



# WCCM

*Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation*

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## WCCM Academy Opens

A TWO-YEAR STUDY AND PRACTICE PROGRAMME GROUNDED IN CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY (P 8)



*An ancient tree at Bonnevaux, which will host the residential component of the Academy*

*“The vision of Metanoia shines like the sun of the true Self”*



In his reflection on *Meta-noia: let your minds be remade*, the WCCM theme for 2023, Laurence Freeman sees that by allowing ourselves to be changed we change the world (p 2-5)

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Leaver friends,

## A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

'*Metanoia*: Let your minds be remade.' Our theme in the WCCM for this year. A few days ago, the first of the year's ten online speakers in the monthly series showed us just how urgent – and deep – this task is. It leads into both peace of mind – (peace rather than pleasure is the meaning of happiness) – and into the global peace needed to survive.

Like me, you probably find that our daily mind is as turbulent as the wintry weather here on Bere Island where I am writing this letter. Atlantic storms have been drenching us almost constantly since I came here for a personal retreat. Then, today when I woke and drew the curtains, I looked out on a calm, sun-soaked landscape, a cloudless sky and brightly joyful colours. 'O, what a wonderful world, I head somewhere'. Even knowing how brief such epiphanies can be, we can fully enjoy the gift of them. Mental weather is like meteorological weather. I will say shortly, mind and world, like mind and ego, are inseparable and both are constantly changing.

Our mind finds peace only when we fully accept what we experience, uncomplainingly or unpossessively, depending on whether they are painful or pleasant. Only acceptance teaches us how to be real by rejecting denial and fantasy. Reality then teaches us that all experience is one. Rain or sunshine, pain or pleasure, failure or success, losing or finding, death or life. No experience stands alone. Everything is connected in the single seamless experience of reality. Seeing this is *metanoia's* gift.

I asked Barry White, the first speaker in the *Metanoia* Series, to start off with a memorable summary of the year's theme. So, he memorably did: '*Metanoia* is recognising the path and following the path with a commitment that is not less than everything – every thought, word, action and moment – with a sense



of urgency and appreciation that time is limited'.

Ordinarily, when we speak of changing our mind, we think of altering a decision we have made or an opinion we hold. Changing opinions or decisions, however, are often just signs of how restless and insecure the mind is. To hide this weakness and appear 'strong-minded' we can also stubbornly refuse to change a position we have taken. For this reason, the Russian leadership is frightened of changing its mind about its assault on Ukraine.

*Metanoia* is different. Letting our minds be remade means more than changing mental positions or opinions. It is seeing the world bathed in the sunlight of God. Sometimes blindingly, as St Paul did in his conversion experience.

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Considerable time and effort are required to achieve that victorious surrender when *metanoia* transforms us, in the sunshine of reality, by burning off ignorance and delusion. It's not easy, but

it's easier than not making the effort. It is life's journey and every step opens us to a deeper level of peace.

Mind is restless, resistant, and ever caught in a web of delusion. This is the first of many humbling discoveries awaiting the new meditator. We need to be encouraged: 'don't be afraid, don't give up letting go.' Seeing *my* own mind for what it is, is step one. Meditation makes us daily more aware of the ego-mind's stratagems for survival and its repertoire of tricks. Then, one day when you sit to meditate and the curtains of the mind are drawn open, you find a clear sky-consciousness, with no cloud-thoughts: except the thin, wispy thought whispering 'O, this *is* great. Success, finally! Cling to it.' After being caught like this many times, you learn that the only thing *not* to let go of is letting go, until there is no more to let go of. Mind *is* thought. Until we are mindless, we are not free. The Buddha once advised how to stabilise practice: 'never over-rate what you have received'. Nor does Jesus short-change us about the radical simplicity of the narrow path of *metanoia*: 'Whoever finds

their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it’.

Letting go means losing-everything.

Meditators acquire a taste for this wisdom by their daily practice. Each daily meditation is part of one experience. For those on our path, the mantra reveals the powerfully unobtrusive presence of Christ, guiding us like a personal trainer, into ever deeper metanoia. Gaps appear in the cloudbanks of delusion. By training the mind we see it for what it is and learn to see inwardly. Gradually clearing those obstacles of ignorance, formed by forces of fear or desire in our early life-story or acquired in our cultural formation, the eye of the heart opens. We no longer look for God as something to be found. We see that God *is* the light by which we see. When the mind *is* clear what is *not* God? Metanoia restores clarity of vision with the bonus of the courage to risk more.

The most important task in life is to live it to the full. Our potential for creativity is to respond fully to the gift of our existence. This means to respond at the point of our origination within the spirit of God. (John Main, *Door to Silence*)

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Meister Eckhart calls this ‘point of origination’ the ‘divine spark’ present in our deepest, most mysterious centre. Metanoia is the path to uncovering it. It draws us into the kind of paradox that unremade minds find terrifying but that to the clear mind is exciting. We let go, until there is nothing more to let go of; then we find not only everything we have lost but everything it was ever part of.

This wisdom, passed down through history, is also the core narrative of every

human life. It needs to be told and re-told, and never more so than in our amnesiac time. The greatest contemplative schools have done this and often came into existence in the worst of times. In 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe, for example, people were tormented by plague (without vaccination), by social and economic chaos, by a divided church in shameful spiritual decline. The mystical teachers of the period (like the author of the Cloud, Mother Julian, Meister Eckhart and Ruusbroek) exposed the church’s failures but did not abandon it. Each of them was a unique manifestation of wisdom, with their own style and thought, to which church authorities often reacted hostile-

or opposition. ‘Every image of God is an idol’, Gregory of Nyssa says. Bonaventure discovered, as each of us will, that ‘we must suspend all the operations of the mind to enter this sacred mystical experience (which) cannot be understood by anyone unless they surrender themselves to it’.

Metanoia is the victorious surrender of the mind, letting go of the ego-mind’s double-act by removing attention from thoughts, including thoughts about ourselves. This is the mystical tradition of the church, truer to the gospel than mere theological orthodoxy or enforced morality. Theology – as the new WCCM Academy launching soon will show – is



ly. In their very diversity, however, we can see a profound unity of vision.

