



Seeds of peace

Teaching meditation to children around the world now will change the future (p.6-9)



Students meditating in a class in Fiji (top) and in Australia (below)

Meditation Retreat at Bonnevaux for Young Adults (24 July-4 August)



Bonnevaux will host a retreat for young adult meditators (18-40) led by experienced practitioners under the guidance of Fr Laurence. The first part offers times for meditation, silence and yoga, as well as creative activities such as pottery, writing, music, and dancing. Participants will share in the life of the resident community. The second part (optional) will be walking the Camino to Compostela. See page 10 for more.

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Dear Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB:
December 30th, Commemoration of John Main

Dearest Friends

The great Benedictine scholar Jean Leclercq, who was also a great traveller, once wrote an excellent article on Stability for *Monastic Studies*. Maybe to deflect critics who might accuse him of inconsistency – and they are always close at hand – he used to say ‘I am a very bad monk. But I am very much a monk.’ Humility (the genuine kind) and humour (in moderation) are great defences and strengths. They enable us to live with the self-contradictions we all carry with us as part of the baggage of life, not to be too dependent on others’ opinion of us and not to take ourselves too seriously. All these are essential attributes for the spiritual life. Baggage there will always be. However much we may reduce it, there will always be some we have to drag on and off the various vehicles that carry us from one phase of life to the next.

At the cusp of a new year we try to shed some of the baggage. We look backwards and forwards. Janus (after whom January is named) was the Roman god of beginnings and transitions and of doors, gates and time. He was two faced, looking in both directions at once. There are moments when we too see like this. For me this time of the year recalls the loss of John Main as well as the beginning of what became the World Community – something at the time he saw coming more clearly than I could.

Jean Leclercq wrote to me soon after John Main died (December 30th 1982) to say that he had heard the news: “So Fr John has leapt into the light. I envy him. I pity you.” We are born into contradictions and we live with paradoxes.

Relationships change constantly.

When someone tells me they have a relationship that has no weaknesses, doubts or frictions, I wonder. I sense an attempt to persuade themselves of something they may not really believe themselves. When we are in any relationship, but especially one in which we have invested our identity and hope for the future, we are continuously edged towards new, uncertain levels of self-knowledge. So are those we are in the relationship with.

Even in the deepest relationships, where profound communion has grown, we remain individuals with our baggage that we have to carry ourselves. Sometimes we prefer stasis in a relationship – pressing the pause button when we are in a good phase – but, whether we like it or not, we are always changing and helping

*We are born into
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each other to grow. However settled and domesticated we become, something will always happens to start a new adventure. One person may relish the challenge while the other resists it. Rarely do we grow at the same rate, in the same ways, and never always in sync.

In Bonnevaux the other day I was looking at some garlic in the upper meadow planted recently by Thomas, our enthusiastic permaculture gardener who is cultivating our first fields. He was excitedly showing me the first green shoot to appear. But he couldn’t tell me why that one had sprung up first or how far behind the others would be or when the last slow one would eventually appear. We grow together, obedient to the

same laws but differently.

To be in relationship with someone whose self-knowledge is more advanced than your own presents challenges but also wonderful opportunities. Perhaps marriage isn’t the best receptacle for that formula of relationship but it is certainly at the heart of the guru-disciple relationship. Many marriages struggle for a long time to achieve a balance of personal strengths and integration of roles. The imbalance of power in a marriage is often a cause of jokes – the over-submissive or over-dominant spouse – but also of suffering. If there is not a conscious process in which balance is being achieved – even if it is hidden deep in the secrets of the relationship – the relationship will struggle to be the vehicle of self-knowledge that all relationships should be.

At both the deepest spiritual level and the highest cosmic level we can see this happening in our relationship with the Mind of Christ. Jesus claimed to ‘know where I have come from and where I am going’. That he ‘knew the Father’ meant that he knew himself. And thus he knows us and the whole great plan of which we and the rest of humanity are part. No one, Christian or not, would deny that he (and all that Jesus of Nazareth began) has changed humanity’s awareness of itself. The disciple of Jesus, even at an early stage of that journey, experiences that change at an intimate, interior and integrated level. Encountering the self-knowledge of Jesus (which is the Holy Spirit he said would come) is to feel an explosive boost to our own process of knowing and understanding ourselves.

I was saying mass on Bere Island recently for a major feast and asked the two altar servers what they knew

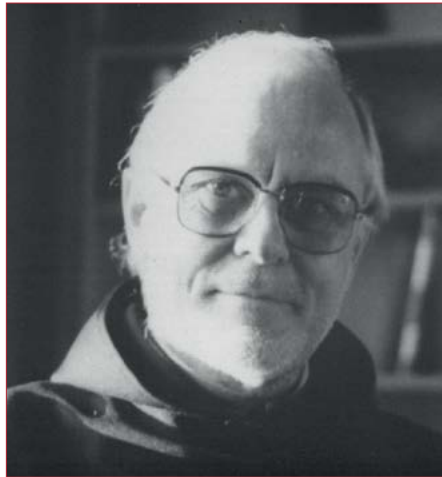
about the feast. Neither of them had any idea. The habits of religious practice have diverged from the basic narratives of Christian faith as ways of meaning. Without these stories that grow in meaning as faith deepens the external practice soon becomes empty and meaningless. Do we need a massive PR campaign and advertising blitz to reignite the transmission of the faith as some church leaders desperately think? Or do those who are neither ambivalent nor embarrassed by their Christian identity need to speak less, to deepen their silence. They then allow the Spirit to turn them, not into salesmen of the gospel but into the gospel itself. In this tradition the disciple has always been seen primarily not as a promoter but as an *alter Christus*, another Christ.

I had my own time as an altar server. I even continued to go to church until, as I got older, I found that the Church and its promoters just didn't seem to connect with the questions and issues I was dealing with. I didn't get angry, just drifted away. In John Main I came to see that I was seeing Christ. After a while I felt that Christ was patiently, steadily, lovingly, gazing at me in a way I had never expected possible, without judgement or conditionality. Over the years and through his dying I saw Fr John become another Christ even as he became more uniquely and irreplaceably himself. There are no words to describe this union of identity because in such a union words are increasingly redundant until eventually they dissolve into the absolute silence of a presence that is love.

I found this (I wasn't looking for it) within monastic life. The outward form of the life was not very appealing and at times even embarrassing

but the emerging encounter was far stronger than that. I realised that the mystery of this relationship needed stability, fidelity and endurance that serious relationship requires in any form of life.

