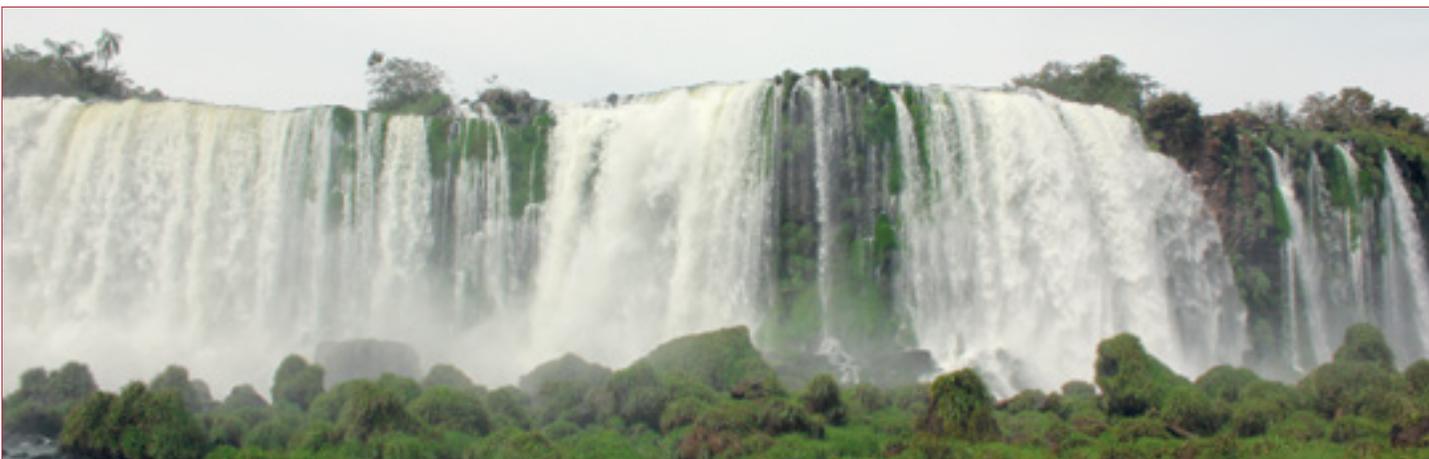




The Need to **reconnect** with Nature

The **John Main Seminar 2012** helped us to reflect on the environmental crisis and showed **contemplation is a real source of hope**



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A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

Early in the morning, as the thick Amazonian night was being redeemed by the light of day, I would go down to the small jetty to meditate beside the river. In Sao Paulo or Los Angeles, Sydney or London the working day also begins at this time as humans begin their commute, read their newspapers, grab a cappuccino and gear up for the business of survival. Here too, in the wilderness, there was an evident rise in levels of activity. The animal kingdom was waking for work.

But here it felt more like the transition from natural deep rest. It was a ritual of nature, a new beginning of an old celebration, an expansion of action in peace, rather than a battle. The conflicts of the species, the survival of the fittest and the killing and devouring that drives their life-cycle were sinless. There were predators but no oppressors, those whose time had come to finish their term of life but no victims. The freshness and purity of the morning reflected this natural order as the river reflected the strengthening intensity of the sun.

From the other side of the river came a noise that drew my attention away from the constant symphony of life - the river and the jungle it flowed through, the hum of the insects and birds, the splash of leaping fish rippling the smooth water and the endless, unidentifiable rustlings that populate night and day. The Amazon jungle is silent. But silence, as any meditator would know, is not the absence of noise; it is the essential innocence of being, existence in harmony with one's nature, a union between self and all that is other.

I found it hard to locate this new, oddly aggressive yet sad and disturbing noise. It came from *somewhere* - over there, or behind me, or downstream. For a moment it seemed almost human and in a flash of imagination I pictured a cargo of slaves being taken down river to their hopeless future. In a contrapuntal way individual voices occasionally dominated over the chorus of this pre-linguistic speech - the alpha males, I was told later, asserting their rights over their fellow

howling monkeys. It was reassuring to have the noise named and located. The literalists wonder how Adam could have named all the species of animals in a single day. But, as steward of creation, he needed to give them names in order to understand them and to see how wonderfully they formed a unified whole.

Those who read the biblical account of creation in the light of meditation know that there are many ways of measuring time and that the work of understanding life reinforces the sense of wonder. My associating the monkeys' howls with human melancholy became less anthropocentric. The noise took its place within the orchestra of the world's miraculous bio-diversity in which Man belongs to serve rather than exploit. So many species, so many parallel universes

"In its true nature all things are beautiful: God saw all that he had made and saw that it was very good"

around me. The more we see and understand, the vaster the world becomes, the more it reflects the effulgent glory and boundlessness of its origin. "In all natural things," St Augustine said, "there is something wonderful."