The vision of metanoia shines like the sun of the true Self, our ‘point of origination’ or the ‘divine spark’. The mind is remade through steady practice and peaceful bursts of self-understanding arising from silence and stillness. Mind and ego are the same. Like the moon that shines with the sun’s light, mind-ego reflects the light of being, of the God-Self which absorbs all counterfeits

most powerful when it recognises its own limits.

Metanoia *is* the contemplative journey. It allows us to interiorise the words of Jesus which we cannot do when the mind remains caught in second-hand opinions and boundaries. For example, ‘the Kingdom of heaven is within you’, is an essential saying of Jesus: it is the experiential insight created in metanoia that our deepest centre is with and in God. Finding this point of origin allows

us to know directly, as God knows, and to know ourselves by knowing that we *are known* (and loved) by God. Metanoia also leads into another mystery of ourselves described by mystics as early as St Paul: we are known by God in eternity before we exist in the flesh: ‘chosen by God... before the foundation of the world’, echoing the prophet Jeremiah ‘before I formed you in the womb, I knew you’.

Metanoia awakens profound and transforming self-knowledge. But, some will say, what has this got to do with my problems or the price of heating my home? Does it make any difference to how well I live in the world and the direction the world is travelling?

It makes a difference. How we think about ourselves shapes how we think, act and feel. If we see ourselves as cannon-fodder (like the Russian conscripts) or consumer-algorithms (as people lining up all night for the new Apple phone), where is the wonder of life? Where is the love that springs from the wonder of self-recognition? Where is the wonder of recognising ourselves in others and to see one divine value and equality in everyone? How we know and understand ourselves matters because it determines how we vote, see the difference between lies and truth, work, play and love. Our love for others, for the world and for God are one experience springing from the cry of self-recognition in one of the most beautiful poems in the Bible: ‘I thank you, Lord, for the wonder of my being.’ (Psalm 139).

However and whomever we love, love has one source and purpose. When we meet someone and fall in love, or when we let ourselves be mastered by compassion for those in need, we are experiencing God. We are beneficiaries of God’s most intimate self-revelation. Pushed into new depths of self-understanding,



*Blessing of the John Main Meditation and Icon Room in Balally (Photo: Balally Parish archives)*

the wonder becomes richer and our capacity for love grows. Rumi says, ‘Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere. They’re in each other all along’. Loving, romantically or compassionately, recognising another person, not as the embodiment of one’s fantasy, but as a wondrously unique manifestation of God, changes us to our depth. It frees us from delusion, by awakening us to our self in them. It too is part of metanoia.

Experiences of this kind are rare, authentic expressions of the ‘giftedness of life’ as John Main described it. They are worth waiting for. Our daily spiritual practice prepares us for them. When they appear, they are like a bonus-boost on the path of metanoia which we are following every day of our life.

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Religion that forgets this mystical wisdom, of revealing the divine in the human and the human in the divine, is either irrelevant to the human path or hostile to it. But when religion is infused with this wisdom it is a global force of

healing and progress.

It is hard today to feel optimistic about institutional religion: until you see it renewed by communal metanoia, transforming itself in a traditional form like the parish. I saw this recently, for example, in the Parish of the Ascension in Balally, Dublin. Fr Jim Caffrey, a meditator in our community, his predecessor the theologian Fr Dermot Lane, and an energised team of parishioners are evolving into a new kind of contemplative parish (‘meditation and service’ it proclaims on a banner) expressing a deep spirituality in active service. It is marked more by depth than just novelty. I celebrated a contemplative mass with them on the Feast of the Epiphany, full of human warmth and the *koinonia* of a diverse, inclusive community nurtured by shared interiority and a common purpose. For me it was a sign of what the church, with enlightened leadership, might yet become globally.

But why does it always seem so hard to commit to the path of metanoia and stay on it? We may have moments, even long moments, of clear sky bathed in the

sunlight of love which feel so powerful that they will never stop. Even if we were to lose them, we would never forget. But weather changes, the mental sky clouds up with thoughts and delusions, storms can delete memory. The pain of loss and doubt can then undermine what was once unforgettable certainty. We are creatures of time.

Life's weather being so unpredictable is why we should fix the roof while the sun is shining. Even if it leaks again, in storms, damage is reduced. Meditation builds resilience. It is a part of our life we don't have to think about but, if we miss it, we quickly feel the lack. We meditate 'in prosperity and adversity' as the desert teachers put it. Whatever the weather, we turn up uncomplaining, grateful that it is part of our life. We learn the wisdom of not evaluating temporary, partial experiences in meditation and stay instead in the whole experience.

One of the hardest lessons to learn is to accept the gift, when what we have been waiting for appears, and to practice detachment from the beginning. All attachment forms imperceptibly and leads to possessiveness and fear. Seeds of new pain and loss are sown. Metanoia is built into the need for continuous detachment. Never give up, never stop letting go. Consciousness of metanoia is released to help the ego-mind by the practice of meditation. It enters in all relationships and activities whenever we slip from gratitude into entitlement by clinging to a gift. The path of metanoia prevents this. It reverses the slide into delusion. It saves us from the trap of possession and restores us to the freedom of gratitude.

The external world manifests our ego-mind. If the mind is is unaware of its egotistical nature, the world becomes a mentally constructed playground of the ego. To the degree that our mind embrac-

es metanoia, helping us to recognise the difference between the ego and the self, the whole world becomes a 'point of origination' for the divinely-human.

This is the ultimate goal of meditation. We change the world by being changed. And as we see our mind for what it really is, the ego, we see that the only mind free of ego is the mind of Christ. 'We possess the mind of Christ', is the astonishing announcement.

Understanding the path of metanoia uniting inner life and external events is the healing, the wholeing and the divinising of the human condition. Because it makes this obvious, meditation is commitment to metanoia. And yes, it makes a difference. For years we go around in circles, repeating mistakes in different ways, searching for answers and explanations. Meditation frees us from this cycle of self-made *samsara*. We often ask, 'what is the best way to go?' The answer is 'the way you have already taken'.

