



Making the Divided Self Whole

Laurence Freeman describes the healing that comes with self-knowledge
as WCCM announces 'Health' as its theme for the new year



Heron in the lake of Bonnevaux (Photo by Laurence Freeman)

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Dearest Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

In between the rolling shutdowns and isolation, I slipped away for a couple of days to visit the origins of humanity. I had long yearned to visit the Lascaux caves which are just a couple of hours from Bonnevaux in the beautiful Dordogne region. On 23 September 1940 they were discovered by three boys playing football. Their dog, called Robot, fell down a sinkhole and in rescuing him they slid down a steep slope to find themselves in a vast subterranean chamber. Then they noticed the powerful, silent images of animals, bison, horses, auroch, bulls, deer and a bear, on the walls of the cave. The boys were the first to see them for 20,000 years. They ran to tell their schoolmaster who couldn't get down the hole but asked them to draw the images they had seen so he could show them to the experts.

This event not only opened new horizons to Paleolithic Art but to the self-understanding of humanity itself. No longer could we think of our human ancestors, even up to 40,000 years ago, as stupid or what we usually mean by 'primitive'. Their minds were more complex and sensitive than we imagined. Studying this earliest, enigmatic art convinced scholars that the images are not random but intelligently and beautifully composed and not merely magical but consciously symbolic. It changed the way we think about what 'human' means while intriguing us with an intimate, strangely familiar mystery that we will never be able to solve or prove.

Six years later three Bedouin shepherd boys entered a cave in the Judaean desert and discovered ancient Jewish scrolls as old as the third century BCE. The Dead Sea Scrolls, as they are known, became the centre of shameful academic and finan-

cial competition for years but have changed our understanding of the Biblical tradition and early Christianity. In the Dordogne and in the Qumran caves discoveries were made that exposed our ignorance, our complacency about what we thought we knew and freed us for greater self-understanding.

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I have always been attracted to caves and rather frightened of them. They are deep, dark, mysterious and offer the promise of treasure. Like the cave of the heart, we have to feel the attraction – or surrender to the accidental discoveries – that introduce us to these sacred spaces. But then we have to be young at heart,



"Lascaux II" by JackVersloot (licensed under CC BY 2.0)

more curious than scared, and risk the journey inwards, to slither down the slope that leads to the inner chambers full of the resident primal presence in which we find ourselves. And we need companions in this solitude.

The Cave is the symbol of the journey of self-knowledge. In Plato's famous Allegory, humanity is enchained in ignorance watching flickering shadows on a wall cast by a fire behind them that they cannot see. One person manages to get free and begins the long steep journey up and out of the cave into the light. There he

is amazed by the colours and beauty of the world but looks higher still till he gazes into the sun, the source of light. He comes back into the cave chamber and proclaims his discovery, urging them to follow him to freedom. But they are scared to leave the cave and angrily refuse to believe him. The descent into the cave is the beginning of the journey up and beyond the cave. As the great teachers of wisdom often put it – they needed and loved paradox to communicate what they had found. The way down is the way up. The way forward is the way back. The way in is the way out.

I was pleased to discover that the part of France where Bonnevaux is situated contains a large number of

pre-historic caves whose paintings helped inspire a new wave in humanity's self-discovery. Bonnevaux, too, gathered as we are in the cave of the heart, is concerned with the journey of self-knowledge. In a sceptical age like ours, largely disconnected from common religious symbols and faith, distrustful of authority and institutions and foremostly seeking personal experience and authenticity, self-knowledge seems the most authentic goal to aim for. But how do we prioritise self-knowledge like this without collapsing into narcissism, self-fixation and the deadly boredom

of endless self-referencing – the ‘I-me-mine’ generation? Self-fixation is the failure of self-knowledge.

But when we learn – what all the wisdom traditions teach – that self-knowledge paradoxically grows through other-centredness, then we are making progress. Before long we learn that self-knowledge leads into the cave of the heart. The presence that resides there welcomes us with an explosion of joy. Whatever degree of self-knowledge we reach – it’s a never-ending journey – is the degree to which we know God. And that knowledge of God is hidden within our experience of being known by God.

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Humanity is continually re-discovering itself. In each person and in the collective experience of humanity, self-knowledge develops through the interweaving of joy and suffering. And, we should add, through interludes of boredom. Although handling boredom is not something we, with our craving for constant stimulation, peak experience and novelty, handles well, it has a value. One of our young guests, who is spending an extended time with us, told me how interested and oddly happy she felt to discover that the element boredom in the rhythm of the life, once accepted, was introducing her to a sense of renewal and peace she had never felt before. It reminded me of the first attraction I felt towards the monastic life which was to an apparent boredom which was somehow not boring.

Self-knowledge makes everyone feel strange at first. We might even feel disoriented for a while by feeling we are strangers to ourselves. We are in fact meeting ourselves again for the first time. We are coming home and recognising the place we had forgotten. We feel different and see the

world with the same difference. Two experiences give us the same feeling at the same level of intense clarity – falling in love and dying. Normally we are frightened by both, while at the same time being drawn into them against our wills, more strongly than our fears. When resistance is overcome, we feel free to soar.

Love and dying are messengers of the true self, angels of the divine, that we do not recognise at first because we do not yet know ourselves. Both experiences express the fundamental driving force of self-knowledge which is other-centredness. Even if

...self-knowledge leads into the cave of the heart

we fall in love and become hopelessly complicated by attachment and possessiveness, at least the lesson we are learning is to pay attention to what is simply other than ourselves and to find ourselves in the other person. We are learning to accept the transforming power of death. As we take the attention off ourselves, we learn the pain of detaching from who or what we love. Possessiveness is replaced by altruism and a spirit of service. The letting go that allows us to receive the gift that has found us is the death of the ego. The deeper the dying, the more we accept it, the fuller the next stage of life we pass into. If we fail to learn the lesson, there will be other chances until we do.

People today often relate better to the meaning of *wholeness* than to the idea of *God*. What matters most, however, is the experience rather than the name we give to it. Wholeness emerges through the process we call growth. To feel we are growing even through a painful experience helps us

put up with a high degree of uncertainty and discomfort. It gives us an experience of *meaning*, of being connected to some kind of process, even if we can’t define what the meaning means or what the process is for.