The crescendo of silent energy in the Amazon jungle builds up in the predawn light and settles down again at sunset. At both times it is intensely peaceful. You feel that peace *is* an energy, a power that vitalizes and renews everything it touches. It enfolds the world, but without possessiveness. Our capacity for this peace is boundless yet it has to be gradually expanded. To receive too much too soon would feel threatening and even, paradoxically, frightening. As energy it can, however, be transmitted (*Peace is my parting gift to you*). To be close to a person whose heart is filled with peace is to have our own heart opened beyond all the restrictions imposed by anxiety,

fear and anger. But even in the strongest presence of peace and of the mystery of love from which it flows - everything real derives from love - we are free and peace can also be refused.

To feel this natural peace by the glass-smooth river, as the birds sweep and dance above it, as the sky brightens like an irresistible human smile that you know won't let you down, is to find oneself anew. It is to be restored to the harmony of nature - the *shalom* in which we resonate with all creation, with all beings in the beautiful order of the cosmos. So, to understand peace in these conditions merely as an absence of conflict or as an escape from risk - as do urbanized human beings in their security compounds walking below the cold gaze of security cameras - is to not be there at all. It is to miss the gift of peace and to be far away in an illusory world.

This resonance with all forms of nature makes the human beings who experience it more present to themselves and to each other, more alive, more at home in the universe - and more natural. It forgives and blesses us. The wilderness, true nature, always gives us a second chance. It is a channel of grace. Its myriad life-systems and all its synchronised routines of life push relentlessly towards their fulfillment. The resolute determination of everything in nature to be fulfilled can seem impersonal. The human presence seems barely acknowledged. But in the human being who feels this resonance within herself it is a presence that is not self-conscious yet cannot be experienced without it awakening a deeper kind of consciousness. It is not trying to succeed at another's expense but simply *to be* because life exists in order to flourish.

What do we mean by 'nature' - the wilderness that modern people both fear and romanticize and often prefer to encounter through film than in reality? Our essential true self that, if we feel in harmony with it, makes us feel good? Natural is good, the unnatural is not because it is false. Buddha nature? The union of

divine and human natures in the one person of Christ? We often use the word 'nature' vaguely - and often contradictorily - yet it points to something that we experience continuously.

The 'true nature' of anything is its irreducible essence, its actual identity. When we are 'natural' we are unadorned, our masks have been laid aside and we have penetrated through the filters and

of being in which we are at one with our true self as the souls' nakedness. *The Cloud of Unknowing* says that when we meditate we come in time to a 'naked awareness of our selves'. In one of Rumi's poems he sings "And so this is love... suddenly to stand naked in the spotlight of truth." To be naked, spiritually, is, like being naked physically, a sign of trust, an embrace of that kind of authentic

the obvious: that we are who we are and nothing else. But the miracle of nature does not stop there. As we become more naturally ourselves (less self-conscious, more attentive to others, more capable of wonder) we also awaken to our harmony with all of nature - in other human beings and in the 'natural world' itself.

This deepening resonance of nature was the theme of the John Main Seminar in Brasil in August when we reflected on the link between spirituality and the environment. The truth we were led to understand better is that our ecological crisis has happened because humanity is simply acting unnaturally and unwisely towards its earthly home. We have failed to see and to resonate with the rich relationship between our human selves and the entire natural order. It is in this relationship the beauty of the world is revealed to us and, in that beauty, the mysterious radiance of the God whose being is in all things - who, as St Paul says, is "all in all". In its true nature all things are beautiful: God saw all that he had made and saw that it was very good. When we see this we see with the mind of God.

"We will be saved by beauty". In *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky this idea is put as a mocking question to the Christlike Prince Myshkin who does not reply. It is not a hope that can be lightly tossed out. It is not a platitude that can be used to cover up the ascetical work necessary to purify our ways of perception so that we can experience beauty in this redemptive way. Myshkin says only that 'beauty is an enigma'. But elsewhere Dostoevsky expressed his belief that 'the world will become the beauty of Christ'. In this he anticipated Simone Weil who felt the world's beauty so sensitively even (or especially) through the tragedies of her life and times: "The beauty of the world is Christ's tender smile for us coming through matter."

When we escape from a crowded and polluted city or rip ourselves away from the addictive and stressful routines of modern life-style, when we go into nature, sometimes even a city park or garden, the word 'beautiful' springs to mind. What better, simpler word can we find? We look at the view, smell the



layers of ego-identity that lead us so easily into self-delusion. To be natural, to be ourselves, is to sense the feeling of self-recovery. To discover our true self - again - is the heart of all recovery, all healing. It is the great *returning home* of life, as perhaps of all things in nature, the completion of the great swing back to the source. When this breakthrough happens in us - after hard inner work and abundant grace - we are blessed with a new degree of confidence and peace. Our 'false selves' that find it hard to deal with the disappointments and losses of life are relativised. When we take them for real we are led into bitterness or despair. Whereas, when we are in harmony with our self, we can be amazed at our capacity not only to survive life's ordeals, to endure them with hope, but even to flourish through times of affliction.

