

Meditatio

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World Community
for Christian Meditation



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The birth of a new sanity

Laurence Freeman reflects on how attention and stillness can help in the recovering of the art of a balanced life



Fr Laurence meditating with a student in La Florida School, Mexico City

The Blessing of Bonnevaux



The new international home of our Community hosted a ceremony on the 21st of November with the installation of an icon of John Cassian and the blessing led by the Archbishop of Poitiers, Msg Pascal Wintzer. It was the beginning of a new journey for WCCM. Read more at p.6

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A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

Dearest Friends

I have just returned home from a trip to Mexico. My first morning there gave me the challenge and delight of meditating with a thousand children in a large school auditorium. I spoke to them in two groups, younger and older, but the quality of the silence we shared was the same for both sessions. They have been blessed with a school and teachers who understand the value of meditation for the young and who have not only added it to their daily schedule but allowed it to pervade the life of the school. The fruits are very evident. On my last morning in Mexico City I met and meditated with a group of business leaders at a breakfast session in an elegant club. I think they were more surprised than the children at the idea of meditating together but they responded well: there is nothing like the experience itself to make one see how normal and sane meditation is.

I told the children that they are the leaders of the future and will soon be inheriting the grievous mistakes of their parents' generation. The consciousness and balance they are already finding in the contemplative experience will be essential to their way of dealing with the global and personal problems of their lives. I told the business leaders what I have come strongly to believe, that no greater responsibility sits on their stressful shoulders than that of leaders recovering their childlikeness in the experience of contemplation.

The prototype Christian monk Anthony of the Desert speaks to both young and old today across seventeen centuries of human evolution. 'The time is coming,' he said, 'when people will go mad and when they see someone who is not mad they will attack him saying 'you are mad, you are not like us''. Anthony spoke these words not far from the mosque in Sinai

where 305 worshippers were massacred recently by Islamist militants. The victims were Sufis, the contemplatives of Islam, the most peaceful and gentle in their teaching and lives. Anthony's words and the madness of our times remind us how urgent is the need to recover the contemplative perspective that we have somewhere lost on our global march of progress.

'Sanity' comes from the Latin 'sanus' meaning healthy. In good health we feel whole, balanced, sound in body and mind – even if we are suffering or dying. Sanity means accepting and making sense of the whole spectrum of life, the painful as well as the pleasurable. This total acceptance and clarity allows us to live and to die healed.

John Main said that sanity and balance



Children meditating at La Florida School, Mexico City

But such has it always been. The Nativity story evokes not only the joy of the birth of the Jesus who is still changing human existence but also the madness into which he was born and in which we still live. The massacre of the innocents by the tyrant Herod and the witness of the first martyr, Stephen, are both remembered close to Christmas. They stop us from seeing Christmas in the sentimental light which modern consumerism confects around us at this time of the year. A newborn child fills the world with happiness even if the world has gone mad. It also evokes the protective concern of parents and family for the health of the child. When we are most vulnerable we are most in need of understanding what health really means.

mean 'knowing the context in which we live'. That is why we are obliged to know what is going on around us. Like many perhaps, I have been tempted recently to opt out, to stop listening to the news, the failures of self-seeking politicians, the shadow side of humanity spilling its raging darkness over the innocent, the greed and corruption of corporations, the Mexican cartels who give schools and social services to poor villages and towns and ruthlessly kill those and their families who resist them. But, to be sane we have to recognise and confront both our own insanity and that of the world.

Understanding contemplation helps us to see this in more immediate, experiential terms. If we are to be attentive to reality, we need to see, to be aware

of our inattention and all the disorder it creates around us and between us. This helps to bring the idea of God down to earth. To 'seek God', as St Benedict says, means more than thinking or imaging God. It means, more purely and simply, to pay attention. The life of attention is a godly life. It reverses disorder and restores order and harmony to ourselves and to the relationships that compose ourselves. To be devoid of attention, unaware of our selfish mindlessness, is a state of sin from which we are redeemed by the experience of love, which hits us when we are awakened by a source of attention directed towards us in all our unworthiness and insanity.

Awakening to a more attentive and conscious life is an initiation into self-knowledge and so into the knowledge of God. Self-knowledge, the contemplative tradition teaches us, is more than self-esteem or just feeling good about ourselves. It is feeling good *because* we can see ourselves as we truly are. Humility like this is a great resource for getting through madness. Mere self-esteem often hides dependency on others. When they reject or despise me, I withdraw, react, twitter my feelings to the world and violently reject the rejection I feel. Contemplative wisdom exposes the insanity of this response. Even more (this makes it seem insane to many), it recognises the advantages of suffering rejection. The ego is purified and reduced and the space it excavates in us allows the spirit to expand. No one likes the Cross yet we have to learn to embrace it.

It feels like an entry into a nothingness which is easily mistaken for death simply because we misunderstand the nature of death, failing to see it as the combining of loss and transformation. Enlightened ones, even as different as Francis of Assisi and Simone Weil, understand the advantages of the Cross. An MBA stu-

dent learning meditation, who told me he did not 'have a religious bone in my body', asked if he could write his first essay on the Dark Night. I wondered why and where an irreligious person would even find out about this term, let alone be interested in understanding it. Meditation had taught him quickly by direct experience. His conclusion, comparing mindfulness and meditation, was that mindfulness would be unlikely to lead you into the dark night but that meditation surely would.

In the science fiction film of the future, *Interstellar*, there is a dramatic scene where the astronauts plunge their craft into a black hole. The very name we give this phenomenon indicates our ignorance about it and the fear that ignorance produces. In the film, however, the black hole, while admittedly a bit terrifying, leads into new dimensions of reality. The human concerns and emotions, love and gravity, survive the transition but the ways in which we see reality and undergo all experience are utterly transformed.

This same transformation happens through the far less terrifying practice of meditation. There we discover that the radical poverty of spirit we enter through the loss of 'all the riches of thought and imagination', as the desert monks called it, enables us to awaken to the new dimension that Jesus called simply the 'kingdom'. The kingdom, like the human self, is unobservable. It is found in a dimension of reality beyond the confines of ordinary self-consciousness and our persistent illusion of 'objectivity'. Although this may sound abstract and over-subtle it is without doubt children who experience and can even understand it more easily than we with our business-oriented minds.

The self is always invisible – that which 'no one has seen or can see'. Our

personality by contrast is most of the time only too visible. We look at it in the mirror of the mind all the time. But we cannot see consciousness. Consciousness is seeing. In the dimension of reality we call contemplation we know what is beyond knowledge through a work of unknowing, the laying aside of the conceptual and image-making mind. We learn that we can know without always being stuck as an observer. More than self-awareness, which is necessary for accomplishing mechanical tasks efficiently, self-knowledge is born amid the labours of consciousness and awakens us to the fact of our being on a journey. This journey spans dimensions of reality and the stages of human development. Yet, however different these dimensions and stages, the journey is one and its irreducible oneness is the meaning of the self.

Attention requires what our world has sacrificed to the acquisition of speed: stillness. It is possible to be moving fast and remain still, in a state of attention; St Benedict tells us to 'run along the way of the Lord's commands' and that 'idleness is the enemy of the soul'. The contemplative life is not about inertia. Of course the speed at which one runs and remains busy will vary with individual temperaments and even the most resilient and energetic need times of slowing down to a still point - just as we all need some space for emotional solitude. But modern life, hijacked by our technology at the ransom of our spirituality, has lost the art of the balanced life and the wisdom to know what this means.