Metanoia is not about novelty, changing opinions or getting more knowledge. It is shedding illusion as it arises by seeing what is real in every form of experience, periods of sunshine or storm. The mind begins to be remade as soon as we start to tame its restless activity. In stillness we let go and, seeing the priority of Being, all our doing changes.

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Time shows that metanoia itself is gift. Metanoia is Being's miracle of self-healing for the mind and ego through what is free of the ego-mind. It remakes the mind, retaining its useful qualities but disconnecting the mechanisms of attachment and illusion that make it self-harming. Ramana said that many 'i's (many deluded, false selves) are



A figure of contemplation, Notre-Dame de Paris

formed every moment. In the deepest centre of our being, where we meet infinite depth, where silence consumes thoughts and images, we enter peace beyond understanding. Here, finally and for ever, we recognise that we are recognised.

Rather than acquiring new ideas or opinions, metanoia removes false identities and illusions. The simple obviousness of self-recognition is what best describes progress on the human path. It is Jesus saying 'Mary' and Mary, in the same instant of recognition, replying 'Rabbouni'. It is the drop merging with the ocean and the ocean simultaneously merging with the drop.

With much love

*Lawrence*

## News & Articles

# Six Opportunities to Let our Minds be Remade

TAKE A LOOK AT OUR LIST OF EVENTS, PROJECTS AND NEW RESOURCES TO HELP YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY IN 2023

## I - Metanoia series and Scripture series (online)

The WCCM 2023 theme of “Metanoia” is a call to let our minds be remade - to change our perception and direction. As has become the custom in recent years, we are offering this as an online series with 10 speakers from different fields, reflecting on and helping us to go deeper into this theme of change. With contributions from the fields of religion, science, politics, economics and technology, this series will be a year-long discovery of hope and fresh insights into our future. The first session in January was led by Dr Barry White on *The Science & Art of Healing*, and the themes and speakers for the forthcoming sessions are as follows:

- 28 February – Education. **Diane Tolomeo**: *Teach Me What I Cannot See*
- 21 March – Philosophy. **David Egan**: *Animals and Us - A Multi-Species Community*;
- 25 April – Embodiment. **Giovanni Fe-**



Matthew Fox

**licioni**: *In My Flesh I Come Face to Face with God*

- 30 May – Global Politics. **Mark Medish**: *Reflections on Human Scale*;
- 13 June – Religion. **Matthew Fox**: *Letting Our Minds Be Remade About Religion*;
- 25 July – Scripture. **Jane Williams**: *Metanoia: How Scripture Remakes Our Minds*;



Jane Williams

- 5 September – Technology. **Marco Schorlemmer**: *Humanity in a Techno-Scientific World*;
- 21 November – Culture. **Jane McAuliffe & Dennis McAuliffe**: *Contemplation and a Culture of Encounter*;
- 12 December – Economics. **Mark Carney**: *Value(s) for Building a Better World for All*.



## The Space Between Words: How to read the Bible and other Sacred Texts

**Laurence Freeman** is leading a nine-session online series (starting in September). A unique journey discovering how the inner experience described in sacred texts is the same as what we discover in ourselves on the contemplative path. Relearning how to read these texts is a priority for a world where the connection between the inner and outer dimensions has been lost.

To learn more about all our online series, visit [wccm.org](http://wccm.org)

## News & Articles

### 2 - Retreats and Pilgrimages

As well as coming for personal retreat and sharing life with the community at Bonnevaux, our international centre offers a programme of special retreats and events:

16-25 February: Deepen your roots – plant trees and meditate at Bonnevaux

3-4 March: The Wisdom of the Desert: Freedom to Change – Lent Retreat (online) **with Laurence Freeman**

7-12 March: A Benedictine Wisdom School with Cynthia Bourgeault (Teacher in Residence)

1-9 April: The Easter Mystery is all about Being Remade - Holy Week Retreat (hybrid) with **Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni**

2-7 May: Risking Delight, with **Sarah Bachelard** (Teacher in Residence)

6-11 June: Radical Regeneration: Christ Consciousness and Sacred Activism with **Andrew Harvey** (Teacher in Residence)

1-6 August: Stability and Plasticity:



Meditation session in the Barn during the John Main Seminar 2022

Embracing Life's Changes - Young Adults' Retreat with **Laurence Freeman, Giovanni Felicioni** and others.

7 - 11 November - Yoga and Meditation Retreat (TBC) with **Giovanni Felicioni**

14-19 November: *Good Measure*,

*Pressed Down and Overflowing: How Contemplation Shapes our Action* with **Rowan Williams** (Teacher in Residence)

For more information visit [bonnevauxwccm.org](http://bonnevauxwccm.org)

### Monte Oliveto Retreat



Seeing is Believing is the theme for this year's Monte Oliveto Retreat (24 June - 1 July) in Italy, led by **Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni**. We may look at something but still see only what we imagine is there. We can have an experience and miss the meaning. Loss, grief, disappointment take their toll in life but can also be transformed by seeing what is really there. This retreat has been held in Monte Oliveto for 30 years and participants have said it leads them into deeper and lasting peace.

Visit <https://wccm-int.org/moretreat23>

### Holy Land Pilgrimage

**Laurence Freeman** is leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with an optional extension to Jordan, 2-13 October. Visit the sacred places where Jesus walked and taught, was born and died and where the church began. With daily meditation, this pilgrimage deepens faith and strengthens the interior journey – especially through the fellowship among the pilgrims.

For more information visit <https://wccm-int.org/hland23>

## News & Articles

### 3 - The WCCM Academy Opens



We are excited to announce the opening of the WCCM Academy!

The Academy is an interdisciplinary programme grounded in the Christian contemplative tradition and inspired by meditation as a universal and unifying source of wisdom. We believe that contemplation generates peace and wisdom which are the necessary foundations for justice, and that this peace and

wisdom can be enacted and applied across all of human life and society.