The mystics often speak of that state

strength that is found only in vulnerability and utter honesty. The shame of Adam and Eve when they stood naked before God showed how humanity began its painful journey to maturity. They had already fallen out of their innocent harmony with nature into an isolating and guilty self-consciousness. Of all God's many questions to humanity "who told you were naked?" is one of the most disarming because it reveals how God knows and loves us better than we know or love ourselves.

The basic human quest is always for our true nature. It is accomplished as much through reduction and renunciation as through acquisition and success. Not only big new experiences and achievements but also losses and letting go - perhaps even more through these - guide us to a joyful and peaceful homecoming, to the startling recognition of

pure air laden with new organic flavours, feel the texture of the plants with our fingers and watch the animal world, recognising ourselves in it. The collective experience from all these channels of awareness forms what we mean by 'beauty'. Immersed in the natural world we feel the unnatural habits of our mind dissolve. Perspective returns. Our true nature is recovered. While we are in this way of being we are unable to exploit or harm the environment because it would be and feel like self-harm. While we are in harmony with nature in this way we see it purely as gift, mysterious and natural, to be enjoyed, shared and protected equally by all.

In this sensitised state of mind beauty awakens the spiritual dimension. A sense of the transcendent merges with the sense of being deeply rooted in the very physical reality which reveals the beautiful to us. In classical thought beauty is the manifestation of the whole through a part. The healing and redemptive influence of beauty can be understood in this way. We don't merely go into nature for a weekend break from an unbalanced lifestyle, to get away from it all. We don't enjoy beautiful things merely at an elitist aesthetic level, like dressing up poshly when we go to a concert or opera. When we are truly open to the impact of beauty on our minds, souls and bodies, we are changed. The sicknesses of our soul begin to get well again. And as the whole gives itself to us in the part our whole being is caressed.

St Augustine said that we can only love what is beautiful. This means that love reveals the beautiful even in things or people that don't strike us as beautiful at first. How often do we find that as our first impression of someone fades, based as it was on superficial appearances or prejudices, a deeper insight comes to the fore and our response to this person is wholly changed. We feel bad about our misjudgement and shed it. Their true nature is now more visible and we resonate with it from a simpler, truer part of our self. Perhaps this is what awaits us all at the end of life, regardless of how mistakenly we have chosen to live. All our ways of seeing and knowing will fuse in a great

healing simplicity as we see God. In that instant of pure perception – of the beauty ever ancient, ever new – we will not be able to resist falling in love, with the love that has always surrounded us. And so we will be saved.

A life without beauty is a half-life, tragically and dismally deformed in its capacity for self-transcendence and tenderness. So much of the malaise and the dangerous patterns in our global



crisis arise from these radical interior deficiencies. The commercialisation of education, the failures of religion to connect with the people in crisis, the depersonalisation of our institutions and the paranoia of our concern with 'security', our loss of moderation in material things and our flight into entertainment rather than the encounter with our true nature in contemplation – these are symptoms that compound the root causes of our crisis. Financial instability preoccupies us most obsessively at this moment but behind it, and getting worse continuously, is the deteriorating environment, the branch on which all humanity is sitting. Like addicts fixated on maintaining their supply we deny the main problem and its consequences. How can we extract ourselves out of this spiralling crisis unless we remember what loving ourselves means and how can we love ourselves if we refuse to love the earth that nour-

ishes us and reveals such beauty to us?

Watching wonderfully made TV documentaries on the Nature Channel won't do it. The true wonder of nature lies in real time and personal encounter. When I told people I was spending time in the Amazon before the Seminar nearly everyone warned me of the dangers – the snakes and spiders and poisonous insects. Very few Brazilians have been there just as few Australians have been to the

centre of their country or Canadians to their vast northern wilderness. The still surviving tracts of unspoiled nature on the planet would re-enchance our world if we visited them bravely, simply in the right way. They would challenge our self-destructive habits, not by making us feel guilty – modern people are generally immune to guilt – but through the experience of wonder and reverence for the beauty we find there.

Fear of the wilderness would then yield to a love of nature which includes human nature in all forms. It was this barrier of fear that the great pioneers of the spirit faced and overcame when they went into the wilderness, Elijah and Jesus into the desert, the early Christian monks into Scetis and Nitrea, Benedict into his remote cave, the Indian *rishis* into the forest.

The fear of wilderness reflects our fear of entering the silence and stillness at

the centre of our own being. Meditation is attractive – as is the jungle or the desert or the high mountains. But it is always easier to read about meditation or to do research on it than to embrace the discipline of a daily practice. This, however, is the consensus of all spiritual traditions: that there is no transformation without practice, no conversion, no enlightenment. External rituals, orthodoxy of belief, conformity to ritualistic conventions cannot substitute for a contemplative practice that goes to the heart of the person and through that to the heart of the world. As Evagrius, a master of desert wisdom said, keeping the commandments is not enough to heal the powers of the soul completely because we also need contemplation to penetrate to the deep centre of the heart. *Apatheia*, or health of soul requires contemplative practice. This teaching was central to our contribution to the Meditatio Seminar on mental health that brought professionals in the field in dialogue together with spiritual teachers from different traditions. It is central also to the Seminar on Addiction later this month. The mystery of wholeness and the powers of healing lie in our own true nature, in the wilderness of the heart.

