



## There's Still Time...

Laurence Freeman reflects on the violence in the world and describes a contemplative response to this most ancient human problem. (p.2-5)



*Child at a silent walk to support freedom and peace and against barbarism, one week after the Paris attacks (photo Gyrostat/CC-BY-SA 4.0.)*

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## Dear Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

On a Friday evening in a school hall in Asuncion, Paraguay I was giving a talk on meditation and the problem of violence. After meditating we had a good discussion about this topic that naturally touches the mind and conscience of anyone whose contemplative dimension has begun to awaken. The question continues: does our work of silence run merely parallel to the world of competition, division and conflict? If there is, however, also an overlap between them – or even more, a union – can meditation help us to heal divisions, confront the causes of violence and find sustainable peace? These are not abstract questions for our time. They may mean our survival if they give us hope for breaking the cycle of violence in which we have been trapped since time immemorial.

What we did not realize as we discussed them in Asuncion after we had meditated was that, at that very moment, the barbaric attacks that shocked and saddened the world were taking place on the streets of Paris.

A few days later, I was meeting with teachers, parents and children at the Colegio Niño Jesús in Buenos Aires. Their teacher, Gastón Dieguiz had introduced me to the children last year. I learned how the older ones were now introducing meditation to the little ones. I listened to the older children, then came the special surprise: the doors of the chapel opened to a flood of excited toddlers. Many ran straight to the older children who had taught them to meditate. It was moving to see the trust and affection between them. A four year old ran into the lap of the thirteen year old beside me and nestled there as we meditated. In this mixed group of three year-olds, teens and grey-haired elders we sang, prayed aloud and meditated in silence sharing

the peace of the heart that Jesus said the world cannot give.

As sadness, fear and anger rise in the world the question in Asuncion – does meditation make a difference or are we avoiding the problem? – becomes ever



*Meditation with students in Buenos Aires, Argentina*

more relevant. And the children in Buenos Aires become more meaningful. To whoever believes in the contemplative way to life it is a realistic question. Even if our response to terrorism must be a defensive violence, this question keeps us aware that we are reacting as our attackers hoped. As we are repeating old patterns we should know what we are doing and not forget ultimate truth.

On the day after the attacks one Parisienne was asked what she felt should be the response and she replied 'love, only love', and I felt both 'true and yet inadequate'. Indeed we should affirm ultimate truth at such times, the truth that comes from the wisest teachers of humanity. But its exchange rate will be very low in the painful aftermath of such a massacre. Another Parisian said 'I will not give them the satisfaction of hating them', reminding me of Ety Hillesum's attitude to the Nazis rounding up Jews for deportation. Who else,

if not the contemplatives, can remind us of this wisdom as the military machines swing into action? If their voice is ignored or drowned out, the dangers of not raising it is greater.

The contemplative response to vio-

lence should affirm the goodness and potential of humanity. Immersion in the gospel community should make this inevitable. But it doesn't mean that we don't engage with events as they unfold in real time. Contemplatives don't employ abstractions and platitudes. Their response should be backed up with rational and persuasive arguments. Without them, the wisdom that will ultimately save us may fall as flat and false as truisms. No one torn by grief will be helped by platitudes – and often not by words at all. Contemplatives intuit when to speak and how to be silent.

Contemplatives don't sell anything and won't commodify their message. Meditation doesn't solve problems. It transforms how we see and approach them – including the most ancient and intractable problem of humanity, the inhumanity of violence.

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One of my MBA students this year was an ex-marine; although I am told there are no ex-marines, once a marine, always one. Tim, let us call him, had served in Afghanistan and Iraq but challenged the stereotype of marines and made one think twice about the military as merely the instruments of violence. Perhaps the edge of violence is better located in the political process and its tragic failures of imagination. Tim was a peaceful soldier who had learned how to lead men under extreme circumstances. He was intelligent, detached and disciplined. This helped him do what I asked, of all the students, to meditate twice a day for the six weeks of the course. He came to recognise a new experience unfolding in his life. His framework of understanding the experience was personal and, as he said, 'I haven't got a religious bone in my body.' Religion isn't the only way to experience God, of course; whether the experience of God makes you religious is another question. Even without religious concepts he was able to reflect on the fruits of his meditation but this led him to explore some new ideas. The topic of his first paper was neither of the options I offered but on the 'dark night' – I don't know how he had stumbled on this. But it led him to spiritual insights that were based on his 'anonymous' experience. For example, he compared mindfulness techniques with meditation and concluded that mindfulness would not lead to the dark night (purifying the mind of memories and attachments) but if you were meditating you would not be able to avoid it.

His second paper was also original because he asked if it could be on meditation and leadership in war. He was not thinking about meditation, as

Pentagon trainers might, merely as a way of making soldiers more 'efficient' and resilient. The purpose of meditation is not merely to have greater clarity and precision but to become more fully human. Understanding this even in the light of his brief experience of meditation, he wrote about the relationship between an officer and his men in time of war when life and death issues occupied the forefront of their minds. He felt that meditation would open a dimension of wisdom, compassion and meaning within this fraternal yet hierarchical relationship. An officer in war, he said, should be like a father to his troops even when he is the younger. Preparing for an operation, they know that maybe not all will return. Their relationship, as few oth-

*(...) a contemplative response to violence must be more than the aspiration of ending violence. It must be realistic and focus on reducing violence*

ers in professional life, is shot through with the ultimate questions of life.

Tim explained his choice of topic by saying that humanity has always been at war and that it will always be at war but we need to control how war is waged. I was struck by the coolness, the realism and detachment of his conviction. But it seemed to reject the hope of those contemplatives who are convinced that one day humanity might make a real peace, eradicating the action-reaction of violence, learning how to turn the other cheek and to love one's enemies in a way that heals

all hearts. Isn't this ideal the only hope of ending the cycle of violence that has held humans in its grip since the time of Cain – at least since Homo Sapiens exterminated their Neanderthal relatives as they did other rival humanoids? Tim's cool acceptance that war will always be with us convinced me that a contemplative response to violence must be more than the aspiration of ending violence. It must be realistic and focus on *reducing* violence long before we can hope to eliminate it forever.

Even if we will 'always be at war', this doesn't mean we won't need martyrs of non-violence. Those who see the *truth* of the goodness of human nature so clearly that they will witness and sacrifice themselves for it form the only ultimate argument against the Paris terrorists. The great gospel-based teachers of humanity – Jesus, St Francis, Gandhi, King, Mandela – are failures but lights in a darkness that would otherwise engulf the world. Even when their wisdom is rejected, without it we would lose whatever progress in consciousness we have made through a long and winding evolution. Their vision prevents us from becoming blindly violent. They embody a faith not only in the essential goodness of human nature but in its destiny and ultimate potential.