In married life there is a danger of domesticating the stability into routines so that the relationship gets buried under daily busyness and distraction. In the life of any contem-



John Main OSB

plative community there is a similar tendency to equate domesticity with stability, to see the chant of the rhythm of prayer as a lullaby or to make the cloister an escape rather than a *laboratory*.

I like that compound word *laboratory*. It is made up of *labor* - work, like planting garlic or welcoming guests; and *oratio* - prayer, like singing psalms or saying the mantra. It captures the dynamic, not just of monastic but of all life. I have come to feel that if the monastic life achieves radical simplicity – in any authentic form – it harmonises with all other authentic kinds of life. This is our vision and aspiration in Bonnevaux – to harmonise and reconnect different forms of modern life through the radical stability of meditation and a contemplative community. This in-

volves solitude but it is also an endlessly renewed encounter with others.

All the members of a community, like members of a family, live together at differing stages of their journey. They connect to each other and heal and support each other through their weaknesses and strengths. Both their desire for and their fear of personal change bring them together. This is achieved if the community is built not on the principle of narcissism, seeking *my* own fulfilment, but on the principle of service, caring for *your* fulfilment. Service not self-seeking. A 'school of the Lord's service' is how St Benedict describes it. This is today, as always has been, about as counter-cultural as you can get.

The glamour of novelty, the illusions spun by false expectations, wear off quickly when the 'school' starts to bring you down to earth. It can then teach you how to learn and *how* to serve. Self-deception and denial are soon exposed. How do we react to this? Either with blame, anger and self-withdrawal or with humility, humour and deepening commitment. Many people are attracted to community (or marriage) for authentic reasons but they also fear the challenges and demands. They want to escape their sense of disconnection and loneliness. But they also resist reality when it appears too starkly. Just as many today postpone the commitment to become spouses while remaining 'partners', others want to come into community but with reservations and conditions.

Of course, at first that's sensible and necessary. It takes time to be clear about any serious commitment and to become familiar with the path of self-knowledge. A time in community may be right for a period

to teach you how to make a deeper kind of commitment in another form of life. (In some Asian monastic cultures a short period as a monk is seen as preparing a man to be a better husband). By gently growing in a spirit of service we learn what commitment means. We also learn how to commit and what to. We discover that the experience of relationship, of community, of communion that we thirst for requires that we learn to serve.

John Main invites us to a serious commitment to meditation practice but he also recognised it takes time – differently for each person – to arrive at the discipline of the twice-daily sessions integrated into ordinary life. His own commitment was not only to the practice but to the extraordinary focus of his teaching on practice. He did not speak so much of the benefits – social or personal – although he saw the value of the practice in transforming both. His commitment was to inspire and encourage people to begin and keep on beginning. He once described meditation to cleaning a tarnished bronze table and said how it was small repeated strokes, in one area after another, that would best restore its obscured beauty.

‘Commitment’ is a scary word at the best of times and these are not the best of times. A friendlier word to describe what it means is ‘embodied’. The ‘-mit’ part of the word commit comes from the Latin meaning to *send*. By commitment we *send* ourselves. We go out from ourselves, push out from shore into the ocean of faith. To commit means to give oneself to the tangible, the actual, the embraceable and to feel that you truly belong in the arms of the real.

..that which we have heard and we have seen, that which we have perceived with our eyes and we have touched with our hands (Jn1:1)

John Main was a very embodied person. He was also very much a monk and a good monk. But his

insight penetrated far beyond that particular form of life. It led him to understand the meaning of relationship itself and how we are capable of it – or not – in modern culture. He saw the painful prison of individualism, isolation and loneliness in which so many feel locked. Since his day digital culture has greatly intensified this problem. For him, though, salvation meant, firstly, to be liberated from that separated sense of self and healed of the experience of division from our self and others. These experiences drive much of the depression and mental illness among the young.

He also knew that the ‘crisis of the self’ has gone so far that traditional ways of communicating the healing message of the gospel merely bounce off this wall of separateness. The good news is that we are not alone and divided. We are embodied and tangible and known. Our true self, embedded in the web of being, is loveable like everyone and everything else. Self-knowledge is to touch the love which is the source of our being, and is being itself.

Through his own struggles and within his monastic tradition John Main saw a way through our modern crisis. It begins by recognising that the core of the crisis and its cure involves the rediscovery of the human spirit. For religious institutions this simple first step can be a huge stumbling block when religion itself has become de-spiritualised. Religious forms, loyalties, identities and beliefs can even become force-fields that deflect the energies of the spirit. Religion has fallen into this sorry, self-contradicting state in other periods of history, as Jesus understood about the religiosity of his own time. In each of these eras where religion became disconnected from people’s spiritual hunger the way forward comes as a rediscovery of the contemplative dimension. This dimension applies to all forms of human

life and to each personal consciousness. We may debate about whether Jesus imagined a new religion called ‘Christianity’. But there is no question about the contemplative nature of his spiritual teaching – interiority, silence, equanimity and being in the now. This underpins his social vision of a world finally freed from violence and injustice.

According to John Main nothing is more urgent for us now than to rediscover the spiritual dimension and its energies. He did not say meditation was the only way to do this. He believed that love is the way. But meditation is a work of love that dismantles all that disempowers our capacity to love. For the new meditator love will become visible as the first fruit of their new practice. It may not be what they expected or even thought they needed. It will also reveal that the solitude of their practice connects them to a different kind of experience of relationship, of community. This evolves. As a ‘school of service’ it becomes a place where the hard shell of loneliness cracks open to reveal the true self in the boundless nature of relationship.

Fr John’s theology breathes through the model of relationship expressed in the Christian understanding of the Trinity. Here God is seen as relationship, communion and community. Not an anthropomorphic God. But as the way for human beings to understand themselves. Not God as a philosophical idea to be proven or debated. Or as a magical ego-projection offering false consolation. But God as the love that every human being seeks and that cannot be reduced to biology, neurotransmitters or even to desire.

We seek love, named or not. Therefore, we seek God whether we believe or not. ‘Whoever loves lives in God and God lives in them’. The ego will fail to understand this because it wants to possess what it seeks, if and

when it finds it. Whoever truly seeks will find but then, as truly, we *will* lose, in myriad ways, in each phase of our life. God is the human quest that gives meaning to life whether or not we believe. Religion wants us to 'believe'. God just wants us to love. Once any goal has been achieved we soon become restless again. We will never be fully satisfied even by finding what we are looking for. After a few cycles, this leads either to cynicism or faith. We either disdain the search or plummet deeper into the whirlpool of reality. We find God and lose God in the same instant. The mystics of all traditions understand this better than the 'learned and the clever'.