The great truths need to be rediscovered and reformulated by every generation. We pass on clues and symbols to our successors but we have to relive the quest and thereby renew and expand the tradition we flow within. Humanity's history is therefore re-enacted in each individual's personal development even though the individual cannot know this until the work is well-advanced and the progress made irreversible. In our personal lives we see how times of breakdown are often related to moments of breakthrough. It does not always happen and there seem to be more breakdowns than breakthroughs; and that is why we must respond to personal crises with such tenderness and concern for the individual. Not everyone seems to get through at least the first time. But maybe breakdown is the necessary condition for all evolution and growth. If everything went smoothly we would not need to look for the new models

of reality which help us adapt better to changing circumstances. In a dull utopia of ultimate security and complacency we could never awaken to universal truths, never see beyond our own comfort zone.

Historically the greatest breakthrough in consciousness, whose influence humanity is still assimilating, was perhaps what historians call the axial age, the discovery of the human inner world. This was the result of many breakthroughs that disseminated this wisdom of the human heart through the great religious tradition and their iconic individual teachers, the Hebrew prophets, the authors of the Upanishads, Lao Tsu, Confucius, the Buddha. Yet these advances came at times of great social unrest and instability and their individual teachers – including Jesus who can be seen as their heir and cultural culmination - knew

“We need to sense that we are at home in the wilderness, the jungle beside the great river”

more failure than success.

This perspective of human history, part of the big story of the evolution of nature, is humbling and hope-giving. It may not prevent us from making the same mistakes again but it helps to understand better when we are making mistakes. It prevents us from the worst excesses of collective egotism, the anthropocentric delusion that allows us to exploit the natural resources and the more vulnerable members of humanity. These are the real moral issues of our time. But deeper than the moral is the spiritual. Our way out of the crisis calls firstly for a spiritually generated consciousness. This means one that is born of pure attention before it clothes itself in thought, that *is* good before it tries to *do* good.

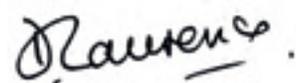
Evolution of consciousness from its earliest stages seems to be driven by our capacity for attention. As our attention deepens and broadens so our forms of social organisation and culture evolve.

When attention shrinks and becomes self-fixated the human is diminished and society dissolves. Our chronic distractiveness, our inability to pay attention to anything for more than a few minutes or even to remember and absorb what we have heard are symptoms of a widespread malaise affecting the spiritual dimension and that also undermines the core values of any civilised way of life.

Our capacity for contemplation – seen so clearly in the child and those who have humbly embraced their own healing process – is connected to this natural instinct to develop our gift of attention. In animals and perhaps even in plants we sense this power of attention. In the jungle you never feel alone. But as the human gift of attention is developed it expands into something pure and other-centred. It is inclusive. It opens the eye of the heart which enables us to see God in all things, to recognise the divine attention at all levels of consciousness and in all forms of nature.

Simply, these are the fruits of meditation. To gather them and replant them for those who come after we need human friendship above all – the community that meditation creates but which also supports the practice. But we also need friendship with the natural world. We need to sense that we are at home in the wilderness, the jungle beside the great river. We need to laugh at the playful exuberance of the surreally decorated birds wearing their *carnevale* headdresses and colours. We need to see ourselves in these earlier forms of life and to remember our capacity for play, for delight and for simplicity. When we turn our attention back, as we then must, to the complex issues with which our world is confronted we will feel less alone, less isolated on the island of human consciousness. We will in fact see more contemplatively and we will act more wisely.

With much love,



Laurence Freeman, OSB

The need for a **reconnection** to nature

The John Main Seminar 2012 showed **contemplation** as a **major source of hope** for the environmental issue



Spirituality and nature. These very related subjects were strongly present at the John Main Seminar 2012, held in August, in Indaiatuba, close to São

Paulo, Brazil. Representatives from 12 countries of The World Community for Christian Meditation were there to listen to Professor Leonardo Boff and Frei Betto OP. Before the seminar, Fr. Laurence Freeman led the retreat "Be Who you Are", also in tune with the main topic. After the seminar, a group of pilgrims went to Iguazu falls, at the "triple-border" (Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay), to live an experience of meditation and the power of nature.

We asked some participants to write about the experience of the JMS 2012. Next year this most important WCCM event will be held in Hong Kong.



Roldano Giuntoli, **Brazil**

By the end of 2010 we decided to take up the challenge to run the 2012 John Main Seminar. The natural choice for the venue was Vila Kostka a 110 km away from Sao Paulo city.