In the Christian vision the fully human means not less than *theosis*, our divinization. 'God became human', as the church Fathers often repeated, 'in order that human beings might become God'. Hard to believe, no doubt, when we see the innocent massacred on the streets of Paris in the name of God on a Friday evening. Other responses are harder to countenance: to despair of humanity, to become cynical, to mirror the violence levelled against us, to feel consoled by the euphoria of our

violent response, to prove Cicero's saying that 'laws are silent in times of war laws'. All of these options support the cycle of violence to which humanity is nailed.

The contemplative response is not just idealistic but truthful. It is not based on beautiful prayers or eloquent appeals for divine intervention. Nor does it ignore the realities of politics. It is articulated with a reasonableness at least as cool as Tim's but also reveals the deepest intelligence of love. During his mock trial a guard struck Jesus for his response to the question of the High Priest. Jesus coolly asked him: 'if I have said something wrong, point it out to me. If not why do you strike me?' It did not save his life. But it will be remembered forever as the way we can choose our response to violence without the loss of our human dignity.

And so, even while the terrorists must be held to account and all reasonable measures taken to control them, we also need to expose and make conscious the structures of violence and the way they entrap us. The contemplative stance must discover new ways to reduce violence that will use consciousness itself.

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We must start with human consciousness at its purest and most receptive. We work with the minds of the young, not brainwashing them but making them resilient against all attempts to brainwash them. The present generation's great responsibility is towards the young precisely because they are so vulnerable and impressionable. Early conditioning shapes us for life. But the young are also our best hope for a change in consciousness. We should not despair of converting the hard-hearted but how much better to prevent hearts from hardening at all.

In a violent world the young are the first to be corrupted, quickly becoming

the next generation to mimic the perennial pattern of violence. As they mature they reproduce the violence of the system they live in. We learn by mirroring the practice we see, not the preaching we hear. But what is learned can be unlearned. Over time meditation proves that. So, in teaching meditation to the young we protect them from the corrupting examples of violence. We can also teach it to children already infected by violence. Meditation restores the clarity of reason. The violent child who bullies others can be taught how to resolve differences non-violently, to accept disappointments without despair, to manage their anger.

Terrorism is not the only form of violence. In the United States there are as many fatalities from firearms as there

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are victims of terrorism worldwide. This iconic democracy proclaiming liberty is deeply corrupted by violence. Its infantile cult of the gun and its nightly entertainment take violence as a norm, as a right and even as a perverse pleasure.

Violence, even when justified, corrupts the human. In any form it diminishes our potential and arrests our development. Political and financial corruption is a kind of institutional violence conducted against society's most vulnerable members or against the environment itself. Human existence is corrupted by violence because the human being is an *ikon* of God: not just a reflection, a look-alike, but a living hologram of the source of being. We are indivisible from that source. We

are meant to become that which gives us being.

There is no violence in God. Justice and mercy, which seem incompatible when we are in conflict with others, embrace in God as love. Love not violence is the motive power of our progress and evolution. So, when human beings descend into violence it is because we easily forget, deny or distrust who we truly are and in what our common humanity consists. Animals are not violent even when they eat each other and compete for power. They are being themselves. Violence is a human rejection of our true nature, a choice to regress.

We cannot completely negate the inborn intelligence, the self-awareness and the spiritual sense that is born from the human experience of transcendence. It is a uniquely human capacity, however, to try to deny who we are. To add insult to self-injury we bring our higher gifts of creativity to develop what is most inhuman, in ever more extreme forms of self-destruction. Driving in reverse gear we make monstrously absurd, life-denying things like nuclear arsenals and the armaments industry. We make arguments for the philosophies of genocide, homophobia, religious persecution and economic exploitation. War and its modern hybrid, global terrorism, are the illogical consequences of such absurdities, such negations of the truly human. To justify these atrocities we create a monstrous god. This is the god of the Islamicists but also of fundamentalists in all creeds, even the atheistic gods of religion-hating ideologies. It is a human creation, a figment of an inflamed imagination. The essential absurdity of violence is exposed when we worship a god that we have imagined instead of the unimaginable one who calls us into being.

The spectral link between religion and violence is complex and murky. It

has become more not less powerful in our time. The decline of traditional religion allows us to be more aware of this primeval connection and to break with it as new forms of religion take shape.

With this in mind, in April we will be holding another Way of Peace dialogue with the Dalai Lama at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. Students from universities around the world, our hope for the future, will take part in the webcast because our topic addresses our common future – the meaning of religion in our time. With the exception of Pope Francis, in the face of strong opposition, and the Da-

gion may offer only limited support for advancing this urgently needed contemplative consciousness. But on the margins, new monastic and lay communities forming in fragile ways from the ground up are the natural teachers of meditation; they show how the Holy Spirit 'descends' by rising up from the roots.

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Far from being an escape from reason into the fantasies or false consolations of faith, contemplation is the recovery of reason in the face of the practical absurdities of the inhuman.

Today 'contemplatives' can no longer

community or in solitary mode contemplatives live the life they are suited to, trying to change themselves, before turning their attention to the world. Contemplative living is hard today in any form. Distraction is endemic. For public contemplatives, like monks or nuns, it is tempting to settle into a public role and to fulfill other people's expectations. But for all their failings, contemplatives, spread throughout society in all states of life, act as a mirror to the world which sees in them and their values a reverse image of itself.

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Contemplatives hold a secret with immense hope for our violent, anxious and unsettled age of transition.

It is the secret of the power of attention. In times of turbulence when dark forces reign and infiltrate even our best hope of defeating them – when violence appears the only feasible response to violence – all we can do is keep paying attention to what is good. The good in ourselves, in the laws of nature and in our enemies. This kind of love becomes almost a divine influence – not 'almost' but 'actually' – when the human rises above itself and becomes fully human. Everything human starts in childhood. Including the art of attention which we should be teaching children – the real Christmas gift that lasts.

This mutual exchange of God and the cosmos in the human is the incarnation. It is the greatest reality of inclusive and healing love we can imagine. It is the logic that runs through all matter and mind, all pervasive. It is the process of redemption hidden in the wondrous beauty of every act of creation.

*Laurence*

Laurence Freeman OSB



*Demonstration against barbarism in Toulouse after the Paris attacks (photo Gyrostat/CC-BY-SA 4.0.)*

lai Lama, a stateless exile, few religious leaders have confronted the question of the meaning of religion today. In all cultures religion is undergoing a sea-change that challenges the very idea of the sacred: a shift in religious consciousness that shakes the authority of religious hierarchies.

But the contemplative consciousness, the spiritual core hidden and even suppressed at the heart of religion, is the key to a new kind of religious consciousness. Contemplative practice, widely taught and practiced by religious followers, is the best hope for reducing violence as the first step to its elimination.

