



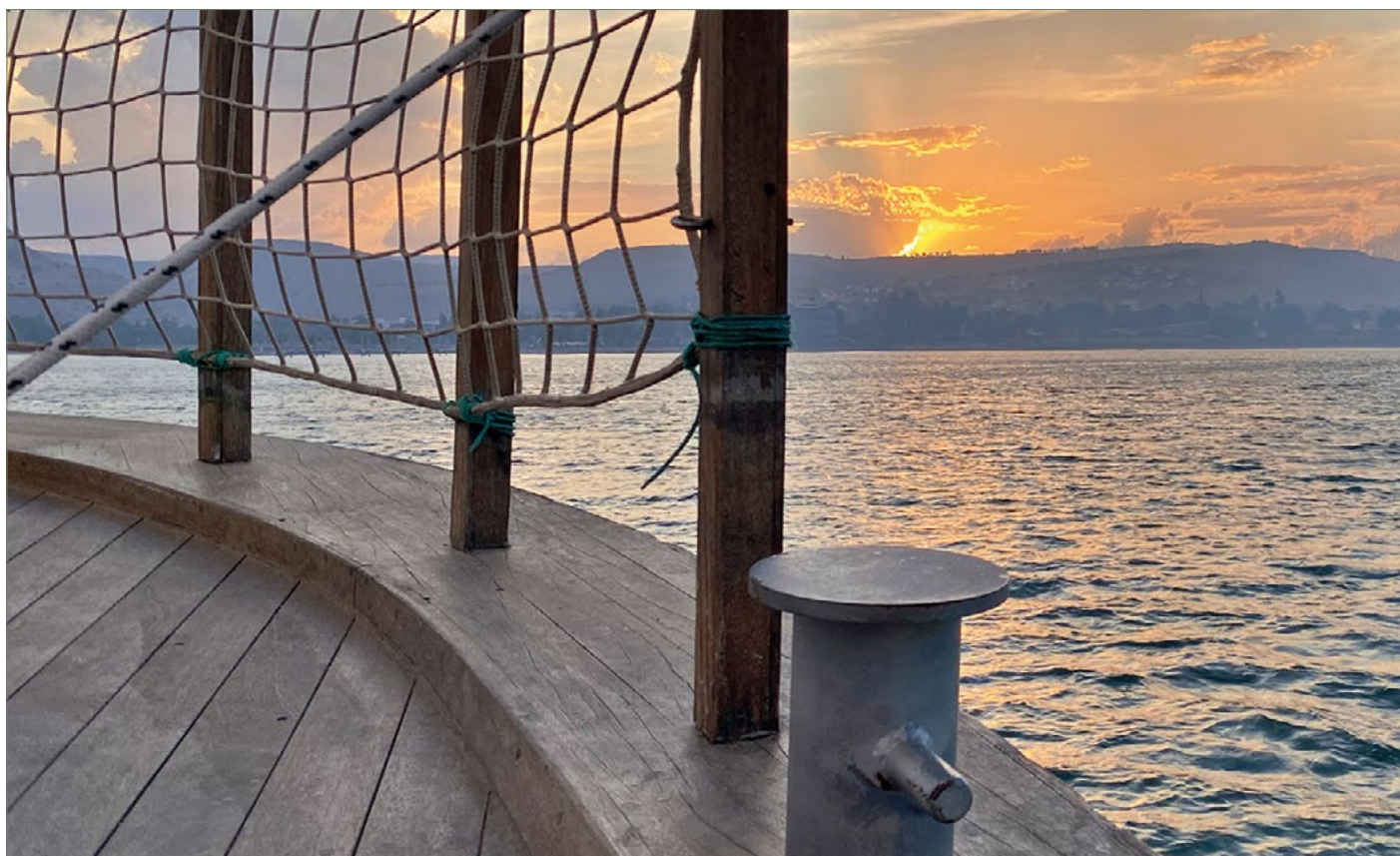
WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

Registered CIO Charity No. 1182213

Sailing With Winds of Wisdom and Compassion

FR LAURENCE DESCRIBES HOW TO LET NEW PERSPECTIVES APPEAR



Sea of Galilee during the recent WCCM Pilgrimage to the Holy Land (Photo by Laurence Freeman)

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Leaver friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

The only things really worth saying are the obvious. So let me begin by telling you of a good surprise I received this morning as a voice message from a young friend who lives in a large Asian city. Like all gifts it is given to be shared.

He was walking to work, rushed along on the anonymous tide of fellow workers. At his feet, on the pavement, he registered the precarious presence of a wounded butterfly. He continued walking, carried along by the crowd but, after two more blocks, he was still thinking of the butterfly. Now it was more than a fleeting image. It had become a real presence that brought him to a new level of self-awareness.

In his real mind, as he called it, he had seen the butterfly and felt a wave of tenderness and compassion greater than the inexorable force that keeps the world turning, crushing anything that resists it. It was a wave of an inner ocean of compassion. The gospels show Jesus actively expressing such compassion for those suffering sickness or rejection he met on his many journeys. Compassion can flow irresistibly as it did with him or it can be blocked. If blocked it becomes mere pity or short-lived empathy. But once freed, compassion will become action.

So powerful was his awakening insight, however, that he turned back. The butterfly was still there. Unconsciously making a zone of reality in the surrounding stream of distraction, he knelt down and picked it up. He laid it somewhere safe from the marching feet, whether to heal or to die, he did not know.

What I find harder to describe was the energy of joy and liberation in his voice. It was not that the ego was whispering 'feel good about yourself.' With no effort or self-consciousness, he broke through old bonds of ignorance that keep us passive and content to accept what seems inevitable, self-

imprisoned. In that instant he himself became pure and free. And he did the simple thing. He reached through the illusion that nothing could be done and he touched another.

Certainly the illusion of our helplessness is exacerbated and reinforced by the omnipresent, unreal world of the entertainment industry, intent on holding us in 24-hour distraction from reality. What my young friend understood about himself is true too of this global

pantomime of American politics, reality can itself become the enemy. It can be overwhelmed by a bombardment of lies – though it will never be defeated. In such a world, truth must be shot down and truth-tellers cancelled. But in an instant of true insight all this brutal world of illusion can collapse and we find a wounded butterfly in our hand.

There are, however deceptive, incomplete kinds of compassion. It is natural to feel active compassion for

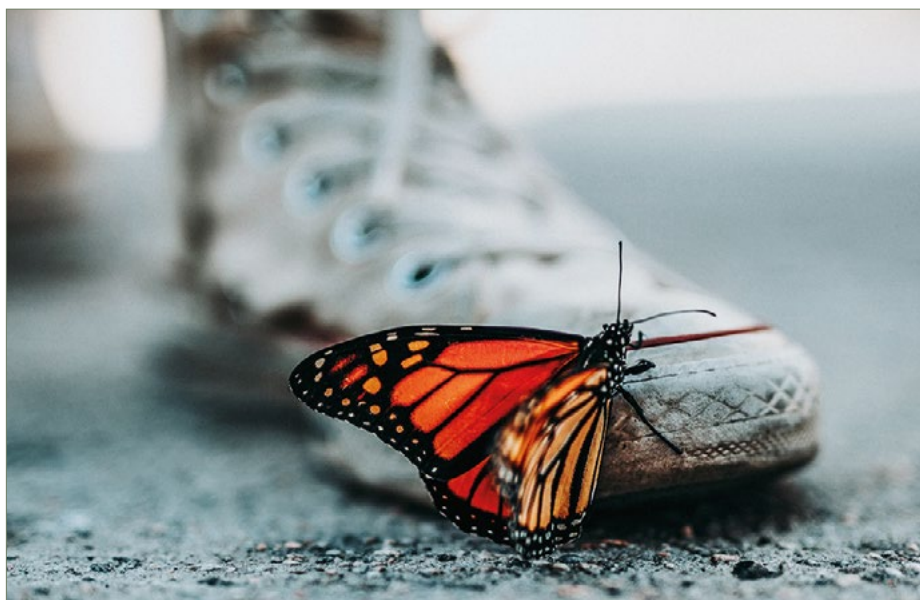


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force of addictive illusion that consumes more and more of our time. It is virtually destroying our capacity to see what he perceived in that instant, the difference between illusion and reality.

He had also been exposed to the truth that we feel compassion for the suffering of *all others*. If it is authentic, and only God's compassion is, it must be felt equally for all creatures and for friend and foe alike. Compassion takes us out of and above ourselves. In this way he experienced how true compassion breaks through the strongest security systems we have designed to keep reality at a safe distance from us. As we see - absurdly and tragically - in the

people of our own party or tribe. American politics is crippled by this self-narrowing which makes us unable even to listen to the other side. The same truth is evident in the revenge tragedy of our day. The hourly moral abominations of the Israel-Palestinian conflict show us, yes on both sides of the conflict, though hardly equally, how compassion can be purposefully blocked against the suffering of the other side. When it is blocked in order to protect our divided view of reality, it is only justified by increasing the suffering of our enemy and our intention to destroy them. But true human compassion reveals the divinity in all of us.