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Perhaps this is why self-knowledge is connected to our concern for our health. No doubt our ancestors painting those amazing images in the Lascaux caves were concerned with their health, too, when they felt a new kind of pain or saw that one of their group whom they felt close to was dying. For many millennia after them the medical treatments people were offered to cure ailments did no good at all and often made matters worse – such as bloodletting. Today, as Dr Barry White puts it, we live in the ‘golden age of medicine’. We cure many more things and extend life significantly. And thank-you to techno-scientific medicine, as we await the new Covid vaccines. But modern healthcare faces enormous problems for the caregivers and for the patients. People sense that health is delivered to them while their self-responsibility for living healthily is confused because of the lifestyle we are conditioned to live. The question ‘what is health’ is therefore not only of financial or political concern but, even more, an important key to open up a new and urgent level of human self-knowledge.

The WCCM Guiding Board has chosen the theme of ‘Health’ for the community’s common reflection in the coming year. Each national community is invited to choose an approach to this question that suits its best. Beginning in January, Barry White and I will be offering a monthly online seminar exploring the meaning and various aspects of health, including practi-

cal ones such as sleep and nutrition, relating this to the spiritual tradition. We hope this will contribute to a contemplative approach not only to this health crisis to what lies beyond it.

I think most of us feel that the real crisis the world is facing is more than Covid. It is essentially a spiritual crisis that Covid has exposed. The pandemic has made us acutely aware of the fragile preciousness of every human life which has the same value in the most vulnerable like the elderly in care homes, in the health-workers serving anyone who is sick, the migrant workers of India or the great cities of the world. The infectiousness of the virus shows it is no respecter of persons and how equal and interdependent rich and poor are in its presence. Through the past year, fragility, impermanence and unpredictability have been inescapably revealed as essential elements of the common human condition.

The question of health – what it really means and how to be healthy – helps us see the full meaning of the underlying crisis. Covid is one of many tipping-points, with others to come. For example, in our unhealthy relationship to the planetary environment which is sickening and increasingly showing points of breakdown. Or the social emergency that has undermined trust in institutions and democracy itself. Beyond Covid lies a major financial crisis that calls for a radically new approach to economics and social justice. What does 'getting back to normal' at a moment like this mean? Will we remember what we have learned?

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Achieving the self-knowledge we need on a global scale seems a mountain too steep to climb. But recall the mind expressed in the cave paintings millennia ago across different conti-

nents by artists who had no contact with each other. The painter of the bison in Lascaux or the beautiful horses in the Chauvet caves did not take a selfie in front of them and send it to his WhatsApp group. Yet great similarities, a common mind, may be perceived among them. What they thought we will never know for sure. But what they



Meditation session in nature at Bonnevaux

saw still resonates with us today.

The mysterious unity in human self-awareness offers us hope as we confront the complexity of our crisis today. Recognising the mistakes we have made is painful and discouraging – the harm we have done to that beauty of nature which saves us from despair; the cruelty to animals who are also our ancestors and life-companions; the neglect or worse of the most poor and vulnerable of our family members; the harm we have allowed the mega-rich to inflict on themselves and others because we flattered and indulged them instead of calling them to face the reality of our inter-dependence; the abuse of the young to whom we denied spiritual knowledge and training in their materialistically-driven education; the harm done to our own intelligence as we became addicted to the technology we created. But painful as this first stage of self-knowledge may be, it will generate hope and open new futures.

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If we can understand what health means – and Barry White articulates this powerfully as a meditator and as a doctor – perhaps we won't miss what may be our last chance at self-renewal through self-knowledge. It is the contemplative's responsibility to highlight and insist on this hope

against the pessimism about humanity itself which is increasing today. In this work, the Christian contemplative tradition has an immense wisdom to contribute.

Clement of Alexandria, a 2nd century teacher of Christian faith, saw it as a way of life and a natural way of human growth, rather than as merely institutional membership or doctrinal orthodoxy. For him, the Christian life began with conversion from paganism. This means a fragmented vision of divinity devoid of the experience of God's unity and person-centred love which results in our being scattered among many gods. Paganism manifests in every culture as it does in modern consumerism. Then, having started this transition, we need support in the basic discipline and attention to our way of living so that a healing of the division between the inner and outer self can begin. Finally, in the third stage spiritual maturity through interior knowledge is deepened and a contemplative human be-

ing is formed.

What is specifically Christian about this? It is that Christ, whose coming completes all sources of wisdom, and does not compete with other traditions, guides each stage both as Teacher and the 'Divine Physician'. Clement sees Jesus as Jesus saw himself: as a healer not as a judge. 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor' he said. What he heals directly in each person and in the human family as a whole, is every kind of sickness of soul. In the early teachers of the faith, this sickness is sin. Clement (like other Christian mystical theologians) likes to tell the story of the Fall which describes Adam as a new creature who is sent on a mission by God. With youthful enthusiasm he rushes off to fulfil it but quickly falls into a pit which he cannot get out of. God does not blame or punish him for this but sends His Son to free him and restore humanity to its mission.

When they think of healing in relation to religious faith many people jump straight to the idea of miraculous cures. As long as we are mortal, this will be an understandable response to pain and suffering. But, even though many of these miracles are now available on prescription, there will always be the sickness we cannot recover from. However, a contemplative approach to health weaves healing and curing together. Cures are desirable and often mysterious. Many factors apart from medication or treatment seem to be involved in making cures successful. But healing is a deeper mystery still. We can die healed. We can live with disabilities or chronic conditions healed. Healing is restoration of the whole person to a new level of wholeness, one they would not have reached without sickness. If cure

happens as well, that is cause for celebration; but even when it does not, healing itself expresses the essential purpose of medicine.

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As Barry White will explore in his monthly online sessions beginning in January, to understand humanity we need to understand what health means. What do we really aspire to when we want to be made well and feel better? At the core of the mystery of healing and true health is the wondrous power of simple, pure attention. Distractedness, fragmentation, interior and external division are all forms of sickness that attention is needed to heal and restore.

The Journey of humanity means growing into a common mind and unity

Meditation is the universal wisdom that introduces us to this truth most simply and immediately. Attention brings us to stillness and in stillness saving knowledge emerges. If we persevere the way of attention becomes increasingly simple until there is no work to do, no goal to achieve, no observer to watch:

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am
Be still and know
Be still
Be

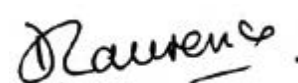
I met a graduate student once who had been on medication for ADDH since grade five. She told me how impossible it was for her to sit physically still anywhere for more than one or two minutes. Longer than that and it felt as if an army of ants was crawling all over her. If she could make it

to ten in a meditation session she was overjoyed. We can only measure health and wholeness by the unique criteria of each person. But health is recognisable anywhere we find it. To be healthy and enjoy the liberty of wholeness feels essentially the same for everyone. It is part of our common humanity. In their own way the painters of Lascaux must have felt essentially what we feel. We are most one with each other in the state of health because then our personal divisions have been healed. If we are one with ourselves, we find oneness with all. The journey of humanity means growing into a common mind and unity.