The centralized structures of reli-

just be institutionally defined. The cat is out of the bag and contemplation has long been out of the cloister. In almost any form of life today, people with a committed contemplative practice and lifestyle now give themselves as wholeheartedly as they can to living in the moment and live out the consequences. Through transcendence of self, compassionate action and the love of peace and justice, they renounce attachments in material, emotional and spiritual realms while continuing to live in those realms.

Much more than institutional recognition, contemplatives need community. This need also nurtures inter-religious companionship. Whether in

Special

## Reasons to be grateful in 2015

### John Main Seminar The Meditatio Centre in New Zealand



David Tacey, Emeritus Professor from Australia, led the Seminar at Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand, in January. His theme was "Spirituality and Religion in a Secular Age." 220 participated in the multi-day event, and Laurence Freeman led a silent retreat before the seminar, "Meditation as a Modern Spiritual Path."

*I think spirituality and religion can come back together again, and I think the WCCM is very much at the forefront of the reconciliation of these two separated continents.* (David Tacey) Watch and listen to the talks from the Seminar and pre-seminar retreat here:

[http://tiny.cc/JMS\\_audvid](http://tiny.cc/JMS_audvid)



The Meditatio Centre has continued to grow and reach out to many new people. We have also enjoyed the very generous support from our many speakers.

Meditatio's outreach has focused on such areas as Interfaith, Science and Spirituality, Meditation and Health, and vulnerable people. Our speakers have included Shaikh Kabir Helminski, Robert Kennedy SJ, Rupert Sheldrake, and Jim Green, among others.

Keeping alive our contemplative heritage, we have featured teaching by Bishop Kallistos Ware, Fr Daniel O'Leary, and Fr Laurence, among others, and have included days on Meister Eckhart and Thomas Merton. Fr Laurence has also been with us for a unique series of four talks, "The Milestones of Life," which have been webcast across the world.

We have also enjoyed days on Art & Poetry to help deepen our practice. Finally, we have launched this year the "Meditatio Gallery" featuring exhibitions from local artists and artists across the WCCM community,

including Imogen Ohlson and Bruno Querci. We are very excited that our exhibition space is fully booked throughout the next year.

More information:

[meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org)

T 0044 207 278 2070

Online: Listen to talks from the Meditatio Centre here:

<http://tiny.cc/MedCTalks>

### San Anselmo



WCCM and the International College of San Anselmo in Rome together organised a full week of study and practice, "Meditation in the Monastic Tradition." Over 50 practitioners and teachers of meditation in the Christian tradition from 15 nations, gathered in Rome at the end of June. It was a unique opportunity for the participants to go deeper in the knowledge and practice of the tradition, as well as share life in community. The course will be repeated in 2016 at the same venue. For more information contact:

[theresawccm@gmail.com](mailto:theresawccm@gmail.com)

Online: Watch the talks in San Anselmo here <http://tiny.cc/sanselmo>

## Special

### Meditatio House Community



The house in London is home to a small community of oblates and also hosts the community's International Office. This past year, Augustine from China and Fr. Sergio Mancini from Argentina joined the house community consisting of Henriette from Holland, Andrew from Australia, and Fabio from Brazil.

### Meditatio Outreach Seminars & Courses

We are also grateful for the number of Meditatio Seminars and Courses held around the world this last year. These include:

As part of our Meditation and Health project, Fr. Laurence, with the support of Dr. Barry White, led the course "Healing from the Centre," at the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin. This was followed by the residential retreat, "Healing Silence," on Bere Island.

Dr. Peter J. Smith (Dean, UNSW Medical School and President, Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand) delivered a lecture on Contemplative Medicine at Georgetown University in Washington in April.

Fr. Laurence again taught the Meditatio course on Executive Leader-

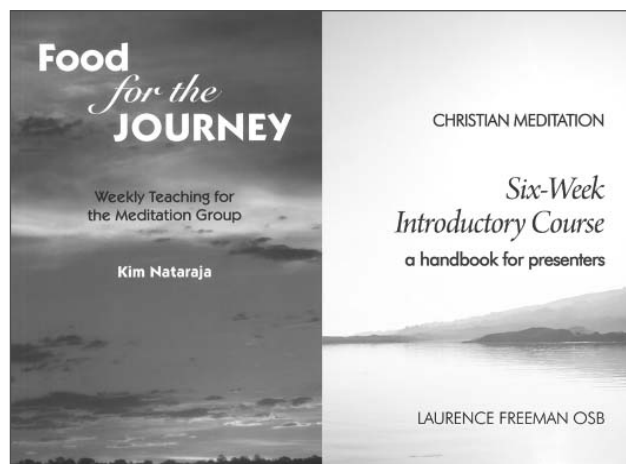
ship for MBA students at Georgetown University. He also facilitated in-company courses in several other American institutions. In June he was guest speaker at Wisdom 2.0 Asia, an international conference on contemplation, business and leadership held in Singapore.

Barcelona hosted a Meditatio Seminar called "The Best Proof is Experience: Meditation, Technology and Humanity" in October. This seminar brought together scholars with an interest in the mindful practice of science and technology, exploring the necessary human qualities of tomorrow's techno-scientists.

Online: You can listen talks from the retreat Healing Silence here: <http://tiny.cc/healingsil2015>

### The School of Meditation

The School is at the heart and soul of WCCM's mission, supporting meditators at every stage of the journey. In 2015 we held activities throughout the world representing every stage, including the Six Week Introductory Course, the Essential Teaching Weekend, and the School Retreat. We will share a full report of these activities around the world in the next issue. We are also happy to highlight two publications to support the teaching of Christian Meditation: *Food for the Journey* (released in 2015, composed of three yearly cycles of the Weekly Teachings) and the *Six Week Introductory Course* (coming soon, see more info at page 12). You can find Food for the Journey at Meditatio Store ([www.meditatiostore.com](http://www.meditatiostore.com))



We cannot know peace if we do not exercise gentleness.  
Peacemakers must be at peace with themselves. (John Main)

## Special

### In Memoriam: Miriam Boyle, Patricia Posnett, Anne McDonnell



We said goodbye for several beloved people this year. In June, **Sr. Miriam Boyle (MB)** died peacefully during sleep. Miriam was an enthusiastic and much loved member of the Community in Mauritius. She served as the country's first National Coordinator, from the time Christian Meditation groups were started in Mauritius by Peter Ng and Cardinal Jean Margéot.

**Patricia (Patty) Posnett** passed away in June of this year after having suffered

a stroke. Patty was, with her husband Charles, instrumental in introducing Christian meditation into many primary and secondary schools in the UK.