'Kind to the ungrateful and the wicked, shining on good and bad alike, is how Jesus reveals the nature of God. 'And you must be like your heavenly Father.' Compassion for our foes? This must surely be unrealistic? It's as idealistically unworldly as turning around against the tide of common sense to acknowledge the transcendent, tender beauty of a wounded butterfly. The more power and influence we possess or desire, the more brain-washed we are by forces of deception, the more any alternative *will* seem unrealistic. Even if we think it is unrealistic, will *we* say it is untrue? If it seems so unreal, it's probably because it is we who have become unreal and disconnected from our true self and capacity for compassion.

My friend's moment of insight showed him that, when we don't think too much, we can be wise. As he walked to work that morning, he was not drinking from one of the forgotten wells of wisdom I have been speaking about a lot recently and to which humanity needs to reconnect: like sacred scripture or a non-digital connection with the most obvious of all, the beauty of the natural world. Maybe his drinking from these sources of wisdom and his years of meditation, ('on and off' as he would say) helped prepared him for this pure moment. Suddenly he found the most obvious of all wells of wisdom, the one within himself.

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Looking out over the ocean under a clear sky.

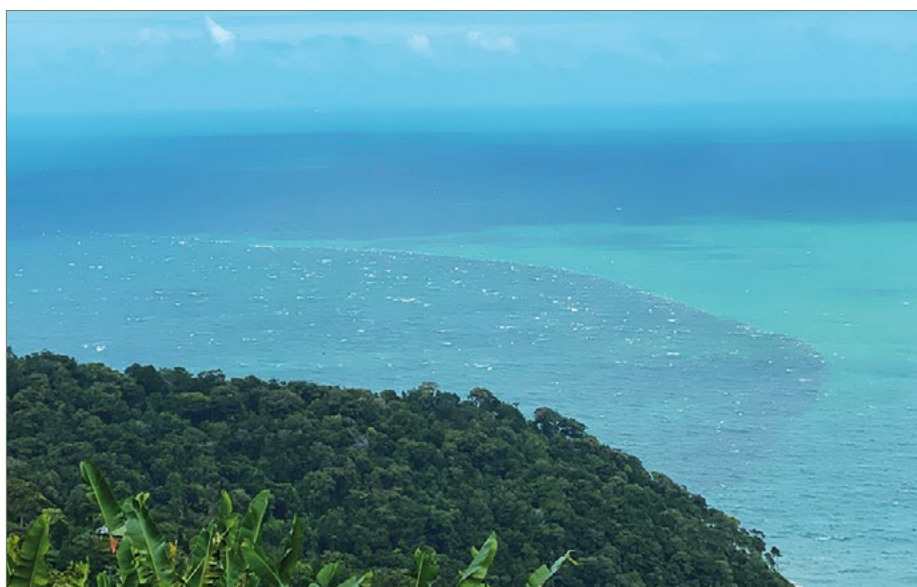
Turn to the left and then to the right, see the great hemisphere that encloses us from our imaginary position in the centre. Behind us is another, unseen, equal hemisphere, an enclosing horizon. Where, so cleanly, the light blue of the sky touches the darker blue of the sea holding all its waves and battalions of white horses. This too is obvious: so

the world must be round. Unless you believe it is flat. But believing something false does not make it true.

Among the beliefs and actions of life some are right and some wrong, often a mixture. But truth exists and truth is also the test of what is good and just. We can deny this. Many do not believe in truth or goodness as absolutes because our dominant worldview is

cells can seem like its deepest validation. 'Science proves it.' For some it proves that consciousness is merely a function of the brain. And so, the best and really only rationale for turning to meditation is that it is a useful tool to make me happier, healthier or wealthier.

If these were theological ideas, they would be pitifully inadequate. They



The Ocean, Trinidad (Photo by Laurence Freeman)

shaped by materialism which claims to be the judge of truth. In the ensuing split between reality and illusion, it seems that we can measure and control everything - whole populations under surveillance, what consumers buy or what enemy to destroy. This self-division has made us dangerously foolish and foolishly dangerous, like arrogant drunk drivers convinced they can drive home. Like those the ancient psalmist described: 'the fool has said in his heart there is no God above'. Even this foolishness craves idols to worship like success, power or celebrity.

There is false and authentic spirituality. The discovery that meditation causes cortical thickening of the brain or improves connections between brain

reject the primal wisdom of humanity, that emerges from the experience of our wholeness, that consciousness is the ground of existence. That meditation leads to transforming consciousness when we stop thinking we are the centre of the world. Meditation is marketed in our transactional world today as a way to increase 'health or 'well-being'. In a wiser world, the 14th century *Cloud of Unknowing* had a different perspective urging us to look after our health so that we can meditate. As I can testify in recent months, it is much harder to meditate when the body is not well. To get me back to meditating properly, I am thankful for medical science, skilled professional care, the love of family and friends, yoga exercises,

warm sunshine and my sometimes-wavering trust in the divine plan.

We are earthen vessels, changeable, emotional, often doubting. But 'God made His light shine in our hearts (and) we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the real power comes from God and not from us'. (2 Cor 4:6-7).

*

Look at the ocean. See how we are contained in a great circle. This is one perspective. Perspective changes whenever things happen to us, for good or ill. We may deny the ill and cling to the pleasant. But life is as changeable as the sea. It always has another surprise for us. Imagine ascending straight upwards from the open ocean and, like an astronaut, seeing the planet from above as a beautiful blue-green and white globe. Go even higher and in another perspective, we'd see it as orbiting a sun in one of countless galaxies. New space telescope images peer deeper than ever into the universe's space-time and stretch our perspectives to new limits. The true scientist who practises science contemplatively is thrilled and humbled with each advance because the more we see the more we know, and the less we understand.

Perspectives can conflict and ideas often mingle good and bad meaning so that we have to struggle in conscience to find the real. The right is rarely right as we first think it is. But discernment is the way to truth and a spiritual process. True spirituality means being willing to have our perspectives continuously altered even though it involves letting go of previously comfortable ways of understanding the world. Surrendering an old for a fresh perspective embraces the way of unknowing as the direct way to wisdom. It is to leave self behind; to lay down our life for our dearest friend, the truth.



Bere Island, Ireland (Photo by Laurence Freeman)

Great teachers of wisdom do not give answers or explanations. They are masters of perspective. Knowing that perspective is unteachable, they wish only for us to see for ourselves. They can transmit everything except our own experience which has to arise from the profound, invisible depths of our uniqueness, our Godlikeness. All their parables and teachings are meant to lead us on the way of transformation of consciousness necessary for the moment of insight to ripen. Their words have been misinterpreted and neutralised by their detractors, and even by their followers. In the case of the Word made flesh, however, there is something more and so obvious that we must always come back to it. It is the entirety of a whole human person: life, death and beyond the horizon of death, all embraced in the Mystery of God.

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One of the most famous of Buddhist mantras, from the Heart Sutra, begins *Gate, gate, paragate*. It is translated 'gone, gone, all the way over, gone to the other shore of enlightenment'.

In its many voices, wisdom calls us

to 'go, go'. Not half-way but the whole way. It is absolute. Hearing it and feeling an inner response to this call starts our journey, turns us around. Whether after two blocks or decades of delay, it reconnects the real and the illusory in ourselves.

This is a journey of many steps. As on the journey of meditation itself we are not concerned with transient *states* of mind but more with the major stages we pass through. We often have an early intuition when a new stage begins but only time reveals its truth. At each stage there will be an accompanying sense of wonder which is a suspension of our capacity to compare. It is what it is. Under the influence of this wonder perspectives shift and bring on an opportunity for change and fresh growth. It is this moment we must pray and work for today for humanity.

St Paul calls this a way of healing that begins in faith and ends in faith. Faith is the commitment to continuously setting out and going ever beyond. If you want to feel what this means, just say the mantra faithfully at deeper and deeper levels, 'all the way over to the other shore.'

*

The WCCM, including Bonnevaux our spiritual centre, is at such a stage. We are using this year to embrace a process of change and discover new perspectives. When I sensed it beginning last year it was just before my health problems appeared. When they came, I had my moments of fear and a sense of powerlessness – good signs that the Spirit is taking over (as we can say later!).

John Main said to me before he died that everything necessary would be given when it was needed. The last few months have again confirmed it. I felt the skilled, kind, unwavering support and commitment of our leadership, the Guiding Board, the Trustees, our Directors, the National Communities and International Office Team - and especially closely, the Bonnevaux core community. As we shared our sense of new perspective with meditators and national communities, they too could see that we are entering a new stage. The feeling of unity and solidarity is strong. Wherever I feared to find fear or negativity I found a wonderful peaceful power of charity and hope.