John Main understood that all growth is from the centre outwards. In the centre is the original innocence we can never lose, our wholeness in the infinite simplicity of God. To return to this centre step by step, day by day, is to be healed even as we grow.

All growth needs rootedness. Our need for roots is critical to health and so we must learn how to treat the rootlessness of the modern world. Contemplation heals the world, restoring health where brutality, cruelty, greed and egoism has wounded us. The destination is even beyond this, as the mystery of the Incarnation reveals to the eye of the heart. Our common destination, our personal destiny is oneness, where we know because we are known, love because we are loved and where our work, whatever it may be, is service.

With much love



Download the audio of Fr Laurence reading this letter at <http://tiny.cc/LFletter1120>

JMS 2020

Five wisdoms from the John Main Seminar 2020

JMS2020 Online (19-22 October) was hosted by WCCM Mexico with Alex Zatyryka SJ as the keynote speaker on the theme 'One Heart, One Hope - Indigenous Wisdom and the Future of Humanity'

By Leonardo Corrêa

1- It is possible to do an online Seminar keeping the sense of community and human connection

This year's Seminar was proof that it is possible to migrate to the on-line format without losing the spirit and the real sense of connection and community. The WCCM Mexico Coordinator, Enrique Lavin, describes it as follows:

In the summer of 2019 I read about an indigenous person feeling at home with tribes in Finland, Australia and Canada because they shared the same principles. I began investigating and found out that indigenous all over the world share many values: care for one-self, for the community, for the earth. And they look at the heart as a center of spiritual wisdom.

When we were at the JMS2019, the plan shaped up and we had a title: One Heart, One Hope: Indigenous Wisdom and the Future of Humanity. Back in Mexico we spent some time looking



Alex Zatyryka and Laurence Freeman during a dialogue session

for the right venue. We had everything ready to make a beautiful presencial Seminar, a wonderful array of activities around the theme. And then came the pandemic, the lack of certitude, the uncommon and forced lockdowns. We went back to the drawing board. And then the time zones! And changing the time allotted to the speakers, and...

So we just followed John Main's advice and said our mantra. Eventually all

things began to fall into place. When a door shut, a window opened, there has been grace everywhere.

The Seminar showed that the spirit of John Main is alive and well no matter the circumstances. More than 350 people from over 30 countries show that we are, a real community, a monastery without walls and without borders, built in love and present to our times and to each other.

2 - Theological attitude is being open to the contemplative experience

The keynote speaker, **Alex Zatyryka SJ** delivered two profound talks on Indigenous Wisdom, sharing also out of his experience as a missionary in Bolivia and Mexico. It is not possible to summarize all in a few lines so we will pick one important point of his teaching, which he called Theological Attitude: this is an inner

attitude that we can cultivate to perceive the communication with God, the experience of transcendence. Zatyryka words:

What attitudes describe that vital disposition? I am going to describe three fundamental ones where the theological attitude comes from. From our Christian perspective, this ultimate

reality is a person, and it is important to approach the encounter with this ultimate reality as a person. And for that I have to prepare myself, I have to cultivate a series of elements, because what all mystics emphasize is that when we want to treat God as an object, the perception of his presence disappears and we are left with an idol,

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no longer with the living and true God.

First fundamental attitude: the cultivation of solitude and silence. And this cultivation of solitude and silence to heal us from dispersion and superficiality. Then solitude and silence are not an end in themselves but are like atmosphere, atmosphere, for the encounter that we are looking for.

Second element: correct attention, learning to attend correctly and this implies rehabilitating our capacity to

perceive and this in turn implies learning to free oneself from the discourses of the mind, which in 90% of cases function as prejudices a kind of automatic that filters reality and that in the end dissociates us from reality. So, whoever wants to learn the theological attitude has to learn to distance himself from his thoughts, from his discourses, in order to be cured of this attitude of prejudice.

And finally, there is the decentral-

ization that is also known as intentional inversion. I intentionally invert my way of relating to the world with reality. Here's what I mean: suspend, put in parentheses, stop for a while ,my reactive and proactive tendencies. I don't try anything, but I exercise to take what I am given. I do not cling to anything. I give what goes. So, this attitude is also fundamental when we have all three, we are talking about the theological attitude.

3 - The value of a profound respect and reverence for the Earth

The connection and respect with the land, with Earth, was something also present during the John Main Seminar. **Hilario Chi Canul**, from Mexico, a linguist of Maya ethnicity, highlighted this in his talk:

In my village there is something very interesting, because people walk with their language and with the legacy of the Mayas. We are a people who walk with the cross, we inherit and we believe that the tree, the cross, speaks and that this cross is the one that leads us. And that is why around it we build all kinds of offerings, to call all the gods that we inherited from our cultures, from our Mayan, ancestral cultures. (...) to all the gods to ask their permission. To share the space with them. We have always seen that the Earth has life and it must be fed, and it must always be remembered. And we have always kept in mind that to step on the face of the earth is in itself to step on our own face, it is to step on the face of our mother, that is why we cannot even spit on the Earth, and in due time the Earth also asks us to feed it, to feed it with smoke, to feed it with water, to feed it with our spirituality.

Ana María LLamazares, from Argentina, spoke on "Building Bridges" and also mentioned the need to see the Earth as a living being, even with its own consciousness:

The sense of belonging to a cosmic and vital web, where the Earth is a living being, is fundamental in the participation of human consciousness. It is no longer a reservoir of exploitable raw materials but a living being that we need to honour and respect and how to accompany our passage as humans along with the passage of nature and the cosmos. Therefore, this idea of time no longer as a unilinear linearity but as a cyclical flow that unfolds very qualitatively, not metric, not mechanical, and that is giving rise to a spiral unfolding, not necessarily in circles that repeat themselves, but in an evolutionary spiral. This looks at the universe with consciousness, even forms of consciousness beyond the human, these would be some of the conceptual bridges that are sowing the field to allow this dialogue between cultures, spirituality, religions, peoples and different views.