Surprisingly for the fast-moving types, stillness is energising for body *and* mind. Early in this journey, almost from the beginning (though there can be a honeymoon phase), it becomes clear that we are not just into relaxation or stress-control. We need to deal with the inner

conflicts and contradictions that the distracted life keeps undercover. Soon we see that there is no one to blame except ourselves. Even those who have suffered injustice are denied the luxury of remaining a victim. This may sound harsh but it is what all therapy is designed to show, including the powerful therapeutic influence of a daily contemplative practice.

Similarly, we must forego a prolonged state of discouragement (*acedia*) as this would lead eventually far away from the revitalising experience of stillness and straight into the sidings of stagnation. Loneliness, too, one of our age's most corrosive illnesses of the soul, needs to be faced and re-evaluated. Meditation turns it back into the solitude out of which every conscious and living relationship is generated. Loneliness is the failure of solitude.

These and many other elements of the work of contemplation show us that the work is a constant intertwining of repentance and growth. *Metanoia* is the narrow path into the kingdom, a turning around of our attention and so of all mental states. This pivoting is continuous. It demands tough self-awareness of our faults and failures but frees us from lingering guilt or self-rejection. Out of self-criticism comes a truer sense of our potential and essential value. We come to see our real potential in the light of our accepted failures rather than in the light of fantasy.

Without a strong capacity for attention the centre is lost and things begin to fall apart. More and more energy is then needed to hold the disintegrating elements together. Life begins to feel, as it does to many today, like an endless struggle with no worthwhile meaning. Attention, however, quickly changes all this. It awakens the undiluted and undistracted experience of being. To the distracted person this experience feels at first like nothing leading nowhere. In a

sense it is. But it will take time to appreciate the meaning of the experience: and then one sees that no where is now here.

So, we *can* become sane again and helps others to do so. Even with the world continuing in madness sane people can make a difference, especially if they remember what it was like to be insane. In Christian wisdom, contemplation is felt to be gift or grace, not the result of will power, scholarship, imagination or spiritual technology. Yet, because contemplation involves an ever fuller participation in reality, not an observer's distance, it does ask for 'right effort'. We need to do something in order to learn what it is to be. Then being shows itself as pure action and we return to the mundane world of work with new motivation and insight.

We meditate in order to be contemplative, which is an end in itself. Nearly everything in our world has become an instrument, a tool for achieving something else whether it is fame, money or self-gratification. All streams of human wisdom agree that contemplation is an end in itself and justifies itself. What

Even with the world continuing in madness sane people can make a difference

flows from it – compassion and wisdom – need to emerge from this non-instrumentalist attitude. Contemplation then turns the toxins of madness into medicine. It is always open-minded and open-hearted and turns away from ideological or sectarian options. In this, religion and science agree in the value of the contemplative mind.

'Contemplation' contains the word 'templum'. But *templum* originally referred to the space in which a ritual was performed or a structure (like a temple) might be built, not the physical building

itself. The meditating mind is boundlessly spacious and yet always capable of acuity and focus. Structures rise and fall, just as thoughts and certainties come and go. Spaciousness is the Spirit and, when we are in it, we are detached from whatever physical or conceptual structures may occupy the space for the time being. There is always an inbuilt tension between a structure and the space which it occupies. So, there is a timeless tension between contemplation and religion. When it is in balance, this tension protects sanity. Its collapse presages madness.

The capacity for contemplation is innately human. Even those who convince themselves 'I can't meditate' have the gift of this capacity both to enjoy the present and to transcend. Children and atheists testify to the universality and unconditionality of the gift of contemplation. It is, Jesus knew, a truth often hidden from the learned and the clever and revealed to mere children. It is never the possession of the religious. In a world gone mad such a resource has immeasurable significance. The contemplative person channels anger into healing and re-constructive action. It purifies and reforms religion and so helps us see what new role religion is meant to play in the future. It corrects and heals; it does not, like many remedies on offer today, make us madder.

To appreciate the gift of contemplative practice (like meditation) in one's own life will eventually make one aware of its social value as well. Its capacity to change the world is proven by its ability to transform us personally. A nine-year old meditator, a little girl told me recently, when I asked her when she meditated at home. 'whenever I have a big fight with my sister'. To recognise that anger is unpleasant for the angry person to feel but that it can also be internally cured is wisdom. Wisdom for a violent world. The symptoms of contemplative

consciousness affecting the body politic and the financial structures of society can be expressed in the classic formula of the secularised French Revolution: liberty, fraternity and equality. Without a transformed mind these ideals quickly deconstruct and there is no quicker passage to violence than to have one's ideals exposed as illusions.

A mind liberated from its own structures and its illusions gazes on other people with fraternal and sisterly love. To those we love we attribute value and importance equal to our own. Families and communities are the laboratory and the lampstand of this experience of the kingdom. And although they may generate many failures and have all the faults of the ordinary, these seminal social groups are needed by society to testify to a necessary redemptive hope even in the grim face of collective madness.

As an idealistic young man I was drawn to the vision of community created by meditation as a 'community of love'. I have failed it many times and in many ways but I have never lost the vision or the conviction that it is achievable. From being a vision held by me and a very few, it has grown, through the community, as one that is now embedded in many singular lives, meditation groups, friendships and national communities. Such a vision lives or dies in the individual but it is realised in the body of the community.

At the blessing of Bonnevaux a few weeks ago I felt that we are already embarked on a new phase of this long journey. It is a young, fresh and fragile phase. Like anything young and growing it needs much nutrition and care in order for it to mature well. Whenever Bonnevaux becomes the centre of peace and for peace that we pray it will, a place of creative thinking as well as deep contemplative practice, I think all the sacrifices we have made for it will be justified. Bonnevaux cannot save the world. But it

is a partial manifestation of something, a movement of consciousness, a wave of contemplation, that is sweeping the world and that we can confidently affirm can pull us out of madness into a new sanity and a new kind of sanctity.


On any long journey like this, a companion is a blessing, at times a necessity. What is considered the first work of literature, the Gilgamesh epic, composed more than four thousand years ago in a Sumerian culture, the goal of the human quest is interwoven with the experience of friendship. Gilgamesh is a strong young warrior who becomes proud and tyrannical. His subjects pray for relief and it is sent in the form of Enkidu, a somewhat wild man who becomes the intimate friend of Gilgamesh after he has been civilised and fought Gilgamesh. They go off together on a great quest in the course of which Enkidu is killed. Gilgamesh is grief-stricken and inconsolable but also tortured by a sense of his own mortality. He continues the quest alone and returns to his city a better man and a far better leader.

This epic awakens and portrays the major themes of human consciousness. It shows us, for example, that we cannot mature alone and that we must suffer the loss of what we love in order to achieve transcendence and wholeness. One might see in both these ancient friends, Gilgamesh and Enkidu, archetypal elements of the Christ-mystery to which the end and beginning of each year, this sad-happy tipping-point of time, invites to pay deep attention. 'God became human in order that the human being might become God'. This shocking revelation, repeated by the earliest teachers of the Church, from the Alexandrians to the Cappadocians, plunges us into the twinned mystery of the incarnation and divinisation revealed by the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. In him we see both ourselves and the friend who is always another one's self.

