this cycle of hope is followed by disappointments that lead to a very challenging space for both patients and doctors. From the patient side it can lead them to behavioural problems where they don't look after themselves, spiritually, psychologically or physically. They think that when things don't work, they are unhealthy, and then they go to the doctor. If the doctor can't deliver the solution they become disappointed.

Within the healthcare, most of the diseases are caused by behaviour: diet, people not eating properly, not exercising, being overweight, smoking and drinking alcohol and stress. This drives most of the chronic diseases which are consuming the budgets of all healthcare systems. On top of that are the psychosomatic illnesses. People are seeking something, they develop the symptoms and they go to hospital for further tests, which consumes resources.

The point is: we have two definitions of health. We have a definition from the WHO (potentially an illusion). The other definition may well be that we accept the condition we are in which is one of suffering, illness, death and we fix the things that can be fixed: physical, psychological or social factors. But ultimately we accept those things we can't fix. We reach a point of healing. Healing is when you integrate all things within your body, your mind and the essence of who you are.

### **What do you mean by 'contemplative medicine' and the relationship between 'self-healing' and medicine?**

Contemplative medicine is a paradigm,

a hope. To get out of this cycle where we are. Instead of saying "meditation and the contemplative wisdom are the only way" or "contemporary health care is the only way" what if we fused both together? We would have a mindful patient and doctor, who are at peace, who can see clearly, who are not obsessed by fear or greed and who feel a sense of wonder with others and with the environment that they are working on. That person would be very effective in using and leveraging contemporary medicine. It would improve the quality of care and compassion of care but it would also potentially be more cost-effective.

This is the best definition I have ever heard of health:

"Believe in miracle/And cures and healing wells. Call the miracle self healing: The utter self-revealing, Double take of feeling." (From Cure at Troy by Seamus Heane)

"Utter self-revealing" is from your inner self, is totally honest. The "double-take of feeling" means you are not changing the nature of the illness, you are changing how you deal with it. People with cancer for example, even if it is terminal, can be healed because they are "double-taking the feeling", they are re-accessing how they feel. They are getting to a point where the cancer is still there but they feel differently about it. Because they integrate it into the essence of whom they are. If we can accept that and integrate that into who we are, then we are healed.

That does not mean if I get sick I will neglect to take medicine. It certainly allows me in use the great benefits of contemporary medicine. We should be very grateful for that progress. But in the process of contemporary medicine we have lost something: the contemplative wisdom of the past.



## "This is not about survival, but in giving meaning to the grace of my life"

*Roberto Corrêa, psychologist and Christian Meditation group leader, Porto Alegre, Brazil*



I started to meditate in 2010. At the beginning of 2013 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. My reaction was that of somebody who was expecting that "visit", but maybe at a later time. I went for radical surgery, removing my prostate. After that the Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test pointed out that I still had cancer. I did radiotherapy and now a special diet.

I am carrying on, with the same spirit, as if I was without any illness. When I think

about my meditation, I realize that spirituality is the axis that sustains me and gives me strength for this journey. This is not about "knowing", but about a relationship with a spiritual dimension that, for me, is Christ. This is because of my tradition and belief. What would it be like if I could not count on Him? He is really personal, many times a clear manifestation, giving consolation, and clarifying things. In other times, that manifestation happens through physical persons, like my wife Vivian and family. I only can see this because of meditation.

I have developed a gradual surrender of my life. This is not like abandonment or giving up. It is a kind of investment not in the power of ego (that I can easily notice in myself). I have talked to my patients (I am a psychologist) that the ego is not "the lord" but a servant. Lord, only Christ.

Faith is the dimension that keeps me meditating. It keeps my hope, my confidence, in a fight that is not about survival. It is about a reassurance of the meaning of the grace of life that I have received, through my parents, from the Lord of life. As a professional I notice myself being more sensitive with those who seek help without pushing them with techniques (ego), but trying to be present, be "sign of God".

I am still confident in a victory, with a lot of effort, and this is not about freedom from cancer. I think I was chosen to help others to know more about health. Meditation and health - I heard Fr. Laurence linking both terms with the prefix MED: meaning care, attention. I am grateful for all that have been presence of God in my journey. I hope I may keep walking this road.

## A simple pathway to healing

*Peter Smith, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney, and member of WCCM Australia*

Over the last century, the "medical model" of healthcare, whereby illness is regarded as having an identifiable cause which can be treated and cured, has served us well. It has also led to the growth of a complex, expensive, technology-based healthcare system with a very strong focus on cure. However, many of the health problems of today, such as those related to mental health and ageing, are not amenable to a curative approach. The frustration engendered by this and the increasing complexity of the health system results in a stressed health workforce and a perplexed population.

This high level of stress in the workforce also leads to system problems. These include impaired safety and quality of care, perceptions of lack of concern for patients and colleagues, poor commu-

nication and workplace harassment and bullying. This situation poses the questions - Can we offer a pathway to healing whether the individual can be "cured" or not? Can we relieve individual stress and improve the functionality of our healthcare system?

Integration of meditation into the health system offers such a pathway to healing in the broadest sense of the word to individuals, healthcare professionals and the system. Meditation can improve health and wellbeing. For example, it can improve the status of those with mood disorders such as anxiety and depression as well as having physiological effects such as lowering blood pressure. It also leads to an enhancement of self knowledge and acceptance, essential steps in any pathway to genuine healing, both

for those suffering and those attempting to help them. This enhanced results in a greater awareness of our environment, that is, enhanced situational awareness. It also leads to a greater awareness of and connectivity to other people. This opens the door to development of a deepening of compassion.

Health system failures today are usually not the result of technical incompetence but relate to lack of situational awareness (such as wrong side surgery), poor communication or poor interpersonal relationships with colleagues or patients. The adoption of the practice of meditation within healthcare leading to improved wellbeing and enhanced situational awareness and compassion, will lead to improved functionality at individual and systems levels.