Hilario in one of the images from his presentation: Mayan culture shows respect and gratitude for mother Earth

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4 - The importance of Community and the idea of Ubuntu

Puleng Matsaneng, from South Africa, spoke on Liturgy and African Spirituality, and one of the key elements she mentioned was the importance of the community:

Indigenous African spirituality is expressed differently by the variety of indigenous African groups. It does however share certain common aspects. One of these is the centrality of community. Unlike in many places in the north and west, the individual is less important than the community. The well-known proverb (Zulu) umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu/ motho ke motho ka batho ba bang (Sesotho), which means, that a person is a person through other people, expresses this powerfully. Ubuntu is where each person is seen, each person is heard and each person is valued and



African Spirituality value the wisdom of the elders

loved. Their basic dignity is affirmed. When we are talking about ubuntu we are talking about agape love. The love Jesus talks of when he says: 'love one another as I have loved you.' In our very broken context it is the love which casts out fear. The gospels are ubuntu and we reach ubuntu when we practice gospel

values. As Christians the gospels are a road to ubuntu.

Puleng shared some interesting videos on the important dance and music for African liturgy and the damage caused by colonisation and Apartheid in South Africa. You can watch it here: <http://tiny.cc/pulvid>

5 - Colonisation wounds and the need of healing and reconciliation

Another point that was strongly present during the seminar was the reality of the wounds caused by colonisation and the deep need for reparation and reconciliation. **Tau Huirama** and **Vanessa Eldridge**, from New Zealand, shared from the Maori perspective. An inspirational and spiritual indigenous story teller, Tau explained how the laws imposed by the colonizers damaged the Maori culture of healing:

I'm classed as a tohunga, which is a Maori word for someone who's really experienced in what they do and is trusted. Some of the work that I do is healing work. I don't like to call myself a healer. I think I feel more comfortable with being the facilitator for the ancestors to come through and to be able to

help. (...) The Tohunga Suppression Act (1907) had a huge impact upon Maori and their needs, especially their ability to sustain themselves through complex health challenges. As a consequence of this act, we weren't allowed to do any Maori natural therapy. If you did, you were fined or sent to jail. What happened was that we either lost the capacity to heal ourselves or it went underground. Vanessa Edridge also highlighted the impact of colonisation and the need of reparation and rescue of the Maori culture:

The land was made to be like a little England. It was deforested, and turned to pastures. Health, healing and spiritual beliefs and practices were forbidden. The centrality of family, sub-tribes,

tribes, was broken and in a religious or spiritual sense we were expected to forget our traditional gods and deities and move on to Christianity. As such, indigenous people throughout history have been "othered." They were forced to become dependent minorities, rendered landless and cultureless, without the resources or means to earn or create a viable life. At worst there is a sense of shame as we forgot who we were and who we truly are. But here we are now: seeking to recover indigenous wisdom, working to save Papatūānuku, our mother earth, the place that we all call home. And I am confident that we have much to offer the world, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be here.

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Carving reconciliation

Ron Berezan and Ivan Rosyskye, from British Columbia, Canada, evoked some of the most moving moments of the Seminar. Ron is ordained as an “eco-deacon” within the Anglican Church of Canada and has a ministry focus on Earth Justice and Creation-centred spirituality. Ivan is an artist and a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation on the Northern BC coast of Canada.

During their presentation, Ron and Ivan spoke together, describing again how colonization damages native people, this time in Canada, where indigenous children were forced to attend “Indian Residential Schools.” A Canadian Commission of Truth and Reconciliation later declared this practice a form of cultural genocide against indigenous people. Ivan spoke touchingly of his mother’s suffering when forced to go to one of those schools.

Ron met Ivan through a carving project on Ron’s parish grounds seeking to bring attention to indigenous justice issues and the call to reconciliation. They described the process and showed images during their talk, and at the end they were both moved - as were many of the attendees online. They finished the presentation with a hug and expressed the hope that rec-



Ivan and his art work that became a symbol of reconciliation in Canada

conciliation is possible.

Ron then reminded everyone that action is needed more than words to reach this reconciliation:

Any real movement towards reconciliation cannot be just about dialogue and feeling, it must include action. In Canada the process of decolonization involves respecting indigenous rights to self-determination, according to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Patterns of exploiting Canada’s indigenous resources, for example, putting a pipeline through a territory where people do not want it to be, is an example of the same kind of playing out of the Doctrine of Discovery described previously.

Ron and Ivan’s talk left us with a question: *is reconciliation possible without justice for indigenous people? (And it’s a yes or a no!) Is it fair to say that we are willing to learn from indigenous people and to embrace indigenous cultures unless we join in solidarity with indigenous people in working for justice, and for an end to colonization, and we also join in the culture of resistance that indigenous people offer us?*

This is our greatest hope today, and people like Ivan and the community he comes from, and many other indigenous peoples, are showing us the way forward, said Ron. Watch a video on the Carving Reconciliation project: <http://tiny.cc/carvrec>

Did you follow the JMS2020 online?

Tell us what lessons you learned and we will share your comments on our social media channels. Send your feedback to comms@wccm.org

Did you miss the Seminar? A second chance to see the talks!

Video recordings of the John Main Seminar 2020 will be available on our website (www.wccm.org) at a lower price soon

News

Bonnevaux Perspectives 2021

2020 was a year of adaptation for Bonnevaux - and for the entire world - whilst facing the reality of Covid-19. After March nearly all of the Bonnevaux Programme migrated to an online format and during this strange and challenging time we learned that it is indeed possible to build a real sense of connection with the world - despite all interactions and conversations transpiring on a flat screen; dialogues, webinars, online retreats, contemplative Eucharist, yoga classes - all these events created a myriad of opportunities for the global Community to feel present at Bonnevaux.

We are currently planning the 2021 Programme and will continue

to strive to build on the strengths of our online events. We envisage providing online-only events through to mid-2021, dependant upon a forthcoming re/solution to the pandemic.

Looking ahead with hope and faith that the state of the world will improve, we can also share that renovation works on the Bonnevaux Retreat Centre should be completed by June 2021, and an official opening day celebrating this wonderful milestone could be planned for the latter half of 2021. Please continue to visit our website and to join us online for both our Programme and regularly-scheduled weekly events. Please keep Bonnevaux in your prayers - we



Meditation time at the Barn in Bonnevaux

remain grateful for your support, in all the many generous ways in which it manifests. For more information visit www.bonnevauxwccm.org

Meditation as a Healing Response to Trauma

Tim Kelly, WCCM Oblate who works with the US Government's programme on survivors of torture, about the Seminar on the role of meditation in the healing process

What parts of the Symposium and Workshop struck you more?

The first thing that comes to mind are the guest speakers for the Symposium and Workshop who shared how meditation has been helpful to them. One of them was a refugee from Bhutan who journeyed to Nepal as an unaccompanied minor and grew up in a refugee camp before coming to the United States. The other was an asylum-seeker who was completing a graduate degree in the Democratic Republic of Congo when she had to flee persecution leaving her home and family. Their inspiring stories of how daily meditation and a meditation group has helped them to heal from trauma provided a context for the presentations and discussion that followed.