The humble, imperfect work of contemplation – as ordinary as daily meditation – awakens and transforms our sense of self. It sheds an illuminating light on the scriptures of our own tradition as well as on the wisdom texts of others. It renews the language which we need to express and share our human journey of faith. Loving God then means more than agonising about God's will and 'doing what He wants'. It evokes the human attraction to love that is powered by the capacity to turn from self-consciousness and focus our attention on another. When this awakening is happening we know that we are not asleep and that we cannot deny, reject - or for long forget - the essential fact of being which is the true arbiter of the good. To love is simply to be awake in all we are and do.

Birth is the continuous present of reality. Christ, as the mystics down the ages have taught, is continuously re-born in us. He forms himself in the womb of consciousness through the work of recognition and acceptance. To know that we are recognised and known awakens our ability to recognise and know. The more we grow in attention, the more humble becomes our desire to be conscious. Christ's self-formation in us is our transformation and our progressive divinisation. As we become truly ourselves we can understand why the Christian says 'I live no longer but Christ lives in me'. The I that no longer lives is the old self, Gilgamesh before Enkidu. The I that can say this knows that it is never alone but now lives continuously in the deepening solitude of its uniqueness.

With much love



Laurence Freeman OSB

News

The Blessing of Bonnevaux The beginning of a new journey



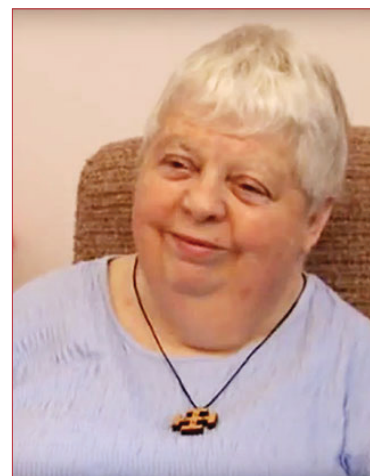
Our Community has entered into a new and special stage in the past months. The purchase contract for Bonnevaux was officially signed in October: WCCM became the new "owner-stewards" of the place, as Fr. Laurence said in his blog. Andrew and Delyth Cresswell, who had given up their jobs and sold their house in Wales in order to be part of the community and its work from the beginning, moved into Bonnevaux the day the contract was signed. They will care for the property, and prepare it for the transformation which is now under way.

On the 21st of November a blessing ceremony was held at Bonnevaux with Fr. Laurence and the Archbishop of Poitiers, Msg Pascal Wintzer. The abbot of Liguge Monastery Dom André-Junien Guérit, was also present and took part in the installation of an icon of John Cassian in the Bonnevaux chapel.



The icon was 'written' for Bonnevaux by Odile van der Hoff, a meditator from The Netherlands. Another important moment was the blessing of the professionals involved in the renovation work at Bonnevaux. The National Coordinator for Belgium, Jose Pyper, read messages from WCCM communities from different parts of the world.

ONLINE: See audio slideshow of the blessing day and listen to the speeches by Fr. Laurence and the Archbishop of Poitiers here: <http://tiny.cc/bbnvx>
Visit the Bonnevaux website: www.bonnevauxwccm.org



Our gratitude to Marie O'Leary from Australia

Marie O'Leary, of Perth, Australia, was (and remains since her death earlier this year) a beloved member of our community. She suffered chronic pain for decades with deep faith and unflinching love for others. Although she was mostly housebound, she fell in love with the Bonnevaux vision and wanted to be part of it. To help achieve this, she left a very generous legacy which will help move the project forward. As she was a special sign of grace to others, so is this generous gift. Thank you, Marie! We know you hope your example will inspire others to remember Bonnevaux in their wills.

Walk For Bonnevaux

See a photo gallery of the "Walk For Bonnevaux" pilgrimage made by Henriette Hollaar in Italy in November here: <http://tiny.cc/wlk4bonnvx>

News

The Fourth International Oblate Congress in Rome (4 – 10 November)

Read comments from WCCM participants



The theme of the Congress was, 'A Way Forward: the Benedictine Community in Movement.' The presentations – not least that given by Joan Chittister OSB – were inspirational! It was good to hear about the different ways Oblates are actively involved in supporting their monastic communities and sharing the spirit of Benedict in places of work, parishes and local communities. The Congress certainly provided me with much food for thought as I listened to the struggles facing oblates and their monastic communities in other parts of our world. **(Eileen Dutt - International Oblate Coordinator)**

The keywords which I submitted to the Congress questionnaire were: rule, stability and mission. I hope to be stable in the Benedictine Order through WCCM. Sister Joan Chittister said that the future of the Benedictine Order lies in Oblates. I experienced a deep blessing of Oblate identity and I understood clearly that Augustine's

Benedictine orientation means moderation between meditation and evangelization – Ora et Labora. **(Augustine Xiao Xiao, China)**

The Congress emphatically illustrated a shift from the restrictive idea that only vowed religious were called to a committed life to one that expressed a more inclusive understanding of one's potential and relationship with the mystery that is God. One can also argue this shift from an elitist view of spirituality is reflected in the dynamic life of WCCM through its inreach and outreach programmes. **(Gloria Duffy Australian Oblate Coordinator)**

Each morning we meditate at 7 am and one of our nine Oblates would introduce the meditation. One morning in Spanish but the others in English. After meditation, I could not believe how the chapel had filled up! Three mornings there were about 80 people. **(Henriette Hollaar,**

Resident Oblate, Meditatio House)

A mind and heart opening vision for the future, 200 people from the world over – monastics and Oblates called to be true 'Friends,' to share St Benedict's aim of peace and harmony in community. Facing diminishing vocations, it was said that Oblates are the future: what happens to the oblates will happen to the Order. We must have a vision bigger than ourselves. We mustn't 'hide and horde' – we must give what we have, what we can, to bring new life, depth and strength and 'take a monastic heart into the troubled world.' **(Raymond Lamb, UK)**

Each day was interesting and motivating. It was stimulating to meet Oblates from all over the world. They all had their story to tell which was fascinating to hear. We took turns to give a brief meditation in the church at 7 am each morning and asked all those who were interested to join us. **(Vicky Lamb, UK)**

There were plenty of opportunities for silence, acts of service and kindness. Several members of The WCCM offered morning meditation sessions. Others were facilitators or translators. It was a joyful experience to have become translator for the Lusophone community at the eleventh hour so they could feel at home. During breaks and communal times there were opportunities to learn about the different oblations around the world. **(Elba Rodriguez, Colombia)**

The spirit that is a healthy spirit is the spirit of an explorer: We are not terrified by the beyond, we are not too tired to seek what is ahead. **(John Main)**

News

A Truly Meditatio Tour in Trinidad & Tobago



The Community in the Caribbean led by Sr. Ruth Montrichard organized a truly Meditatio tour with Fr. Laurence in his recent visit to the region (last October). The first event was in San Fernando: a session with 500 young people at Presentation College, a boys secondary school. That evening there was a Contemplative Mass with 170 meditators. After that, during dinner, Fr. Laurence met with members of the medical profession, spoke about Bonnevaux, and received a donation from the Caribbean for the new Centre.

The next day Fr. Laurence delivered a lecture on "Consciousness and Leadership" at the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business to post-MBA students and members of the business community. It is hoped that this institution will eventually adopt the Meditation and Leadership Course developed at Georgetown University in Washington DC.

The visit was also an opportunity to be close to nature. This is how Sis-

ter Ruth describes a tour to the Caroni Swamo, one of the major attractions in Trinidad:

"A flat-bottomed boat took us many miles down the river and into the swamp where the famous scarlet ibis came in to nest at sunset. It was an experience of the silence of nature, as we



waited for the birds to fly in - the scarlet ibis and the white egrets... all heading home."