Over the last few years there has been rapid and intense growth at Bonnevaux, borne especially by the selfless energy of the core community. We will pause until the summer of this year to reflect on the life of the resident community that many call the 'soul of Bonnevaux'. It will help us share the grace of Bonnevaux with all we welcome 'as Christ himself'. Accordingly, we are re-

ducing events although some, including the Holy Week Retreat and the Young Adults Retreat, will continue. We trust the programme can resume at the end of August, along with the construction of the Contemplative Cloister beginning in early 2025. This trust will be

professional fundraiser, has similarly offered her skills to help us on our way to financial sustainability. Indeed, we are grateful to see, as Fr. John assured us, that what we need is being given.

Change of perspective is always challenging, a dying before life expands



ultimately shaped by the new stage of discernment we have entered.

Bonnevaux is part of the WCCM. Like all organisations today, we are facing challenges calling for new perspectives. In March we will welcome to Bonnevaux a new WCCM Associate Director who will work closely with me and the Bonnevaux and global communities. We will also undertake an 'audit' of the whole organisation of WCCM with the help of a highly experienced professional, a meditator who has offered us his skills for this exciting task we have long felt overdue. Another meditator, a

again. In community we can go through this, reassured that at the deepest level of reality, the personal, the communal and the universal are in harmony. As long as we recognise our wounded butterfly moments and act on them, the energies of wisdom and compassion will carry us forward to new perspectives fuller experience of the great mystery.

With much love

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurence". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

WCCM+

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News & Articles

John Main Seminar 2024: *Widen Your Tent,* led by Jason Gordon

NEW HARMONY, INDIANA (US), 8-14 JULY

More than thirty years after the WCCM was formed at the John Main Seminar led by Bede Griffiths, Jason Gordon comes to New Harmony to lead a contemporary reflection on where we as a community and as a human family have come. He will raise the question of how we can act hopefully in a collapsing civilisation with such hostile forces of de-humanisation. How can we understand contemplation in this social and spiritual crisis? But in facing these hard questions, he will invite us to consider the twin path of contemplation and synodality: a faith-filled, hopeful way to a better world and a fuller humanity.

In a world collapsing in on itself in a failure to listen and to open to others, the resounding wisdom of Isaiah's call to 'widen your tent' is like a beam of light. It summons us to open our hearts, our ears and our minds in all directions in an ever-widening spirit of universal welcome and solidarity.

Jason has been meditating since the

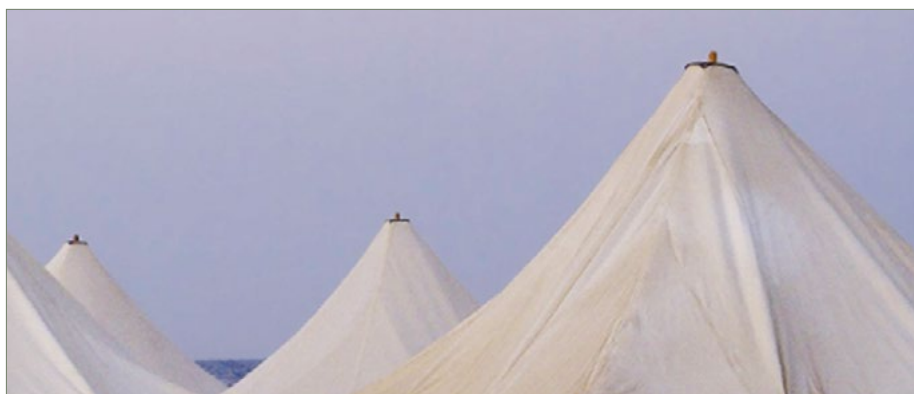


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early years of his priesthood and has long been teaching it in all parts of the church and society. He has also experienced the power of the synodal process at the grassroots level in his spiritual leadership of the Archdiocese of Trinidad and Tobago and later at the global level in Rome. Synodality is simply the ancient wisdom of consultation, attentive conversation in what St Benedict calls 'calling the members to council'. But as Jason will describe the active agent is deep listening which makes it

a contemplative work and the leader of the process is the Spirit. Contemplative experience prepares us and informs such transformative communication and so they should be seen as two sides of one path to recovery.

As always meditation will shape the days of the week's Seminar and there will be sessions too where the listening and mindful sharing of Synodality will be practised (and take the place of the usual silent retreat.) . For more information visit: <https://wccm-int.org/jms2024>

Jason Gordon



The Most Reverend Jason Gordon was born and grew up in Trinidad. At an early age his father died and he successfully assumed the family business. In 1981 he entered Living Water Community, a lay ecclesial community in Trinidad, studied for the priesthood and completed a Master's in Theology at the University of Leuven, Belgium, completing a Master's in Theology (Magna cum Laude) and a BA in Philosophy. He was ordained in 1991 and com-

pleted his PhD at Heythrop, in London, where he first encountered the WCCM. He received awards for his work with disadvantaged youth. In 2017 He was appointed Archbishop of Trinidad and Tobago and is currently the President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference of Bishops. He has authored several books, is a patron of the WCCM and especially supports its mission throughout the Caribbean. Read his full bio on wccm.org

News & Articles

WCCM Theme 2024: *Beholding Divine Beauty - And God Saw That It Was Very Good*

Every year, the WCCM suggests a theme for the general reflection of our members worldwide. In 2024, the theme is **Beholding Divine Beauty: And God Saw That It Was Very Good**. Our events throughout the year will explore Beauty, Goodness and the Act of Creation in all senses, including art, theology and social justice.

In this issue we give you a glimpse of both online events and Bonnevaux on-the-ground retreats in 2024. On-the-ground retreats might be subject to change.



Main Online Series: Beauty, Goodness and the Act of Creation in all senses, including art, theology and social justice



John Philip Newell

- 16 January - **Charles Taylor**: Reconnecting with the Cosmos in Post-Romantic Poetry
- 5 March - **Catherine Goodman**: Creativity as a gift of connection
- 9 April - **John Philip Newell**: Sacred Earth
- 7 May - **Inge Relph**: Adventure in Uncertainty - Back to the future
- 4 June - **Marco Schorlemmer**: Being Naturally Intelligent in a Technological society: Recovering the Axiological and Creative Dimensions

- 23 July - **Diane Tolomeo**: "To See a World in a Grain of Sand"
- 3 September - **Bernard McGinn**: The Goodness and Beauty of Creation in the Eyes of the Mystics
- 15 October - **Sarah Bachelard**: Consecrated Ground: Realising Earth's Goodness
- 12 November - **Guy Claxton**: Teenage Mystics: Educating Our Saviours To Be
- 10 December - **Robert Johnson**: The Mystical Language of Music: Dylan, Son or Daughter of the Sea

Into the Mystics online series with Prof Bernard McGinn

- 23 January - **Augustine of Hippo**, respondent is Margaret Lane
- 21 February - **Bernard of Clairvaux**, respondent is Mark Burrows
- 19 March - **Francis and Clare of Assisi**, respondent is Daniel Horan OFM
- 23 April - **Meister Eckhart**, respondent is Rebecca Stephens
- 28 May - **Teresa of Avila**, respondent is Bernard McGinn
- 25 June - **Francis de Sales**, respondent

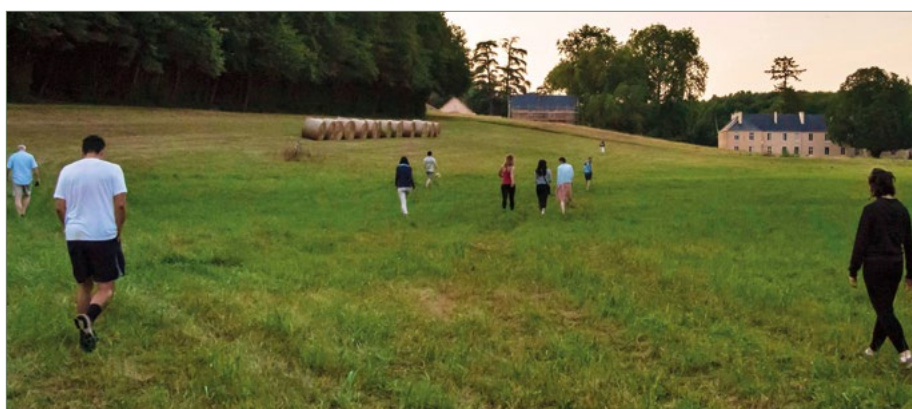
- is Prof Edward Howells
- 24 September - **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**, respondent is Gemma Simmonds
- 23 October - **Edith Stein**, respondent is Peter Tyler
- 26 November - **Etty Hillesum**, respondent is Liz Watson
- 17 December - **John Main**, presenter is Laurence Freeman and respondent is Bernard McGinn

Other options online

The programme includes extra options: **Contemporary Anxiety** (a contemplative response to three of the big issues facing us in the 21st century), **Learning to Meditate**, **The Space Between Words** (both with Laurence Freeman), and many more. Check out the full programme at <https://wccm.org/events>

News & Articles

New Opportunities for Young Adults



These are the main projects planned for Meditation and Young Adults under the leadership of Taynã Malaspina:

Integral Education and Spiritual Intelligence for Universities and Schools Project

An integral education articulates the potential without prejudice to anyone.