Roz Stockley, UK Coordinator, offered the following testimony: "On behalf of the UK Community, I would like to acknowledge, with immense gratitude and love, Patty's significant contribution to the spiritual lives of the many children and adults who came into contact with her. Her joy was infectious. She will be

sorely missed."

Later in the year, we lost another key UK leader, **Anne McDonnell**, who died on the morning of the Feast of All Saints, 1st November. (Read Anne's obituary at page 10).

The Community is deeply grateful for the lives of Sr. Miriam, Patricia Posnett, Anne McDonnell and all other members who passed away in 2015. We send our condolences to all families and friends. May they rest in peace.

## Reasons to be hopeful about 2016

### Bere Island & Monte Oliveto retreats

Both retreats are very special and attract international audiences. Participants share the Holy Week journey in the wild and beautiful nature of Bere Island, all moving toward Easter Sunday and sunrise at the Standing Stone.

Monte Oliveto is always a time and place for solitude, silence and sharing friendship and community life with the monks of Monte Oliveto Maggiore Abbey.

For booking and more information:

**Bere Island Holy Week:**

contact Theresa Hobbs at [theresawccm@gmail.com](mailto:theresawccm@gmail.com)

**Monte Oliveto Retreat:**

contact [monteoliveto@wccm.org](mailto:monteoliveto@wccm.org)





## Special

### The Way of Peace 2016: HH the Dalai Lama & Laurence Freeman OSB



Longtime friends, His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Laurence Freeman OSB, will meet again next year for a day of dialogue at Catholic University of America in Washington DC, on April 4th. This event will be the first of three meetings all part of the continuing Way Of Peace series, begun in

1998. With the theme of "Religion and Spirituality in a Secular Age: a Buddhist Christian Dialogue," the meeting will include Catholic seminarians and students from The Good Heart Fellowship. A special website will be available soon. For more information contact [meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org)

### Meditatio Seminars

Additional events for next year include:

**April 22-24:** WCCM in Sydney will host a Meditatio seminar on "Ecology, Economy and Meditation - Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth."

More information:

<http://tiny.cc/medeco2016>

**May 11-12:** WCCM in Prague will host a Meditatio seminar on "The Secular Age" with Professor Charles Taylor, Fr Laurence Freeman and others. More information:

[meditatio@wccm.cz](mailto:meditatio@wccm.cz)

**June:** WCCM London will host the Meditatio seminar "Changing the Future: Meditation with Children."

Also in spring 2016, Fr. Laurence will deliver the Meditatio course on Executive Leadership for MBA students of several universities in Singapore.

For more information:

[meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org)

### National Coordinators Conference Sussex, UK June 29- July 3

This international gathering, which only occurs every five years, hopes to attract as many of the community's 65 national coordinators as possible for an opportunity to share and learn from one another, receive from and provide guidance to Fr Laurence, and learn more about the latest WCCM resources.

### JMS 2016: Where the Light Comes in... Jean Vanier - Trosly, France August 31-September 4

The 2016 John Main Seminar will be held at the international home of L'Arche in France, including a retreat led by Jean Vanier and Laurence Freeman. Because of the limited accommodation, numbers will be restricted. If you would like to come please contact the WCCM Office soon: [welcome@wccm.org](mailto:welcome@wccm.org). The seminar and retreat will be web-cast live and later posted online.

### Meditatio for those at the Margins

Fr Laurence will speak at a special conference in Middlesbrough on May 17th, 2016 that aims to bring people together to explore a "Contemplative Response to Austerity." The conference, organized by UK Oblate, Terry Doyle, is a great opportunity for Meditatio to partner with an array of support services to further develop resources for those at the margins of society.

For more information:

[terry.doyle@depauluk.org](mailto:terry.doyle@depauluk.org)

## News

# Anne McDonnell 1946-2015

By Jim Green

*"We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather around us that they may see ... their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even a fiercer life because of our quiet."*

I shared these words of W. B. Yeats with Anne by email only a few weeks before she died on All Saints' Day this year. She immediately responded with great warmth and enthusiasm, recognising, I think, qualities apparent in her meditation group and present, perhaps, wherever meditation is practised. What is entirely characteristic of Anne's selfless modesty is that she didn't realise just how perfectly these lines described how she lived and the effect that she had on other

people's lives.

Anne was a member of the WCCM for many years. She started her journey of self-understanding and self-transcendence as a young girl in the austere setting of the Plymouth Brethren. By the time she had grown up, trained as a nurse and midwife, worked in a therapeutic community, got married, had two children, trained as a counsellor and taken a degree in English as a mature student, life had brought her to the path of meditation as practised in the Christian tradition. She became the community's Regional Co-ordinator for East Anglia and at her home near Norwich in the UK she built, with her husband Mark, the wonderful Noggs Barn – a contem-

porary sacred building which hosts a weekly meditation group amongst many other soul-nourishing activities.

That Anne died on November 1st helps us to have a truer understanding of what a saint might actually be. Not someone who is dustily holy, without flaws, managing to rise above the mess that the rest of us constantly fall back into. Rather, someone who is fundamentally, and constantly, opening to what is good and loving. In short, to what is real. Maybe this is true of us all at our centre. Anne just manifested that centre to a much greater degree than most. A great gift and a rare teacher. Our love and gratitude go to Anne and Mark and their children Ben and Amy.

## Meditation with Children seminars in South Africa



Dr. Cathy Day and Mr Ernie Christie of Townsville Catholic Education in Queensland, Australia were in South Africa recently, offering a series of nine seminars titled "A Way to Peace: Teaching Meditation to Children". The nine seminars were given between 21

September and 1 October in Durban, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and ending in Cape Town. At the seminars, participants were given an overview of the Townsville story and were invited to meditate together to get first-hand experience of this way of prayer. The presenters ended the seminar posing the question to all of what this introduction to meditation might mean for their personal lives and professional practice.

## Retreat in Hong Kong

Fr. Laurence Freeman led the retreat 'Reading the Scriptures with the Eye of the Heart', in Hong Kong, in the second weekend of September.

*Meditation allows me to experience a different way of being with God. Besides reading the bible and praying, meditation provides a time and space of being with God. It's a gem for those who have a busy lifestyle and also those who have too much on their mind to worry about.* (Darren Tang, Singapore/Shanghai)

## South America Tour

Fr. Laurence visited Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay between 13-29 November. He led retreats, delivered talks and held meetings. During this period he was able to see the growth of Meditation with Children in South America.

## In Focus

# Giovanni Felicioni, from UK

I discovered meditation at 27 in California while studying for a master's degree in fine art. At that time, the creative dynamics of painting, theatre and dance held all my attention and all my desire for the future. Around this time my mother, who never pressured us with her faith, mentioned that she had heard Laurence Freeman speak about meditation and that this sounded like something I might want to look up.