The 18th of November was a bank holiday in Trinidad (Hindu Festival of Lights). This was a perfect opportunity for the blessing of the John Main Cen-

tre. The moment was also an opportunity for Fr. Laurence to receive Michele Ayoung-Chee as an oblate novice.

For the first time, a Meditation and Health Seminar was held on 19 November at a medical complex in Trinidad. Again Sister Ruth comments on the seminar:

"It turned out to be a very successful event in spite of the rain and flooding that descended on Trinidad that day, virtually cutting off the south of the Island, which was under water. Some 120 people braved the weather to attend and the feedback was positive from all quarters."

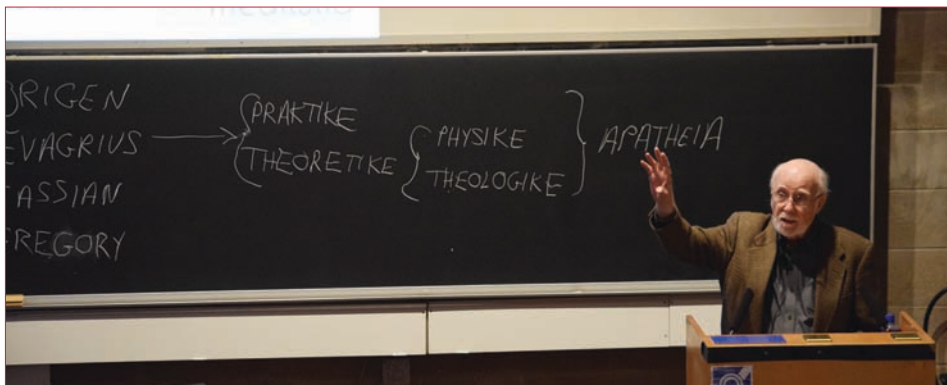
The seminar included a very enthusiastic group of doctors and panelists who were meditators from various traditions. Fr. Laurence was the featured speaker, followed by the panelists. A short video by Dr. Barry White (Dublin) on the meaning of Meditation and Health was shown. A video recording of the session will soon be available.

In the last day Fr. Laurence visited another school, this time meeting with 200 students (13 to 16-year-olds) from Providence Girls Catholic School. This school had already introduced meditation into the Religious Knowledge curriculum and many of the girls acknowledged having meditated at their primary school where meditation was introduced. A quick visit to the retiring Archbishop of Port of Spain, Rev. Joseph Harris C.S.Sp, brought the journey to an end. He will be replaced by Bishop Jason Gordon, a patron of WCCM Caribbean who will become the new Archbishop of Port of Spain in December of 2017.

News

Meditatio Seminar in Ireland

John Main: A Hunger for Depth and Meaning



The Seminar John Main: A Hunger for Depth and meaning was held at Trinity College in Dublin, in 15-16 September. This was a conference on the life and legacy of John Main organized by the Community in Ireland in association with the Loyola Institute of Trinity College and Meditatio. The conference was a huge success and sold out weeks in advance of the event.

This was also a special recognition of John Main's connection with the

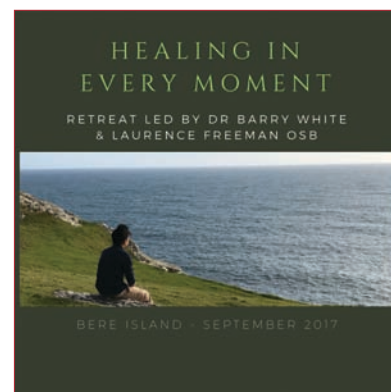
College where he had been a professor of Law. The present Director of Graduate Studies introducing the Seminar thanked the participants for contributing to the ethos of the university as a place for depth and meaning. The keynote speaker was Prof Bernard McGinn (who led the John Main Seminar the previous month in Houston). The programme's speakers included Laurence Freeman, Mark Dooley, Noel Keating (Meditation with Children) and Dr Barry White (Meditation and

Health), all reflecting on John Main's influence on modern consciousness. ONLINE - Watch the videos here: <http://tiny.cc/JMhng2017>

Bere Island

Meditation & Healing Retreat

The Meditation & Healing Retreat was held in Bere Island from 17 to 23 September, led by Laurence Freeman and Dr Barry White. You can listen to the talks here: <http://tiny.cc/MedHI2017>



Ask the Guiding Board: send your questions and suggestions

Part of the mandate of the Guiding Board is to provide an accountability and communication point to the general membership. We have therefore created a simple way for the Community worldwide to communicate directly with the Guiding Board. Now you can send your comments, suggestions or questions to askthegb@wccm.org. We have our next meeting in London from 21 March 2018. So if any of your com-

ments should go on our agenda, it would be helpful to have them by, say, 21 February. After our meeting, the Board will share responses for some of the questions through our website and newsletter.

The Guiding Board gives direction on matters of broad concern within the Community. These include major new initiatives but also the simple integrity of the teaching which is the heart of the Community's life and mission. The

Board oversees the service provided to the national communities by the International Team, Meditatio and the London International Office, new initiatives and outreach. The Director of the Community is a member of the Board, which also oversees succession and continuity in all the main leadership roles in the Community. The Guiding Board thus provides overall direction and vision to the life and mission of the Community.

News

Meditating with those on the margins: a Time of Encounter

Terry Doyle, a UK oblate recently took part in a retreat-day with 22 people helped by charities that work in the John Paul Centre in Middlesbrough. The retreat was held at a retreat centre in Ampleforth (40 miles away from Middlesbrough). Below are some observations from Terry:

We should never underestimate the healing power of genuine and authentic listening to a person's story as it affords the person being listened to the power of dignity which can go a long way to healing wounds and raising self worth. So, our meal times were spent sharing stories and laughter, and as people began to relax more,

defences came down and hearts were opened. People from the streets of an urban town some born in the area, others dispersed there from various countries in Africa and Afghanistan, sharing stories with young people from more privileged backgrounds but all meeting as fellow human beings sharing and learning from each other. One particularly beautiful session was held in the Crypt underneath the Abbey with the darkness illumined by an array of candles in the shape of a cross as well as the smiles of everyone gathered there. A beautiful meditation followed there proving that when we become simple and enter

the silence and stillness of the present moment, none of the outer differences of age, colour, wealth, background matter anymore. In the sacred space of the Crypt it felt as if we all met each other's Soul there in the silence and what a sacred encounter that was.

So thank you Pope Francis for reminding us of how Jesus showed total commitment and solidarity with those on the margins. And thank you to all those wonderful staff and students from Ampleforth who made our group feel so very genuinely welcome.

ONLINE - Read the full article by Terry on this retreat here:

http://tiny.cc/art_encount2017

In memory of Lucy Palermino (1924-2017)

By Mary Robison, US Oblate Coordinator



It is with great sadness that I share with you news of the death of our beloved Oblate, Lucy Palermino, on October 14th, after enduring the effects of a stroke. Her extraordinary transparency of spirit, firmness of faith, and love of the Oblate community of WCCM are all reflected

in the words of some of her friends, below.