For example, the meditation group which they both belong to consists of people from different cultures, languages, and religions. One of them described how it has become like "a sacred family to me". This comment beautifully and succinctly describes two key principles of trauma-informed meditation, that meditation is a universal spiritual practice and that it creates unity out of diversity. The other thing which stood out for me was how well the different speakers related to one another and the depth of their discussion. Most of them had never met. They were from various countries of origin and are currently living in the U.S., England, and France. They approached the topic of meditation and trauma from different professions includ-

ing neuroscience, psychiatry, social work, psychology, community health, religion, and contemplative prayer. However, there were common threads throughout the presentations on the art and science of meditation and from the three organizations which offer meditation groups to various populations of refugees and asylum seekers.

What kind of fruits or next steps do you hope after that event?

We are planning to: 1) produce a special edition of the Meditatio Journal based on the presentations, 2) work with the organizations involved developing guidelines for trauma-informed meditation support groups, and 3) create an international working group to share the information and resources on the topic.

In Focus

Naomi Downie, Australia



Peace with every step to you. Hello! I am Naomi, and I currently host the International Young People's Meditation Online Group. Our group was meeting on Zoom before the Covid pandemic. I feel blessed that we were set up and in place ready to be a support during lockdown in connecting communities of like minded people during this time.

I have been a part of the New South Wales WCCM young people's meditation groups and retreats since I came to live in Sydney over 10 years ago. When I saw the pamphlet at Cafechurch in Glebe it was a great relief to have found a Christian path of intentional silence.

I have been drawn to meditation since my university days when I borrowed tapes of guided meditations

from the library. I had grown up in the church, but I was seeking a mystical way which I didn't see in my childhood church. The tapes were very helpful, and I continued on to Buddhist retreats and chanted Om Mani Padme Hum. I attended Kirtan with Hare Krishnas and sang Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Krishna in a call and response style with the group. I read the Bhagavad Gita, which was a seminal text for me. I experienced chakra meditations & Reiki and attempted to raise my kundalini with breath work. All of these things were enriching and fascinating for me, but I still missed the regular fellowship and guidance of a continual teaching.

That is when I joined, at 25, the School of Philosophy in Newcastle. For a wonderful three years, I attended a weekly class that gradually introduced concepts and wisdom teachings with robust and increasingly intimate discussions. I have never forgotten my initiation into the School's mantra in a beautiful ceremony. I continued to use that mantra for a further four years, twice a day, as well as doing readings and mandala drawings. I was very devoted. The School used the name of a Hindu god for their man-

tra. After a time the word did not sit well in my spirit, and I couldn't stop coughing when I said it. After I left the School and then had a relationship breakdown, someone sent me a CD of Father Laurence on Christian Meditation. His voice was so soothing and calming to me. I began a slow process of returning to Christ, and going to spiritual direction in Melbourne.

When I moved to Sydney for work, it was very important for me to find a church where Christian Meditation was practiced. I found one, and I haven't left. I have experienced wonderful retreats in Mittagong and Dargal Island, silent retreats at St Mary's, and day retreats in Lavender Bay and Blue Mountains. I have also attended groups in Paddington and Glebe, and incredible seminars and conferences in Sydney and Melbourne.

Online meditation sessions, retreats, and conferences have been really inspiring and supportive for me as I seek to recommit to regular devotion and personal practice. I recently joined a committee for the NSW Young People's Coordination team. I look forward to moving into the future with this team and working to grow Young People's Christian Meditation.



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Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano

Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 January.

Resources & Events

Book & Online Course

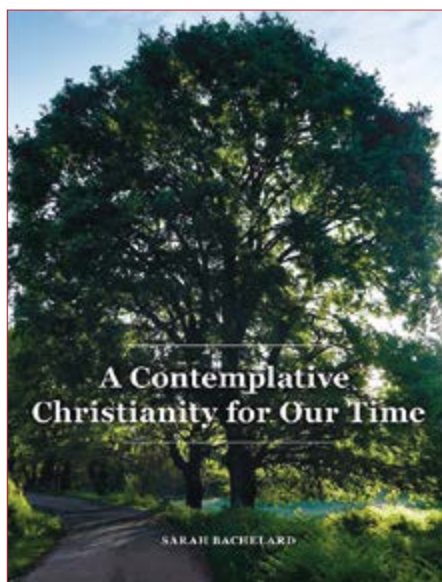
A double opportunity to reflect on Contemplative Christianity with Sarah Bachelard

The teachings from the John Main Seminar 2019 on A Contemplative Christianity for Our Time are now available in two different formats: an online course and a book.



Book - What is the meaning and point of faith, and of religious identity? Why not just meditate, leaving behind the weight of dogma and tradition that seem to have lost their relevance? This book explores the significance of a contemplative Christianity and offers a renewing vision of the connections between contemplation and faith, and the gifts of the contemplative path for a world in travail. The official release date is 15 December. More information and pre-order here: <http://tiny.cc/cchbook>

Online Course - This course is based on five talks from the John Main Seminar in 2019 addressing the most urgent issues facing not just the future of the Church and Christianity, but also that of the world itself. Sarah's contribution to the seminar was described by Laurence Freeman OSB as "a breakthrough in the understanding of modern Christianity" Enroll here: <https://rebrand.ly/cchoc>



Eternal Birth

Prepare for Christmas with Laurence Freeman



Laurence Freeman will lead an on-line day retreat to help prepare us for Christmas. There will be talks, meditation and time for reflection on the true meaning of the feast. A special day set aside to spend together at the busiest time of the year. Some quiet and peace to imbue the holiday period with true meaning.

Saturday 12 December

1.00-6.00 PM (France)/

12 Noon - 5.00 PM (GMT)

Register: <https://rebrand.ly/pxmas20>

Art Show in a Time of Crisis

An initiative by Judi and Paul Taylor (WCCM Friends Coordinators), *Art Show in a Time of Crisis* is an on-line exhibition with artworks donated by meditators. All proceeds go to The World Community for Christian Meditation's Friends Programme. More info here: <https://artshowinatimeofcrisis.com>

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VISIT WCCM's ONLINE BOOKSTORE: <https://mediamedia.com/>

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email:contemplativewisdom2@gmail.com
Tel: +1-520-882-0290

ASIA

email: mimi@wccm.org
Tel: +65 6469 7671

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christianmeditation@wccm-canada.ca
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Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COMMUNITY



Online Meetup Groups Flourish on the West Coast

See Page C2

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Meetup Group Attracts Younger Demographic



In June, Luis Zunino and I started up a Meetup group (Meetup.com), offering an online Introduction to Meditation talk in an effort to get the word out about Christian Meditation during Covid-19. As you know, throughout the pandemic, and especially in the early days, we were advised to get a routine, take care of our mental health, exercise and meditate. We hoped to attract a group of potential contemplatives who we would not normally reach. It would seem that Covid-19 has forced us all to get a little bit more creative in how we connect with each other.