I did and started meditating as John Main teaches in his tapes and books.

I'm 53 now and very grateful for the gift of meditation and community in my life. In those exciting early days of learning to meditate, I abandoned my New York and Los Angeles theatre agents and, on the wave of metanoia, went to live at the Priory in Montreal and then with the lay community at the Christian Meditation Centre in London when it was at Campden Hill Road. I became an Oblate, and helped set up and run Medio Media, the publishing arm of the community, and helped Laurence Freeman, Eileen Byrne, Elisabeth West, Susan Spence, and many others, with the first steps of the WCCM – our “monastery without walls”.

After a decade of living and working close to the meditation community, in what seemed “the good life,” I experi-

enced an interesting and unexpected trial. I felt an inner push to get a job and dive into the world that I sensed existed beyond community. That is what I did.

I am sure that meditating regularly took me on this journey of “conversion



to the world”, even though it seemed a dubious path at the time. I started a successful private practice as a Rolfer and a yoga teacher, bought a flat, partied hard and ran a weekly meditation group with my yoga classes and eventually met a wonderful man, Luke, with whom I have been for the past ten years.

What I did not see and could not see was that this part of the journey was going to help me verify a fundamental truth of my faith – that being a Christian

and meditating is not about belonging to any group nor even about being a good person but about becoming more simply human.

This happened in my life through a deep and life-giving failure: I stopped meditating and gradually became isolated from community. The excuse was simple and powerful: I started working harder and harder and becoming more and more busy, driven and eventually resentful. As if the reason I had less and less time for friends and family was more and more linked to a sense that I was owed something I could not put my finger on.

What an extraordinary gift prayer is when it comes on the terms given by the God of Life. Some years ago I went on a Silent School Retreat. There, towards the end of the retreat, in the woods, alone, Christ stood by my side and with all the brotherly gentleness of a love that does not displace, accuse nor control, I was helped to see a little of how confused and distracted I had become and how much I actually longed simply for forgiveness and rest.

What I longed for I received as already given.

Life is “different” now that I am meditating again... something along the lines of “participating in the gift of things as they should be” ...



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E-mail: [welcome@wccm.org](mailto:welcome@wccm.org)

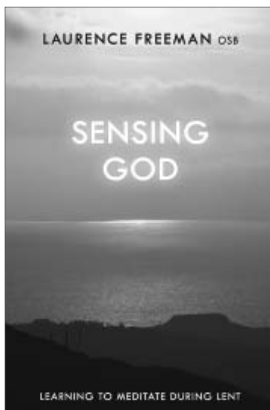
Editor: Leonardo Corrêa ([leonardo@wccm.org](mailto:leonardo@wccm.org))  
Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano  
Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter?  
Our next deadline is **March 10th.**

## Resources

### Books

#### Sensing God: Learning to Meditate during Lent

Laurence Freeman OSB



We often associate Lent with “giving something up”, but it is also a good time to begin or to deepen the practice of meditation. This book is a practical introduction and guide to meditation in the Christian tradition and illuminated by scripture. It shows how to meditate and personal support in the 46 inspiring daily reflections on the Gospels.

How to order (publication date is 10 December): [http://tiny.cc/sensing\\_God](http://tiny.cc/sensing_God)

#### Christian Meditation: Six Week Introductory Course

Laurence Freeman OSB

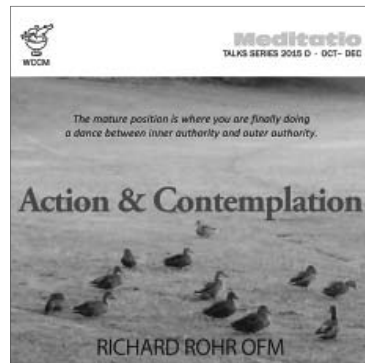
This handbook is a step-by-step guide for presenting an introductory

course on Christian meditation. It offers a detailed plan for the course with all the necessary materials for running the course including instructions, templates, and links to online audio recordings. This title will be released on January 2016. It will be available from the resource centres listed below and from the Meditatio Store (<http://www.meditatiostore.com>).

### CDs

#### Meditatio CDs: Action & Contemplation

Richard Rohr OFM



Richard Rohr OFM emphasises that religion should transform the individual and society and not foster a system of belonging and superiority. These talks are taken from the John Main Seminar 2005, California. The CDs are available from the resource centres listed below. The audio files and transcripts can also be downloaded from <http://tiny.cc/meditatioCDs>

### Retreats & Events

#### Bere Island Easter Meditation Retreat

March 20-27, 2016

Bere Island, Ireland

More information:

[theresawccm@gmail.com](mailto:theresawccm@gmail.com)



#### Ecology, Economy and Meditation

Meditatio Seminar

April 22-24 2016

Sydney, Australia

For more information:

<http://tiny.cc/medeco2016>



**To order:** contact the resource center nearest to you. Our centres are listed below

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



UK and Europe  
[www.goodnewsbooks.net](http://www.goodnewsbooks.net)  
email: [orders@goodnewsbooks.net](mailto:orders@goodnewsbooks.net)  
Tel: +44 (0) 1582 571011

USA: [www.contemplative-life.org](http://www.contemplative-life.org)  
[contemplativewisdom2@gmail.com](mailto:contemplativewisdom2@gmail.com)  
Tel: +1-520-882-0290

CANADA: [www.wccm-canada.ca](http://www.wccm-canada.ca)  
email: [christianmeditation@bellnet.ca](mailto:christianmeditation@bellnet.ca)  
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[jpanetta@ausgrid.com.au](mailto:jpanetta@ausgrid.com.au)  
Tel: +61 2 9482 3468

## CONTEMPLATIVE RENAISSANCE

# From Canada, Christian meditation has spread around the world

Recently I met with a diverse group of people at noon time in my apartment in downtown Ottawa, Canada. There were government office workers, a marathon runner, several retirees, a bird watcher, and a singer/actor. Was this a meeting of some new investment group? The cast of an Agatha Christie mystery plot?

As improbable as it may seem, we were there to practise Christian meditation. We were one of 40 such groups in the Ottawa area, linked to 2400 Christian meditation groups in 114 countries of the world – all meeting on a weekly basis to meditate together.

These groups are at the heart of a global expansion of interest in the contemplative silence and still-

ness of Christian meditation. They share the teaching of contemplative prayer and meditation, and there are other movements like them – including Thomas Keating with Centering Prayer, Richard Rohr at his Centre for Action and Contemplation, various religious communities, and the ongoing practice of the Jesus prayer in the Orthodox tradition.