Lucy was well named as a vehicle of light. Deeply rooted in her faith and the body of Christ she continued to grow and spread the light in new and courageous ways. She was an exemplary oblate, meditator and disciple of Jesus. We are blessed to have travelled with her. (Fr Laurence)

She has not left us. Lucy is very much a part of who we are and have become. Her loving care continues. (Mary Ann Gould)

Lucy was a woman who never had children but was mother to so many. A woman who belonged to no one and to everyone but above all to her God who she knew she "belonged to since the age of 7." She always loved God first and from that central place her love for all humanity. (Anne Dillon)

In memory of Fr Arnaldo Dias (Brazil)

Fr. Arnaldo Lima Dias passed away on November 3rd at the age of 72. A spiritual director and a poetic composer from the state of Bahia, he had been a missionary in Africa and Brazil. He had a special gift of grasping the meaning of whatever was going on and to putting it into words on a string of rhymes in a humorous, concise and poetic way. While participating in silent retreats he frequently celebrated Mass with Fr. Laurence and read to the participants his always-joyful poetry which, in key phrases and aphorisms, synthesized the main teachings of the ongoing conferences by Fr. Laurence and the events of the day. Let us pray for his happy and loving passage after this fully-realized life.

In Focus

Vladimír Volráb from the Czech Republic

Priest in Hussite church (reform), National Coordinator for the Czech Republic



My spiritual journey began when I was about sixteen years old. I grew up in a non-religious family but during this time I started to be naturally attracted to spirituality. After a period of searching I became a Zen Buddhist student in the Korean tradition and I was trying to keep up a regular practice and also attend meditation retreats.

A few years later I became friendly with a reform priest. He gave me the Gospels to read because he wanted to discuss them with me and also he wanted to know my thoughts about them from a Zen Buddhist perspective. Actually, I had never read the Gospels before and was very sur-

prised when the reading of them gave a deep and direct meaning and sense to my life. I am convinced that this was because of the experience of silence that I had already had within the Zen tradition. The Gospel's narrative reflected my own story of life. I felt I was ready to hear them at that stage of my life. I received baptism, entered the church and started to study theology soon after that. I had found a place to belong within the religious life of my own culture.

Nevertheless, I had entered into an environment where spirituality was more of a conceptual understanding than experience. I still felt a great desire for the experience of silence so I started to look for references to meditation in the Christian tradition. One day I finally found a book by John Main: Moment of Christ. After reading a few pages I understood that I was really "at home". Especially John Main's idea of meditation as a process of "smashing the mirror" which deeply resonated in me. Every time as John Main says, we look into the mirror which is between us and God, we see ourselves, our past, and the things around us. If I can really

see the story of my life as connected with the Gospel narratives, I understand that I am not the central focus in this story. God is the focus, not as an intellectual idea or image.

I'm grateful that I was invited to the meeting of young contemplative teachers and scholars this year, which took place in Snowmass, Colorado. We discussed many problems of the today's world and churches. Although we were people from different Christian backgrounds, we have shared an understanding that the

If I can really see the story of my life as connected with the Gospel narratives, I understand that I am not the central focus in this story.

answers should come from our experience with God's presence in our hearts. The process of "smashing the mirror" is able to bring God into our lives as the source and purpose of all our efforts. I believe that this is what Christianity and the world desperately needs.



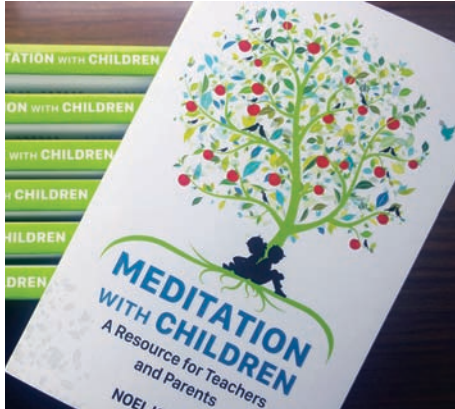
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Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org)
Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano
Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 March.

Events & Resources

Books

Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents Noel Keating



The book encourages adults to experience meditation for themselves and equips them with the tools needed to introduce the practice to children, including simple lesson plans that can be implemented at home, in the classroom or on a whole-school basis. Noel Keating explores what the wisdom traditions and religions of the world say about meditation and identifies the practical rewards and spiritual fruits that arise from regular meditation. Featuring excerpts from interviews with Irish primary school children who have practised meditation regularly in the classroom, the book also gives voice to their first-hand experiences of its benefits, both psychological and spiritual.

MORE INFO:

<http://tiny.cc/NewMedBook>

Meditatio Talks Series

Finding Oneself 2 Laurence Freeman OSB



These talks present meditation as the way to self-knowledge, to finding oneself.

ONLINE - listen to the talks :

<http://tiny.cc/Med2017D>

Photo Calendar 2018

Photos by Laurence Freeman and quotations by John Main



ORDER ONLINE:

<http://tiny.cc/MedCal2018>

Upcoming events

19 February

Meditatio Seminar on Meditation & Business/Values - London, UK
Contact: meditatio@wccm.org

21 - 24 March

The Guiding Board Meeting

25 March - 1st April:

Bere Island Easter Holy Week Retreat
Contact: theresawccm@gmail.com

28 April - 5 May:

International School Retreat
Contact: jacqrussell3@gmail.com

2-9 June

The Monte Oliveto Retreat
More info: <http://tiny.cc/MO2018>

25-31 August

Health & Meditation Retreat
Contact: theresawccm@gmail.com

17 - 23 September

The John Main Seminar in Bruges
Contact: jms2018.be@gmail.com
ONLINE - check our 2017/2018 events calendar here:
http://tiny.cc/wccm_cal1718