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*"A whole man, who rejoices in life, in the gift of his own life, is the man who can enjoy himself as a unity" (John Main)*

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## Interview

### *Fr. Daniel Madigan, speaker of the John Main Seminar 2014*



***What would you like to see happen through the JMS you are leading and what is your main theme?***

About ten years ago I did a series of public seminars in different cities in Australia along with a Muslim professor. After about a month of traveling together on and off, hearing each other speak to various audiences and respond to their questions, we were having a farewell lunch. It dawned on me then at table that what made me feel a real bond of brotherhood with Abdullah was that (when we were at our best) we were both listening attentively for what God had to say. As I began to teach more and more Muslim students in Rome, I found a very similar experience. We often think of ourselves as people who have heard the Word, but God's Word is never exhausted, so we have always to be listeners for the Word. In meditative silence, in prayer and in recitation, we try to resonate with God's speech, so that it may shape and transform us.

I chose "Muslims and Christians: Listeners for the Word" as title of the seminar because it includes the commonality and the difference. Yes, we are both straining to hear and resonate with the Word of God and yet we are also deeply

divided about where and how God has spoken the Word in a defining way, in a way that is so clear and so true that we measure against it all other claims to have heard God speaking. Too often this plays out as a fruitless game of "Our book's better than your book. Our prophet's better than your prophet." Yet for Christians, God's Word to us is not primarily a matter of prophets and books, but is rather a Word-made-flesh, a Word spoken in body-language.

I would like to share with the participants the understanding of our Christian faith that I have come to through the experience of friendship with Muslims and study of the Islamic tradition. The Muslim critique of Christian faith challenges us profoundly, yet when taken seriously can generate new insight into what is particular about the Good News--what is Good and New about the Good News. Now that Muslims are our neighbors, fellow-citizens, co-workers, and family members, we all need to be able to understand our faith in relationship to theirs in a way that is not defensive or aggressive, that appreciates those "rays of truth" and "seeds of the Word" that Vatican II said we see in other people of faith.

***Can meditation help Muslims and Christians to listen to each other and to the Word together better?***

I don't know whether that's the case or not. I would hope that whatever helps Christians to resonate with the Word that is Christ will make us more compassionate, and it will attune us to the resonances of the same Word -- God's self-revealing Word -- in other people. We will become attuned to how others are resonating with that same Word we have seen in Jesus: whether in their standing courageously against injustice, in their patient forgiving, in their overflowing generosity, in their humble

service, or in their trusting obedience to God. Those are the characteristics of the Word-made-flesh, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). If other people are living that way, we can know that they are "hearing" in their very bones the Word we experience in Jesus.

***What attracted you personally to the Muslim tradition?***

I did not get into these studies because of any attraction: I was somewhat unexpectedly asked to undertake them by my Superior-General. I had been assigned to China and at the last minute the request came from Rome that I undertake Islamic studies. My engagement with Muslims and Islam over the last 30 years has broadened my world enormously. We are, after all, speaking about having some sense of familiarity and solidarity with about one fifth of the human race. I have the repeated experience of feeling at home with Muslims, at a time when much of the world views them as irreducibly different, to be feared and suspected. This has meant feeling at home with immigrants and asylum seekers, with students and academic colleagues in various parts of the world, and not least with taxi-drivers in almost any city you care to mention! Particularly given our current world situation, to count Muslims among your close friends and to have studied the Islamic tradition with care and attention is to live in a much more expansive world than that to which many in the West now feel themselves fearfully confined. I count that a great blessing.

**John Main Seminar 2014**

**July 24-27 - Elmhurst College**

**Elmhurst, IL, a suburb of Chicago**

**Muslims and Christians: Listeners for the Word**

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## News

### Retreat in Manresa



During three days early this year, January 2-5, the Cave of Saint Ignatius was the site of a retreat on contemplative prayer, guided by Javier Melloni, SJ and Laurence Freeman, OSB.

More than 60 people attended the retreat.

The topic was "the Cave of the Heart" in the contemplative tradition, from the Cave of Subiaco for Saint Benedict, through the Cave of Manresa for Saint Ignatius, to the cave of the heart for Henri Le Saux and Ramana Maharshi.

The days were scheduled with four times of quiet meditation and , two walking meditations, as well as two daily talks, by Laurence Freeman and Javier Melloni. Marco Schorlemmer, coordinator of the WCCM in Catalunya and Spain, also gave a daily talk on contemplative prayer and the WCCM.

Javier Melloni: "it was a time of encounter in silence and also through the words of Laurence Freeman, direct successor of John Main. We have lived and shared during these three days both the Benedictine contemplative tradition (following the lineage of John Cassian and John Main) and the Ignatian one (following the lineage of Franz Jalics). It has certainly been a time of grace, in which we have been reciprocally enriched." ( from <http://covamanresa.blogspot.com.es/>)

### TV Programme on Christian Meditation in Trinidad



The Community in Trinidad y Tobago, led by Sister Ruth Montrichard, started a program at Trinit TV in January called "Christian Meditation - The Prayer of the Heart."

Sr. Ruth said, "I think the whole idea was an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Trinity TV used to broadcast limited hours, but then decided to broadcast 24 hours. We asked ourselves: Why not Christian Meditation?"

According to Sr. Ruth, the response has been good with several people calling in to get more information and to join groups. The first episodes of the program are available on our YouTube Channel, at [wccm.org](http://wccm.org).

### Talks in Florida



Fr Laurence spoke at Camillus House, Miami, a centre for vulnerable people in February. The photo is from the event called "Street Wise: Meditation Where You Are".

### New National Coordinator for Argentina



The Community in Argentina has a new National Coordinator: Enrique Pavan (the first in the photo, from right to left, standing) took over from Magdalena Puebla (the first from left to right, sitting). WCCM is very grateful for Magdalena's dedication. She has been a dedicated and committed leader using her gifts to introduce many to Christian Meditation. Magdalena also translated ten books into Spanish and worked as a translator of Fr. Laurence's talks in Argentina.

### Live webcasts from Meditatio Centre



The Meditatio Centre, in London, prepared a series of talks by Laurence Freeman that will be webcast live over the next several months. The overall series is titled "The Eight Big Problems of Life" and the first talk, Gluttony and Greed and their Remedy was given on March 5th (photo). Please register for the next talks by visiting the Meditatio website at [www.wccmmeditatio.org](http://www.wccmmeditatio.org).

## Bishop Michael Putney (1946-2014)



Bishop Michael Putney of Townsville, Australia, Patron and friend of WCCM and pioneer of the teaching of Christian meditation in schools, died peacefully on the morning of 28th March.