For many clever thinkers today all this is an outdated mystique for explaining the human condition. They believe (and it has become a new orthodoxy) that the meaning of life is better described by a combination of psychology, economics, social science and neurology. God is just bad fiction. The spiritual dimension is just a room of mirrors. Consciousness? Well, we don't know yet how consciousness arises from the electrical activity of the brain but it *must* be merely a product of things not the origin of everything. This new materialism has become a dogma and generates its own prejudices just as religion does. It is a two dimensional humanism with length and breadth but no depth. It often ridicules and denies the spiritual, depth dimension, rejecting it after identifying it with the worst aspects of religion. Culturally, this is a receipt for deceit. Psychologically, it burns the bridges that connect us to all wisdom traditions. Spiritually, it strands us on a floating iceberg where we just imagine how we can bio-engineer ourselves to become the God we no longer think is real.

So when John Main said thirty years ago that the most important of modern tasks is to recover the spiri-

tual dimension, has this become any less true or urgent? Maybe because of his background in diplomacy, law and education he was eminently practical. Maybe true contemplatives are the least abstract and the most embodied of contemporaries. He believed that recovering the spiritual must begin by learning to know and love ourselves. If we cannot get back into relationship with ourselves as we are how can we relate to anything or anyone else realistically?

However resistant we may be to that process of self-discovery, there is



Contemplative Exchange 2017

no way of sidestepping it. I was once participating in a conference with scientists and religious leaders. One scientist impressed me intellectually more than the religious leaders but he was irrationally condemnatory of religion – the cause of illusion, wars, intolerance etc. I asked him if, on the same premise, he thought we could ban science because the scientific method was applied in the concentration camps and the best scientific minds of the time produced the atomic bomb. In the meditation period he sat in front of me ostentatiously and loudly leafing through a booklet. Later someone said to him 'meditation is so important because it helps me see what's going inside me' With wonderful honesty the scientist replied 'that's why I don't meditate. I don't want to know what's going inside me at all!'

It's not only some scientists but many religious and other kinds of people who find the first step so difficult. We all resist a self-knowledge that is deeper than that found at the

conceptual, self-reflective level. But if we don't go there we cannot discover the spiritual dimension. Just how resistant we can be is evident when we say we want to meditate and then make excuses for not meditating.

What we actually believe at this first step is not so important. But we must have enough *faith* in ourselves to take it. The beauty is in discovering that it is always a first step. Soon, if we allow sufficient space and time for the experience of love to emerge, we see how self-knowledge ripples outwards affecting all our relationships and propelling us towards the ungraspable horizon of the unknown God.

This year's John Main Seminar (in Vancouver, Canada) is on the theme of 'Contemplative Christianity' and is led by a masterly young theologian, Sarah Bachelard. She leads a contemplative parish community in Australia and participates in the Contemplative Exchange group that emerged from our Snowmass meeting last year. We are living in times that are often dark and disturbing. To hear the spiritual leaders of the future looking, from a contemplative perspective, at what we are going through helps restore hope and revive faith. These qualities produce love and it is love, in unexpected manifestations, that will illumine our decisions. In July there will be a retreat for young adult meditators at Bonnevaux. They too see things differently. Maybe together, meditators from different generations meeting in the same experience of community will be able to see the blessed simplicity of the next step, the big leap of consciousness, that humanity must take.

Laurence

Laurence Freeman OSB

Special

Education for a new World: Teaching Children to Meditate Sowing now for a Contemplative Future

Teaching children and young people to meditate is an urgent endeavor, a gift and a contribution to the sanity of our world. This outreach work shows increasing activity around the world. In the latest international report we see 30 countries reporting work in this vital area. With very few exceptions, the activities are conducted by a very small team of volunteers. In this issue of our newsletter, we highlight some of this work around the world.

Uruguay: Third Retreat for Children who Meditate



This September we held the third retreat for children who meditate with growth in numbers and depth. Almost 100 children came to the *Mary Help of Christians House* in Lezica, Montevideo. They came from different parts of the country, representing Schools, Parishes and Children's Clubs and showed an infectious joy in the contemplative path they are beginning. The theme was *Interiority*. With coordinators from our community and educators who came with the children, we walked the path to the centre, to the heart that the children understand so well. We had unforgettably beautiful moments of communion in the Spirit through silence, games, the contemplation of nature, the sharing of food and art. We are so thankful for the promise of peace that these children bring us and the future of our world. (Carina Conte)

Fiji: Meditation Team visited 53 Schools in 2018

Each time we visit a school we leave edified by the openness of both teachers and children to the practice. This year we visited 53 schools both primary and secondary, urban and rural, as well as Boys' Town, Navesi. Without the generosity of the meditation team this would not have been possible. Sr Torika and I are also grateful to Mere and Tema, members of our community at the Prayer Centre, who have always, smilingly and graciously left us free to do this work. (Sr Denise McMahan)



Luxembourg: Meditation included in First Communion Preparation

Christian meditation was introduced to two classes of 35 children preparing for their first Holy Communion in our parish - the city parish of Notre Dame in Luxembourg city. Our congregation meets in the Redemptorist church and monastery in the center of town. We are a very multicultural and multilingual community drawn from 44 different countries worldwide. The language of communication and instruction is English. This year the numbers have far exceeded expectation and an additional class has been formed. Par-

ents are responsible for leading the classes under the guidance of an experienced catechist. It is the first time that meditation will be incorporated into the teaching program for first Holy Communion. The parents were informed of this by the catechist who oversees the program. At a later stage it has been proposed that I speak with the parents as a group. The children are eight years old. We began with two minutes of meditation and intend to build up to eight minutes over the course of the six-month period. (Marcella McCarthy)

Special

South Africa: Project will Bring Meditation to Rural Schools

The Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) serves the needs of 334 Catholic schools in South Africa. Many of these schools lie in deep rural areas and encounter the hardships and problems typical of poorer communities. A WCCM project in partnership with the CIE aims to bring Christian Meditation to some of these schools. According to the WCCM National Coordinator, Paul Faller, since access to the meditation events and materials relied in the past on the ability of schools to travel to central venues – often some 100-200 or more kilometres distant – this project seeks to bring the work to schools that have not previously enjoyed the benefits of being in attendance.