We ran our first talk on Canada Day, 2020 and two people attended the meeting. We offer the same talk biweekly. The talk condenses the Six Week Introduction to Meditation course and includes a brief meditation of ten minutes with time for questions. The meetings normally run about 60–75 minutes. Whilst we are aware that it is not ideal to present this material in such a short session, it seems to be well received. At the end of the meeting, we offer support post-talk

via email (questions they may have, directing them to the national and international websites, the School of Meditation's How to Meditate free online course, etc.). If they are interested we guide them to one of the four online groups here in British Columbia and Northwest Territories. A number have since joined groups.

By late September 2020, our Meetup group has 49 members and approximately 18% have attended our talks. Interestingly, we are reaching a younger demographic with Meetup. Having such a compact session seems to work well for this group. We have also met people with no particular ties to a faith tradition who are curious about Christian Meditation. Some of our members have come from as far away as Alberta and the Western States.

Luis and I are constantly evaluating the talks and hope to enhance the program.

Maeve Slein

BC & Yukon Regional Coordinator

Information on the BC online meetings

NORTH VANCOUVER, BC

Mondays at 7pm (PST)

Leader: Luis Zunino

lzunino@gzarchitects.com

EAST VANCOUVER, BC

Tuesdays at 7pm (PST)

Leaders:
Cora and Ted Alcuitas

coralcuitas@shaw.ca

VANCOUVER, BC

Thursdays at 7pm (PST)

Leader: Maryann Lyshaug

mlyshaug@gmail.com

YELLOWKNIFE, NT

Thursdays at 7pm (MDT)

Leader: Darrell Taylor

healing.trappers@gmail.com

Darrell also runs a weekly 12 Step program and book study group. Contact him for times and dates.

FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR

Christmas Appeal

When the angels sang over the fields surrounding Bethlehem, they announced boldly: “Peace on earth and good will to all people!”

Yet for centuries, especially since the Enlightenment and Reformation times, people of faith have interpreted this more in a prescriptive rather than descriptive way. In other words, we have believed that we somehow have to solve our problems and overcome our suffering before finding peace. ‘Peace on earth’ was prescribed to us, to earn, by first making things right.

But it’s the other way around. The message is meant to describe the reality that now exists because of Christ’s coming into the world. We already have access to this peace. It is there for us. Because God becomes embodied in a human – a baby no less – there is peace. Balance and equanimity in creation have been restored. Peace is the divine gift at Christmas.

From this peace that is given and that is already there for us, we respond to this gift. And what do we say when we receive a gift? We respond with thanksgiving, despite all that is wrong in the world today. A thankful, grateful heart is the consequence of embracing ‘the one thing’ in the middle of the world’s turmoil.

COVID has brought many into this singular, focused perception. Families are discerning how to celebrate Christmas with all the social restrictions. Governments are telling us to limit our celebration of Christmas to those in our household. Worship this

Advent and Christmas season looks and feels quite different from years past.

This change challenges us who normally associate Christmas with holding lighted candles and singing carols at the top of our lungs, shoulder-to-shoulder, in a packed room of the faithful.

And yet, we are peeling the onion, stripping the non-essential trappings of a holiday season normally encumbered with so much glitz and fuss. By necessity, people are drilling down to the most essential and simplest of ritual and activity to find meaning and wholeness.

So, light one candle to watch for the coming Christ. Breathe. Enter the holy silence. Listen to the Word whisper in your heart. And then, rejoice. Give thanks.

The practice of Christian Meditation is what the world needs this Christmas. The Holy Night will come precisely because it is already a Silent Night.

We begin there. And from that still-point within us, we go out into the world with love and thanksgiving.

Would you give thanks with me for the gift of Christ in your heart? And please, consider in your thanksgiving this year especially, a gift for the Canadian Christian Meditation Community of which you are a part. Don’t just keep the faith this Christmas, spread it. Empower others in the Community to teach it, share it, and practice it with others.

Martin Malina
canadacoordinator@wccm.org



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at newsletter@wccm-canada.ca.

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

Page design and layout: www.katemcdo.com

What are Benedictine Oblates?

As oblates, ours is a consecrated life. Deeply rooted in the origins of monasticism, the essential commitment of oblature is the sharing of the tradition of silence and prayer. As Benedictine Oblates, we consecrate our lives, promising to live according to the Rule of St. Benedict. The three promises are: Obedience, which is the capacity to listen; *Conversio*, which is a continuous conversion; and Stability, which is the fidelity to our twice daily meditation. These are the walls of our monastery, firm foundations indeed.

The Rule is one of moderation and commonsense, written in a turbulent time at the end of the Pax Romana, which nevertheless survived as a guide for fifteen hundred years. Its guiding principle is the 'via media' – the middle way (nothing in excess), which was also the classical Apollonian maxim written over the entrance to Apollo's Temple at Delphi.

Writing to his community on the Benedictine life, Dom John Main wrote 'that the path of the middle way is not one of compromise, but much, much more – one of continuous refusal to compromise. St. Benedict wrote his Rule from a life-time of experience of this truth. The essential spirit of the Rule is the Spirit of Life – its specific quality is that of a fully human life – the whole person, body and soul, making the pilgrimage.

One cannot reach the goal of holiness, Father John so often said, without achieving personal wholeness. The Rule stresses discretion rather than blind obedience, moderation rather than egotistical asceticism, spiritual maturity rather than spiritual infantilism – understanding life as a growth in the experience of Love. Father John called Love perfect when your complete acceptance of the other is fully reciprocated. This is the definition of Love.

The universal vocation of the monk – and of the oblate – is to love, he said. The universal vocation for all of us is to love.

As oblates, we are encouraged to do *Lectio*, the Divine Office, to study the Rule daily, and of course, to meditate. However, I remember Father John saying to us oblates that 'if you are really strapped for time focus on the meditation.' All of us have a monastic dimension to our lives. A tonsure and a habit does not a monk make' was a quote often heard at the Priory. Oblature leads us further within, into an ever-deep-

ening silence and solitude. This solitude is not a self-indulgent privacy, but rather, a Bodhisattva-like presence to others.