Fr Laurence writes: "Please keep

Bishop Michael Putney in your heart as he now leaves this realm of existence and expands beyond it into the boundlessness of God. Michael has been a good friend and advisor to our community and me for many years. He influenced thousands of young lives around the world by introducing meditation into the schools of his diocese and gave a model that inspired schools in many places far from Townsville.

He was the best example of a man

who saw and loved the potential of the church and gave his life to help realize it. Seeing him in his diocese made me understand how a person can be married to a place and a community and how this union of faith and love gives a glimpse of how Christ is married to the earth and to humanity and how he simply is his own body. When I went to visit Michael in his last illness I expected a sad time. In fact I experienced the joy of his vocation – celebrating a school's centenary way out in the desert, going to a football match with him and concelebrating Sunday mass with him in his cathedral. He was full of life. Now he is fully alive because in this third week of Lent Easter has come early for him".

## Retreat at Camaldoli, Italy



The Italian National Retreat was held at the Monastery of Camaldoli, March 14-16. Laurence Freeman OSB spoke on the theme "The Word is Alive and Active".

Jennifer Greenleaves, from WCCM Italy shared:

"It was a very relaxed and effective retreat, with more than 90 participants. Laurence spoke marvellously

on how meditation fitted into the history of the Church and gave us a particularly effective picture of Martha (and Mary) to show how stress undermines our activities. There were many people new to meditation and they seemed to absorb his words gratefully".

## School Retreat at Orval Abbey, Belgium

The international School Retreat was held at Orval Abbey, Belgium, March 7-14, led by Laurence Freeman OSB, with 43 meditators from 10 European countries. The School Retreat is a week long intensive suitable for people who have been meditating for some time. It is a time of silence and stillness with a daily flow of meditation, a short teaching and regular meetings with one of the retreat leaders. The central theme was about spir-

itual knowledge.

Jose Pype, National Coordinator for Belgium and North European Coordinator, said:

*"The silent meditation was really the central part of the retreat. On the last evening there was a possibility to share in small groups. What I heard as most significance was that people were amazed, also group leaders who led already longtime a group, how transforming such a retreat is. The silence was complete and people did have the opportunity to visit every day an assistant for a short interview. The interview helped the retreatants to clarify and discern through sharing what the Spirit is saying.*

*We have had exceptional weather during this early spring days. Blue sky and sun, symbols of pure attention. What you experience during such a retreat is inexplicable with words, you must do it."*



## In Focus

*Betty Carmody, Australia (Betty is an oblate, leads two meditation groups and has decided to leave a legacy to support the work of WCCM – but while she's still with us.)*



I began to meditate in the Christian tradition about 9 years ago. My first experience was in a small home group with a few others whose presence inspired me. The experience remains in my consciousness and colours everything I do. I soon felt a real change of focus, a turning inward and learning to know myself in God. This led to a desire to share meditation with others who were seeking a deepening of their prayer life. So, I started a group in my home and another in a local Uniting Church, where I now am a member. Leading these groups also helped me to stay faithful to the discipline. It wasn't always easy but the spiritual rewards were discernible.

As my experience with the wider community increased, it expanded my horizon and I could see glimpses of what was happening through WCCM all over the world. I joined the ACMC Sydney committee and was involved in leading courses to introduce meditation. I was experiencing the reality of being part of a 'Community of Love'; as described by Father John Main.

Each morning, when I open my computer, I find 'Daily Wisdom' - a gem to

start my day. WCCM weekly teachings and readings encourage and enrich me, as do Advent and Lenten lessons during those two special times of our year. As an Oblate, I read the Rule of St Benedict each day and I am amazed that the wisdom and guidance given over fifteen hundred years ago is as relevant today in helping me to live well.

The impact of a bequest usually comes after the person making this has passed on. Why am I choosing to make my bequest now?

As I read the newsletters, I decided that I wanted to share in the extended outreach of the community, in its life-changing work in so many fields, in its vision for humanity. I am inspired by the work being done by Father Laurence visiting poor areas in so many parts of our world, to places of continual violence, his leading seminars, retreats, visiting prisons, schools and hospitals. I am inspired too, by the community's website as it offers resources to extend meditation to the world. And I realise this all comes at a cost!

At my advanced age, I find myself slowing down and am limited physically. It is comforting to know that my practice of meditation is the help I can give to the world, no matter what limitations I may experience in my body. I can also give financially.

It was an easy matter for me to bequeath to WCCM when making my will some years ago. Then, about 4 years ago, I followed an inner prompting to revisit the way I had left my will. I want-

ed to begin now! The idea grew in me. It was a step of faith. Doubts were dispelled as it proved to be manageable. I had already decided on the amount I wanted to give, so I then began giving smaller regular donations, and the balance will be bequeathed after I die.

It gives me sheer joy to be able to say 'thank you' in this tangible way, and to have the satisfaction of knowing that I can have a practical part to play in the furtherance of the WCCM's work. My hope is that in sharing my experience, many others will consider not only remembering WCCM in their will, but experience the blessings that comes from beginning now!

Many worthy causes have my attention and need support. For practical purposes I need to prioritise.

I believe the WCCM's mission is all encompassing. It is addressing the grassroots of all that needs to change. The daily practice of meditation as contemplative prayer transforms us; has a ripple effect in our relationships, our homes, communities and in our world. For me and many others, it opens the scriptures showing a deeper meaning to the life and teachings of Jesus.

**If you would like to know more about the various ways to leave a lasting legacy and help further the mission of WCCM in your country or throughout the world, please contact Rachel Sharpe at the WCCM's international office – [rachel.sharpe@wccm.org](mailto:rachel.sharpe@wccm.org) or +44 (0) 7834 626426.**



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**Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is June 5th**



## New Resources

### Videos

#### *Meditation with Children: Meditatio Seminar in the US*

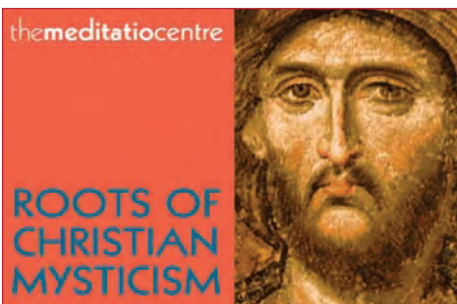


Dr Cathy Day and Ernie Christie, Directors of Education in Townsville, Australia gave a series of seminars in several cities in the United States and Canada in 2013. They have introduced the daily practice of Christian Meditation in each of the 30 schools they are responsible for. This collection contains 6 videos.