Phase 1: Definition of the Research Sample (Selected Countries)

Phase 2: A research project with young people, parents, educators, and academic directors to identify unmet needs and resources used to develop spirituality.

Phase 3: Designing the programme methodology and pre- and post-project evaluation tools.

Phase 4: Implementation of the pilot project.

Youth Council

The council was reorganised after World Youth Day 2023, and is composed of eight young people from different countries discussing projects and bringing insights to future projects.

Young Adults Retreat in Brazil

The retreat, to be facilitated by oblates Taynã Malaspina, Carlos Siqueira, and Ida Mara Freire, is scheduled 31 May to 2 June. The aim is to cater to young people

International Young Adults Retreat

This annual retreat will happen at Bonnevaux from 30 July to 4 August, led by Fr. Laurence, Fr. Patricio, Taynã Malaspina and Giovanni Felicioni. The theme is **Where has the Joy gone? Reconnecting with our True Selves**. The Young Lives Project at Oxford University reports a sharp reversal in the upward trend of young people's well-being, replaced by widespread anxiety and depression. For the first time in the 20-year study, young people are much less confident about themselves and their futures. As a community we support this generation of young adults through meditation practice linked to local and global community experience of friendship. This retreat is an opportunity for young people to share the shadow so that they can feel the light and return to life enlightened by the spirit.

from Latin America who are unable to attend the retreats in Europe.

Young Channel on Insight Timer

Insight Timer is a very popular free meditation app. We developed 20 introductory meditation audios for young audiences in Portuguese (How to meditate; The origin of Christian meditation; John Main, Living in the Present Moment, etc.). The second phase will produce the same material in English.

Course: Meditation and Life Project

Many young people are experiencing a crisis of meaning and are overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety, anguish, and meaninglessness. This programme aims to support them, to help them reflect on their choices, begin the contemplative journey through meditation, re-

cover the experience of the sacred in their daily lives, and finally build a life project in line with their values and their essence. The course was initially launched in Portuguese, and an English version will be ready in March.

Online Group

Formation of an online Christian meditation group for young people, encouraging young people to start local projects.

Actions in partnership with the Laudato Si' movement

Partnership with the Laudato Si' movement to publicise initiatives, joint events, and communication materials.

Formation of a study group: *Laudato Deum*. Learn more about our complete programme for Young Adults: <https://wccm-int.org/youngmed>

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Songs and Sacrifice

MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS AS THE EARTH SUFFERS

BY JIM GREEN

*Image by Peggychoucair from Pixabay*

“The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?” This is one of the questions – perhaps the most important question of all – posed by Pope Francis towards the end of his apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, published on October 4th, 2023. A fitting day to share his words of encouragement, being the feast of St Francis – the instinctive ecologist who heard that song of infinite love and responded to it so joyfully and unreservedly. The choice of the papal name directs our attention constantly towards that readiness to listen and to enter into right relationship with our dear siblings: all the creatures of the Earth and, indeed, Earth herself.

Laudate Deum comes as an addendum to Pope Francis’s celebrated encyclical of 2015, *Laudato si’*, which did so much to change the culture of global debate and fed into the significant advances made that same year at COP 21 in Paris. He pulls no punches in making it clear why he feels the need to speak urgently once again “to all people of good will”, explaining that over the past eight years “I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world

in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point.” What Pope Francis hopes for, he makes clear, must come from each one of us and – crucially – must also come in the form of “major political decisions on the national and international level”. To make a reality of our response to the song of infinite love, there are choices to be made by all of us, at every level – perhaps, really, at every moment – of our lives.

The swell of feeling about these issues is strong among many members of our meditation community. That yearning to listen to the Earth and to join with her song as part of the healing chorus has given rise to a number of initiatives and responses nurtured by *Meditatio: Contemplating Earth*, an online self-directed, multi-media course; a series of international *Earth Crisis Forums*; an *Earth Crisis* blog where members of the community can share their concerns, their grief, their information and their hope; an *Earth Crisis* weekly online meditation group where members come to listen to each other and to sit together in attentive, open-hearted silence.

After one of these recent online

meditation sessions, a member of the group shared that – after long and painful reflection – she and her husband had decided to cancel the long-distance flights and the train tickets that would have taken them to a much looked-forward-to retreat. Refunds were not possible – they lost a large amount of money. “I had thought, oh well – let’s just make this the last time we fly such a distance,” she explained. But that thought didn’t work. What they were proposing to do felt deeply at odds with the changes they saw had to be made. The tickets were cancelled.

The story isn’t offered as an ethical stick with which to beat those who flew to that retreat, or who fly to any other destination in the world. Choices have to be made in the context of unique and complex lives. The same member of the group said that she would still make some airplane trips within the US to see family members 3,000 miles away. Because she *had to*. But she decided that she didn’t *have to* fly to the retreat. It didn’t harmonize with the way she heard, and wanted to sing, the song of infinite love. The gift of her example is that it brings us to the important questions we need to keep asking: Do I *have to* buy those new clothes? Do I *have to* take that car journey? Do I *have to* eat meat? (Or so much meat?) Do I *have to* have my money where it supports the extraction of fossil fuels? Do I *have to* join in with Christmas as a retail bonanza? Do I *have to* remain ignorant of, or indifferent to the values and policies of our political leaders?

And, of course, as we ask ourselves these vital questions, *do I have to?* will at some point change into the much ►

News & Articles

more interesting question of *do I want to?* It roots the 'problem' in a deeper part of our being and starts to indicate the way forward, the possibility of making a choice and knowing a greater sense of fulfilment than any new clothes, new gadgets, fresh meat or long-distance travel can ever possibly provide. The practice of meditation can open up for us, perhaps for the first time, the possibility of connecting with the deepest resonance of *do I want to?* We begin to hear another question: what does it want? What does the Earth and its song (of which I am a part) want? Entering into contemplative silence allows, as Mother Julian of Norwich puts it, the *oneing* of that want and my own. It also helps us get closer to the questions Pope Francis, in *Laudate Deum*, urges us to sit with: "What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?"

Exploring this path through each of our individual lives might help us to have a completely different understanding and experience of sacrifice. Jesus has already given us a clue: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" The pain of some financial loss or of breaking old habits can be considerable but are short-lived when held against the possibility of living a life that feels authentic, that is ready – no matter how clumsily or incompletely – to respond to the Earth's song of infinite love.

And, at the organisational and structural level, how much pain is involved in the sacrifice of – for instance – dis-



Image by Silvia from Pixabay

entangling your finances from a bank that invests in fossil fuel exploration and extraction? (As Christian Aid has just successfully managed to do, getting its money out of Barclays.) Some pain perhaps - in terms of logistics and overcoming inertia - but such a step is surely one to be celebrated in the process of healing and recovering from an unreal life in an unreal world. Every organisation of good will – the World Community for Christian Meditation included – has a duty to look at all of its activities, the implications of its financial arrangements, its travel requirements - every aspect of its life, to ensure that we are not failing to care for our common home.

At the live online presentation of *Laudate Deum*, Johan Rockström, a leading scientist of global sustainability, urged us to free ourselves from unhelpful – and just plain mistaken – ideas around sacrifice. He pointed out that what we are dealing with is wrongly characterised as simply an "environmental crisis". Properly understood, it is a challenge to "human dignity, wellbeing, health, security, peace and economic stability".

The way to safeguard all of that is to face up to the reality of the climate crisis and to take action. There is, he insists, no need to go along with the old narrative that this will involve crippling costs and that there will be painful sacrifices to be made. Embracing the need to change is the only way to avoid the otherwise inevitable social instability, conflict and economic chaos. It can be clearly demonstrated that it is the path to a "smarter, cheaper, more modern and attractive" way of life.

We have the technology to do it, only the will is missing. If the will can be found and harnessed, then leaving our old and damaging way of life is no sacrifice at all, if we understand sacrifice as pure loss and nothing else. But Jesus has given us a clue about this as well, not just in his words, but in his death and his life. There is, we have been shown, everything to be gained, to be loved, to be sung. As Johan pointed out, "All we have to do is simply change the story."

"The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?"

Get involved! Visit the Earth Crisis: Climate and Ecology page at https://wccm-int.org/med_eccm

In Focus

Jose Cuervo Castro, Colombia/Canada



My exploration of meditative practices started in the context of psychological training and the search for tools to improve my mental and physical well-being. Given that I have been very involved in the Christian tradition, I started to wonder: is there a way I could meditate as a way of prayer? As a way of deepening my awareness of the presence of God? I soon became aware of Christians who integrated methods of Eastern traditions with contemplative spirituality and started to practice them. Later, I was introduced to WCCM, and I felt surprised at the existence of such a community in the Christian tradition. It made me think that the legacy of the desert fathers, the “prayer of the

heart” was still alive.