In 1975 John Main, born of Irish parents, started the first Christian meditation group at his Benedictine abbey in London, England. Then, from 1977 to 1982, he taught this way of prayer at a Benedictine monastery he founded in Montreal. Laurence Freeman

joined that first meditation group and assisted John Main in establishing the new Canadian monastery.

In 250 recorded talks, now digitally available, John Main reveals the depths and importance of a deeper understanding of silence, stillness and simplicity in the daily practice of this way of prayer. These

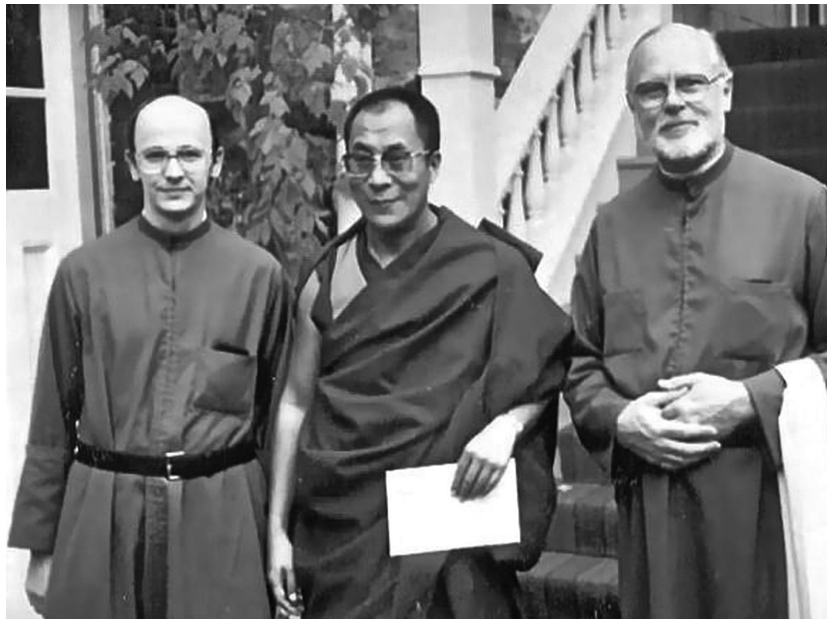
recorded talks have become a unique resource for introducing the teaching to newcomers through the weekly meditation group meetings. Today Laurence Freeman continues the work of expanding the teaching world wide.

The life of John Main spanned only 56 years (1926-1982), but in that time he became a journalist, university lecturer, soldier,

lawyer, diplomat, monk, and finally one of the leading 20th-century teachers of contemplative spirituality. A growing number are asking about his cause for canonization as a master of the contemplative tradition for our time.

John Main's message on prayer is one of authenticity and simplicity. In a 1977 series of talks to Cistercian monks at Thomas Merton's Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky, Fr. Main said: "All Christian prayer is a growing awareness of God in Jesus. And for that growing awareness we need to come to a state of

*Continued on page C4*



Fr Laurence Freeman, the Dalai Lama and Fr John Main in 1980.

WCCM

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Past, present and future

You might say we have a highly appropriate issue for January – the month, as you may know, named for the Roman god Janus. Janus was usually set up in a homeowner's front doorway, and was depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions, to guard both the inside and the outside of the house.

Our major articles this month also look in two directions. Paul Harris's examination of the growth of, and growing response to, Christian meditation – from its Canadian origins to its current worldwide expansion – brings us up to date with the history of our practice.

Looking the other way, Paul Tratnyek's Report on meditation with children in Ontario Catholic schools – and the strategy to move that forward in 2016 – gives

us a glimpse of an exciting future, not just for a year, but for a new generation.



Here, between the future and the past, Mark Schofield sends us photos and a brief discussion of recent events in Montreal, among the Benedictine Oblates, and at the Montreal Centre. We can all hope that the spirit of harmony between French- and English-speaking meditators grows and flourishes in that fertile ground.

And our National Coordinator Jack Murta inspires us to turn our gaze in perhaps the best direction of all – the one our practice leads us to – which is

inward.

Whichever way you look at it, 2016 is starting off on the right foot.

**Jeff Ewener**

## Calendar of Events

### Ottawa

**March 5, 2016:** Lent Day Retreat – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Beatitudes: Meditation and the world turned upside down. Led by Rev. Kevin Flynn.  
Emmanuel United Church, 691 Smyth Road, Ottawa.  
No charge. Brown bag lunch.  
RSVP: [cmadventretreat@gmail.com](mailto:cmadventretreat@gmail.com)

### Montreal

**June 3–5, 2016:** Silent retreat at Rougemont.  
Room with private bath: \$180; with shared bath: \$150.  
Down payment to reserve a room: \$50. Total due by April 30, 2016. No refunds after April 30.  
Make cheques to: Meditation Retreats, send to Magda Jass: 4540 Wilson Ave, Montreal QC H4A 2V4. Include your name, email and phone number.

### Winnipeg

**March 19, 2016:** Lenten Silent Retreat Day 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., St Paul's Anglican Church, 830 North Drive

### Toronto

**June 3–5, 2016:** *The Gospel of Mercy*, A refresher in basic Christianity, four meditative talks by priest, theologian & author James Alison. [jamesalison.co.uk](http://jamesalison.co.uk)  
St John's Convent, 223 Cummer Avenue, Toronto. Close to TTC.  
4 p.m. Friday to after-lunch Sunday. Register *before* May 27.

Contact: Nina Honoridez: [nhonoridez@yahoo.ca](mailto:nhonoridez@yahoo.ca)

We can accommodate about 30 residential and 25 commuter participants.

Residential: \$295 single, or \$275 (each) double – 2 nights accommodation, 6 meals, health breaks, use of all facilities.

Commuter: \$240 – includes all of above except accommodation & breakfast.

Fee includes \$10 donation to WCCM-Canada National Council.

Donations over and above fees can enable us to offer a few scholarship spaces. Donations of \$20 or more are eligible for a tax receipt.

## FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR

# The Practice of Solitude

In the last few years, a silent retreat during the month of December has become an essential part of my yearly activities.

The retreat centre is in the Eastern Townships of Quebec not far from Sherbrooke. It is operated by the Benedictines and is open to everyone, every day of the year. The only set rule that one needs to observe is total silence from the time you arrive until you depart.

The monastic day is broken into seven parts.

The day begins with 5 a.m. Vigil (watching and waiting for God); 7:30 Lauds (morning prayers) followed by breakfast; 11 a.m. Eucharist (the central part of the day); 12 noon (Sext) followed by lunch; 5 p.m. Vespers (evening prayers); 6:15 p.m. supper and recreation, until the day concludes with Compline (last prayer of the day) at 7:45. Anyone can attend as many or as few of these services as they wish.