A subject connected to the environment sustainability entailed the choice of the JMS theme on "Spirituality and Environment" since 2012 was to be the year of the Rio Eco 92+20 World Conference in Brazil. Few names

would gather more international momentum to this theme in Brazil than Prof. Leonardo Boff and Friar Betto OP.

They delivered equally profound speeches in complementary ways whereas the academic approach of Prof. Boff was balanced by the popular address of Fr. Betto. "Be who you Are" was the subject of the most appreciated lectures Fr. Laurence delivered during the Pre Seminar Retreat.

It was decided to prepare for an extension to the Seminar contemplating one of the many natural riches of Brazil. The Iguazu Falls were the natural choice. The visits to the Iguazu Falls National Park, to the exotic Bird Park and to the huge Itaipu power plant were much appreciated. We wish to extend warm thanks to all who have contributed to the success of the 2012 JMS and the best of luck to the Hong Kong community for the JMS 2013.



Jane Serrurier, **UK**

I experienced our Community as a 'World' Community in a way that I had not understood before. The warmth and energy generated by our coming together in Brazil filled me with a sense of awe and wonder on a par to the spectacular encounter with the Iguazu Falls! The quantum realities of our interconnectedness to one another and the world in which we live, and our place in this vast and expanding

(...) the harmony for example that you experience with nature when you see a beautiful clear day or wonderful view, the marvellous sky. In those moments of revelation, it flashes in on one that this is what it's about: a sense of oneness with nature, with oneself, with others. That is why we meditate." (John Main)

Universe, demand that we search our hearts and minds with a new urgency. The 'cry of the earth' for a new ecology, mutuality and respect can only happen if we embrace the real challenge of a contemplative spirituality, opening ourselves to the Infinite.



Rev. Stuart Fenner, **Australia**

Coming from Australia, the driest continent in the world, to Brazil known for its water resources and rainforest, I felt strangely at home amongst the vibrant community of Brazilian meditators and the 40 or so foreigners from many different countries. Silence does that – it draws people's attention to their essential unity rather than their differences.

The alarm and anxiety we felt, listening to Leonardo Boff's exposition of the dire situation of the planet soon turned to hope as he assured us that joining together with others in meditation was essential to save the planet. The painful silence of isolation caused by individualism and consumerism must be replaced by the healing silence of contemplative spirituality.



Marina Müller, **Argentina**

It was an intense and wonderful experience that prevailed in harmony, sharing friendly coexistence of all the participants in their diversity and unity, with depth content transmit-

ted, beauty of nature and art, from the issues treated, the pleasant and comfortable house Vila Kotska and its beautiful park, the good food, the careful organization of the whole event. It was an experience of peace and grace, to disseminate and share in our national and regional communities, in our meditation groups, and to be thoughtful and deepened for personal and community engagement with the interior teacher from daily meditation. We deeply appreciate the WCCM, especially in its branch in Brazil, the organizers, the speakers and participants the opportunity to share this important event to feed our way in Christian Meditation.



Fred Jass, **Canada**

During the Conference it came to me that when the sciences figure out the importance that prayer, more so silent prayer, can clean the airwaves from crime and sin which pollute it, and if they will publish the results like the stock market, then we are on the right way to clean polluted mother Earth.



Magda Jass, **Canada**

Warm sun, warm people, beautiful surroundings, and a whole lot of people caring about each other, and the environment. Laurence talked about the necessity of being who we are, about beauty, and he stressed that we are part of nature. Leonardo Boff told us that we are using up the resources of the earth faster than they can replenish. Frei Betto shared some of his personal history. The pilgrimage to Iguazu falls was being immersed and part of beauty and nature. Everyone had a big smile on their face. It was like contemplative prayer in that it was an indescribable experience.



Lina Lee, Agnes Wong,
Pamela Yeung, **Hong Kong**

Our hearts are sparkled up through participating in the John Main Seminar. As meditators, we feel encouraged when Boff told us that while human resources are finite, the more we meditate, the more we grow in our 'spiritual capital' in order to love and care for all. Betto highlights that human rights and dignity are un-separated integral parts in these two arenas.

Thanks to our friends of the Brazilian community for your warm hospitality, for making this seminar so sparkling, so magical and filled with family atmosphere. Thank you Lord, for striking a chord of harmony through this seminar so that we can be strengthened by the noble spirit of John Main --as now that it is our turn to organize the Seminar 2013. See you in Hong Kong! Deo Gratias!

Meditation and Medicine

The Brazilian gerontologist physician Dr. Fernando Bignardi, a researcher at the Center for Medical Ecology "Florescer na Mata", Sao Paulo, gave a talk during the Seminar on the need for a multi-dimensional and transdisciplinary approaches in both physical and mental health.

A Meditatio Seminar on Meditation and Health in Brasil is being planned.