During and after the pandemic, given the stress and personal challenges of that time, meditation became an essential part of my life. I realized that I could not afford to live at the surface of my being, that I could not live immersed in my mind. The glimpses of bliss, presence and clarity in the previous years of meditation nourished in me a yearning for a different way of being, and for this to become my dwelling place. But I realized I could not walk

encouraged me to continue. I especially remember the meditation hall at Bonnevau, in which the prayers and scriptures of the Christian tradition, full of the spiritual power of divine love, were integrated with times of stillness, simplicity and silence. I was amazed also at the inclusion of sacred texts from mystical traditions of the East, which I appreciate and respect and which have influenced me deeply.

I would also say that meditation, in a way that I do not fully understand, has immensely enriched my Christian life. It has deepened my relationship with Christ, present in the Eucharist and scripture, spaces that feel denser with life and mystery. It has also increased my awareness of the presence of God in all circumstances of life, and despite my limitations and tendency to distraction, this Presence continues to invite me constantly to open my eyes to it. I also feel invited to God as a mystery, one that I cannot grasp, comprehend or fully understand, as Love that is infinite and inexhaustible. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to WCCM, since through the support of this tradition I started to see my meditation practice as an act of love, as self-giving, as “getting out of the way” so love can act freely in me.

I would also say that meditation, in a way that I do not fully understand, has enriched immensely my Christian life.

this path alone, that I wanted to be in the presence of people who I could walk with and who could support me in the journey. This is why I decided to go to a retreat for young adults in Bonnevau in 2022 and to the World Youth Day with WCCM in 2023. These events, and the encounters that happened during them, reaffirmed my commitment to the contemplative path and



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Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano

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

Events & Resources

Bonnevaux Retreats Calendar

The retreat centre at Bonnevaux is in a period of transition, and we are therefore pausing retreats at Bonnevaux from April to August 2024 to review the situation. These are some of the retreats planned for before and after that break:

27 February - 03 March - **Spirituality and the Arts in the Benedictine Tradition**, with Cynthia Bourgeault (fully booked)

23 - 31 March - **Sacred Life is Death and Resurrection** - Holy Week Retreat, with Laurence Freeman

30 July - 4 August - **Where has the Joy gone? Reconnecting with our True Selves** - Young Adults Retreat, with Fr Laurence, Fr Patricio, Taynā Malaspina and Giovanni Felicioni (see more on page 8).

24 - 29 September - **Flesh, Truth,**



and Sacred Body: Exploring Dance and Movement as a Spiritual Journey, with Ida Mara Freire.

08 - 13 October - **“And the song remains beautiful”** with Mark S. Burrows.

19 - 24 November - **The Marriage of**

Wisdom and Prophecy with Br. Martin.

03-08 December - **The Beginning is Faith, the End is Love** - An Advent Retreat with Laurence Freeman.

Check out more information at <https://bonnevauxwccm.org>

Monte Oliveto Retreat: invitation to Silence

This year's Monte Oliveto retreat is an invitation into deeper silence in the form of a WCCM Intensive Silent Retreat. “There is nothing so much like God as silence”. This mystical truth is proven when we discover that silence allows us to be who we are and God to be who God is. Each morning Fr Laurence will give a short teaching on this theme, **It Is What It Is: We Are**

Who We Are, which takes on more meaning as your own experience of silence expands. Frequent meditation, a simple eucharist, a short daily meeting with your guide, natural beauty, healthy and delicious Italian food and the friendship of the monastic community beside us – all these elements support and enrich this week's experience.

It Is What It Is: We Are Who We Are

Monte Oliveto Silent Retreat

6 – 13 October 2024

Led by Laurence Freeman

With translation into Italian and Portuguese

For more information:

<https://wccm-int.org/mo2024>

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Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COMMUNITY



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Canadians at Bonnevaux

In July 2023, thirty-three Canadians made a trip to France to spend a week at the Benedictine Abbaye in Bonnevaux (meaning beautiful valley). Bonnevaux is the spiritual home for the World Community of Christian Meditation (WCCM). The community is now present in over 100 countries with 67 National Coordinators. Each national community serves the WCCM mission, which is to share the gift of meditation with everyone they meet.

Centred in the spirit of silence, daily life takes on a rhythm of prayer, work, study, hospitality, and care for others – very much like Saint Benedict envisioned some 1,500 years ago. During the set times of prayer and meditation, all other activities pause and move into silence and stillness. For daily activities, everyone staying at the Abbaye gets invited to share in the work of running the centre.

There are four meditation sessions a day: 7 am meditation; 7:45 am morning prayer and meditation; 12:15 pm midday prayer and meditation and 6 pm evening prayer and meditation.

The Abbaye dates from the 12th century with remodeling done on the main building in the 19th century and total remodeling completed since its purchase in 2017. It began 1,000 years ago as a Benedictine monastery; was privately owned for many, many years and

is now back with the Benedictines, as a “monastery without walls.” The monastery has become a centre for learning, study and meditation. God’s ways are indeed mysterious.

A multi-purpose conference centre with capacity for 200 people now sits transformed on the property in place of their barn. Former stables are used to receive retreat visitors, and the guesthouse holds up to 35 people in beautifully appointed rooms for overnight accommodation.

It is often said that the hope for Bonnevaux is for visitors to be blessed with a profound sense of peace that comes from cultivating deep silence. Its effect on the Canadians on retreat certainly fulfilled that hope. We all came away feeling relaxed, with a greater understanding of the benefits of silence and stillness, and feeling closer to God.

I should also mention that the trip itself would not have been as successful as it was if it had not been for Mona Agia. Mona worked closely with me throughout the entire organizing phase. Mona is a Montreal travel representative and a meditator. She oversaw all travel arrangements and also travelled with us to Bonnevaux. Her help was so very important and appreciated beyond measure.

Jack Murta

Erica Schweigerlehner Remembered



Longtime meditator Erica Schweigerlehner passed away on Saturday, November 4, 2023 at St. Michael’s Palliative Care Unit. She was a longstanding member of the Community going back to the days of the Montreal Priory and Fr. John Main.

The more senior members of the Toronto community will probably remember her well. Clem Sauvé said that when he first joined the Saint Basil’s group in the early 1980s, Erika was its leader, a position she held for over 25 years. When the Montreal Priory closed in 1991 and ceased providing overall leadership to the Canadian Community, fairly quickly a GTA leadership group emerged and Erika was among its early originators. Her commitment to the WCCM and to her own practice of meditation was lifelong.

Erika did not wish to have a funeral. She is buried in Holy Cross Cemetery. St. Basil’s Church offered a Catholic mass in her name in December.

We ask God’s blessing on Erika and remember her in our prayers.

Elaine Mills

WCCM–Toronto Team

Meditation and Gravity

Dear friends,

When I started my role as national coordinator in September, I chose the theme “How can we teach meditation for life?” Not only for a lifetime, but for the experience and enjoyment of everyday life; life at its fullest for what it is meant to be.

One way to “teach” meditation is to communicate our own experience with meditation. What it means to us. Before Christian Meditation found me, life seemed like a constant battle of opposites: gains and losses, successes and failures, accumulation and protection, passion and reason.

Then, in 2017, I heard the message from John Main. First through his faithful successor, Fr. Laurence, in a radio interview. Then through Fr. John’s invaluable recordings and writings. Something started gnawing at me. Steadily, things became clearer. The veil lifted.

Fr. Laurence often says, “We’re on our way.” The corollary to this wise saying is that “We’ve come a long way.” I like to look back and see where I came from. How, over time, the duality of my existence seemed to dissipate, thanks to meditation and prayer. I started seeing the other not as an “opponent” but as someone like me. I can’t say I’m “there” yet, but I’m



working on truly loving the other as myself, as Jesus proclaims. Because the other and I are the same.

The gravity that holds us down on this planet is also what liberates us by allowing us to experience God. We face duality even within our own religion; we disagree about who the Jesus of 2,000 years ago was: A Saviour? A Wisdom Teacher? What I know, thanks to meditation, is that He knows me and loves me.

Do you have a story to share about “How can we teach meditation for life?” Why not share it on our new [Canadian Christian Meditation Community Facebook page](#) courtesy of Andrea Siqueira, Luis Zunino and Andy Burns? Please like and follow the page. They are also working on improving our [CCMC website](#) and augmenting our presence on social media. Be on the lookout

for the results of their work in the coming weeks.

In this issue, you will find details about our National Conference on July 5-7, 2024, in Vancouver. Many thanks to the NC24 planning committee and Fr. Laurence for putting together a state-of-the-art conference. I encourage you to take part in this biennial opportunity to meet as a national community (register at: [2024 National Conference Retreat – CanadaHelps](#)).

In Spirit, **André Choquet**

The Bonnevaux Blessing 2023:

Pilgrimage to the Center – the center of WCCM – July 18-23, 2023

Bonnevaux was everything I expected and more!

Travelling from Okotoks, where I live in Alberta, to Bonnevaux, France was its own pilgrimage; taking a flight from Calgary to Toronto, then Toronto to Paris, then a two-hour train journey from Paris Austerlitz to Poitiers, and finally a 20-minute taxi ride to our destination at beautiful, peaceful Bonnevaux.