An ongoing effort to bring meditation – as taught by John Main and the World Community for Christian

Meditation – to Catholic schools in South Africa has been a feature of the work of CIE's Religious Education Department since 2012. The inspiration for this work was the project initiated by Catholic Education in the Diocese of Townsville, Australia. Introductory workshops, short courses, provision of supporting materials and the maintenance of a teacher network have been some of the ways in which the Department has attempted to instil a practice of meditation among teachers and students in the schools.

It is proposed that meditation will be introduced and monitored in six areas of South Africa where the work would be supported by the presence of CIE offices and their regional managers. Introductory workshops will be followed up by



a second visit within three months to schools that have shown some level of commitment to meditation. Such commitment would be demonstrated by monthly reports from a designated person at each school. Further support will be given on an ongoing basis through the provision of monthly materials and visits from regional managers. (Paul Faller, National Coordinator)

Philippines: Spreading the Gift for Parents



JM Rebueno, leading a meditation session with with parents of the gratuating seniors in Philippines.

Miriam College, an all-girls school, asked that I facilitate a Recollection with parents of the graduating seniors. This event is hosted annually for graduating students. Parents were introduced to and experienced Christian meditation, with some contemplative breathing and listening as a preparation, while waiting to pick up their daughters at school after a two-day out-of-town retreat. The theme of the student retreat concluded with the line, "bring themselves and their family into the presence of God." This theme under-

scored my sharing simple contemplative practices with parents open to meeting their daughters halfway in the presence of God. Based on their wide-eyed nods, happy smiles, questions, comments and feedback, I feel they had indeed learned how to begin to meditate. Feedback ranged from feeling relaxed, calm, mind-rested (after a stressful drive), gratitude for reminding them to deeply listen to one another with eye-to-eye contact, with no agenda, and the simplicity of the practice to connect them with God. (JM Rebueno)

Special

Canada: Noel Keating presentation to school boards in Toronto area



Meditation with children continues to spread in Catholic schools throughout Ontario. As part of our Meditatio Outreach, we brought Dr. Noel Keating to Ottawa and Toronto area to present his research findings on meditation with children. Noel is the WCCM National Coordinator and leads the Coordination for Meditation with Children in Ireland. His book *Meditation with*

Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents based on his research has been widely acclaimed in education fields. Noel presented to five school boards with a focus on the role spirituality plays in the well-being of children and how meditation provides both benefits and fruits. In February 14, 2019 I will be presenting a workshop at the Catholic Educators' Conference in Vancouver with the hope of bringing CMC to schools on the west coast. I will also be doing a presentation with Mary Theresa Coene in Ottawa on April 5, 2019 at the National Conference on Evangelization and Catechesis hosted by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. (Paul Tratnyek, International Coordinator for Meditation with Children)

Australia: focus on the formation of teachers



In the Lismore Diocese (New South Wales), Christian meditation continues to be embedded within our schools. 2018 has seen particular interest from our secondary colleges with very positive results from both teachers and students alike. For staff, our inaugural two-day retreat of Stillness, Silence and Simplicity was held in Lismore and was very well received. The deep-

ening of the staff experience adds further to the student experience. The number of staff who attended more than doubled.

We also held a Full day "Sharing the Gift" Teachers' Workshop in Adelaide (South Australia) on 6 September for 50 teachers. A further day will be held in March 2019 to train those who will facilitate such days in the future and a whole school introduction to Christian meditation is scheduled for that time too. Each State has a programme and facilitators who respond to individual schools and also embark on Formation Days and Teachers Retreats to gather many who are "Sharing the Gift" with youngster in their care. (Helen Hunter and Penny Sturrock)

Scotland: growing interest



I am presently concentrating on setting up meditation in three secondary schools and their sixteen associated primaries in Motherwell Diocese. For some of the primaries it has meant going back after a change of Head or of staff and for others teaching the staff from scratch and then illustrating this by teaching two or three of their classes. In each of the secondaries I taught forty or more Sixth Form Caritas students. Then we went, initially together, to teach six classes of first year pupils in their Religious Education classes. In one school we also arranged to visit the primary schools and support meditation there.

One of the secondaries reported an extremely positive effect on the first year classes as a result of the classes taught by the Caritas students. This format is now being introduced into the other two secondary schools. There are too many schools for individual visits to each one. Consequently, I have been asked by the Religious Education Advisors for Glasgow and Edinburgh dioceses and the Motherwell Diocese to give in-service sessions to their Primary Headteachers. (Pat Hay).

Special

Indonesia: a day for teachers and parents to go deeper



Fr. Laurence came to visit us in November. He spent time with the Christian community in Semarang, Central Java of Indonesia and had the opportunity to speak to teachers and parents about meditation with children. The 204 participants from the Christian community included 112 teachers, 2 Jesuit priests and 7 intermediate seminarian students.

The day began with Fr. Laurence meditating with those assembled. After, he described the first time he

introduced meditation to children in Canada in 1977. Fr. John Main had been asked to go to Montreal to establish a Benedictine monastery to teach lay people Christian meditation and he went, accompanied by Fr. Laurence. A woman in Montreal soon approached them to give religious teaching to her children. Being busy, Fr. Laurence initially refused but after some prompting from Fr. John, he accepted. Each session, after teaching them about the gospel, he taught them to meditate just as as adults do, with the only difference being the duration of the meditation time (one minute per year of their age). Fr Laurence was amazed at their response and enjoyment of the experience. He discovered then that giving the gift of meditation to children is a gift for life

In the middle of the seminar Fr. Laurence led another meditation

session. Prior to meditating he talked about "letting go and letting God" followed by some basic instructions on how to meditate. Fr. Laurence provided several guidelines for the teachers on teaching meditation to children. He said the most important element to teach is attention. It is not easy for children to pay attention in the times we are living because of all the distractions around them. We see this everywhere with their gadgets. This will be a challenge for teachers.