Interview



Frei Betto OP (left) and Leonardo Boff



By Leonardo Corrêa

Frei Betto: "Meditation takes us beyond the consumerist life-style"

You mentioned meditation as being against consumerism. So, it helps to drive the new paradigm in a good way?

Betto: It is true. Meditation is diving inside yourself, an introspection, and leads people to discover that happiness is not outside but inside themselves. Thus, in a society in which all advertising tries to induce an idea of happiness based on material possessions and certain pleasures granted by what is consumed, the spiritual density reached by a meditator creates for sure an anti-consumerism behaviour.

So in this case, helps to build a paradigm of solidarity?

Betto: Exactly. Because meditation must not be considered a spiritual narcissism, or space from reality or aim in itself. It needs to "render fruits,

and fruits of love, of service, of solidarity, of participation, building a better world. This is the challenge of meditation.

This would be my next questions. You spoke about these "dangers" of meditation. How to avoid that? Just being aware of it? Or does the community have a role here?

Betto: We need to be part of a community. And the community must not see meditation as a end in itself because in this case we fall into spiritual "solipsism". It is like the egocentric use of a meditation practice and could even be called another thing, but not Christian. Because in the Gospel Jesus frequently emphasizes "we know the tree by the fruits". So, it is not valid prayer if it does not lead us to a social commitment, a commitment with a better world.

Leonardo Boff: "Contemplation can heal the planet"

You highlighted the seriousness of the environmental situation. With the support of spirituality can you have more hope that we can reverse the situation?

Boff: We must think in the terms of quantum physics. In quantum physics matter does not exist, everything is energy. Even matter is energy, highly condensed. And energy organizes itself in networks.

The basic law of energy is that everything has to be with everything in all points, in all movements and in all circumstances. The energies intertwine. So, spiritual energy is probably the most powerful energy. And we can cultivate this energy. It does not get stuck in us. It enters into the energy network fructifying more feeble energies, fortifying those who are most threatened. So, I understand the mystics and the contemplatives to be those who make the molecular revolutions, the silent revolutions. In silence they generate energy that will be important for the couple to be faithful, to ensure the social militant is transparent, to keep the politician from being corrupted and continue to serve the people.

All forms give birth to energies that circulate. So, mysticism and contemplation are major sources for generating positive energies that can heal our sick planet and strengthen its energies and they will always help and strengthen all that is good, luminous, decent and holy.

Meditatio News

By Brijji Waterfield

The summer saw a flow of welcome guests and friends coming to stay at the new Meditatio House in London and despite the unpredictable English weather provided some happy times in the garden. We say goodbye to Francisco Wulf who has spent the last year as an oblate in the house and part of the Meditatio team as he returns to Canada and welcome to the house, Mike Rathbone, a music teacher from England and Lucy Beck from the USA. Meditatio house continues its daily round of meditation three times a day and has a new program of events.

Meditatio held a Seminar in York earlier this year on mental health with over 160 participants which brought together professionals from different faith traditions. London also hosted a lively dialogue between Fr Laurence Freeman and Alan Wallace a Tibetan Buddhism on Salvation or Enlightenment? The Meditation with Children program continues to

flourish as we held Meditatio Forums in Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Ireland – where teachers and principals gathered together to hear how we can introduce meditation to children. Next year Poland, USA and hopefully Canada will also host these in their countries with Cathy Day and Ernie Christie from Australia as the speakers. Meditatio now looks forward to developing the theme of Meditation and Addiction with a seminar in London on 30 October. All seminars are recorded and Meditatio publications made available via our website.

Meditatio looks forward to an exciting new venture next year – the launch of the Meditatio International Centre at St Marks, London. We plan to develop this as a public meeting space and a training centre. We hope that this urban setting will be a contemplative space where meditators can gather with others in community, friendship and outreach.

SUPPORT OUR WORK: Become a Friend

Our community is twenty-one this year. The simplicity of the essential teaching remains the community's living core and that, I believe, has shaped and guided our growth to date. The roots deepen as the branches spread - like the gospel's mustard seed.

At the John Main Seminar in Brazil, on spirituality and the environment we saw how necessary it is to develop a new contemplative consciousness for our global challenges. It clarified for me the significance of our outreach to children, people in recovery, prisoners, the mentally ill, the poor and forgotten and the developing world - as much as our work with thousands of regular weekly meditation groups.

Our mission is large; our financial needs are relatively modest. We have commitments for which a stable annual income is necessary. Please help us by becoming a "Friend". Your annual support gives us both inspiration and practical support in our mission every day.

Both the UK and the US now manage their own Friends programs on behalf of WCCM. For Friends' gifts in the UK, please go to www.christian-meditation.org.uk; for the US, please go to www.wccm-us.org. For all other Friends' gifts, please visit www.wccm.org. If you have questions about the Friends program, please contact Carla Cooper at cmcooper@gvvc.com

Thank you for sharing this vision and helping to pass on the gift by becoming a Friend of the World Community.