The Academy, which is based on ecumenical, interfaith and inclusive values, is committed to passing on the contemplative practices and teachings of John Main and Laurence Freeman to a new generation of students. Whether you are new to contemplation or an experienced practitioner; a student of theology,

philosophy, psychology or another discipline; or simply one who would like to delve deeper into the path of meditation, the Academy provides a unique opportunity to explore the transformative power of contemplation and how it can be applied to your own life and work.

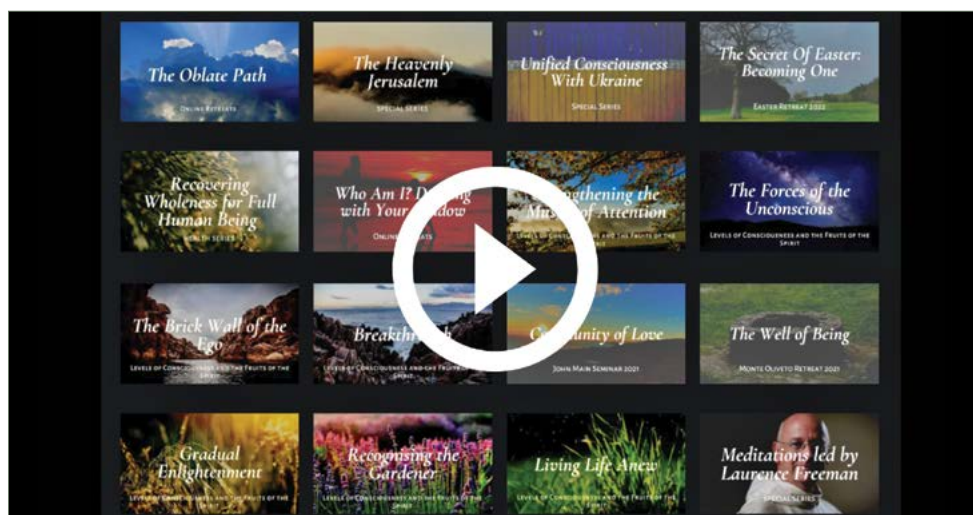
With a richly diverse faculty of teachers and personal tutors, a combination of online courses, retreats and in-person seminars, the Academy offers an immersive educational experience that deepens our understanding of contemplative wisdom in all traditions. The Academy draws on a global community of teachers and practitioners committed to fostering a sense of inclusion, connection and mutual support among its students.

We hope you will join us on this journey of discovery and growth. To learn more about the programme, please visit the WCCM Academy web page:

<https://wccm.org/academy/>

### 4 - Our video streaming platform

At the end of 2022 we launched WCCM+, our video streaming platform with more than 300 hours of recordings of talks, retreats, meditation sessions and major events. We invite you to subscribe as a member in order to support your personal journey while also supporting WCCM in its mission to spread meditation to the world and “to serve the unity of all”. You can do a 7-days trial before you subscribe. For more information please visit: [wccm.org/wccm-plus](https://wccm.org/wccm-plus)





## News & Articles

# 5 - Meditatio WCCM's Outreach

BY KATE MIDDLETON, DIRECTOR OF MEDITATIO

Meditatio WCCM's outreach which includes work in prisons, as well as in the realms of health, social justice, education, business and, importantly, the climate crisis. By connecting and networking via Meditatio webinars, events, resources and offering teaching on meditation, WCCM aims to bridge the gap between the contemplative experience and key areas of modern society, educating, inspiring and informing meditators and non-meditators alike. The Meditatio Centre in London (which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in March) offers a physical space for dialogue and learning, and represents a kind of microcosm of the huge amount of work that is being done globally.

Meditatio is made up of an incredible network of expert volunteers working to bring meditation to different areas of society. 2023 will be a time for recruiting and training more volunteers. COULD THIS BE YOU?! Meditatio wants to encourage and train you to be fully confident in talking about your practice in different contexts. We have already begun by producing guidelines to leading meditation with children and now, Mary Devane, Meditatio International Coordinator, is producing a toolkit to support meditators to 'break in' to their local prison and have the skills to teach meditation to prisoners or their families. The work in trauma-related meditation is ongoing with Tim Kelly in the USA, and we are looking to start some online support groups for people in the margins: refugees, people coming out of prisons, those in recovery from trauma and addic-



Coming soon: *Breaking into Prison - A Toolkit for Meditation* (Photo by Dimitris Vetsikas/Pixabay)

tion. We will train you to lead a group like this, either online or in person, in your neighbourhood. We want to support you to go out and seek the people who need meditation most. The Earth Crisis Group was formed last year to look at how meditation can redress the climate balance. This is of the upmost importance and, as meditators, we need to be engaged and informed. We are currently forming a global network of meditators involved in climate work. To learn more about this, look out for our Earth Crisis Forums which will be happening regularly.

Terry Doyle, the Meditatio International Coordinator for People on the Margins famously says, "have mantra, will travel". By this, he means we need only our word, and we take that to where it is most required. But, of course, confidence is needed to do this. Some groups are unknown or challenging to us. What language

should we use? Are we allowed to mention God? Can we say we are teaching Christian Meditation? These are questions that come up regularly for us all, I am sure. While we do not hide the faith dimension of our own practice or inspiration, we must of course reassure the audience that we are not trying to convert or win them over to any belief system. So in 2023, Meditatio aims, through webinars, events, online teaching programmes and meditating together, to encourage and support what we all want to do: share this amazing gift with as many people as possible! If you are interested in getting involved in any of the areas of outreach mentioned above, please get in touch on [meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org).

To explore all the Meditatio initiatives, go to: <https://wccm.org/outreach/>.

Be a part of the social transformation of consciousness in 2023. Metanoia, let our minds be remade - and maranatha!

## News & Articles

# 6 - New online courses will help group leaders, outreach and the delivering of the Essential Teaching

BY PHIL ROGACKI, WCCM DIRECTOR OF ONLINE LEARNING

Online Learning is releasing several courses in the first half of 2023. They will align with a contemplative approach to our current crisis such as the challenge to democracy and healing from trauma. Others, will focus on a deeper investigation of the transforming of consciousness which flows from the practice of meditation.