Like many of you I meditate daily (twice if I can) but to be at a retreat centre where the focus of your day is your prayer, meditation and solitude is quite remarkable. You come away feeling renewed, refreshed, with a greater sense of purpose for your life.

Having spent this time in silence and solitude, I have a few observations which I would like to share. I believe that solitude is just not being in a quiet time and place. It is much more than quieting the many inner voices that we encounter in our time of meditation. The great spiritual writer Henri Nouwen reminds us that “for the fourth century Desert Fathers, solitude was not simply a matter of being alone, but of being alone with God.”

The solitude we look for is not just a place of aloneness but also a place of companionship and fellowship. Solitude is not only a way to “get away”; it is a chance to be with God, who normally gets crowded out of our everyday lives. In solitude we are with that God in a very unique way – not to seek answers

to the many questions we all have, but simply to be attentive. Solitude allows us to focus on being active listeners. When meditating we just sit quietly in God’s presence, not asking for anything, just resting in His presence.

So, contrary to what some people think, solitude does not lead us to withdraw from the world. It is just the opposite! Solitude lets us become more fully engaged in the world. In an age when we are told to be more independent and to “take

charge of our lives”, meditation and solitude is the perfect counter balance. It allows us to gently connect with our inner selves, at a much deeper level than we normally could.

Our times of solitude are not always easy. Many thoughts and ideas can enter our minds when we meditate. The use of our word or mantra is critical if we are to attempt to move from the periphery of our thoughts to the centre of our inner selves. Mantras and prayer words vary, but without question I feel that one of the most spiritual is *maranatha*, the Aramaic word that translates to “Come Lord Jesus”. The gentle repeating of this phrase can take us down the road to stillness, peace and contentment.

It is my prayer that your meditation be beneficial and fruitful for you in 2016.

**Jack Murta**  
National Coordinator



St-Benoit-du-Lac

ELF-8 on FLICKR

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### Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Resource Centre

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

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Mark Schofield and Jeff Ewener

Send submissions to newsletter coordinator Jeff Ewener  
at [newsnotes@bellnet.ca](mailto:newsnotes@bellnet.ca).

*échos du silence* and the French version of *Meditatio* are  
available from Méditation chrétienne du Québec,  
105 ch du Richelieu, bureau B, McMasterville, QC J3G  
1T5, 450-446-4649. [info@meditationchretienne.ca](mailto:info@meditationchretienne.ca).

Page design: [www.katemcdo.com](http://www.katemcdo.com)

# CONTEMPLATIVE

continued from page C1

undistracted, to a state of attention and concentration, that is to a state of awareness. The only way I have been able to find and come to that quiet, to that undistractedness, that concentration, is the way of the mantra.”



Meditation with children workshops in Durban, South Africa

In the book *John Main by Those Who Knew Him*, theologian François C. Gerard writes: “If one were to characterize the spiritual pilgrimage and teaching of John Main in one sentence or phrase, one could suggest that he rediscovered and lived the simplicity of the gospel.” According to Gerard, “Main assumed the role of prophet to our generation, reminding us that to be with God does not demand words, thoughts or images, but the silent consciousness of a Presence. Main reminds us that our spiritual pilgrimage has no future unless it becomes more and more silent on our inner journey.”



Paraguay retreat 2015

Many additional tributes over the years affirm John Main’s contribution to contemporary spirituality. Before his death, the famous author of *The Golden String*, Benedictine Bede Griffiths, wrote from India: “In my experience John Main is the most important spiritual guide in the Church today. Fr. John has opened the way to the direct experience of God, of truth, of reality, from within the Christian tradition.

“He was a man of great wisdom, and above all of great love. I do not know of any other method of meditation leading to the experience of the love of God in Christ than that of John Main.”



Laurence Freeman in Ukraine 2015

Rowan Williams, the former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, has stated, “John Main effectively put the desert tradition of prayer to work in our day.

“The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM), which continues his mission, is for me, as for many throughout the world, a taste of what a committed contemplative Church might look and feel like.”

Franciscan Richard Rohr OFM, founding director of the Center for Action and Contemplation, Albuquerque, New Mexico has said, “John Main, by going to the roots of spirituality, laid a solid and radical foundation for social critique and social involvement. John Main teaches us to move beyond all images for the sake of powerlessness. I have personally been gifted by the wisdom of this man.”

John Main also had a deep insight and prophetic vision that his teaching on meditation would be handed down in an organic way, primarily in small groups meeting on a weekly basis.

He had a profound understanding of the ancient tradition of Christians gathering together to pray in



# RENAISSANCE

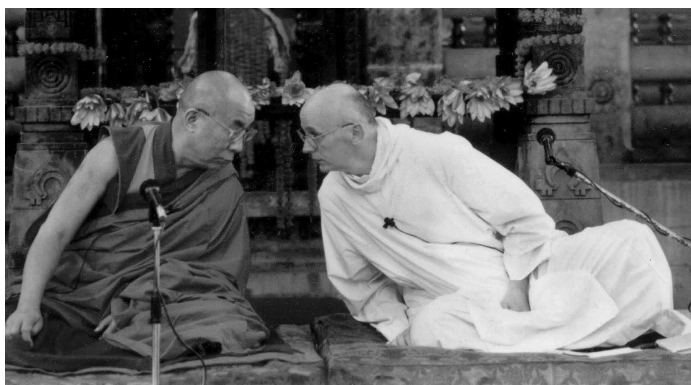
small groups in one another's homes. He observed that these small groups met to pray and offer support to each other in their common faith. Christian meditation groups now meet in homes, churches, hospitals, work places, universities, retreat houses, nursing homes, retirement homes and prisons.



Laurence Freeman in Hong Kong 2015

Since John Main's death, Laurence Freeman, a Benedictine monk of Turvey Abbey, England, has continued the work of sharing and expanding the teaching of Christian meditation around the world. Born in London, England in 1951, he was educated by the Benedictines and took a masters degree in English literature at New College, Oxford. After working with the United Nations, and in banking and journalism, Laurence Freeman entered Ealing Benedictine Abbey in London.

Laurence Freeman helped to found the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) in 1991, as a means to communicate the teaching of this way of prayer. A guiding board of meditators from various countries oversees the direction of the WCCM community, including an international web site ([www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)), a School of Meditation, the yearly John Main seminar, and a quarterly newsletter.



Laurence Freeman with the Dalai Lama, Way of Peace, India, 1998

A new WCCM outreach program, *Meditatio*, is currently sponsoring a series of seminars and forums, directing meditation to the wider world and the problems and crises of our times. The program examines the potential for meditation in education, business, healthcare, addiction, mental health, prisons, and the homeless.