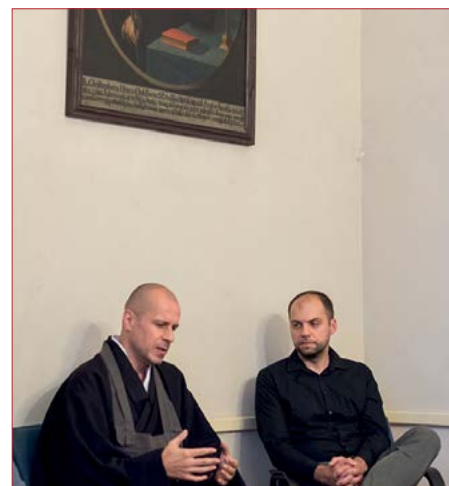
At the end of the session, Br. Bayu, CSA from Semarang community gave a presentation about meditation with children currently taking place in several Indonesian cities. Where children are meditating, teachers have observed them to be calmer and more focused in class. We left the day with the message that basically it is not difficult to teach children how to meditate. (Johanna Wisoli)

News

Interfaith Dialogue in Czech Republic

After ten years, the WCCM in the Czech Republic took part for the first time in an interfaith event. The gathering happened in September in a refectory of St. Thomas monastery in Prague and was well attended and received. The theme was reflecting our 'experience of meditation' with representatives from other religions. I think it is more and more urgent to understand our common ground in this experience in order to find a source of healing and re-integration in our troubled world. We were four: myself (Vladimir, from

WCCM), Petr Vacíka (Jesuit), Won Hye (Zen Buddhist monk from Korean Kwan Um Zen school) and Radek Steiger (ordained monk from Japanese Sotó Zen.) We meditated together which always seems the best way to share space and time in intimacy and friendship. Then, we introduced our respective traditions and discussed our perspectives on practice, techniques of meditation and fruits of silence. We didn't agree on everything, but we deeply experienced a spirit of mutual understanding. (Vladimír Volráb)



News

A new year, a new era for Bonnevaux

This year Bonnevaux re-opens as a contemplative centre. It is also the 900th anniversary of its foundation as a Benedictine monastery in 1119. During this new era we will bless the first phase of the renovation and hold the first retreats and events.



On June 15th a blessing will open the Abbaye and Conference centre while the work on the Guesthouse continues with scheduled completion for December 2019. The WCCM

Holy Week retreat will be held at Bonnevaux, although because the Guesthouse will not be finished participants will stay in nearby accommodation. Other retreats will be held during the year and these will be published shortly on the Bonnevaux website. Individual meditators and groups from national communities will be welcomed. Contemplative Leadership events for the business world will host companies and institutions wishing to explore new ways of work and service to the world. The Bonnevaux Centre for Peace is a physical expression of John Main's insight of the power of meditation to transform individuals and society and of a global monastery without walls.

Underpinning the programme will be the daily rhythm of silence, *ora et labora* and 'welcoming each guest as Christ himself', as St Benedict says.

Retreat for Young Adults

'Young' is a state, not a measurement, but this retreat focuses on meditators between 18 and 40. Those with more experience of life will be of help to the younger and the younger can help re-energise the older. The retreat is in two parts: the first at Bonnevaux (24-31 July) sharing in the life of the community, meditation, yoga, worship, work and study, as well as creative activities such as pottery, writing, music, and dancing. There will be an opportunity to work on the land and our new organic farm project. There will be times for sharing and personal direction. In the second part (optional, 1-4 August) there will be a few days walking along the Camino to Compostela. Those who wish, can then return to Bonnevaux for additional time sharing in the life of the community, getting to know more fully its mission as a centre of and for peace and for personal and social transformation. For more information contact:

accueil@bonnevauxwccm.org

Visit: www.bonnevauxwccm.org

Renovation still in progress



2016 was the year that Bonnevaux found the WCCM. We became its stewards as legal owners in October 2017. 2018 was a year of many small miracles and great transformation. In 2019 the work continues on schedule. The Abbaye (the main house where the resident community and some guests will live) will be finished by April. With a capacity for nearly 200, the Conference Centre (the barn) will follow in June. Fr. Laurence will be resident at Bonnevaux after Easter.

Fundraising is now focused especially on the scheduled completion of the Guesthouse with 25 guest-rooms, bookshop and dining and meeting rooms. We still need your help to achieve this. Every gift - small or large encourages us - and makes a difference. Thank you!

In Focus

Sr Denise McMahon, Fiji



I come from a traditional Catholic Australian family with Irish roots. Growing up, the faith was important in my family. I was sent to Catholic schools and taught by the 'Sisters' who were influential in imparting our Christian heritage. I grew up as a child in the 1950s, a time in Australia when there were many refugees arriving from war-torn Europe. Our street was a veritable United Nations and my special friends were the Polish children. The Slavic traditions were particularly enriching and I was fascinated with their customs, religious symbols and celebrations, particularly of Easter and Christmas, which they willingly shared with us.

My novitiate with the Missionary

Sisters of the Society of Mary was on a beautiful property in rural Victoria. It had a magical, rambling garden leading on to rich farm land. The beauty of the environment was food for the soul. In the novitiate, we were taught the Ignatian method of mental prayer which was not easy. After profession and teacher training I was assigned to Bougainville, followed by Vanuatu, and then Fiji where I have been for the last twenty-five years. Although I remained faithful to daily personal prayer I always felt there was something more.

In God's good time I was introduced to Christian Meditation by Fr. Denis Mahony, newly assigned to Suva. Soon after arriving he began teaching meditation with a series of Saturday teachings which a small group, including myself and two other community members were invited to. At the end of the six week course Father encouraged us to begin our own groups which we did. It was an act of faith. We had no idea who, if anyone, would join us. On the first evening, a Peace Corps Volunteer, who had read the notice we had placed in the parish newsletter, arrived. From that time on our

small group grew and was enriched by numerous people, both Fiji residents and people living temporarily in Fiji.

I have had the privilege of being part of the Fiji meditation community since its beginning. One of the most satisfying experiences has been the outreach to the schools. This year our schools' team visited 53 schools, both primary and secondary, urban and rural. Meditation is now part of the daily school practice. We hope to continue to visit these schools each year for as long as we can. We know we are simply sowing seeds but note that children understand intuitively the prayer of silence and stillness and readily enter in to it.

As a missionary, I believe meditation is important in evangelization. The daily practice is a training time in learning to live the spirit of the gospels. At the centre we are one regardless of what faith tradition we belong to. Christian Meditation is one of the greatest graces I have received. Belonging to the meditation communities, both locally and world-wide has enriched my life and I am grateful to God.



Meditatio Newsletter is published four times a year by the International Office of The World Community for Christian Meditation, St Marks, Myddelton Square London EC1R 1XX, London, UK.
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Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 March.