More information: [www.meditatiostore.com](http://www.meditatiostore.com)

Price: US \$30,00

#### *Roots of Christian Mysticism - Session 6 Return to the Heart*



This video is a look at the Victorines

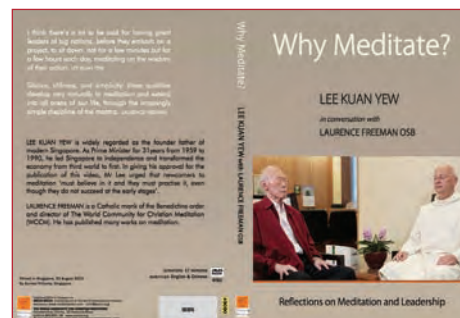
– Hugo and Richard of St Victor – and their context as the last flowering of pre-scholastic spirituality. Br Patrick Moore is a De La Salle Brother and a Scholar in Residence at Sarum College. He is a tutor on the MA course in Christian Spirituality.

More information: [www.meditatiostore.com](http://www.meditatiostore.com)

Price: US \$5,00

### DVDs

#### *Why Meditate? Lee Kuan Yew in Conversation with Laurence Freeman OSB*



Lee Kuan Yew is widely regarded as the founder father of modern Singapore. As Prime Minister for 31 years from 1959 to 1990, he led Singapore to independence and transformed the economy from the third world to the first. In giving his approval for the publication of this video, Mr Lee urged that newcomers to meditation 'must believe in it and they must practise it, even though they do not suc-

ceed at the early stages'

Price: US\$14.95

More information: [www.mediomedia.com](http://www.mediomedia.com)

### CDs

#### *Aspects of Love*



Talks by Laurence Freeman, given in Montreal on the three aspects of love: love of self, love of others, love of God. A re-issue of one of his most popular CD retreat sets.

Price: US\$19.95

More information: [www.mediomedia.com](http://www.mediomedia.com)

### The WCCM Mailing List

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## FATHER LAURENCE 2014 TOUR

# A Modern Monk Returns to Canada to Share the Teaching

With Laurence Freeman's speaking tour of Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal coming up fast – May 31 to June 3 – it is an excellent time to recognize the foundational role that Canada has played in Fr Laurence's life, and in his work of teaching Christian meditation around the world.

Laurence first came to Canada at the invitation of the Archbishop of Montreal, in 1977, when he accompanied John Main from Ealing Abbey in England. Fr John came to establish new Benedictine priory of monks and laypeople, dedicated to the practice and teaching of Christian meditation.

In Montreal, Laurence studied theology at the Université de Montréal and at McGill University. In 1979 he made his solemn vows as a Benedictine monk. And on June 8, 1980, he was ordained to the priesthood, at 29 years of age. Just two and a half years later, on John Main's death on December 30, 1982, Laurence succeeded John Main as Prior of the community. He struck out on Fr John's pioneering path, which was barely visible at the time, and began traveling to other countries to share the teaching.

Laurence's accomplishments over the years have been prodigious:



Fr Laurence Freeman in Brazil 2012. Photo by Magda Jass.

- the 1991 founding of the World Community for Christian Meditation;
- the establishment of an International WCCM Centre in London, England (where he now resides);
- a number of dialogue and peace initiatives with the Dalai Lama;
- founder and director of the John Main Centre for meditation and inter-religious dialogue at Georgetown University in Washington, DC;

- and in recent years, the start up of Meditatio, an outreach of the practice of meditation to the secular community.

Perhaps his most fruitful endeavor has been his worldwide travels to teach Christian meditation, and to plant the seeds of weekly meditation groups in 114 countries.

Yet Laurence Freeman's links to Canada have remained strong. He retains his citizenship here, and on May 25 2012, he received one of this country's highest honours – investiture as an Officer of the Order of Canada – for his work in sharing the teaching of Christian meditation in Canada and around the world. The Order of Canada recog-

*Continued on page C2*

### IN THIS ISSUE

Letter from the Editor.....	C2
From the National Coordinator.....	C3
Fr. Laurence Letter on the Friends Appeal.....	C4
Father Laurence 2014 Tour .....	C5-C7
B.C. Community of Love.....	C8-C9

Junior Meditators (photos) .....	C9
WCCM Global Connection (photos) .....	C10-C13
Meditation and the Healing Fire: Michael Hryniuk.....	C14
Calendar of Events and Media Order Form .....	C15
Finding Inner Space in Cyberspace .....	C16

# Letter from the Editor

## Open Out, Open In

This issue of your newsletter comes with a clear unifying theme – though it wasn't planned that way. Yet every article, and every topic, highlights the indelible connection between our inward and our outward spiritual growth.

Each one does this in its own way. Consider the article on our Canadian Friends Appeal by Fr Laurence. Using one of his favourite images, that of our spiritual roots, branches and fruits, Fr Laurence makes it clear that this gift of contemplation has been given to each of us freely – and must therefore be given freely away.

This is not a rule we have to follow or we'll get in trouble. This is a reality that reveals itself to us in the silence of our hearts. It doesn't make us say "Uh-oh"; it makes us say "Ah-ha!" It's what stimulates us to start new groups, to volunteer for community activities (such as sending our articles and photos to the newsletter!), or to make a financial donation to the Friends Appeal.

The inner and the outer cannot be disconnected. It is the deepening of our inner growth that makes us extend ourselves outward. And our extending outwards opens us all the more deeply within.

This theme runs just as visibly through our other major topic – the upcoming visit of Fr Laurence to central Canada, May 31 to June 3. We have short pieces by the organizers of his visit in the three cities he'll be visiting. Each author is a meditator, like every newsletter reader. And each one has discovered joy and satisfaction in contributing their time and talent to the work of the WCCM-Canada.