Another thrust of Laurence Freeman and the WCCM has been a program of Christian meditation for children in schools. In the Catholic diocese of Townsville, Australia, all 32 Catholic schools have pioneered a program of daily Christian meditation periods for young people aged between five and 18. Similar programs in schools are underway in numerous countries around the world, including Canada.



Introductory workshop in Malaysia

In 2012 Freeman received one of the Canadian government's highest honors, the Order of Canada, for his work in sharing the teaching of Christian meditation around the world. The Order of Canada recognizes recipients for a lifetime of outstanding achievement dedicated to service to the nation.

According to Laurence Freeman, "The Christian meditation renewal of contemplative prayer today is evidenced by the increasing hunger for inner silence and stillness echoed in countries around the world. In an age of noise, busyness and psychological stresses, there is growing awareness of the need for interiority and depth.

"The path of Christian meditation is drawing more and more people to the authenticity of a way of prayer rooted in tradition, simplicity, and daily discipline."

**Paul Harris, Ottawa**  
**Photos from the WCCM Archive**

## CHRISTIAN MEDITATION WITH CHILDREN

# Making All Things New

*The following is excerpted from Paul Tratnyek's report on the visit of Australian teacher Ernie Christie to Ontario, Nov-Dec 2015.*

Ernie has spearheaded the development of a remarkably successful program of Christian meditation in the Catholic school system of Townsville, a major city in Queensland, Australia. He spent a busy five days here, meeting with Catholic Church and Catholic education leaders and teachers, discussing the value of Christian meditation for schoolchildren, and the ways it can be successfully introduced into the regular curriculum.

As reported in the last issue of the newsletter, Paul himself has had some brilliant initial success in reproducing Ernie's experience in Ontario Catholic schools, particularly in the Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk district. (There is a very moving video of this on our website, [wccm-canada.ca](http://wccm-canada.ca).) The report discusses ways in which Ernie's visit will help lead to further success:

**1. Teacher/staff formation will be our primary focus in 2016-17.** Ernie Christie's overwhelming positive experience shows that the Townsville team has much to offer that we can benefit from.

We would like to look at the formation retreats and programs he is offering and develop one that parallels Townsville within our own cultural context. We would train teachers and principals to help lead the formation experiences.

When I presented to the bishops of Ontario this past October, they were very supportive of Christian meditation in our schools, but expressed their concern for teacher formation to ensure that the practice remains within the Catholic tradition. A focus on formation, then, will garner further support from our bishops – but more significantly, it will provide an opportunity for intentional evangelization among teachers and staffs, exposing them to the practice of Christian meditation, and drawing them toward contemplative teaching and a contemplative life.

**2. We will approach ICE** (the Institute for Catholic Education) to discuss having them take the lead in developing a teacher/staff formation program centred around contemplative prayer and living.

ICE's executive director attended the informal group conversation we had with Ernie one afternoon. The executive director approached me after our meeting about ICE's support for teacher formation. I will follow up with the director to set up a meeting to chat further.



ICE is the provincial umbrella set up by the Ontario bishops for all the partners in Catholic education throughout the province. ICE has both credibility and clout with all school boards throughout the province and with the various partner groups – including teacher union groups, the provincial principals' association, senior administrators' group, the bishops and other key players. ICE's leadership will help explicitly embed Christian meditation into the schools' prayer life and practice.

**3. Provincial networking group.** Ernie presented in key regions in the province. As a result, we have now connected with schools in northern Ontario, eastern Ontario and the populous boards of southern Ontario.

Ernie and I discussed lead teachers from the various boards whom I will contact for follow up, and to try and set up a provincial Catholic schools contemplative cooperative, similar to the existing curriculum cooperatives.

This will help tap into and expand the creative energy around Christian meditation in our schools throughout the province. It will give us an opportunity to utilize existing WCCM resources, develop new shared resources, and embed and sustain contemplative prayer in our schools.

**4. Potential teacher exchange in the future.** Ernie and I also talked about the value of having some of our teachers go to his schools and some of his teachers come to our schools in Ontario.

We could richly benefit from having some of our lead teachers immersed in a contemplative school culture in Townsville, an experience they would back to their schools the following year. Having some lead teachers from Townsville in our systems would benefit and help develop a contemplative school culture, both at the Ontario schools they taught in, and within the wider school systems.

**Paul Tratnyek**

# NEWS FROM MONTREAL



## Anglophones and Francophones embracing silence together: Polly Schofield and Sébastien Gendron

Mid-December, a meeting was held with the newly appointed Coordinateur de MCQ/RFC – Sébastien Gendron – to discuss possible collaboration between our two groups. Sébastien was also able to meet and meditate with members of the Monday meditation group at the Centre. Both MCQ and CCMC will be celebrating their 25th anniversaries in 2016. MCQ / RFC (méditation chrétienne du Québec et régions francophones du Canada) organizes events, translates, publishes and distributes books, CDs and a newsletter, and coordinates over 50 groups in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec.

## New Meditation Room at the Montreal Centre

For the past year, the Canadian Christian Meditation Community's Montreal Centre – site of the bookstore and office – has shared space with a counselling service for immigrant families with pre-school children. Recently, Polly Schofield negotiated a space-swap with a community legal service, which provides us with a private room in a much quieter part of the building. Voilà! The CCMC's new Meditation Centre.



*Montreal news continues overleaf*

## Canadian Christian Meditation Community – Newsletter

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_____	<i>Learning to Meditate During Lent</i> (see p.12)	\$13.00	_____
	TOTAL		_____
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	TOTAL AMOUNT		_____

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# NEWS FROM MONTREAL

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**John Main 33rd Anniversary Celebration. Linda Guignon and Yvon Theroux read Psalm 139 alternately in English and French.**

December 30, 2015 marked the 25th John Main Anniversary celebration to be held since the closing of the Benedictine Priory of Montreal. The first celebrations were held in Loyola Chapel of Concordia University and were presided over by Bishop Crawley, until ill health prevented him from attending. For 2015, Rev. John Forster of Mountainside United Church offered to host the event. Polly Schofield, with the help of Linda Guignon – leader of the Mountainside meditation group – organized the event, which was made as bilingual as possible. A number of members from Méditation chrétienne du Québec attended, including Yvon Theroux, the president of the organization. The formal service was followed by a joyful and friendly reception.

**Oblate group meeting. Left to right, Polly Schofield, Beth Smith, Maureen Sandrock, Don Myrick, Irena Konopacki and Dorothy Wood**

On October 30, Don Myrick welcomed us to an Oblate meeting held at his home in Kanata – where Polly Schofield received, in Community, Irena Konopacki, as an Oblate Novice and two Oblate Postulants, Beth Smith and Maureen Sandrock.

*Montreal photos and reports by Mark Schofield*



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