Resources & Events

The Meditatio Centre 2019 Programme



The programme of events and activities for 2019 at the Meditatio Centre in London is available online. Download it here: <http://tiny.cc/MedCt19>

Meditation and the 11th Step in Recovery

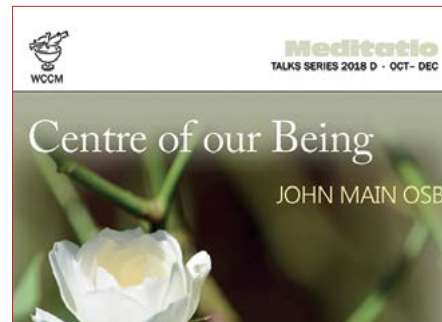
The 11th step outreach 'wheel of prayer' picked up speed when the online meditation groups began. These groups allow us to reach and share this way of prayer with other meditators in recovery. The first one began August 2017 in the US and recently a second group was established in New Zealand. Following are our current groups and scheduled programs:

- * US, Canada, UK and New Zealand have 11th Step groups practicing in the John Main Tradition;

- * UK offers 11th Step retreats twice a year;

- * The first Essential Teaching Week-

Audio & CDs



In these talks, John Main speaks of meditation as a pilgrimage to the centre of our being where the Spirit of God dwells. Listen to or download the tracks: <http://tiny.cc/Med2018D>

Order a copy of the CD:
<http://tiny.cc/CentreBeing>

Retreats & Seminars



Holy Week Retreat (April 14-21)

led by Laurence Freeman OSB.
Bonnevaux, Marçay, France. Contact:
easter2019@bonnevauxwccm.org

Monte Oliveto Retreat:

Who do You Say I Am? (June 1-8)

led by Laurence Freeman OSB and
Giovanni Felicioni
Siena, Italy. Contact:
monteoliveto@wccm.org



John Main Seminar 2019: A Contemplative Christianity for our Time (August 5-11)

led by Rev. Dr. Sarah Bachelard
Vancouver, Canada. More infor-
mation: <http://jms2019.org/>

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

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Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COMMUNITY



JOHN MAIN SEMINAR

 VANCOUVER, CANADA 2019

AUGUST 8 TO 11

WINTER 2018 ISSUE

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TIRELESS MESSENGER AND FAITHFUL GROUP LEADER FOR OVER 40 YEARS

Tribute to Alice Ward



Alice Ward of Thunder Bay who corresponded with Fr. John Main in the late 70's has moved into a seniors home this past year and had to give up leading two groups in Thunder Bay. Alice and Sr. Louise Vanetti, SSJ, introduced Christian Meditation to Thunder Bay in 1978/79 and had a group at Avila Centre, now a residence for Lakehead University.

Alice tirelessly spread the message at parishes, libraries and other venues and was faithful as a group leader for over the last 40 years. I count myself as one of the lucky people to have been touched by Alice and her faith. Many people came to know the teachings of John Main and then Fr. Laurence Freeman because of Alice. So faithful was she that her parish dedicated a

room for the Christian Meditation group (St. Patrick's Cathedral), where she was every Monday night and Tuesday afternoons at a local Anglican Church, St. Paul's.

Other groups started after being introduced to Christian Meditation through Alice, and some continue to this day. Alice is one of those rare people who served without fanfare or a need to be acknowledged in any special way. The Canadian Christian Meditation Community has been greatly enriched by Alice and all the people she touched who later became involved in the community.

George Zanette

This is an edited version of Father Paul Geraghty's homily given at the December 30th celebration of Dom John Main's anniversary in Montreal.

Like the disciples in the gospel account, I wasn't looking for a teacher the day I met Father John. I had made the journey over to Ealing Abbey to discuss a possible vocation to the monastic life with the abbot. I did not expect to have my life radically changed and although I think at some level I registered at the time what had happened, it took a number of years before I fully understood it. Nor could I have ever thought, or wanted to think, seven years after meeting the man who revealed himself as my teacher that day, I would be sitting by his bedside as he lay dying. In a necessarily brief but nonetheless profound exchange between us, the circle of our love as spiritual father and son would be completed, a completion that was anything but a closure. Father John is still teaching me.

At the human level his death grieved me just as much as had the deaths of my parents many years before but at the same time there was a whole other dimension of complete assurance, all was well. I felt this very powerfully at the time. It wasn't denial but a true spiritual experience. The surface of the ocean might have been very turbulent but the depths were profoundly calm.

The learning our spiritual teacher opens up for us and invites us into is not the learning our world is most familiar with, the learning that is acquired and accumulated – the knowledge that becomes our possession and makes us able to judge some as cleverer than others – a comparative judgment of the kind that has no place in the spiritual understanding of reality. Obviously such worldly learning has its place and there is nothing wrong with that except for its limitations. The teaching offered to us by our spiritual teacher is very different. It is an experience of



recognizing something is already present in us which comes to awareness in the presence of the teacher as he awakens us to it. The teacher reveals our true self to us and reveals that self to be love. That is why the love that exists at the human level between us and our teacher is so precious even as our teacher reveals that love is but a taste of the infinite unlimited love it is opening us up to. I don't think you can read the gospels without understanding that it was bonds of friendship and of love that bound Jesus to his disciples and them to him. The true spiritual teacher opens our hearts to the gift that is already ours and which, whilst we can turn our back on it, is never withdrawn.

We use images and metaphors to point to the reality the spiritual path is leading us to for fear of reducing that which is infinite to our limited vocabulary.

Thomas Merton in his deeply moving experience in downtown Louisville, where he saw everything and everyone around him only in the light of love, called it the point of pure nothingness at the heart of each one of us. In the centre of our being, he wrote, there is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us.

This point of pure nothingness is the point to which the mantra is leading us in deeper and deeper silence and simplicity. It is also paradoxically where we always and already are – how can it be otherwise?

Continues on page C4

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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.

Page design and layout: www.katemcdo.com

Father Paul Geraghty's homily *continued from C3*

We could not respond to the gift if it had not already been given. There is nowhere to get to or to run from – there is only the challenge of being here, now.