And the brief history of Fr Laurence's long-standing connection to Canada (by his longtime friend Paul Harris) shows us how important the inward-outward connection has been to his own spiritual development over the decades.

The article on "Meditation and the Healing Fire" shows how our inner work of contemplation brings us out into the saving light of God's love, and changes the whole way we relate to a newly revealed world. The piece about online meditation groups shows how the technology of the internet is being used to share the gift of contemplation across the country and around the world.

The great value of our Christian meditation community is that it gives us, freely, the teaching of contemplation, as well as a means for each of us to give that gift away – in our local groups, in community activities at the city, regional or national level, and (through our support for the Friends Appeal) in the international work of Fr Laurence and the WCCM, to carry this gift to every corner of the world.

Many of the photos that illustrate this issue were taken (often by Fr Laurence), during his travels to more than 30 countries in the past two years – teaching meditation to young and old. If you subscribe to the e-version of the newsletter you'll see them in rich full colour!

Just as with trees, you can tell how deep the roots go beneath the ground, by seeing how far the branches reach into the sky.

Love & Peace,  
Jeff Ewener  
newsnotes@bellnet.ca

### A Modern Monk Returns *continued from page C1*

nizes its recipients' lifetime of outstanding achievements, their dedication to the Canadian community and service to the nation.

The Order of Canada citation says of Fr Laurence: "He works at all levels of society, engaging world leaders as well as the poor, and his organization has expanded to more than 100 countries. A committed advocate of non-violence, he co-founded the Way of Peace gatherings, which bring together Buddhists and Christians, as well as those who

have been on the violent ends of religious divides. In addition he is a respected speaker, author and theologian."

Your fellow Canadians salute you, Laurence, for your remarkable spiritual energy and love, in sharing the contemplative message and teaching of Christian meditation around the world.

Paul Harris  
Ottawa

**Other articles about Father Laurence's upcoming tour begin on page C5.**



# From the National Coordinator

## Tending the Roots of Love

This issue of the Newsletter features an appeal for the Friends of the WCCM. What a happy opportunity to participate in the practical growth of Christian meditation throughout the world. Fr. Laurence asks us to take an active role – financially, if we can – in sustaining and building our World Community.

Elaine Mills is our new Canadian Friends Coordinator.

In Canada, we've been supported by the sharing of resources developed by the International Community. This has included a collaborative vision for the future direction of the community, teaching resources through the School, tools for outreach through Meditatio publications, an informative international website, and personal reflections from Fr. Laurence throughout the seasons of Lent and Advent. These are signs of a creative and vibrant community.

Our meditation journey connects us with one another in a real and meaningful way. At the mystical level, our prayer joins that of the young student in Myanmar. His prayer helps sustain us.

Our mission is not to build houses, dig wells or buy goats – yet it is equally real and necessary. It is to help open our individual and global awareness to the discovery “... that God is the root from which we are sprung ... and it is the roots of love that hold the ground of our being together,” in John Main’s words.

And Julian of Norwich tells us that eventually this love will require “... not less than everything.”

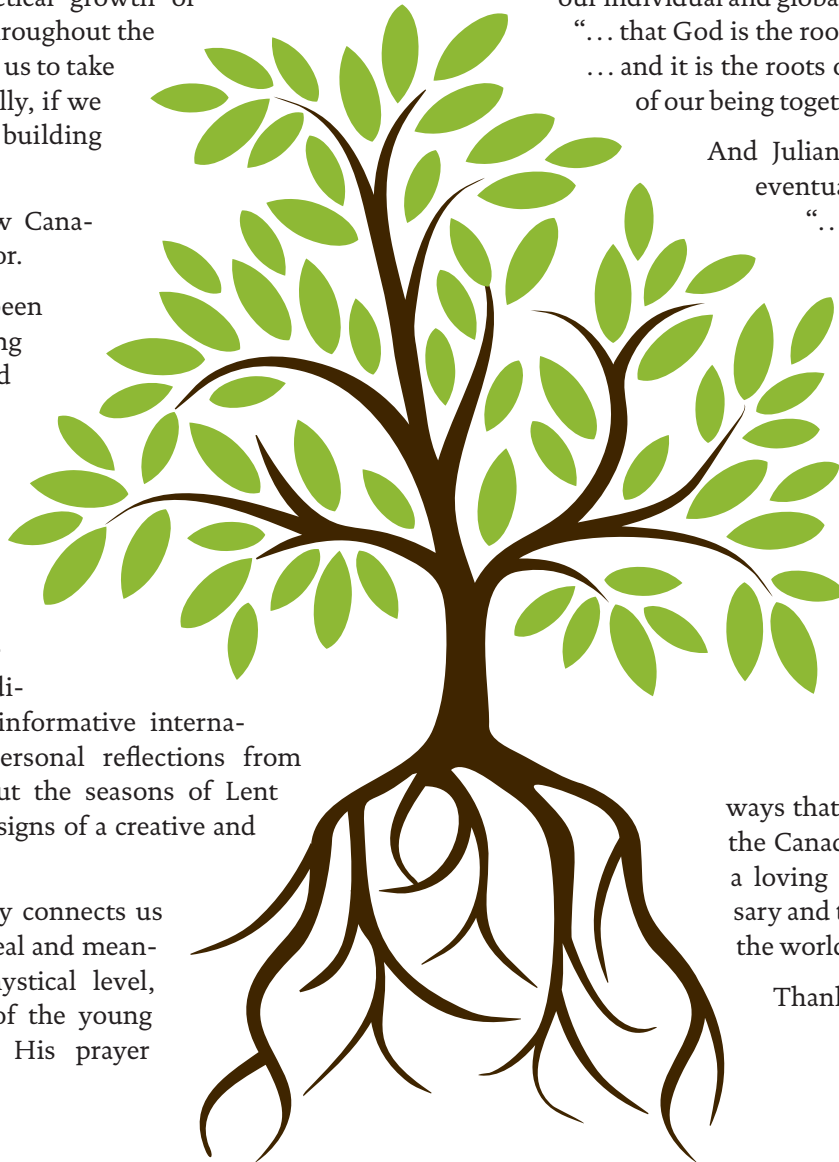
For many of us that includes money, but as it was for the “rich young man,” it’s a gradual process.