Meditatio Centre Programme 2018

Download here: <http://tiny.cc/MedPROG2018>

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

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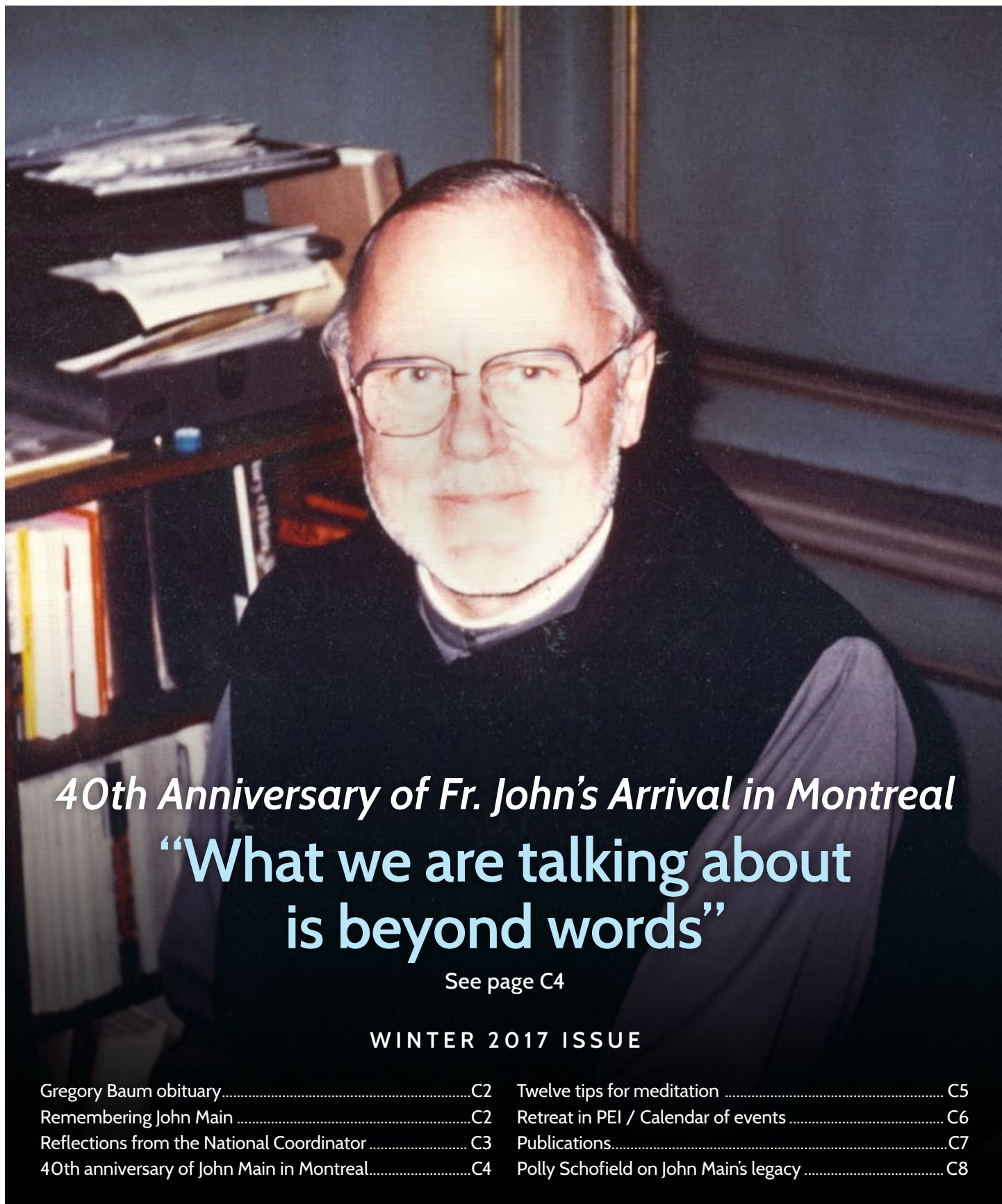
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Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COMMUNITY



40th Anniversary of Fr. John's Arrival in Montreal

**“What we are talking about
is beyond words”**

See page C4

WINTER 2017 ISSUE

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THEOLOGIAN AND MEDITATOR GREGORY BAUM 1923-2017

“ ‘Christ is Risen’ is a good note on which to close”

Gregory Baum, one of the most influential theologians of our time, and the author of twenty books on the renewal of Christianity following the Second Vatican Council, died October 18 in Montreal. He was an advocate for social justice, liberation theology, and the preferential option for the poor. In 1990 he was named an officer of the Order of Canada, which recognizes recipients for a lifetime of outstanding achievement dedicated to the service of Canada.

Baum was a theological priest expert at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). He was one of the drafters of the Council document *Nostra Aetate*, which repudiated anti-Semitism and radically helped change the relationship of Catholicism to Judaism. He also contributed to the Decree on Ecumenism, which launched the ecumenical movement after Vatican II. Many observers place Baum in the highest rank of theologians, even in that astonishingly rich era – with Hans Kung, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Karl Rahner. Together these men helped to “update” and renew the Catholic Church, in its social teaching, interreligious dialogue and openness to non-Christian religions. In the 1960s he gave four lectures at the Catholic Information Centre in Toronto on the progress and meaning of the Second Vatican Council.

In the last years of his life Baum sought out John Main’s teachings on Christian meditation. In a 2015 letter to me he said, “I have just read and enjoyed your article in the National Catholic Reporter on Christian meditation. It is a great movement you are fostering. I have discovered quite late how deeply sustaining meditation is.”

Perhaps it is not too bold to suggest that Gregory Baum – the great thinker, intellectual and theologian – found, in the final years of his life, “the other half of his soul”, in the contemplative practice of Christian meditation. Perhaps he had taken to heart the famous words of the 4th-century spiritual writer Evagrius, who wrote: “If you are a theologian, you truly pray; if you truly pray, you are a theologian”.

On Sunday November 5, 2017, a well attended Memorial Mass and social event honouring the life of Gregory Baum was held at Regis College in Toronto.

Towards the end of his life Baum wrote a semi-autobiographical book entitled *The Oil Has Not Run Dry: The Story of My Theological Pathway*. In this book he writes about his oncoming death: “I hardly ever think about what happens to me after I die....I leave this to God... . I have had a life of light and happiness in the darkness of an unjust world.... ‘Christ is Risen’ is a good note on which to close my theological pathways”.

As a friend of Gregory’s for over 50 years I would like to offer this tribute. Thank you, Gregory, for your kindness, generosity and love to all you have touched. Thank you for a raft of books, articles, talks and essays, and your editorship of the magazine *The Ecumenist*. Thank you for your sensitivity to all forms of injustice. Thank you for stretching our minds, and opening our hearts to a faith centered on Jesus in the Gospels, and directed to social justice in its many forms. To sum up, Gregory, thank you for a life well lived.

Paul Harris
Ottawa

MEMORIES OF JOHN MAIN

Creating a community of love

How time slips by – through the changes of 40 years ago that mark the ministry of Fr. John in Montreal.

I think it was the fall of 1979 when I met Fr John Main and Br Laurence Freeman at a lecture series, after which they invited everyone to come to the Priory that was moving to Pine Avenue. I joined in the evening meditation groups, and other community functions. It was especially memorable to meet Bishop Henry Hill, who encouraged me to find spiritual support in meditation practice, and a return to the roots of my Anglican faith.

The lasting memory I have of Fr. John is his unquestioning acceptance of everyone who came to the Priory. Many different people arrived, seeking a pathway to meditation in the Christian tradition, and Fr John was true to the values of ecumenical and interfaith practice. He never questioned or judged anyone, and offered unconditional love to all in this community of love.

Carol Peterson
Bellwood ON

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR NATIONAL COORDINATOR

Faithfulness To Small Tasks

We often think of our world as being in complete turmoil. So many terrible things happen every day that we start to wonder whether the few things we do ourselves make any sense.

It happens when we can see people who are starving just a few thousand miles away; when wars are raging in different parts of the world; when countless people in our own cities have no home to live in, and struggle just to get by every day; and when we live with the continual threat of terrorism.

In such moments, our own activities can look futile.

It is a question that I regularly ask myself – and often I have trouble finding a satisfactory answer.

However, we have to be careful that such thoughts don't paralyse us, and lead to despair.

As Henri Nouwen once said, "Here the word *call* becomes important." Even though we may like to

think so, we are not called to save the world, solve all its problems, and help all people. We do not have to be saviours of the world!

We need to remember that each of us has our own unique calling. It may be with our families, in our work or in our world.

What will keep us moving forward is to keep asking God.

We need God to help us see clearly what our calling is, and to give us the strength to live out that calling with trust and compassion. Fortunately, if we ask, and if we are patient, God will always give us enough light to see the next step in our journey.

Over time we will discover that our faithfulness to the small tasks in our lives is our most healing response to even the greatest illnesses of our time.

Jack Murta
Ottawa

BE OPEN TO THE PRESENCE

12 practical tips for Christian meditation

- Try to meditate around the same time each day. Regular meditation times help your mind and body begin to quiet down. Before a meal is better than after – our brains are less alert when the body is busy digesting food.
- Set aside a place that's reserved only for meditation. Your mind and body will come to recognize that this is the place to be quiet. After a while, simply entering that place will have a calming effect.
- Select a chair that helps you keep your spinal column erect during meditation. If your head, neck, and spine are aligned, you won't be tense. The back of your chair should come no higher than mid-back – if it's too high, you will tend to slump forward and fall asleep. A special chair used only for meditation will let your mind and body know that your time of stillness is beginning.