As James Finley tells us, in the presence of the teacher you sense you are in the presence of someone who is more deeply aware of you than you are yourself and who is more tender and compassionate towards you than you are to yourself. Father John was a man of great strength, a strength that knew how to be tender and compassionate. It was a gentle strength rooted not in ego but in his own experience of being loved by the teacher who had revealed his own depths to him – the teacher that was Christ, the depths that were ultimately the infinite depths of God. In the Christian experience of life it is the profound mystery of the unity of all things in God that is at the heart of our faith – may they be one as we are one, I in them and thou in me, may they be perfectly one – it is out

of the lived experience of unity, beyond the divided consciousness the ego so easily traps us in that our teacher speaks to us both in words and in their love for us. It is into the experience of unity that they invite us as they reveal it to be the source of our truest identity. The words of any authentic teacher rooted in the mystery of union with love will speak to us and we are lucky when we encounter them. We were especially lucky to encounter that teaching in as loving and humane a person as Father John. In his own words: “quietly at work in the heart of our faith is love. When we see this, that it is not only by faith that we proceed but by faith and love, then we have really begun. Through this faith Christ dwells within us in love. His indwelling is the constant companionship of the teacher. Our initiatory courage has led us to find our teacher.”

Joined in A Loving Fellowship

My dear Benedictine sisters and brothers,

“The communications of the dead are tongued in fire, beyond the language of the living.”

These words of W. B. Yeats, Father John's favourite poet, continue to have a powerful impact on me. In its light, I ponder Dom Main's teaching as I remember the teacher himself. I remember his joy and passion as he communicated it. The joy and passion came from the personal experience of the unshakable, eternal Reality into which ever deepening meditation led him.

The simple time honoured discipline, practiced by wise men and women of every spiritual tradition, John Main called ‘Christian Meditation’ because he himself was Christian and meditated as one. His life's work was to pass this teaching on to his contemporaries.

This is Father John's legacy – his gift of wisdom – that each one of us must discover for ourselves. But he points the way, as a way of silence, a way of love, trodden by holy people down the ages – a path so simple, yet not easy – of self-abandonment and fidelity; a lifelong practice, requiring not less than everything.

Father John often quoted the fourteenth century author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, cautioning us

against the temptation of embellishing and complicating the supreme simplicity of the teaching of meditation. “Just say your mantra and continue to say it...”

He was concerned that over time this simplicity would be complicated and eroded with devastating consequences.

The searing honesty of what the author of *The Cloud* calls ‘naked intent’ is the only thing absolutely essential for the practice of meditation, provided one is serious.

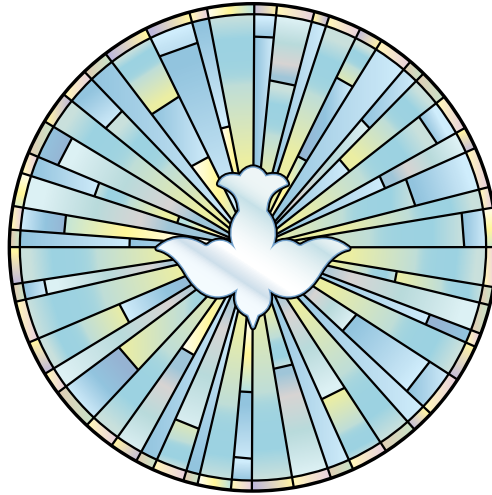
All of us who meditate, every one of us who daily enter into the profound silence that leads to communion, is a member of the world community of Christian meditators. We are joined, not within an organization, but in what Father John called a fellowship – a loving fellowship.

This is our Community of Love.

Polly Schofield
Canadian Oblate Coordinator
January 2019

I would love to hear from you
Polly.schofield@gmail.com

I urge you to continue to listen to the talks Father John prepared for you.



Calendar of Events

Toronto, Ontario

March 9

Lent Retreat

Saturday, March 9, 2019, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

St. Basil's Church Parish Hall
50 St. Joseph Street (Bay & Bloor)

Rev. Sr. Constance Joanna Gefvert

Arnprior, Ontario

May 3-5

Christian Meditation Weekend Retreat

with Denis Paquette

Fortify Your Life: Dive Into Faith!

Gallilee Centre
398 John Street North, Arnprior ON K7S 2P6

No previous meditation experience is required. Everyone is welcome.

\$250 single and \$210 double occupancy, \$150 local commuter.

Call 613 521-3234 or email william_meek@bell.net for assistance. Space is limited so register as soon as possible. Deadline for registration and payment in full is Saturday, March 30.

Rougemont, Quebec

June 21-23

Annual Oblate Retreat

All are welcome

Information: Magda.jass@gmail.com

Tel: 514-489-0998

Monthly Teaching Meetings

The theme for the Monthly Teaching Meetings at Knox College for the 2019 season is **Meditation and Daily Life**. All of the following monthly teaching meetings will be held in Room # 4, KNOX College, 59 St. George Street, University of Toronto (St. George Campus)

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Contact: Elaine Mills 416-962-7111
wccmtoronto2@gmail.com

February 28, 2019

Fr. Schuyler Brown:

**Meditation and Brain Science:
Why God Won't Go Away**

March 9, 2019

Rev. Sr. Constance Joanna Gefvert:

**Community and Christ:
Praying with Scripture and Art**

March 28, 2019

Barbara Shepherd:

Opening the Eyes of the Heart

April 25, 2019

Rev. Marilyn Metcalfe:

**Travels with St. Benedict:
Stumbling Upon an Anchor for Life**

May 30, 2019

Br. John Buckingham:

Food for the Pilgrim

June 20, 2019

Satsung & Video

Our Greatest Need

What do you think our greatest need is?

I hear many, many people say that they would like their tombstones to read, “He/She made a difference.” Whether we are achieving our full potential or just getting by, when men and women discuss what they really want in life it seems to always move into the topic of how to be remembered. They invariably talk about their desire to be significant in this life. I believe that it is another way of saying “I want to find purpose and meaning to my life”. Achieving significance is one of life’s basic desires.

The author Patrick Morley says: “The difference in people is in how we go about satisfying our need to be significant.” Some people, playing the “winner take all” game, pursue significance by gratifying their own ambitions and egos. Everything else takes second place. Others will follow a more meaningful path which is to reach out and help others.

The question, who am I and why do I exist often determines how we see ourselves and pursue our significance. Our answers usually divide us into two distinct groups. If we focus on ourselves, climbing that never ending slippery mountain will produce one result.

If our answer lies in reaching out to others, supporting and caring for friends, neighbours and those less fortunate, then that will produce a completely different outcome.

Jesus came up with a simple solution.