When we give from our heart, our generosity grows. Helping others is an act of love. Every act of love requires letting go. The lighter we travel the more joyful the journey.

Please consider the various ways that you, too, can play a part in the Canadian Community, and make a loving contribution to this necessary and transformative work around the world.

Thank you.

**On behalf of the  
National Council,  
Colleen Donald  
National Coordinator  
cmdonald@telus.net**



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*échos du silence*, a newsletter for French-speaking meditators, is available.  
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or email <info@meditationchretienne.ca>.

Page design: www.khatvanga.com

# Fr. Laurence Speaks to Canadians about the 2014 Friends Appeal

## The Precious Gift of Meditation

I have enjoyed the opportunity to share the gift of meditation with many different kinds of people, recently: business students at Georgetown University (where we have the John Main Centre), and doctors and nurses in Ireland. Last year, I introduced Christian meditation to young clergy in Myanmar.

We all know that meditation has touched and changed our personal lives. With these and other groups I meet, I see more and more clearly how meditation can also transform the way we live and work together.

As meditators, we know that social transformation begins with our own transformation. Our daily meditation, the weekly group, the days we spend together on retreat – all connect us to the human family, that is the Body of Christ.

Since I first began to help Fr John with this work 40 years ago in Montreal, I have seen our small groups branch out and spread beyond Canada, to become a truly global community – while Canada continues to be a leading and inspirational force to WCCM.

We freely received the gift of meditation and we freely share it – it is one of those few precious things on which no monetary value can be placed. Yet many of us say that meditation is the most precious gift anyone has ever shared with them.

And so we pass it on, keeping the essential teaching ever simple, in order that it can connect with young and old, rich and poor, sick and healthy – and with so many today who simply don't know where they belong.

As I see it, we are like a tree that needs to be nurtured in order to continue to grow.

In our roots, we ensure that the community is built upon strong foundations, in this and future generations, especially through our weekly groups, weekend retreats, School events and publications. Our branches raise a wider awareness of the contemplative dimension of Christianity, and provide support to the young members of our community, in the visits I and other teachers make to regions which have limited resources. And the fruits of meditation we pass on to the wider world – by developing our outreach, especially in the realms of education, medicine and business.

### Freely Received, Freely Given

If we are to continue this contemplative mission today, to pass on the gift of meditation around the world, especially to the poorest and neediest, the WCCM needs support – including financial support. It has always moved and inspired me to see how generously people provide this support – with their talents, and their time, and their financial donations.

If your means allow, I would like to ask you to consider supporting us with a financial contribution.

Some of course will not have the means to do this, and we understand. But every donation that you and others are able to contribute to this appeal will be directly invested in sustaining our community's work – and **matched cent for cent by a US family foundation** that wishes to help us increase the number of lives throughout the world that are touched by meditation. Therefore, **your donation will be doubled.**

Thanks to a generous designer and printer, we've recently created a photo book called *Light of the World* to share the vision and mission of the WCCM with donors, volunteers and anyone who wants to find out more about our community.

If you'd like to receive an electronic copy of *Light of the World*, Elaine Mills, the Friends Coordinator in Canada would be pleased to send this to you. Many people have said how helpful this book is when introducing others to Christian meditation – so you may also wish to forward it on.

I am grateful to you all, for thinking about how you can continue to support us in this mission, and for any help you can share. Your generous gifts of prayer, time and financial support are vital to ensuring that our collective contribution to a renewed Christian life – and thus to a more peaceful and just world – can be more fully realised.

**With my thanks.**

**Much love,**

**Laurence Freeman OSB**

### Note from Elaine:

If Fr. Laurence's words touch you, please become a Friend of the WCCM.

We would be very grateful if you would consider offering the WCCM an individual gift of \$120 or a donation from your group of \$300 – which works out to just \$10 per month for individuals, or \$25 per month for a group – or any other amount you can manage.

The ways you can make your donation are detailed in the enclosed leaflet. You can also donate online, through [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca).

To receive an electronic version of *Light of the World*, please email [friends.wccm@gmail.com](mailto:friends.wccm@gmail.com) and I'll be happy to send this to you.

**Warm wishes,**

**Elaine Mills,**

**Friends Coordinator in Canada**

# FATHER LAURENCE



Fr Laurence Freeman OSB is the Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation

## “Why do all these people come to see and hear Fr Laurence?”

That was the question put to me by someone at one of Fr Laurence’s previous visits to Montreal. I thought it was a pretty good question. Rather than just share my own reflections, which I will include also, I asked some other meditators. They offered many different answers – some gave very short responses, then came back later and added more reasons. Others went off on a long tangential explanation.

Here are some of their answers – boiled down and distilled, but I hope still capturing the essence of each one:

Because his teaching is so simple, and easy to understand.

Because I am on a spiritual quest and I have watched him, too, develop over the years.

Because it helps me to grow.

Because he is so interesting and knowledgeable.

Because he is a friend.

Because he teaches me to go deeper.

Because he is a model for me.

Because he does so much for the world.

Because I think he is amazing.

Because he embodies the teaching.

Because he is transparent.

Because he deepens me.

Because of his insights.

Because he confirms what I experience, and helps me to recognize new ones.

What is your response? Ask yourself.

**Magda Jass  
Montreal**



# 2014 TOUR



Fr Laurence is made an Officer of the Order of Canada by Governor-General David Lloyd Johnston, 25 May 2012

## When Fr. Laurence sends you a surprise offer to lead a silent retreat, what do you do? **SAY YES!**

I did not pause for a moment but immediately replied *Yes!* Then I emailed the Ottawa Area Organizing Committee with the news, and they all were enthusiastic about the retreat. With confirmation from Fr. Laurence's assistant Pauline Peters that it was a "go", the committee thought, "Great! ... Now where do we start?"

I think when each of us on the Ottawa Area Organizing Committee meditated that evening we tried to say the mantra with fidelity – but we also had the monkeys swinging through our minds with excitement. There was a lot of work to be done. The question was, how to put on a major event like a retreat, from start to completion, in only five months?

With Christmas coming, the Organizing Committee received an early gift – Reverend Kevin Flynn offered St Paul University, to host the event. We had a venue! Magically, there was "room at the inn" at St Paul's residence for the crucial weekend. Now we had accommodations. Things fell into place so quickly – and while the details had to be worked out in January, the major items were already settled.