There will also be courses on

developing leadership and the personal gifts of teachers of meditation. This will include a Meditation Group Leaders' course and a course for presenters of the Essential Teaching Workshop, which has been a WCCM in-person favourite for more than 20 years, based on foundational Christian teaching and spirituality. For more information visit [wccm.org/courses](http://wccm.org/courses)



# The first John Main Seminar at Bonnevaux

Herman Van Rompuy was the keynote speaker at the John Main Seminar 2022 on the theme "The Challenge TO Democracy: The Challenge OF Democracy". The Seminar and pre-seminar retreat (led by Fr Laurence) were hosted for the first time at Bonnevaux in November 2022. Resident participants were at capacity and several hundred joined online. Herman Van Rompuy spoke wisely and challenging and enjoyed a robust dialogue both with seasoned meditators and younger ones, with a passionate concern for the environment. The 2023 John Main Seminar will take place from 11-17 September and details will be released soon.



# Contemplation in Action in Trinidad & Tobago

A meditation group in Trinidad, led by the National Coordinator Sandee Bengochea, put the idea of "contemplation and action" into practice in a project to help women refugees from Venezuela. For eight weeks (starting in September 2022) they gave migrants English language lessons,

taught them work skills, and provided mental health support. The whole project was centred around the meditation practice. "It was really beautiful to see the women calming down during the meditation, very often there were tears. I think what we did was to provide a space for them to heal, to just be and to

really exhale and try to find themselves again. The *Contemplation Leading to Action* project meant so much for our group. And in fact, we are all waiting to do another round of the programme," said Sandee.

ONLINE - watch the full interview here: <https://wccm-int.org/intvtrind>

# In Focus

## Kenzie Knight, USA



My meditation experience began when I was a nervous first-year student at Georgetown University. Feeling overwhelmed, I would find myself at the John Main Center for Meditation & Dialogue (JMC) seeking silence, simplicity, and stillness. At first, meditation was an escape from the hecticness of college. I was looking for a moment of rest in the midst of such a huge transition. What I did not realize at the time was the invitation to which God was calling me.

Through my experience at the Center and exploration of the teachings of John Main, Laurence Freeman, and

many others, I learned that meditation is a call to prayer and to find rest in God. Meditation can be summarized for me in the phrase “mutual gazing,” as Fr. Martin Laird, O.S.A. beautifully expressed it – reflecting the meeting between God and me.

I have deepened my practice this fall as the JMC Fellow for Christian Contemplation for 2022-2023, which is generously sponsored by the Trust for the Meditation Process. My biggest observation has been the nonlinear

*The invitation of meditation is to find rest in the restlessness, to embrace the difficult nature of letting go*

nature of the practice. That is, I have noticed sometimes distractions are constant and at other times I can be attuned to God’s presence so clearly. I sometimes experience both on the same day!

I discovered that I have brought expectations of a perfect practice to meditation. I assumed my meditation practice would be a linear progress with

distractions becoming less and less as I meditated more. But this has not been the case. I have noticed distractions are frequent still after years of practice. And I am learning to be okay with that -- that God is not asking me to be perfect but just to simply be.

Even still, this nonlinearity can be frustrating and disheartening at times. So, I am learning how to sit with this frustration and my distractions in meditation, welcoming them as guests rather than seeing them as intruders, because accepting the presence of these feelings is as much a part of the process of the practice as finding stillness is. I remind myself of the words of Jesus: “Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” The invitation of meditation is to find rest in the restlessness, to embrace the difficult nature of letting go. It is not about perfecting the practice but is a way to be with the messiness of life. It is about reorienting the way we think about our relationship to God, ourselves, and others.

Meditation is simply the invitation to meet God within us and recentre on that love – to sit in mutual gazing. No matter how the practice unfolds, God and you are there in the present moment – and that is all that matters.



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**Would you like to contribute to the WCCM Newsletter? Our next deadline is 15 March.**

## Events & Projects

# Spring Appeal: United for the Future



WCCM is much more than an organisation: it is a community of people from around the world, committed to the mission of sharing the gift of Christian Meditation. We have come a long way over the past 30+ years of our existence. We now have National Communities in 63 countries and are present in more than 100. We have been teaching meditation in all sorts of conditions and spheres of society,

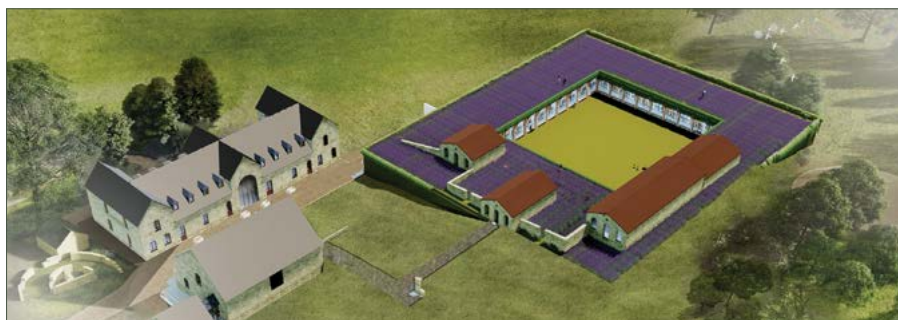
not only among Christians. Because meditation is a universal wisdom, everyone is welcome to join us. WCCM continues to expand and grow, and so our financial needs have also increased significantly.

Our Spring fundraising appeal will take place the week of 24-31 March 2023. Please tune in and give what you can. Details on ways of giving will be available on our website ([wccm.org](http://wccm.org)).