- Use some kind of timer so you don't have to keep looking at your watch to see if your time is up. Choose one carefully. A ticking timer can ruin your focus. Timing CDs are available for sale. Download a timer app for your smartphone from wccm.org. You can also make your own timer if you have the dubbing ability – you can add your choice of music for the beginning and end of your meditation.
- Make your meditation period a priority. Schedule it into your day just as you would a doctor's appointment or a hockey game.
- There are many ways to begin your meditation period. Some light a candle. Some read the day's psalm or Gospel passage. Some simply breathe deeply

Continued on page C5

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at newsnotes@bellnet.ca.

échos du silence and the French version of *Meditatio* are
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105 ch du Richelieu, bureau B, McMasterville, QC J3G
1T5, 450-446-4649. info@meditationchretienne.ca.

Page design and layout: www.katemcdo.com

“What we are talking about is beyond words”

On a cold winter night in 1979, Neil and I trudged up Vendome Avenue to the old Decarie House that had been given to John Main. Neil had heard about him from a former Jesuit colleague a couple of years earlier. Finally, Neil telephoned and had a conversation, mostly about the fundraising Neil had done during his time in the Jesuits.

I come from a Protestant family with roots in Northern Ireland, had never met a monk before, and wasn't sure I wanted to now. I was thoroughly enjoying the social life that went along with being the wife of a well-known radio host.

Once inside the house, I found myself sitting on a sofa with sprung springs that had been bought from the Salvation Army for \$25.00. I did my best to avoid sliding toward the centre and into my neighbour.

Because of Neil's Jesuit experience we were put in the advanced Tuesday group. Lacking the beginner's introduction to meditation on Mondays, I had no idea what to expect. Fr. John sat silently in his chair at the front of the room as people began to arrive. Promptly at eight o'clock, he began to speak. You could hear a pin drop.

Gradually I began to relax. I realized I was hearing about a spirituality akin to that of my grandmother's, who had been involved with medical services for women in India and had given me unconditional love during my childhood.

Initially I assumed any fool should be able to repeat a single word for 20 minutes. Well! I was embarrassed to discover how wrong I was.

I was on the verge of giving up, when I heard Fr. John say, “You're on the way, so you might as well continue.” That sounded manageable, I thought. And I was riveted by his further insight that “we are made for a limitless expansion of spirit.”

That brought me back in touch with a childhood experience – one summer evening in my grandmother's farm home, when I was communing with a magnificent elm tree outside my bedroom window. The sound of summer insects filled the air and the smell of petunias wafted up from the flower beds below. I could hear calves bawling in the distant barn. Gradually a whole universe began to expand in my consciousness, up, up to the stars and beyond, almost as though the

back of my head had opened up. And I knew with complete certainty that I was held and I was loved.

I was also delighted with Fr. John's ability to deal with my beloved and complicated bipolar husband. Neil would formulate the most challenging and complicated questions he could think of. One time Fr. John said at the end of his talk, “You asked an interesting question last week, Neil, in spite of yourself.” I cheered. Other times the phone would ring and Fr. John would ask, “Did I fully answer your question?” We were privileged to be part of a time when Fr. John was evolving the fuller articulation of his insights.

The move to the Pine Avenue house in 1980 provided a new setting for the spaciousness of Fr. John's vision. Gradually, the pattern of our week began to change. We started coming to the five o'clock meditation on Friday to end the work week, then Sunday mass and also the occasional weekend. Fr. John had a beautiful voice, and the sung Compline was memorable. The people who turned up on these occasions were a motley crew, “like the inside of a Montreal bus” as Fr. John described it. They also included Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who lived across the street.

Fr. John was a commanding figure as he came down the staircase in his long monastic robes. I felt quite intimidated. Then one day we arrived for Sunday mass, a few minutes early as usual. There was Fr. John in his shirt sleeves to greet us muttering something about “washing the windows, you know.” We stood talking in the sunshine. It was only years later I realized that monks don't wash windows on Sunday.

Two years after Fr. John's death, Neil left his radio career at its peak, with 76,000 listeners, to complete his biography of Fr. John. It was a decision neither of us ever regretted. It put us both in touch with rich aspects of Fr. John's life we would otherwise never have known, as well as with our own Irish heritage. The English edition was widely reviewed, and a brand new American edition is now available from Light Messages Publishing.

All of Neil's years of training, and his skill at looking at a question from different angles, went into the creation of that book. He must have interviewed sixty people in those first weeks in London. During the war Douglas Main, as Fr. John was christened, travelled in the back of a used ambulance behind the advancing

army, tuning in on signals from enemy agents left behind – an image he would later use to describe our focus on the mantra.

The only paper we had to go on was a simple address book with 40 names in it. One of them was Tudor Jones, a young Scot who had been in that ambulance with Douglas. He had no phone, but I was able to track him down, sitting in our one small bed-sit apartment dropping coins into a payphone. Tudor used to go for long walks with Douglas, and confirmed that the spiritual calling had always been with him.

Neil was also able to weave together key insights, which evolved within Fr. John's teaching. Yet always Fr. John would say, "What we are talking about is beyond words."

I am eternally grateful for all the friendships that developed between people from the far corners of the globe who have found their way to this path. And I marvel at the ripple effect of this one man's life, combined with the fresh insights and imaginative work of Fr. Laurence Freeman. I thank him again, as Neil certainly did, for his gift to us of asking Neil to write that biography. It was the privilege of a lifetime.

**Catharine McKenty
Montreal QC**

Editor's Note: See the Publications page of this issue, overleaf, for information about how to order the new edition of Neil McKenty's biography of John Main: *In the Stillness Dancing*.



12 Tips for Meditation *continued from page C3*

several times, while tensing and releasing different muscles, to trigger the "relaxation response." They let their breathing slow down and become regular, as they integrate it with the rhythm of the mantra. Some people splash water on their faces, to make themselves completely alert. Some take off their shoes. All of these are personal choices; whatever you choose to do is OK.

- Stick to your allotted time: Don't extend your meditation period if it is going "well," and don't cut it short if it's going "poorly." Be faithful, and be gentle with yourself.

- "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." In other words, do what you are able to do NOW. Don't wait for the perfect time, place, mood or circumstances. Just make a new start each day.

- Don't get upset at continual distractions. The mind wants to be in control in meditation. Thoughts, images, insights, emotions, hopes, regrets and even brilliant ideas can arise and distract us. Don't use any energy to dispel them. Simply ignore them and say your mantra. We cannot force this way of prayer through sheer willpower. No matter how distracted we are when meditating, our will remains tuned to the presence of God. To handle distractions, we need a gentleness and patience that will reveal the Spirit, working silently within us.

- Lay aside expectations, goals and results. Be as open as you can to whatever happens in your own meditation experience. There is no such thing as a right or wrong, good or bad, meditation. Meditation challenges

us to overcome our self-centeredness. Can we meditate without concern for where God is leading us? Can we meditate faithfully when distractions bombard us? Can we meditate when nothing "happens"? Jesus asked his disciples, "Could you not watch one hour with me?" In our daily meditation, we watch this one hour with Jesus. We surrender ourselves and rest in God.