There are a hundred or so Oblates in Canada at various stages of their journey, and we are part of the worldwide Benedictine Community. Oblates meet in small 'cells', and larger community celebrations, when we listen to one of John Main's talks, meditate, share community news – and celebrate with good food and wine. It is a balance of the serious and fun (no solemnity involved). We also gather annually for a truly monastic oblate retreat, which is open to everyone.

However, one does not recruit oblates. They must follow an inner call that is definitely not for everyone. There are a few candidates 'banging on the gate', who are kept waiting to test their resolve. If accepted, a mentor, an experienced oblate, is found to guide the applicant through six months of postulancy, followed by a year of noviciate, then application for full oblature.

New oblates tend to dive into organizing, working for groups etc. – being super-busy Marthas. Unfortunately, this often leads to disillusionment and burn-out. So it is strongly recommended to first 'Be' rather than 'Do'.

Father John said that the power of the Christian community to manifest the Love of God in the world, and our own personal response to faith, are deeply bound. There is such an urgent need to keep alive the experience of the Divine within. The health of society, as of the individual, depends upon the depth to which Ultimate Reality penetrates it.

Father John taught us that no religious community, or spiritual fellowship, is justified merely by what it does, but by what it is. However apostolically oriented a community is – whatever services it gives – there must be a space of silence at its centre. And this centre must be the focal point of its *raison d'être*, from which will flow all its good works and activities. Out of the solitude, good works will blossom and flow in abundance. Our main task as individuals, and as a community, is to return and keep on returning to that silent centre. It is a journey beginning in faith and ending in love.

Apollonia (Polly) Schofield
Canadian Oblate Coordinator



Julian of Norwich (1349-1429)

who recovered from the Black Death
– a saint for our times

The Black Death, a bacterial pandemic in England and Europe in the 1300s, killed 50 million people, 60 percent of the population, and is regarded as one of the greatest catastrophes in recorded history. It destroyed a higher proportion of the population than any other single historical event. The disease was carried by fleas and rats, and passed on from person to person. This devastating pandemic wiped out many towns, cities, hospitals and monasteries. Individuals usually lived 23 days between contact and death. The Plague was particularly disastrous in 1346-1353, but returned time and time again through the 1300s.

We only know a little about Julian's early life in this dangerous environment. She was born in Norwich in 1342, and was probably schooled in a Benedictine monastery. In 1373 she contracted the disease at 31 years of age, and came close to death. A parish priest was called to give her the last rites, and it is recorded that her mother closed her eyelids in anticipation of her imminent death. In this near death state she experienced a series of 16 visions gazing at a crucifix held up by the priest. After her illness she subsequently wrote a short text about her unexpected recovery. And many years later Julian wrote a longer text outlining these visions and spiritual revelations during her illness, entitled *Revelations of Divine Love*. It is the first book in the English language known to have been written by a woman.

The Warmth, Closeness and Tenderness of God

Why does Julian appeal to us? One reason is that in her writings she brings refreshing optimism, and new insights into the nature of God, particularly the warmth, closeness, and tenderness of God. More importantly, Julian is one of the few medieval writers who says it is absolutely impossible that God could ever be angry at us, for as she says, "anger and friendship are two opposites." God, says Julian, is loving, gentle and kind, which is the opposite of angry. She states, "For I saw full well that whenever our Lord appears, peace reigns, and anger has no place. For I saw no anger in God, in short or in long term." She goes on to say that God's love is compassionate and never wrathful.



Thomas Merton on Julian

So inspiring are Julian's insights, that the Trappist monk Thomas Merton, made this astonishing statement about her:

"Julian is without doubt one of the most wonderful of all Christian voices and she gets greater and greater in my eyes as I grow older. In the old days I used to be crazy about St John of the Cross, but I would not exchange him for Julian if you gave me the world, and the Indies, and all the Spanish mystics rolled up in one bundle. I think that Julian of Norwich is, with Newman, the greatest English theologian".

A Message of Joyful Optimism and Hope

In Julian's 14th-century world of unrest and the black plague, a world not unlike our own current state, she speaks of a God of tenderness, a God of compassion and love. As the Dominican priest Conrad Pepler once said, "We need her message of joyful optimism and hope, when we are in danger of being crushed under a lethal pessimism". God's love rings down through the centuries in Julian's revelations when the Lord says to her, "But all things shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." Her revelations encompass a wide range of topics, and portray an unquenchable optimism regarding God's power to bring good out of evil."

John Main and Julian

In one of her revelations Julian says, "For in the human soul is God's true dwelling," and adds, "utterly at home he lives in us forever." Again she says, "God

Continued on next page

Julian of Norwich

continued from previous page

is the still point at my centre". John Main picked up on this saying of Julian's, and in one of his talks says, "Meditation is a daily pilgrimage to our own centre."

Once in a time of prayer, Julian heard these words of the Lord, "I am the foundation of your praying." These words were a great consolation to her in her practice of inner prayer. Is it any wonder that John Main asked to hear readings by Julian in the last days of his life?

"All believing prayer is precious to me"

As one might expect, God speaks to Julian about desolation and helplessness in our daily life of prayer and the need for perseverance. She says: "our prayer brings great joy and gladness to our Lord. He wants it and awaits it. So He says this: "Pray inwardly, even though you find no joy in it. For it does good, though you feel nothing, see nothing, yes, even though you think you cannot pray. For when you are dry and empty, sick and weak, your prayer pleases me, though there is not enough to please you. All believing prayer is precious to me." No wonder John Main loved Julian, studied her revelations, and chose to listen to her writings of optimism and hope as he approached death. Two of Julian's more famous quotations are "Utterly at home, he lives in us forever" and "Our faith is to receive the divine ground of our being."

Julian becomes an anchorite in Norwich

In approximately 1394 Julian became an anchorite in Norwich, England, enclosed in a small cell attached to the church now known as the Church of St Julian. This small anchorhold of about 100 square feet would have had a window looking into the church, as well as a window looking out to the street. The window to the Church would allow her to receive the daily Eucharist at the Church Mass. The window to the street would allow daily spiritual counselling to visitors, and donations of food and heat for her daily needs. She would also have a small garden. In her anchorhold Julian wrote a book on contemplative prayer, as well as other spiritual writings. She was still alive in her anchorhold in 1429, and lived until she was 87.

She had lived through her time of pandemic, taught about perseverance in prayer, fought the good fight, and is a saint for our times.