## Free Online series for Young Adults

*Fully alive: Make Contact with Our Own Centre* is a free online series of eight sessions, starting in February. This series has been created for the 16 – 45 age group and focuses on the questions they may have about society and the world we live in. Each session will be led by a meditator from the global community and will concentrate on a different aspect of meditation, including a general introduction, the benefits of meditation, the difference between meditation and mindfulness, and the balance between action and contemplation, among other topics. More info here: <https://wccm-int.org/yngs23>

## Bonnevaux next phase: The Contemplative Cloister



The next major step in the Bonnevaux project will be the Contemplative Cloister. Like the first version of this idea, there will be 26 new “cells” in an uniquely peaceful and beautiful environment. The new design is more economical, more ecological, and blends more harmoniously with the older buildings. To date Bonnevaux has been made possible by the generosity of meditators, friends, and foundations. We have taken no loans and our only debt is gratitude. With the same kind of support we plan to begin work on the cloister in early 2024.

Learn more: <https://wccm-int.org/ccloister>

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# Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COMMUNITY



## WINTER 2023

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## IN MEMORIAM

### Maureen Sandrock

Our beloved Maureen, mother, grandmother, wife, sister, daughter and friend, died peacefully on February 17, 2023 at the Queensway-Carleton Hospital in Ottawa after a short illness. Maureen was born in 1942 in Lampman, Saskatchewan. She was a registered nurse who trained with the Regina Grey Nuns School of Nursing and worked in operating rooms at several hospitals, including the Misericordia and Children's Hospitals in Winnipeg, before moving to Ottawa and retiring from nursing in 1991.

Maureen was a devout Roman Catholic and a professed Benedictine Oblate. The Oblates remember fondly times shared with Maureen at the Dom. John Main annual retreats at the Abbaye in Rougemont, Quebec. In 2011, Maureen established an ecumenical Christian Meditation Group in Manotick, participating in it until her death. The group continues today and connects to the wider Ottawa Christian Meditation community.

In lieu of flowers, family and friends may wish to donate to the Canadian Oblate Community through Canada Helps at **The Canadian Christian Meditation Community** to support communication and participation in the Rougemont retreats and other events.



**Maureen Mary Sandrock**  
28 Sep 1942–17 Feb 2023

### Bill Meek



**Bill Meek**  
2 Jan 1951–4 Feb 2023

The Ottawa Christian Meditation Community mourns the loss of Bill Meek. Bill was a valuable member of the community as a volunteer on the coordinating committee for many years.

Bill was responsible for putting together conference and retreat booklets, registration forms and many other tasks. One of Bill's last volunteer task was as the registrar and organizer for the Canadian Christian Meditation Community 2022 National Conference at St Paul University, Ottawa. Bill was always willing to give his time to the Christian Meditation Community. Bill also served on the Canadian Christian Meditation National Council and Bill was a Christian Meditation group leader at Emmanuel United Church.

At Bill's recent celebration of life, the Christian meditators who attended talked about Bill and his humble quiet manner of getting things done. We recalled that he was personable and accepting and welcoming to all. We knew Bill was a model train hobbyist. But we did not know he loved music and photography also. He was a man of many talents and we will miss Bill greatly. Bill leaves behind a wonderful family and we will keep them in our prayers.



### EDITOR'S NOTE

We are seeking a  
**Newsletter Coordinator.**

If you are interested please contact  
the National Coordinator at

**[canadacoordinator@wccm.org](mailto:canadacoordinator@wccm.org)**

# The journey of loss in Christian Meditation

The season of Lent is a journey. And it isn't a journey to Disney Land. This journey is difficult, and not easy. And maybe that's why it's not a very popular religious observance these days. We would rather make a spiritual bypass around the cross to get to the empty tomb. We naturally try to avoid, deny, or distract ourselves from acknowledging and dealing with the truth.

But the only way to experience fully the joy of Easter is first to confront ourselves. Getting at the truth means we need first to face the lies we have believed. We must unearth those long held, deeply grounded beliefs about ourselves and how we relate with others and the world that aren't true.

The journey of Lent echoes Jesus' forty days in his wilderness journey. (Matthew 4:1-11). This was a journey he had to take. And in the desert Jesus encountered the father of all lies, the devil, who tempted him. The devil tempted Jesus not to believe in what God told him at his baptism, which happened just before he went off into the desert. At his baptism, Jesus received the truth from God, who said: "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

Jesus was tempted by the devil to believe lies that undermined the truth that: 1. Jesus belonged to God already, before doing anything; 2. God's love for Jesus needed no verification from others; and 3. God's pleasure and favour did not depend on how much or how little he had, materially.

These temptations are also aimed at each of us. What are the lies we are told? These lies that correspond to the three temptations Jesus faced are: We are what we do, we are who others say we are, and we are what we have.

The practice of Christian Meditation leads us to confront those three lies. We say that Christian Meditation invites us to embrace stillness, solitude, and silence. These three descriptors – stillness, solitude, silence – confront the three lies we are told. In the stillness, solitude and silence we are invited to experience profound loss which feels like a dagger to our ego.

In the stillness of our bodies in meditation, we first 'lose' the lie that our worth hinges on our accomplishments and abilities. Because in twice-daily, twenty-minute meditation times we are not productive. We are not getting anything done. And for some of us action-oriented personalities, this is hard work to let go of incessant physical activity and productivity. In meditation, "I am not what I do."

Then, in the solitude of our hearts, we are doing this work interiorly. We are not mirroring nor reflecting our egos vis-à-vis others – in conversation, in social interaction, in any activity together. In contemplation our true self is not conditioned by others. We lose our self-analytical enterprise to identify with others. For those whose identity is caught up in social interaction, this is hard work to consent to, engage and rest in solitude. In meditation, "I am not what others say about me."

In the silence of meditation, finally, we confront our thinking. All the noise of inner chatter that seeks to obtain and maintain security in our lives meets the profound silence of the one truth. In the one-word prayer we concentrate and focus our minds on the one thing that matters. In the silence we lose our disposition to amass more, conserve more, obtain more in order to be safe. Because, in meditation, "I am not what I have."

Should we persevere in meditation, as difficult as the journey is, we discover the gift of God's love, in Christ, who makes this journey with us. In Christian Meditation when we face the lies of the world, we discover the grace and the truth that we belong to God, before all else. We discover we are God's beloved, before all else. We discover that God's pleasure and favour is all we will ever need.