He says that we must stay close to Him. Jesus said: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide

in me and I in them bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Many people try to lead good, respectable, honest lives but Jesus said that the only way to lead a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to a vine. If we are apart from Jesus our efforts throughout our lives will

always be short term and ultimately unsatisfying, we will always be searching for something more.

One way that many people express what is central to their value system is to sit down and for a few minutes write their own imaginary obituary. This may sound somewhat morbid but if you were to put on paper how you would like to be remembered, what you would like to see people read in a newspaper, it may just turn out to be an important roadmap pointing you to what is really most important in your life

No matter where you are in that climb up your own personal mountain, your words in your

“obituary” will very likely be more about relationships with family, friends, and in giving back to your community and to the world. Not too often would you see an article written about the position you held in the firm you worked in, the size of your home or the make of the car that you drove.

If we stay close to Jesus, and ask Him to show us His purpose for our lives, we can satisfy our greatest need in a way that truly endures.

Always remember: we are either called to serve or to be served!



The Sermon on the Mount, Cornelis van Dalen, 1663 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)

**Jack Murta
Ottawa**

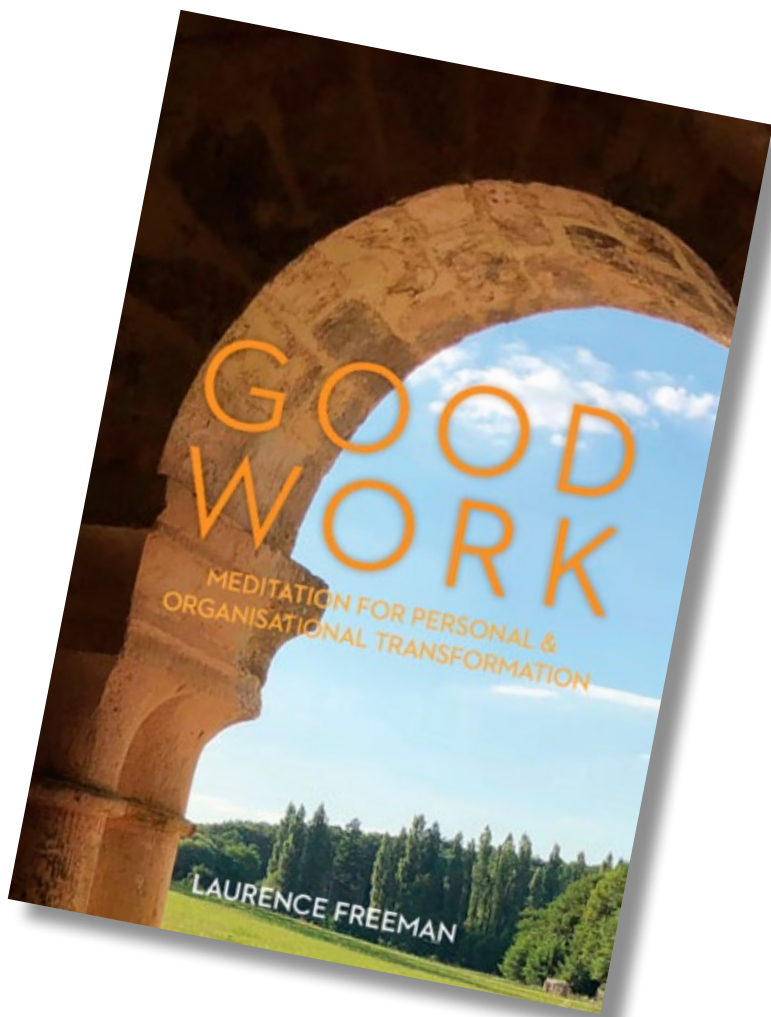
Laurence Freeman defines good work as ‘work that brings out the best in the people who do it, and brings enduring benefit to those who are influenced by it’.

This book is about how meditation helps to make work good work, while transforming the workplace environment through more humanly rich and enjoyable encounters.

The first part concentrates on the fundamentals of meditation – as a universal and inclusive practice found in all wisdom traditions. It then shows how the experience enriches the experience of work itself with meaning. In the second part of the book, successful leaders from the corporate world who practise meditation speak from experience about the value of a contemplative approach to work and leadership.

The emphasis throughout is on practice rather than theory. The language is inclusively secular. The approach is wisdom-based rather than a merely physical or psychological one.

The spark for this book came from a series of talks Laurence Freeman gave to the staff at DP Architects, Singapore in January 2017, where they now continue to meditate every morning before work begins.



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Warm Invitation to Attend 2019 John Main Seminar

Dear Meditators,

I am writing to invite you to attend the 2019 John Main Seminar. The John Main Seminar is held at a different international location each year and was established to honour Benedictine monk Fr. John Main's memory and his legacy to broaden and deepen the teaching of Christian meditation. Past presenters have included His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Christian contemplatives Abbott Thomas Keating, former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Fr. Richard Rohr and Jean Vanier.

The 2019 John Main Seminar will be held at Quest University in Squamish (August 8-11) and will be preceded by an optional Silent Retreat (August 5-8) with Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

The theme of the Pre-Seminar Silent Retreat is Sources of Wisdom. Through talks and times of silence, Fr. Laurence will reinforce the power of meditation and reflect on the sources of wisdom to be found in Spirit, Failure, Scripture and Silence. Fr. Laurence is a Benedictine monk of the Monastery of Christ our Saviour, Turvey England, a monastery of the Congregation of Monte Oliveto. He was awarded the Order of Canada in 2012 in recognition of his work for interfaith dialogue and the promotion of world peace.

Rev. Dr. Sarah Bachelard will lead the 2019 John Main Seminar and the theme is A Contemplative Christianity for our Time. She is an internationally respected theologian, retreat leader and priest. Dr. Bachelard is the founder and leader of Benedictus Contemplative Church in Canberra, Australia and an honorary fellow at the Australian Catholic University. She was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University where she studied theology with Dr. Rowan Williams. She is the author of two books, *Experiencing God in a Time of Crisis* and *Resurrection and Moral Imagination*.

Please visit the seminar website at www.jms2019.org and share the link and attached brochure with anyone who may be interested. John Main Seminars draw people from about 25 countries so I encourage you to register early as places are limited.

I hope that you can make it. We look forward to welcoming you at the retreat and seminar. Please note that the Pre-Seminar Silent Retreat is live in only (no commuters).

In peace,

JoAnn Kelly-Cullen
BC & Yukon Regional Coordinator, WCCM-Canada
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jlullen1@telus.net

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