To donate online go to the Friends page at www.wccm.org/content/donate

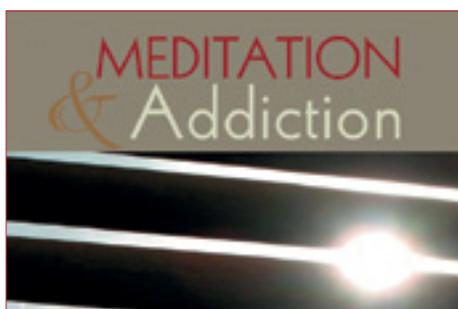
Publications



THE BUSINESS OF SPIRIT

Based on the Meditatio Forum held in Georgetown University, USA where organisational leaders operating at a level of global responsibility talk from personal experience about the practice of meditation and its place in their working lives. They bear witness to the need for a truly enlightened approach to business in which spirituality informs leadership and where contemplation is inseparable from action.

ISBN 978-0-9571040-6-8
Price £3.50



MEDITATION & ADDICTION

This booklet is a guide for those who are interested in the role that meditation can have in helping people to recover from all kinds of addictions. It provides information and encouragement for those – and their supporters.

ISBN 978-0-9571040-7-5
Price £2.00

Laurence Freeman, OSB

Events



Australian National Retreat

Melbourne held the Australian National Retreat, in July, under the theme Stages of Contemplation: The Way Up is the Way Down. About 200 people participated.

ONLINE: The talks by Fr Laurence are available to download at www.wccm.org



Meditation with Children Asian tour

Dr. Cathy Day, Ernie Christie (from Australia) and Fr. Laurence Freeman gave a series of talks on Meditation With Children in Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore to encourage the practice between teachers, students and parents.

ONLINE: check out a video on the tour in our YouTube Channel (at www.wccm.org)



Meditatio Seminar on Meditation with Children in Ireland

Ireland held a Meditatio Forum on Meditation with Children, "A Gift for Life", in Dublin, on 2nd October. The event had 220 participants. Charles and Patricia Posnett (UK coordinators for Meditation with Children), Laurence Freeman OSB, Mary Savage a teacher from Belfast and Kim Nataraja (WCCM Director of the School of Meditation) were the speakers.



Retreat in California

On September over 80 meditators welcomed Fr Laurence to the San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, California, for a weekend of silence and meditation. His theme for the retreat was "First Sight - The Experience of Faith."

Retreat in Holland

In September Fr. Laurence led a silent meditation retreat for the first time in Holland for about 70 participants.



New programme at Georgetown

A meditation programme for the Georgetown University Business School was launched on 25th September at a session led by Laurence Freeman and Sean Hagan, General Counsel of the IMF (above) which was attended by numerous students and faculty. Dean David Thomas, who was also in attendance and participated in the entire hour-and-a-half meeting, addressed the group to express his strong support for the idea of including meditation in the training of future business leaders.

The high visibility of the launch was followed the next week in one of the Business School's lecture halls by a more low-key regular working session, that is to say, by a twentyminute silent meditation, preceded by an introductory talk by John Main Center director Gregory Robison.

The plan is to continue these late Tuesday afternoon sessions for the rest of the academic term, and in the spring term begin including meditation modules in courses in Organizational Behavior.

ONLINE: see videos of this event on our YouTube Channel (at www.wccm.org)

In Focus

Mick Lowcock, **Australia**



My first Retreat with WCCM was at Monte Oliveto which is a long way from Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia. Upon my arrival I met Fr. Laurence Freeman who greeted me with "I will be in Mount Isa next year" and Desley Deike on the front welcome desk "Did you really come from Mount Isa? That is where I come from and went to school before I ended up in England." No doubt I felt at home amongst friends I had never met before. Fr. Laurence did come to Mount Isa and the idea of sending an oblate novice in the meditation community for a kind of internship was born as Pierre Corcoran came to Mount Isa for three months.

Amongst the many things I remember was the first day that Pierre was

here and driving the car, with Pierre sitting in the back seat beside the coffin to allow for room for the coffin to fit in. It was a trip out to a funeral in an Aboriginal community. But Pierre made a big difference to some of our Aboriginal men whilst here. He went each Monday to the Aboriginal Men's Group and introduced meditation to them to end their meeting. That practice has continued mainly because I told him I would make sure it did not die. We end our "Yurru Ngaratthati Men's Group" with a time to reflect on the two hour meeting and

"I feel really sure that meditation helped me to relax and allow the physical effects of the accident to dissipate"

with a time for meditation. I would never have thought it could become so important to some men who needed the peace and inner healing it offers.

As I flew home after my six months away with various Retreats and experiences in my mind and heart, I remember reading on the plane a copy of 'Time' magazine that had a brain on the front page with an article that described how meditation can change the structure of the brain. My experi-

ence has certainly shown me that it is true.