- In addition to the spiritual effects of Christian meditation there are physiological effects as well, if we can persevere over the years. These benefits can include less stress, less anger, anxiety and depression, increased energy, greater creativity, emotional wellbeing, self-confidence, patience and self-esteem, not to mention anti-aging benefits. St Paul hints at some of these fruits of the Spirit. Since we are one entity – body, mind and spirit – these side effects of meditation can be accepted graciously with thanks. However John Main felt we should keep our priorities straight. Meditation is primarily a faith-filled spiritual discipline of prayer. Any health side effects should be considered secondary.

- Let's leave the final words to John Main. In one of his talks he says: "To meditate you must learn to be still. Meditation is perfect stillness of body and spirit. In that stillness we open our hearts to the eternal silence of God, to be swept out of ourselves, beyond ourselves, by the power of that silence. Where are we when we meditate? We are in God. Where is God? He is in us. The presence in our heart is that of the living Christ, and the supreme task of every life that would be fully human is to be open to that presence." ♦

PEI: CHRISTIAN MEDITATION AND YOGA RETREAT

Prayer in Motion

“Grace and Gratitude” – this was the theme for this year’s annual PEI Christian meditation and yoga retreat, inspirationally led by Sister Kathleen Bolger, Teri Hall and Rachel Leslie.

More than twenty participants gathered at the newly built Our Lady of Hope retreat centre, situated in Stanley Bridge. The centre overlooks the bay with its surrounding dunes, and the view was framed in the changing colours of the fall trees and the red earth of the fields. The setting was ideal for reconnecting with nature and the teachings of meditation and yoga.

The centre’s administrators, Earla and Martin Avery, and their able staff prepared delicious meals from scratch, and went above and beyond in their consideration for each guest.

Most of the retreat was held in silence – so that each person could have the experience of journeying deeper into his or her own stillness.

In her sessions, Sister Kathleen weaved seamlessly together the interconnectedness of science, creation and meditation. Teri and Rachel’s yoga sessions complemented this experience by sharing their



TERI HALL

Laughter, tears, joy and peace

love for prayer in motion, body uniting with soul. Throughout the weekend, there was laughter, tears, joy, and an overall feeling of peace.

Next year’s retreat will be held on the weekend of September 7-9, 2018. It will certainly be another enriching journey into stillness.

Rachel Leslie
PEI

Calendar of Events

British Columbia

Saturday, March 24, 2018
10:00 am–2 :00 pm

Introduction to Christian Meditation

Saint Mary’s Catholic Church
956 Gibsons Way, Gibsons, BC
(Sunshine Coast)

May 25-27, 2018

Essential Teaching Weekend

Little Flower Monastery at Carmel Hill,
Deroche, BC.

Contact for both events: JoAnn
jlculen@telus.net or 604-922-8856

Winnipeg

Saturday, February 24

Meditation Silent Retreat Day: Be still and know that I am God

9:45 to 3:30: 2 periods of meditation
videos • times for stillness

St Paul’s Anglican Church
830 North Drive (at Point Rd.)

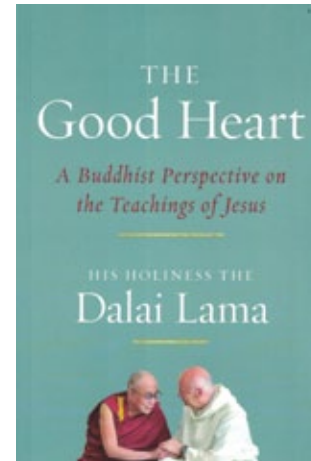
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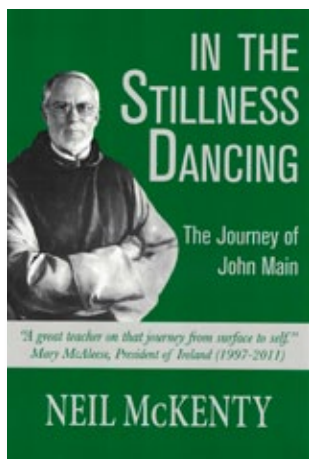
The Good Heart \$20

This book explores passages from the Gospels with the Dalai Lama and participants at the 1994 John Main Seminar. In addition to capturing the proceedings of the Seminar, this book has been augmented with additional contextual materials on the Christian and Buddhist traditions, to enhance its use as a tool for future interreligious dialogue. Recommended reading by Father Laurence Freeman.



Christian Meditation Reflections \$15

In October 2014, Christian meditation was introduced to students of Ontario's Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic District School Board. This ancient prayer has a long lineage in our Christian faith tradition dating back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 4th and 5th centuries. This book presents some of our students' experiences.



In the Stillness Dancing \$23

New edition, revised and edited by Catharine McKenty

As author Neil McKenty said of this book in 1986: "Perhaps the story of John Main OSB would not have been published at all without the co-operation of Father John's successor as Prior, Laurence Freeman OSB. It was his idea that a biography should be written. He discussed it with me, and I agreed. Since I began research in May 1983, in Ireland and England (with my wife Catharine), Father Laurence has been a tower of strength. He has given us material and insights associated with Father John. He has provided both encouragement and caution when these were required. He has never interfered with the integrity of the biography even when, I feel sure, he would have written a passage differently or omitted it altogether. Working with Father Laurence on Father John's biography has been an enriching part of our pilgrimage."

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

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JOHN MAIN IN MONTREAL

A legacy and a way of life

It was forty years ago that Dom John Main arrived in Montreal from the UK with little more than what was in his heart – which was the absolute knowledge of the sustaining primacy of love. He came to open a monastery – to establish a community – to teach prayer in the Benedictine tradition to the people of Montreal.

Always ready for adventure, this for Father John was the one that his whole life had prepared him for. For the five years or so that we knew him, Dom John taught us to meditate – the prayer of the heart – the prayer of the Risen Christ – to recognise Christ within ourselves, and within one another.

Father John was himself transformed during those last years of his life. He lived with such a sense of urgency, such passion, as he went deeper and deeper into silence – the one reality that does not cease to change.

One is made aware of this growth in his recorded talks, given on Monday and Tuesday evenings at the Priory, from the earliest ones to the sublime affirmations in the ‘Last Conferences’.

As for so many, as well as for me, Father John’s dying was his greatest gift – his final and greatest adventure. This is what we are celebrating today.

Much water has flowed under the bridge since those early years. Yet, one of the gifts of age is to clearly see how marvellously logical and meaningful a progression there is in life’s seemingly random events. What we did not see then, we see now.

To be here in this place, the Saint Anthony of Padua Centre and the former home of Unitas, is poignantly meaningful for me. It has come full circle, as if it were a compass, a pointer to the real meaning of things.

We owe a deep gratitude to Fr Laurence Freeman, who sends his love from Ireland’s Bere Island. We are grateful for his tireless work in bringing the teaching of meditation to the ends of the world.

So, tonight let us celebrate our Teacher, who has left us such an enduring legacy – a legacy that each of us must take to their heart, and make into a way of life, and in this way to pass this tradition on to our contemporaries.

If you want to really get to know Dom John, and if you really want to learn how to meditate, listen to his talks. Here, as nowhere else, will you find the real teaching on Christian meditation.

Do not embellish, do not complicate the teaching – keep yourself out of it. The ‘naked intent’, as the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* says, is all you need. Do not proselytize. Just say your mantra, and be a light in this world.

In meditation, in the forgetting of self, you will find that the Teacher, the Teaching, and you, the Disciple, are one.

Polly Schofield
Coordinator of the Montreal Centre
December 30, 2017

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