The sheer sight of the monastery buildings filled my soul with awe! It seemed I was entering the gates of heaven. The welcoming feeling when entering the foyer of the guest house was warm and inviting, with a snack table and drinks provided; bright smiling faces at reception were incredibly welcoming, and we felt right at home from day one.

Continued on page C12

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Page design and layout: www.katemcdo.com

Young Adults Meditate



My name is José, and I had the privilege of taking part in the World Youth Day (WYD) in Lisbon, Portugal with WCCM, while representing Canada. I am grateful to the Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC) for the support and encouragement to join Pope Francis, Fr. Lawrence Freeman, Tayna Malaspina and a group of youth from around the world. It was one of the most profound and joyful experiences of my life, full of moments of community, contemplation, faith and celebration.

We were a diverse group speaking different languages, but deeply connected in spirit during meditation. A space that allowed us to be in the presence of God and each other, even with our differences. I appreciated sharing the passion for contemplative spirituality with other pilgrims who have a deep love for Christ and who have also begun a journey of medi-

tation as a way of grounding themselves in his presence. It was also a journey of discipleship, enriched with each other's wisdom, but also the wisdom of Pope Francis and Lawrence Freeman, whose words inspired me profoundly and spoke to the core of my spiritual yearnings.

As I reflected on my experiences, an image that came to me was children as they sit close to their grandparents listening to stories of wisdom. In the same way, I felt that we (the WCCM community and the youth of the world) were like children at the feet of their elders, enjoying their presence and receiving the wisdom that came from Christ himself.

The experience of living in a contemplative community during the WYD was unique in the juxtaposition

Continues opposite

at World Youth Day 2023

between communal silence and the sounds of massive celebration during WYD events. The moments of meditation provided us with opportunities to re-centre ourselves, as the events in Lisbon were intense and surrounded by a lot of stimulation.

This helped me to appreciate from my heart the experience of the WYD, to take part with more attentiveness and openness and with a sense of “being with” the Pope, the youth, the entire world, and Christ. It helped me clear my mind from challenges and be open to the mystery that unfolded on the journey.

I felt an invitation to be receptive, to let go of my agendas, to surrender to something larger, to surrender to self-transcendence. I felt this invitation during many moments, during meditation sessions, the contemplative Mass, concerts, the massive gath-

erings with the Pope, and the long – very long walks between gatherings. During those moments, I also felt a deep sense of belonging, of mysterious interconnection with all the surrounding peoples, a sense of oneness.

The walks were very significant. We were ALL walking together towards the same destination, under the same sun, wanting to arrive at the same source of love and joy that is Christ. And even if these experiences included physical challenges and struggles, there was an expansive wave of joy that permeated the air, filling our hearts and driving us forward.

The WYD in Lisbon, Portugal, was to me an incredible experience of belonging, self-transcendence, joy, presence and community that will always live in my heart. I am infinitely grateful for having been part of it.

José Cuervo Castro





A Personal Story about Christian Meditation

**“Silence is God’s first language;
everything else is a poor translation.”
– Fr. Thomas Keating**

**“If you have not yet begun to meditate, I implore you by the
love of our Lord, not to deprive yourself of so great a good.
There is nothing to be afraid of, there is everything to hope for.”
– St. Teresa of Avila**

IAN STAUFFER ON UNSPLASH.COM

I grew up going to Catholic schools, beginning in kindergarten. But by the time I was a teenager, I lost interest in Christianity. My school mates and I all agreed that religions were empty rituals. Far more relevant topics were, “Why are there wars, poverty and pollution?” I eventually left the church and my Christian beliefs.

Like so many youths, I experienced some serious emotional turmoil. I finally left home and travelled across North America, ending up in California. I heard of a natural cure for my ailing soul. It was called meditation. I read about the different schools of meditation while attending a Zen meditation centre. But I could never quite get into Zen. It just didn’t click for me at the time.

One night I felt very alone. I did something I hadn’t done in years. I prayed. My prayer went something like this: “God, if you’re really there, you will have to show me because I just don’t know.”

An answer came soon enough. Many answers, in fact. Good answers which led to more questions. I decided God must be real. But I wasn’t too sure about Jesus. Was He God’s son? I began a long spiritual journey. Eventually I made my way back home to Ottawa, Ontario and started university. I wanted to become a teacher. My elective courses were mostly in religious studies. I thought about meditation, wondering if I should give it another try.

At that same time, I thought about going back to

church. I did some church shopping. Over the years, I tried Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Methodist churches and some small, independent groups as well. Reform Judaism was also a serious option after reading their platform. There were many good people in these different communities, and I learned many positive things, such as a love for the Bible.

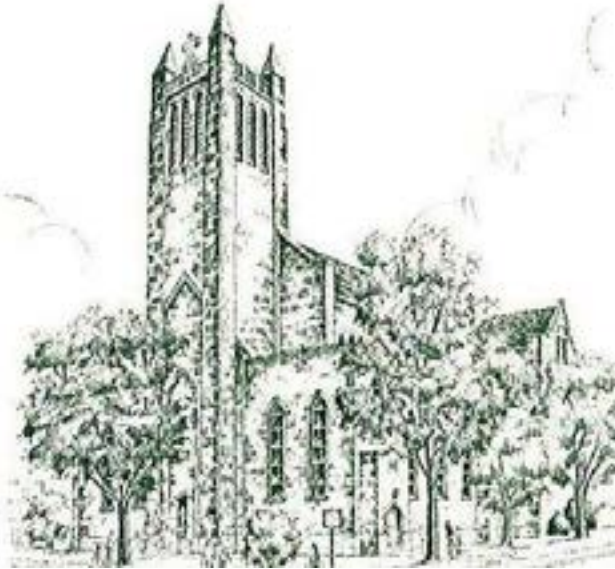
One day, while walking across the sprawling U of Ottawa campus, I noticed something I had taken little notice of before. There was a big, old stone church with a Celtic cross on the top. It was a Catholic church. I checked it out. On Christmas Eve, I attended midnight Mass.

I was gobsmacked. Everything made perfect sense. After studying different religions, psychology, mythology, and early church history, I now understood the beauty and power of this ancient Christian ritual. Even my studies in Jewish mysticism helped me better understand the sacrament of the Lord's supper. It is ironic but true, if I had not immersed myself in different world religions, I would never have had this experience of Christian conversion. I had to make Christianity my own, so to speak, and view it through the different lenses of the stories, symbols and rituals of many traditions.

I reconciled with my childhood faith, and I started going to Mass. I volunteered for several lay ministries. I even started a Bible study using lessons from previous churches I had attended. A particular church, St. Joseph's, had a refugee committee, a soup kitchen, food bank, and a women's center. They didn't just talk the talk, but put faith into action. They also had many young families and youth attending their celebrations. This church was very open and alive.

There was another church in downtown Ottawa close to the university. It had a late Sunday service which we endearingly called "last chance Mass." One Sunday evening, I noticed a poster in the back advertising a Christian meditation group. They met every Wednesday evening. I had heard of such groups but didn't know where I could find one. Now I knew. The following Wednesday, I made my way down an old stone stairwell into a dark basement. It reminded me of the church crypts I visited when touring Ireland. There was a welcome sign on the door of the meeting room. I entered the door.

An older gentleman many of you may know, Paul Harris, kindly greeted me. I remember well his warm reception and big smile. Before we started meditating, he played a tape recording for us. It was a 15-minute talk by a Benedictine monk with an Anglo-Irish accent. His name was John Main. His talks were fresh and alive. Fr. John was obviously familiar with the writings of the mystics explaining spiritual truths using modern psychology, the new science, and the early Desert Fathers. He even quoted from the sacred texts of other religious traditions such as the Upanishads. He spoke with an impressive depth of wisdom and understanding. With Paul's encouragement, I started a daily meditation practice. That was over twenty years ago.



Over time, I noticed the effects of my meditation practice. My daily scripture reading took on new depth. Sunday services became more engaging. Holy Communion was an intimate, spiritual event. Praying was more meaningful, even though I now used far fewer words. I felt calmer, more centred, and better grounded. In nature, the beauty of God's creation awed me when walking. I also became less tolerant of noise. The silence and stillness of meditation was the healing balm my soul needed.

Now, years later, I continue to meditate. I also facilitate a meditation group. Christian meditation is simple; not complicated. There are no difficult poses or elaborate doctrines. We sit in silence and simplicity. If prayer is talking to God, then meditation is listening to God.

Anyone can do Christian meditation. It is for beginners and long-time meditators. People have joined our group who practiced other forms of meditation, such as mindfulness. They said they were glad to know they could now meditate within their own Christian faith. Everyone is welcome.

John Main teaches that the fruits of meditation are none other than the fruits of the Spirit mentioned by St. Paul: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and moderation (Galatians 5:22-23). After a long journey, I came full circle and returned to my spiritual home within the Christian tradition. Maranatha.

Darrell Taylor
healing.trappers@gmail.com

Fellowship, Fun & Friendship for Bruyère Hospital Meditation Circle



Bruyère Spiritual Care chaplains meet with Martin Malina, Sue Rayner, Don Meryk (Ottawa Meditation Community) and Rachelle Fortin (MCQRFC) on November 16, 2023.