I thank God for these gifts of stillness, solitude and silence. May God bless your Lenten journey. And at the end of this journey, may Easter this year bring a resurrection of new life, renewed spirit and joy to you.

**Martin Malina**  
National Coordinator CCMC

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*échos du silence* and the French version of *Meditatio* are  
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Page design and layout: [www.katemcdo.com](http://www.katemcdo.com)

# No Words To Pray

When my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, I was totally unprepared for how the changes it effected in her impacted me. I literally had no words to either pray or say, and found myself in a kind of spiritual desert, feeling incredibly alone, abandoned by God. The words I searched for in others' prayers were no comfort to me. I lacked words of my own to say to God. As a priest in the church, I was aware that I was perceived as someone who could pray-on-demand. I felt fraudulent.

My friend Mary Kilbride introduced me to Christian Meditation, taught me "how" to meditate and I joined a local group. I was so weary – spiritually and physically. I worked full-time, had two small children, was anxious about my mother yet somehow, I managed to get myself to Meditation every Monday night. My fellow Meditators told me some years later they were sure I'd slept through the first six months! I persevered and an amazing realization dawned on me: God had not abandoned me in the desert at all. Just as I had been longing for God, God had been longing for me. God had and was still very much with me. I didn't need to "do" anything, much less say anything. "Just show up and let God love you," Mary told me.

The Anglican priest and poet George Herbert in his poem "Love bade me welcome" tells the story of a soul encountering Love's extravagant welcome at a feast held in his honour. This Love, of course, is

Christ, who desires not a superficial acquaintance, but rather a deep, personal, long-term relationship. The prodigious hospitality of God is manifested as the Host ushers in the wearied traveler; offering food and drink, physical and spiritual refreshment. The Host lavishes attention, expects nothing in return, except to "sit down, and taste . . ." There is forgiveness, redemption, a desire to soothe all shame and blame. The invitation to "sit down, and taste" is what the practice of Meditation has been for me.

Christian Meditation, recovered for us by a Benedictine monk, John Main, is an ancient form of silent, interior prayer. To aid our being still, attentive to Christ's company, we use a word, a mantra, "Mara-natha", repeated throughout the meditation. Sometimes people wonder what "happens" during meditation. All I can say is: "Just show up and let God love you."

It's not about our perfection at it but rather our faithfulness in the practice – even when we're depleted. John Main instructs us not to evaluate our meditation time, deeming it "good" or "not so good". It's the holy habit of "showing up" that changes us, that opens us to Christ and by extension, opens us to others as we seek to see, love and serve Christ in them.

**The Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith**  
Cathedral Church of All Saints, Halifax, NS  
Online Christian Meditation Community  
prayasyoucan3@gmail.com

## Alberta WCCM Advent Retreat

On Saturday, November 26, 2022, seventeen members of the Alberta WCCM community gathered at the Priddis Golf and Country Club in the foothills, a short drive west of Calgary. This was a stunning natural setting for our second annual Advent Retreat. The nature and quiet allowed us to quickly find our silent centre as we transitioned out of pandemic restrictions and prepared our hearts for the Advent season.

The theme was "Hope and Story". As Andrew Greeley has said, "Every object, event, and person in life is potentially an occasion for hope and renewal and hence is potentially sacred."

Our special day, held together by silence and the Holy Spirit, contained both group and personal meditation times, WCCM talks, music, mandala colouring, haiku, writing our hope story and contemplative walking inside and outside. This was a wonderful opportunity to slow down, listen, wait, love, be still and attentive. In such a peaceful environment the presence of the Holy Spirit was felt among us very quickly and deeply as time flew by. Our time together was a special gift, a day of many blessings. Thank you to the organizers.

**Sharon and Ken**



# JOURNEY FROM FEAR

Christian Meditation. Within a short time, I could participate in workshops, retreats, and groups. I became well acquainted with the World and Canadian communities of meditation.

I found that as my practice increased I began to feel much better. I felt a sense of refreshment, a move of God's spirit within my life. It gave me new eyes to see, new ears to hear, and a new heart to know the love of God at the centre of my being. It animated my entire life, where the ordinary was transformed. It was not sudden or dramatic, but rather like a gradual awakening where my fears, anxieties, and aloneness melted away. It was liberating.

When we entered our long Covid phase, I wanted to express my gratitude for meditation by volunteering. However, those options were restricted. At the time I was enriched by a model of meditation practice supported by the Martha Spirituality Centre in Charlottetown, PEI. I replicated that model online by teaching four introductory courses, and now lead two meditation groups and a book study on meditation as a continued expression of my gratitude.

I found that the various meditation communities helped me to maintain and persevere in my own practice. Since that time, I relocated again.

While I still have health concerns, I feel more equipped to manage them. Silence, solitude, meditation, mindfulness, and action have given me the ability to accept my identity in God with an even greater desire to seek "the mind of Christ" so that I may be steadfast in the adventure which animates all of life.

John O'Donohue writes in *Anam Cara*, "The phrase 'do not be afraid' recurs 366 times in the Bible. There is welcome for you at the heart of your solitude. When you realize this, most of the fear that governs your life falls away. The moment your fear transfigures, you come into rhythm with your own self."

**G. Wayne Short**



Procession, Elise Berg, Rijksmuseum

**I**t was late October of 2013 when my world began unravelling. Within a matter of months, I plunged headlong into a multilayered transition – a transition that I was ill-equipped to deal with.

The pivot came in my recovery after having two strokes. The startling realization that I could not do my work as a priest in a large growing Anglican parish was jarring. Reluctantly I took early retirement, making major changes and decisions.

We relocated to a rural Prince Edward Island community. What should have been a transition into a more relaxed lifestyle, with time to take care of my emotional, physical, and mental health, did not happen.

Walking became my way of coping. I walked in the early mornings, afternoons, evenings and late at night. With the gift of hindsight, I know now I could not walk around my losses. It became evident that no matter how hard, how long, and how determined I was in my walking I could not outpace my mind, my anxiety and my losses.