The Organizing Committee had to produce the retreat poster, registration form and info sheet in a very short time, to get word out to the meditation community. Committee members met with the St Paul Facilities Manager and residence staff in early January to finalize the major details. Contracts were signed.

The Organizing Committee was very fortunate to be able to consult with the registrar for the 2011 Canadian biennial Christian Meditation National Conference. We got valuable advice on many matters, including budget ideas, logistics and more.

The Organizing Committee members stepped up and accomplished an amazing number of tasks in just one month. The retreat poster went out by the end of January. It was not until after the posters were finalized that I realized that the silent retreat will fall on the same weekend that my first grandbaby is due to be born! (Thank goodness first babies are always late.)

Fr. Laurence's offer of a retreat has quickly become a reality. In addition to the Organizing Committee members, additional volunteers have come forward for specific tasks – thank you to each of you for your help.

Of course, there are still many preparations to be completed. But I can speak for the volunteers and retreatants that we are thrilled to have the opportunity of an Ottawa retreat with Fr. Laurence. We are all looking forward to the retreat weekend, to deepen our faith and resolve on the path of meditation.

**Barbara Chouinard**  
Coordinator – Ottawa Area  
Christian Meditation Organizing Committee

# Event Organization 101

In the past 30 years I have played a leading role in organizing more than a hundred WCCM events involving Fr. Laurence. These have ranged from one-off talks to workshops, retreats, John Main seminars, Way of Peace events, pilgrimages, and more. A majority were held in Canada and the USA, but many were held in various other countries, from India to Ireland and Italy.

In the early years of the Community the various local and regional Christian meditation centres and groups in Canada, including Toronto, were directly guided from the Benedictine Priory in Montreal, the then-centre of the Community. The job of the local community was basically to find a venue for the meetings, and to set and collect registration fees if that was called for. The proceeds from the collection basket at monthly meetings were simply turned over to the Priory, and that was it.

With the abrupt closing of the Priory in the spring of 1991, the centre of the Community moved back to London, England. At first, we in Toronto felt like orphans, suddenly on our own. But we quickly marshaled our organizational talents and efforts to keep the monthly teaching meetings going – and in the summer of 1993 we took on the challenge of organizing one of the first John Main seminars, which became the paradigm for all subsequent seminars.

The organization of a twilight retreat – like the one coming up in Toronto on June 2 – is comparatively easy. The collective talent to undertake it exists in every local community of meditators – if we are willing to move into the unknown, in much the same way we do every time we meditate.

Here are the steps. Once the date is set and the speaker is confirmed, a suitable venue has to be selected, a budget prepared and the fee(s) set. Usually for a twilight retreat it is not necessary to set up an advance registration process. The next step is to prepare a brochure or flyer, and a communications strategy. This phase of the process need not involve more than 3 or 4 people.

As the event draws near the event manager has to ensure that the following roles and responsibilities are properly staffed:

- Greeting, registration and payment of fees ..... 2 persons
- Books and A/V resources table and sales..... 2-3 persons
- Refreshments ..... 3-4+ persons
- A/V equipment operator ..... 1 person
- Decorations ..... 1-2 persons
- Fr. Laurence’s transportation from/to airport and to/from event venue
- Fr. Laurence’s accommodation

The experience of meditation naturally encourages and builds within us a sense of community – family and friends, other meditators, and indeed all of humanity. Organizing an event helps nurture and sustain that same sense of community in others, as well as in ourselves. It is an extension of our practice, outward as well as inward.

**Clement Sauvé**  
Toronto



## I AM NOTHING.

The I is swallowed up in the nothingness and can no longer speak or think about itself or its favourite subjects. This sounds like pure negativity, outside of the experience of prayer. In the pure prayer of meditation – the thinner, unpolluted atmosphere of the high mountains where rock meets air – the edge of nothing is felt as the beginning of the full promise of being.

The nothingness is understood, deeper than words, as the thing that gives fullness to our emptiest days.

**LAURENCE FREEMAN**





# BRITISH COLUMBIA





# COMMUNITY OF LOVE



October: BC Christian meditators (from North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Vancouver proper, Tsawwassen, Agassiz, Chilliwack and White Rock) gathered to reflect on what draws them and others together, across their million-square-kilometer province.

Answer: Contemplation moves us into action in a Community of Love, of service, and of greater spiritual growth.

Jim Dudar facilitated the event. Kathy Coyne, Colleen Donald, Hans-Ulf Schellhase, Nada Traison, Louise Dudar presented aspects of the program



## JUNIOR MEDITATORS



Elementary students repeat their mantra in their classrooms in south-central Ontario's Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk Separate School Board. The Board has meditation in every classroom in three different schools. Seven teachers are in regular contact, via Skype, with mentors in Townsville, Australia. (Thanks to Paul and Ernie for keeping in touch.)

# WCCM Global Connection



National Meditation Retreat, Poland



Fr Laurence with the first Christian meditation group in Moscow





Meditation at St. Mary's Girls' School, St. Vincent, West Indies



Meditation at St. Martin's Boys' School, St. Vincent, West Indies



# WCCM Global Connection



Primary school students, Australia



Australian Aboriginal girl meditates





Fr Laurence speaks to schoolgirls, Trinidad

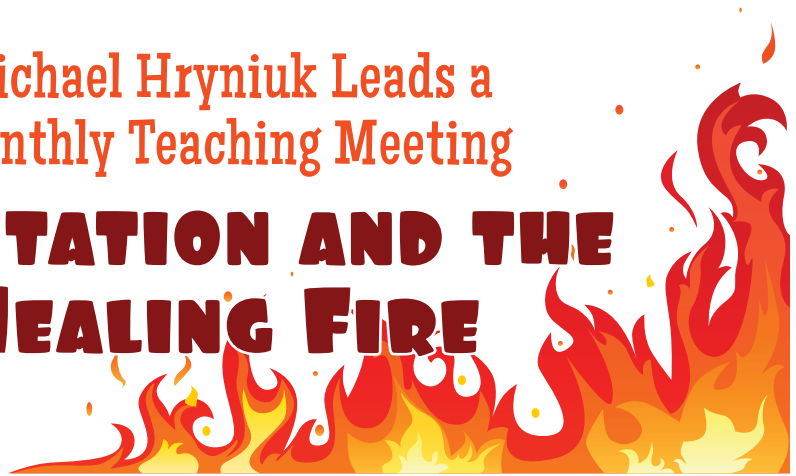
Fr Laurence in Brazil





## Michael Hryniuk Leads a Monthly Teaching Meeting

# MEDITATION AND THE HEALING FIRE



At Toronto's monthly teaching meeting for February, Michael Hryniuk explained how meditation can help us rediscover and recover our true identity – as the beloved of the Father – and find healing in the authenticity of that experience.