The Bruyère Hospital Meditation Circle has been

running for almost a year, and the hosts thought it would be a good idea to socialize during the holidays. So, following a meditation session at one site—St Vincent’s hospital in Ottawa—leaders enjoyed lunch out at a nearby restaurant.

John Main 50th Anniversary Commemoration Challenge

In July 2023, upon returning from “The Art of Friendship” retreat in Bonnevaux, France, I felt full of gratitude and energy. I guess it was my personal “Maranatha” moment after having meditated there three times a day. Then, the question to myself was where to direct and channel the gratitude and energy I so deeply felt. I thought for a while, and finally it came to me.

On December 30, 1982, John Main passed away in Montreal. As Canadians, we hold a special privilege among the WCCM. His dream to establish a foundation to teach Christian Meditation came to fruition in our country. To honour the 25th anniversary of his death, a John Main seminar was held in Quebec called “Still Present: the life and legacy of John Main.”



The year 2032 will mark the 50th anniversary of his death. What a fitting tribute it would be to celebrate the anniversary on Canadian soil once more. I hope you agree. Would the meditation community want to recognize it with another John Main seminar?

We have eight years to consider how to celebrate this benchmark anniversary; how best to honour and pay tribute to the meditation community’s founder. I leave that question with all of you and look forward to seeing the interest generated.

Theresa Ziebell
Ottawa, Ontario



The Spirit who is mind
and heart and vast spaces
– enfolds the whole
universe and, in silence
– IS LOVING TO ALL.

Father John Main's 41st Anniversary Celebration

St. Anthony of Padua Church

I welcome you today with this teaching whose ancient words convey profound truth, which Dom John Main recognised as the HEART OF REALITY. The reality which is – Who is – LOVE.

The torrent of Energy flowing between the Father and Son, who is the Holy Spirit, lavished upon all without measure. This divine self-communication – this self-giving – is continuous and total.

'God cannot give partially, but it is the complete self-giving of the Generous Immensity' Father John never tired of saying.

This is the theology of John Main. This is what energised and motivated him. This is what ultimately mattered to him. The intimate knowledge, the certainty, that we are connected, indeed fused in Communion. The Oneness of Being.

Verified through his inner experience, Father John knew that he stood on solid ground, and it gave him freedom and joy; enjoying good things, but not complaining when things did not go his way.

I remember him saying, with a smile, that we will be judged, not by the bad things we have done, but for all the blessings and lovely things we have refused from the hand of God.

Dom Main knew what is real and what is only peripheral. And had the discretion to make the right choice.

He was excited about life – it was a gift to be cherished – an adventure.

John Main used his loving, integrated personality, his many natural gifts, to pass on to people this pearl of great price – with passion and urgency. He points the way – a practical way – to the inner experience, which

is personal, yet universal - to the centre of one's own heart – which is the centre of every heart.

When asked what makes Christian Meditation, Christian? I remember him saying 'Because I myself am a Christian and meditate as a Christian'. If you are Buddhist, or a Jew, or Muslim, or Hindu, you would meditate as a Buddhist, or Jew, or Muslim or Hindu. You don't even have to believe in anything as long as you meditate.

But meditation is Christocentric.

This universal way – the way of the mantra – is a discipline. It is work if practiced selflessly and regularly. Less than 20 minutes is frivolous, longer than 30 minutes is self-indulgent. It might lead one into silence. The rest is pure gift. But meditation is a life-long commitment. There are no shortcuts – no instant mysticism.

When John Main was about to die, he resolved to make his death the biggest adventure of his life – and being allowed to share in it – changed mine.

Over 40 years of meditating, I have come to understand that there is eternal life all around us. Those who love us are always with us, straightening our path.

I recall a quote from Yeats – Father John's favourite Irish poet. "The communications of the dead are tongued in fire, beyond the language of the living..." Those who love us are with us – we cannot be separated – they have our backs.

ALL IS GIFT.

Polly Schofield

Montreal, December 2023



Meditation and Moving the Fence

It is April 1945. A priest in a French village enters the church to prepare for mass. In the shadows, he sees three men and recognizes them immediately. Six months ago, these same three Allied soldiers had come to the church with an urgent request. Could they bury the fourth member of their group in the church cemetery? He had been killed during their secret mission and the three remaining soldiers had to get back to their unit. Could they bury his body in the church cemetery?

Now that the war was over, the soldiers had come to pay their respects to their fellow soldier before travelling home. But there was a problem. They had been looking for the grave and the big rock they left as a marker, but they could not find it. Had the priest or someone else moved his body?

The priest tells the three soldiers that he remembers them well. In fact, he could not sleep for weeks after they departed. In response to their request, he had first asked them some questions about the deceased. Was he baptized? Was he a man of faith? The three soldiers said they could not answer the priest's questions because they knew nothing about his religion. Finally, the priest gave them permission to bury the body outside the fence that surrounded the church cemetery.

But where was the body? The three soldiers had just walked around the fence twice and had found no sign of the grave they had dug six months ago.

The priest told them that after they left that night, he deeply regretted his decision. True, he was following

rules about who can be buried in a church cemetery, but he regretted not listening to his heart and his head. No, he told the soldiers standing before him; he had not moved the body. He had moved the fence.

This very simple story invites us to look at our own fences, especially those we build and maintain around our mind and our heart. Like the village priest, we may accept the need for rules and regulations concerning who can be buried or married or receive

the sacraments. Rules and regulations many times can be helpful, but as the priest discovered, his heart had something to say as well. For weeks after the soldiers left, he had a heart-rending experience, which found the rules inadequate and impervious to the preciousness of a human life lost far from home. He listened to his heart and moved the fence.

As a meditator, I found this story powerful because it speaks to the transformation of mind and heart we experience as meditators.

Whatever our personal, social,

religious fences may be, in the meditation journey, it is by God's grace that we learn to acknowledge them. It is through God's love for us we gain the insight that so many of our fences get built out of fear. Those fears prevent us and others from living the abundant life God has for all people. And it is the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts reminding us to "fear not", that he is the doorway; the gate through and beyond all fences. Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus has freed us from all that separates us from God and one another; he moves all fences.

Rev. Glenda Meakin



REGISTER NOW!



The Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC) invites you to the biennial **National Conference/Retreat**

July 5-7, 2024

Vancouver, British Columbia

From Anxiety to Peace

Keynote speaker: **Fr. Laurence Freeman**

Register early, as residential and commuter spaces are limited.

All are welcome.

Contact JoAnn at 604-318-3429 or email Maeve at bccchristianmeditation@gmail.com

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The Bonnevaux Blessing 2023

continued from C3

We were greeted by Fr. Laurence Freeman and the residents of Bonnevaux. The evening prayer/meditation anointed the evening of our arrival, followed by a gorgeous, welcoming dinner with introductions.

The retreat theme was “The Art of Friendship, Finding One Self in the Other.” Fr. Laurence led our sessions in a most meaningful, thought-provoking way, as he usually does in all his talks.

The talk’s essence was building long-lasting and fruitful friendships as we discover the spiritual friendship with our Heavenly Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Friendship, he says, comes from the root word LOVE.

Fr. Laurence also gave us insights into the practice of Lectio Divina, which is another way of meditating on scripture and undoubtedly another tool for discovering the art of paying meaningful attention and understanding the written word.

Our retreat comprised four periods of meditation each day: 7 am, 8 am, noon and 6 pm.

There were periods for quiet reflection, where we could walk on the gorgeous, peaceful grounds, walk the labyrinth, write haikus, engage in adoration reflection in the abbey’s small chapel or read in the library.

Between the talks and meditation, Michael Rathbone led us in an interesting session on how to use our bodies to discover our uniqueness through movement. Illustrated by a walking meditation session, our movements were meditative and peaceful.

I offered a session in Tai Chi and Qigong, which my contemplative friends received well, for which I am grateful.

André Choquet, our newly appointed National Coordinator, gifted the Canadians with delightful, authentic crêpes for breakfast one day; he even bought pure Canadian maple syrup!

On our last day, we celebrated the retreat’s closing with a beautiful contemplative mass. André Choquet, Mike and I provided the music leadership with hymns Sacred Silence, Amazing Grace and The Lord’s Prayer in French and meaningfully delivered.

After the Mass, Pr. Martin Malina, the former Canadian National Coordinator, and Fr. Laurence, formally blessed André Choquet from Toronto as our new Canadian National Coordinator.

The Holy Spirit truly anointed our moments at Bonnevaux. We felt the spirit of Fr. John Main through Fr. Laurence.

As Fr. John Main said, “Silence is the language of the Spirit.” Indeed, we felt the Bonnevaux Blessing, leaving with hearts overflowing with gratitude and love!