The loss of my identity and status was particularly acute. I was alone without meaning, purpose, and work. I felt I was disappearing. I became fixated on thoughts of my existence, particularly my nonexistence. I feared that I would succumb to my physical health.

An opportunity arose to do limited contractual work. However more importantly I was re-introduced to

# Ego and the True Self

## I. The Ego

There are some strange sayings in the Bible. One example is “denying the self” (Luke 9:23). To modern ears this may sound unhealthy, even morbid. Today we often hear messages about the importance of positive self-esteem. Modern ideas about what is healthy may sound very different from many Biblical teachings. Our social context today is different from the ancient culture when these sayings were written. What to do with self-denial? With Lent upon us, let’s see if we can get a better understanding of this teaching.

Exactly what is the “self” that we must deny? It is the ego. St. Paul’s calls the ego the “old self” (or “old man” cf. Rom 6:6, Eph 4:22). He is referring to our untransformed self. We all grow up developing a sense of self. We develop egos based on our culture; what we hear from parents, school, church, peers, and the media. We pick and choose aspects according to our likes and dislikes. This choosing can be adaptive. If someone grows up in a rough neighbourhood choosing a tough self-image has its advantages. This self is the ego.

Weaving cultural messages into an ego is necessary. But many of these once adaptive messages are not helpful in the long run. This egoic self proves inadequate. A sense of emptiness or angst may result. Psychologists tell us we must mature and develop better egos. But there’s a problem. From a spiritual point of view, even a healthy ego can impede the spiritual journey. A healthy ego might even be more problematic than one who struggles with a wounded ego. All this begs the question, “Who are we, really?” Am I this ego that I have constructed over the years?

Paul and the Gospels tell us we are not this constructed self. This is ego. As helpful as the ego may be in adapting to earthly life it is an impediment on the spiritual journey. This is the self we must deny. There is a long history of religious people trying to deny their ego. Some methods were extreme. Everything from self-flagellation to thumbscrews have been used. Fortunately for us we have a better way. And it really works. We have the teaching of meditation. How is meditation dying to self?

## II. The True Self

Whenever we let go of thoughts, images, ideas we are letting go of ego. We are denying the self. When we return to the mantra, the one word, we are acknowledging the One – the One beyond the ego. It’s simplicity itself. The mystery is why this even works.

The self must die, says Jesus (John 12:24). But the ego is not inherently evil. It simply gets in the way of discovering something wonderful. Buried behind the ego is our true self. We uncover our true self through the spiritual discipline of daily meditation. Every time we let go of thoughts we are letting go of the ego which is the false self. Letting go of ego makes room for the emergence of the true self. The mantra washes away the grit and grime of ego. (Remember John Main’s talk about “Brasso?”)

By meditating daily the true self begins to shine through. “You shall know them by their fruit” (Mat 7:15). We will know we are starting to shine when the fruits of the Spirit begin to manifest in our daily lives. We will become more patient, kind, compassionate, peaceful, joyful, temperate, etc. (Gal 5:22). This is the true self. It is who we are meant to be. It is being fully human. Psychologists might say “fully actualized.” Unlike the ego, the true self is not a construct. The true self already exists.

The true self, who we really are, exists eternally in the mind of God from the foundation of the world (Rev 17:8). Meditation uncovers this essential reality. Our true self is immortal and cannot be damaged by trauma or adversity. Buddhist teachings call this self “sambhokagaya,” – the celestial body of bliss. When we let go and return to the mantra, we are denying the self. We are suspending the ego and uncovering our true self. Of course, we’re not thinking about this as we meditate. The ego is suspended so the Spirit can do its silent work of transformation. This is not accomplished by human effort. Meditation is not about trying. It is trusting.

So, dying to self makes perfect sense. It is denying the ego. It means clearing away ego to make room for the true self to shine. We are dying to what is limited and not useful on the spiritual journey. We put the ego in its proper place. The ego is no longer central. In other words, the ego makes a great servant, but a lousy master. Our true self becomes the master. And the true self is who we are in Christ.

*Even a healthy ego can impede the spiritual journey.*



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The talks are also available on CD from the Bookstore at \$10 each – postage included, or \$40 for a year subscription – postage included.

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# An Invitation

**Are you concerned about the climate crisis?**

**Are you experiencing climate-related crises in your own community?**

**Are you involved in local initiatives or with organizations that are taking action?**

**Would you like to contribute to finding solutions?**

Earth's crisis – the ravaging of its climate, the imbalances in its ecology – is a central concern for the World Community for Christian Meditation. We are committed to the healing of our relationship with Earth through our shared practice, in a spirit of collaboration, raising and unifying consciousness, strengthening our ever-increasing global sense of unity.

Meditation does not solve our problems but it does radically change the way we see them. Most vitally, it opens the eye of the heart so that we can shape our policies with wisdom and ensure that compassion is never lost. According to Fr. Laurence, a contemplative orientation to the climate crisis can change minds and hearts and lead to decisive action (i.e. the inner and outer ecology).

## **Earth Crisis Forums**

Meditators in many countries have begun to gather, in a spirit of hope, through regular Earth Crisis Forums. Three have been held to date and the next one is tentatively scheduled for June. Each event last approximately 90 minutes, and is recorded and available to view on the WCCM website <https://wccm.org/outreach-areas/earth-crisis-climate-ecology/>

## **An opportunity to marry contemplative practice with action in the world**

The Canadian Community has been invited to host the next Earth Crisis Forum, and we are seeking two or three individuals who might feel called to action who would be willing to assist in planning the Forum. The Forum could provide points of view from people in different regions of Canada, including perhaps an Indigenous perspective. We will only proceed if there are willing volunteers.

Technical support is provided by WCCM, and the Canadian team would collaborate with and be supported by the small international Earth Crisis Working Group. The group currently has representation from New Zealand, Australia, Brazil and the UK. This is a work in progress, with lots of room for creativity.

## **Will you join us?**

**“For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them.”**

**If you are interested in learning more, and possibly in participating in planning the June forum, please contact Denise at [da.knees57@gmail.com](mailto:da.knees57@gmail.com) or (506) 849-1759 as soon as possible.**

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