**Paul Harris
Ottawa, ON**

Paul Harris is a former National Coordinator with the Canadian Christian Meditation Community

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for the Year Ended December 31, 2019

	2019	2018
Receipts		
Publications	\$ 19,940	\$ 17,275
Donations – Newsletter	2,902	2,062
Donations and Grants	29,012	18,668
Bonnevaux Scholarship Fund	12,285	105,211
Program revenues	5,665	15,145
Miscellaneous revenues (see notes below)	20,190	589
GST & PST refund	3,424	2,048
Revenue from Endowment	2,059	2,425
Proceeds from redemption of Endowment	0	25,000
Total receipts	\$ 95,477	\$199,923
Disbursements		
Publications	\$ 24,001	\$ 15,852
Newsletter & WCCM Friends	28,403	28,176
Rent	3,320	3,000
Office	867	2,306
Travel	2,628	3,834
Shipping and warehousing	1,492	1,254
Telephone and communications	86	1,005
IT	1,103	300
Programmes General	7,850	8,099
Donations to Canadian regional communities	750	1,396
Canadian groups	1,492	1,423
2019 JMS deposit	0	21,487
Bonnevaux project	0	6,762
Insurance	1,183	1,084
Professional services	2,277	0
Interest and bank charges	1,361	1,612
Miscellaneous disbursements	306	916
Total disbursements	\$ 77,199	\$ 98,506
Excess of receipts (disbursements)	\$ 18,278	101,417
ASSETS		
Cash	\$154,607	\$135,968
Accounts and miscellaneous receivables	11,608	2,849
Investments – Term GICs	5,510	5,441
Pledges receivable	6,435	11,143
Prepaid expenses	210	203
Inventory	34,647	26,203
Total Current Assets	\$213,017	\$181,8041
Long-Term Investment		
Income Endowment Fund	\$ 46,184	\$ 20,186
Total assets	\$259,201	\$201,993
LIABILITIES – Current		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 11,608	\$ 5,312
NOTES		
Pre-paid expenses – the insurance policy runs from March 12.		
The Bonnevaux Scholarship Fund donations were held in an escrow account pending the establishment of a French non-profit organization.		
The net balance for 2019 was \$ 5,993 – excluding donations to the Bonnevaux Scholarship Fund.		
\$25,000 was returned with interest from the loan to the John Main Seminar.		
The John Main Seminar generated a net surplus of \$ 19,750 for the Canadian Community		
Full financial records for the past ten years may be found on the Revenue Canada website under the Charities Division.		



Online CYO Summer Campers Take to Christian Meditation

This past summer the Hamilton Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) was not able to run its traditional face-to-face summer camps. The CYO Camp in a Box was created to keep campers connected and engaged through the safety and comfort of their own homes. Campers were sent a box of goodies, which they used to connect virtually with a group of other campers and their camp counsellors. Daily activities included, arts and crafts, games, interactive nature activities and even airbands.

Christian Meditation was included in the daily prayer of the camp. Karen Stevens, Director of the camp wanted to include Christian Meditation, as part of the program to inspire the campers and staff to take a few moments each day to connect with God. Christian Meditation was selected as one form of camp prayer because of how this

profound personal experience of the presence of God can be shared with a group.

Time was dedicated each day to meditation to allow staff and campers to become more comfortable with this prayer form. Staff used video timers containing meditation instructions, music and chimes made available by the WCCM to facilitate meditation periods.

In the beginning, staff were unsure how this would work, and were supported through the early days by Andy Burns (The Canadian Co-ordinator for Christian Meditation With Children and Young People). Very quickly campers were providing positive feedback and even requesting to meditate before they began their day. The counsellors were grateful to provide this daily prayer period that helped campers feel connected to each other and to God.

Andy Burns
Hamilton, ON

Canadian Christian Meditation Community

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PUBLICATIONS ORDER AND DONATIONS

Quantity	Title	Price	Total
_____	<i>A Contemplative Christianity for Our Time</i> (see page 12)	\$19.00	_____
		POSTAGE (Price + 10%)	_____
		TOTAL	_____
		DONATIONS / NEWSLETTER	_____
		TOTAL AMOUNT	_____

Reflections by Jack Murta

The one thing that we can all agree on is that we are living through a very challenging and uncertain time. For many people Covid-19 has turned their world upside down. While we know that our world will be changing, it is how we manage that change within ourselves that is the issue we must come to grips with as we move into the future.

For many, Covid-19 has unexpectedly begun somewhat of an awakening and a re-evaluation of our values. Just imagine how this small virus has shut down offices, places of worship, planes and trains, schools and universities, overwhelmed healthcare and exposed the flaws of the people and institutions that govern us.

Laurence Freeman has said that for everything that has happened the virus did not shut down the internet! We discovered its human potential. It allowed us to volunteer, in great numbers, to help others, to express solidarity with the worst affected, to meet and pray, to accompany the lonely, to discuss what all this craziness might mean for the future. The crisis has exposed fundamental flaws in our view of the world, especially our environment and social structures. We are all in the same storm, rich and poor, north and south.

What to do? How to proceed? I believe that the ability to focus on today, taking one day at a time is the best way of navigating through the time we are living in. As an example, imagine walking down a dark path at night holding a flashlight. We shine the light directly in front of us so as not to stumble. If we shine our light too far ahead it just gets diffused in the darkness and we see images, shadows, but we see everything very dimly. If the light is pointed at the spot where our next step will be we will very likely be fine. That is like living one day at a time, one step at a time. Thinking about what is in front of us at

this moment, today and dealing with it right now is how to get through times like this.

It may seem counterproductive and hard to believe that at a time like this silence may be our best way forward. As we move through this time, silence should be an essential part of our lives. If we spend a few minutes in silence each day we begin to find ourselves guided by certain core values and life becomes more centered and meaningful. Our focus becomes what truly endures for us and what is important.

Meditation and taking it one day at a time is still be the best way of navigating this crisis. The verse "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) is what many meditators look to for support and a firm foundation. The verse "Be still and know that I am God" is not an escape from the problems of the world but it is the answer to the problems of the world, because stillness and knowledge of God is the most powerful reality we have.

It has often been said that stillness is greater than hatred, greater than turmoil, greater than violence and greater than the self centered aggressive politics we see happening in various parts of the world. Taking time to be in solitude, silence and meditation will bring us closer to becoming more actively engaged in our world. We will begin to see issues more clearly, people in a different more positive light and feel more alive to the world we live in. Meditation leads to a shift of pure attention in everything we do.

Please stay safe.

Blessings to you, fidelity, courage, openness and grit to persevere.

Jack Murta
Ottawa, ON

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