Andrea Siqueira

Here is the YouTube link to our Bonnevaux Blessing 2023:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsgrMDR51PQ>

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
Canadian Christian Meditation Community
P.O. Box 53092
RPO Royal Orchard
Thornhill, Ontario, L3T 7R9
Tel: 514-485-7928
www.wccm-canada.ca

Past issues of the Newsletter can be found at:
The Medio Media Canada Bookstore:
www.mediomedia.ca

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40007931

2024 CCMC National Conference Retreat REGISTRATION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province/State _____

Postal Code/Country _____

Cell phone _____

Email _____

Name on conference badge _____

I wish to register as follows, click one:

Live in **\$495** Commuter **\$340**

Online **\$120** Students Online **\$60**

For shared bathroom, I would like to share with:

Another Female or Male

Special health/dietary/medical needs

Specify _____

Optional Donation toward Scholarship Fund \$ _____

Payment can be made by

Cheque or money order payable to
Canadian Christian Meditation Community
3018 East 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, Canada V5M 1S3 **OR**

Payment can be made by credit card:

Visa MasterCard

Amount to be charged: _____

Name as it appears on the card _____

Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____ CVV* *the three digits on the back of your card

To Register

Visit www.bit.ly/CCMC-NC2024 to register online
OR complete the form and mail your completed
registration with full payment to:

Canadian Christian Meditation Community
3018 East 6th Avenue,
Vancouver, BC, Canada V5M 1S3

with a cheque payable to Canadian Christian
Meditation Community.

**Register early, as residential and commuter
spaces are limited. All are welcome.**

\$495 for Live in - Single room and shared
bathroom with adjacent room. Includes 2 nights
accommodations and 6 meals from Friday dinner
through Sunday lunch.

\$340 for Commuters - Covers as above except for
2 breakfasts and accommodation.

\$120 for Online participation - You can attend the
talks and meditations live.

\$60 for Student Online participation - You can
attend the talks and meditations live.

Please note that registration will close:

- Thurs May 30, 2024** for Live In
- Wed June 26, 2024** for Commuters
- Monday July 1, 2024** for Online Participants

CANCELLATION POLICY

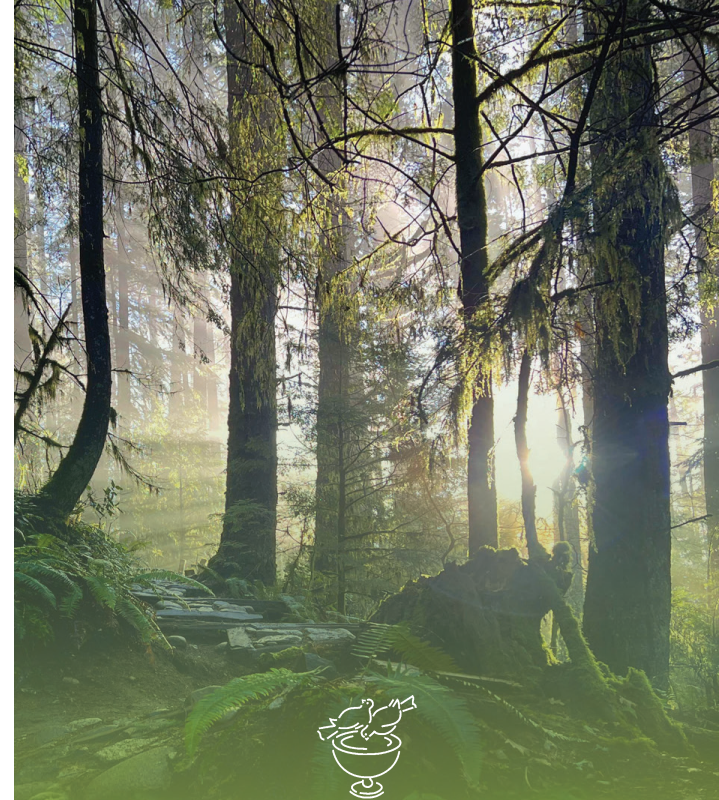
If you need to cancel your registration and
request a refund, please email your request
on or before May 30, 2024 to Maeve at
bccchristianmeditation@gmail.com. Telephone
cancellations are not eligible for a refund.

A **15%** administrative fee will be charged
on all cancellations. Cancellations **after**
May 30, 2024 will not receive a refund, regardless
of circumstances.



For further information:

Contact JoAnn at **604-318-3429**
or email Maeve at
bccchristianmeditation@gmail.com



The Canadian Christian Meditation Community
invites you to attend the

Biennial National Conference Retreat
July 5–7, 2024

Totem Park, University of British Columbia
2525 West Mall, Vancouver, BC

*From Anxiety
to Peace*

Led by Laurence Freeman OSB
Keynote speaker Kaveh Guilanpour

Presented by
The World Community for Christian Meditation
wccm-canada.ca

From Anxiety to Peace

'Once meditation has become part of your life it teaches us many things about ourselves and about life and the fabric of reality. One of these is that you can meditate regardless of your mood or how things are around you. For example, you can sit and start meditating with a heavy heart and a pessimistic mind, weighed down by what Jesus called the burdens and cares of life. But then, in the simple fidelity of your silence and attention, the dark veil of anxiety lifts, the heaviness dissolves and you are reconnected to that vein of peace, like a light shining in the dark or a stream of purity in a polluted world'.

Laurence Freeman's words about the transformative effect of meditation surely have relevance for a world suffering as we do today. We seek, often confusedly, for the wisdom and gentleness of contemplation without which we will be unable to face the realities of our crisis with hope and intelligence; human intelligence not merely Artificial Intelligence. We may feel a pessimism of the mind in the face of our earth-crisis but we are capable of an optimism of the will. This is found within the depth of human nature.

In this conference of meditators and friends of the community across Canada and beyond we will explore how this transformation of awareness takes place and highlight the sources of wisdom.

Our coming together is itself a sign that contemplative consciousness awakens a sense of community and is strengthened by our coming together. The speakers will help us see and experience this. But so will we embrace and welcome each other as we see that the anxiety that could paralyse us at this crucial stage in our evolution is certainly not the bottom line. Beyond it is the peace that passes understanding, opening new vistas to celebrate humanity's riches and to contemplate the beauty of the world, our home. We will hear of contemplatives supported by their meditation in the hard, often lonely work of climate change negotiations. We will listen to experiences of how the embrace of the beauty of nature can itself also free us to be fully alive.

We will see why the solution to the ecological crisis lies in our inner ecology. For what we are like interiorly so will we act externally.

WCCM Canada invites you - in one of the most beautiful parts of the planet - whether you meditate or not - to this conference of hope to share the journey we can only make in unity from anxiety to peace.



With Irish and English roots, **Laurence Freeman** was educated by the Benedictines and studied English Literature at New College, Oxford University. Before entering monastic life, he worked with the United Nations in New York, as well as in banking and

journalism. He is the Director and Spiritual Guide of the World Community of Christian Meditation (WCCM), a global, inclusive, contemplative community. Fr. Laurence Freeman is a monk of the Benedictine Congregation of Monte Oliveto Maggiore.

Fr. John Main was his teacher and Fr. Laurence assisted him in establishing the foundations of the Community. Fr. Laurence is the author of a number of books on Christian Meditation. He travels extensively giving presentations and leading Christian Meditation Retreats.



The keynote speaker is **Kaveh Guilanpour**, former senior member of the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Team and Vice-President for International Strategies at the Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions. Other speakers

include Squamish Elder **Wendy Charbonneau**, and **Dr. Jason Brown**, Lecturer in Religious Studies and Ecological Humanities at Simon Fraser University. He also serves the SFU community as an Ecological Chaplain.

Venue

The University of British Columbia
Totem Park, 2525 West Mall, Vancouver.

Totem Park is located in a natural setting on campus near the ocean and is a short walk to the UBC Botanical Garden.

Accommodation

Accommodation is available at Totem student residence which is located a short distance from the venue and dining hall (approx. 3 min. walk). All rooms are single and share a washroom with the adjacent room.

Online Participation

A company that specializes in audio video production will live-stream the conference talks and meditations.

All registrants will receive recordings of the talks after the event.



CHECK IN: July 5, 2024, 3 pm to 6:00pm

OPENING SESSION: Begins at 7 pm

CONCLUSION: July 7, 2024 with lunch starting at 12:30pm

REGISTER NOW!



Fr. Laurence Freeman



Kaveh Guilanpour

The Canadian Christian Meditation Community (CCMC)
invites you to attend the

National Conference Retreat

July 5–7, 2024 UBC Vancouver, British Columbia

From Anxiety to Peace

Led by Laurence Freeman OSB, Spiritual Director of the World
Community for Christian Meditation

Keynote speaker **Kaveh Guilanpour**, former senior member of the
UN Secretary General's Climate Action Team and Vice-President for
International Strategies at the Centre for Climate and Energy Solutions

For more information, visit wccm-canada.ca/events or
register online at www.bit.ly/CCMC-NC2024. Attend in person
or online. Register early, as residential and commuter spaces
are limited. All are welcome.

Contact JoAnn at **604-318-3429** or email
Maeve at bccchristianmeditation@gmail.com.

wccm-canada.ca