I was involved in a fatal car accident a few years ago, when I had just swapped from being the driver to the passenger on what is known as Melbourne Cup Day in Australia. When I was taken to the local hospital in the country town for observation, I had some quiet time and I just focused on the window and with the mantra in my heart spent some time in meditation while the staff at the hospital watched the big horse race. The next day I had no soreness, nor hardly any effects of the accident, apart from the trauma I experienced over the time ahead.

I feel really sure that meditation helped me to relax and allow the physical effects of the accident to dissipate and to know that it can heal us in many ways we are never aware of.

My simple time of meditation most days allows me to focus for the day, be healed without being aware of it and to carry a load that I might otherwise not be able to do all by myself. It certainly puts me in touch with the basics of spiritual life and to end with praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for what was, is and will be. What a great way to begin a day and to see God within and without.

A short reflection from: Fr. Mick Lowcock, Good Shepherd Parish, Mount Isa. Diocese of Townsville. Queensland, Australia.



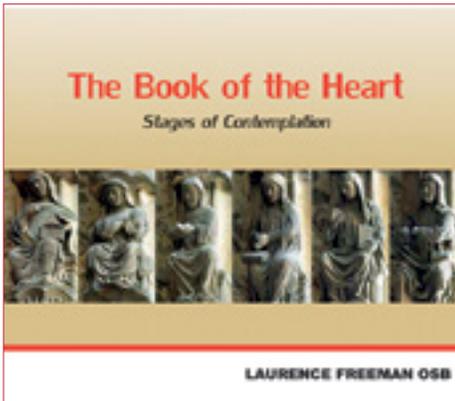
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Releases

The Book of the Heart Stages of Contemplation

Monte Oliveto 2012 Silent Retreat
By Laurence Freeman OSB

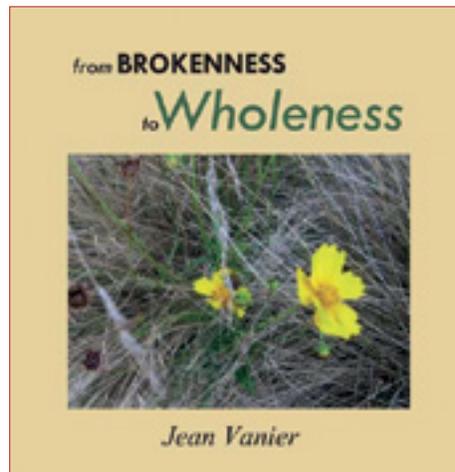


Although we cannot measure the spiritual journey, there are certainly stages that we can identify and that help us to persevere and understand what is happening to us. In these enlightening talks Laurence Freeman uses a series of medieval statues from Chartres Cathedral to illustrate this journey in a strikingly personal and contemporary way. The symbol of the book can be seen as the heart itself, opening in stages to a process of spiritual knowledge that leads to progressive transformation in love. By linking these stages to the practice of meditation Fr Laurence brings this ancient wisdom alive in our daily experience.

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From Brokenness to Wholeness

By Jean Vanier
1992 John Main Seminar

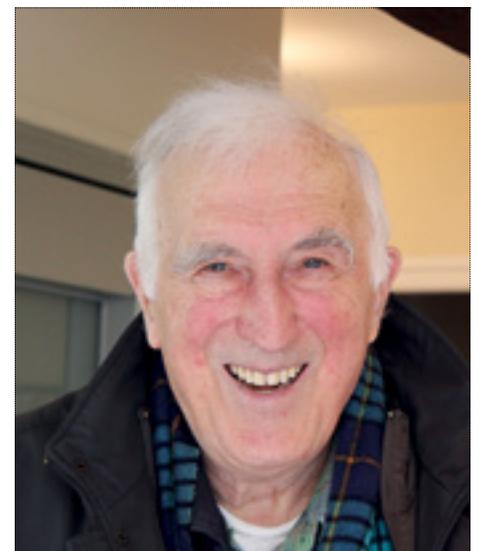


We close ourselves up in productivity and sterile activity to avoid looking at inner pain. And we deny our woundedness because we fear criticism. The deepest quest of the human heart, Vanier says, is for unconditional love such as the woman at the well experienced when Jesus asked her for a drink. We too need to experience such unconditional acceptance. Meditation, Vanier says, opens the space where we can meet the heart of Christ, be who we are in all our woundedness, and allow ourselves to be healed. This encounter then will free us to move from a vision of rivalry and competition to helping

others find their place and exercise their gifts.

Bio

Jean Vanier is a Canadian philosopher, humanitarian and founder of L'Arche, an international federation of group homes for people with developmental disabilities and those who assist them.



This is a digitally enhanced re-issue of the John Main Seminar led by Jean Vanier in London in 1992. Since then the friendship between L'Arche and the World community has deepened. He and Laurence Freeman will lead a retreat together at the international L'Arche centre in Trosly, France, May 22-26 2013.

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