The Trinity is the context and starting point for our meditation. We have been invited to participate in the life of Three Persons who live in a communion of love. The Christian is not to worship Jesus or follow Jesus in isolation from the other members of the Trinity. Rather, we are invited to become “little Christs” like Him, in union with the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God saves us by drawing us into this communion.

For Henri Nouwen, the experience of being a “beloved son” of the Father was a life-changing event. Something similar happened to Michael. A retreat experience, focusing on the baptism of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, brought Michael to an overwhelming sense of God's love.

In Matthew 3:13-17 we read, “and when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased’.”

This gospel passage can help us understand that meditation is, at its heart, our awakening to our core identity as God's beloved.

Meditation is not a technique or a project, but a response to our baptismal call to enter into relationship with God. Meditation is a resting in God's love, in which we enter more and more deeply into this relationship of love. Our Christian life is focused on learning how to receive and how to give Love. In the Gospel of John, Jesus thanks the Father for his disciples and for all those who believe in Him through them, “so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (17:23).”

Meditation is the ascesis, the spiritual discipline, of readiness to be open to the life of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual tradition of meditation teaches us how to enter into this

desert tradition of silence, solitude and unceasing prayer in a community context.

The ascetical life is one of disciplined, conscious, intentional openness to the Spirit so that God can work in us and through us. We move away from the petty concerns of the ego as the light from Jesus opens up in our being and the Spirit becomes active in us. What dies is everything that obscures the image of God within us, as we are healed and transformed by the core image of becoming the beloved.

Citing Richard Rohr's book *Immortal Diamond: The Search for the True Self*, Michael encouraged us to be excited about salvation. For Rohr salvation is being grabbed and held by a divine wholeness that allows us to be ourselves even at our worst.

The root of the word ‘salvation’ is ‘salve’ – the anointing and healing of a wound in ourselves. Salvation heals and restores the soul to its True Self, which cannot be selfish and cannot be separate. In this process of salvation, God is infinitely generous to us, and Rohr calls on us to struggle to accept the love of a God who so exceeds our understanding – both allowing us our human freedom, and sharing the divine life and grace.

Michael also described how meditation heals the divisions within us – between mind and heart, and between mind and body. The “shadow” part of us blocks our openness to the power of Love, when we fear our own vulnerability. We must have the courage to accept ourselves as we are rather than as we would like to be.

Contemplation can help to detach us from our left-brain dominance and be more open to a God-centered or other-centered world, where we are not struggling all the time to assert our ego.

This good news is something to get very excited about. God's loving generosity exceeds most people's ability to believe, and we need to allow ourselves to be grabbed and held by divine wholeness. Salvation is all about playing with fire!

**Joseph Clarkson**  
Toronto, ON





# Calendar of Events

For regular updates go to [www.wccm-canada.ca](http://www.wccm-canada.ca) under Events

## 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. Contact: barbara\_chouinard@hotmail.com. Details and registration form available at [www.wccm-canada.ca](http://www.wccm-canada.ca)

## Toronto

**Fr Laurence: *Teaching Meditation to Children.*** Monday, 2 June. Fr Laurence will meet with teachers, children and parents, on meditation with children. More info online at [wccm-canada.ca](http://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.

- 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.

Registration closes 30 April. Registration form available online at the Canadian website ([wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca)), Events, or call or write Phil Barnett – 204-261-9713 ([phil.barnett@mts.net](mailto: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](http://wccm.org) – or contact Sharon Nicks – 520-829-3197 – [sharon@mediomedia.org](mailto:sharon@mediomedia.org)

For some information on new publications, please see **page 12** in the international section.

## Canadian Christian Meditation Community – Newsletter – Publications

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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.

Quantity	Title	Unit Price	Total
_____	Aspects of Love (see p. 12)	3 CDs \$22.00	_____
_____	Why Meditate (see p. 12)	DVD \$16.50	_____
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## Online Virtual Meditation Group Invites Members Finding Inner Space in Cyberspace

Every Monday morning at 8:00 a.m., Pacific Time, a group of Christian meditators sits down to share a deepening silence with one another.

Nothing unusual about that. Except that this group also sits down at 9:00 a.m. Mountain Time, 10:00 a.m. Central Time, 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time, 12:00 noon Atlantic Time, and, of course, 12:30 in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Welcome to what may be Canada's first online meditation group. And that welcome is not just a figure of speech. If you've got a computer or tablet and an internet connection, you can probably join this group too, and meditate with them every week – without leaving your own home or office!

“We hold our meditations in the virtual chapel set up by the US community – graciously offered to us by Roger Sessions, from Houston, who hosts groups himself at other times,” explains Vancouver's Kathy Coyne, the group's convener. “It's a great opportunity to meditate with others from our Canadian community!”

This being the computer world, there are some technical requirements:

1. Your computer or tablet needs a camera, and a microphone and speakers or earphones. These are built-in on most systems today, but if you're using very old hardware, you may need to attach external devices.
2. You need to download and install two free software applications – Google+ and Hangouts.

You also need a fairly up-to-date browser. If you can meet the technical requirements, you can email Kathy for a PDF document that will guide you step-by-step through the set-up process. Her address is [kcoyne@shaw.ca](mailto:kcoyne@shaw.ca). Once you're up and running, she can even meet you in the online chapel to test your system.

Then you can join Kathy's group, or start a new one, perhaps at a more convenient time. Bring together far-flung friends for a weekly period of silent contemplative prayer. Reach around the world, as you reach deeper within.

It's Fr John's “monastery without walls” – with a new technological twist!

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