The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Memorial Mass Memories | Westminster Cathedral

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JOHN MAIN: A CELEBRATION OF HIS LIFE AND LEGACY

How does one appraise Beethoven's Ninth Symphony? And Van Gogh's masterpieces? In the same vein, what words can I use to describe the Memorial Mass for our beloved Fr. John held at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, December 29? Magnificent. Beautiful. Majestic. Glorious. Timeless.

Everything was perfect: the weather, the venue, the program, the music, the liturgy, the homily, the offering, the petitions and the attendance (well over 800) that almost filled the church. No detail was overlooked—thanks to the hard-working efforts of the London organizers: Giovanni Felicioni and Roger Layet and their team, with assistance from Pauline Peters and Bjorn and Christian from Germany.

Albert and I were fortunate to be among those present to witness this miracle of love and grace which drew meditators from many countries: Australia, Belgium, China, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Singapore, U.S. and the U.K. After Communion, when we all meditated for 15 minutes, time stood still, for we were indeed a "community of love," one heart and one soul united in the silent love of our Mantra.

As I look back, we were thankful that we said "yes" to Fr. Laurence when he informed us of this event. Without hesitation, we cleared our schedule, purchased our flight from Detroit to London and also reserved our hotel. This was certainly the experience of a lifetime, not to be missed.

Two days later, on New Year's Eve, we revisited the Westminster Cathedral for I longed to recapture that feeling of beauty and peace. Yes, we will treasure this special moment and can echo Keat's words, "a thing of beauty is joy forever."

Lucía Gayón

Mexico

LATIN AMERICA CELEBRATES JOHN MAIN

At 14.30 of 29 December 2007, the Latin American Community got together in prayer to be in spirit at the Westminster Cathedral in London.

We have an internet forum whereby we communicate and have a calendar where we post our meditation schedules. Through this forum we followed the Mass and posted there the readings from the Mass booklet, almost simultaneously. We also used a blog where we posted the comments of the meditators who wanted to be there in spirit.

We used the www.meditacioncristiana.com website to listen to a sample piece of Margaret Rizza´s choir and then we were silent for 30 minutes while we meditated in union with all those who attended the Mass and all those who were also in communion in other parts of the world.

It was, indeed, a day of great Grace for all of us. Many of the Latin American meditators did not meet Father John, but they expressed their love for him in that sacred moment of silence.

We thank God for Father Laurence´s life who has constantly and tiredless worked to keep this Community of Love.

The Eucharist, the sacrament, the living sign of Christ has touched our hearts and we are therefore encouraged to repeat our word every day of our life.

Kim Nataraja
International Centre

JOHN MAIN: SPIRITUAL GUIDE

"On Saturday the 29th of December many of us gathered in Westminster Cathedral for a Commemorative Mass to honour John Main's life and legacy to us all. The magnificent Cathedral was a suitable setting for this very special occasion. The choir singing the music of

Margaret Rizza was hidden from view, yet filling the Cathedral and thus including everyone there in its beauty and praise, adding to the sacredness of the occasion.

The readings and Father Laurence's homily brought out the importance of John Main as a spiritual guide and summarized his essential teaching. The international aspect of our community was shown when National Coordinators, who had traveled from far and wide to be present at this occasion, read the prayers. It was also a visible affirmation of the success of the mission of Father Laurence to take the legacy of his beloved teacher around the world and create a truly global meditating community.

Lilian Siak
Troy, MI

RECONNECTING WITH JOHN MAIN'S TEACHING

I was most fortunate to be informed of the mass at the London Westminster Cathedral on December 29th, 2007. It was even more exciting when I was able to attend the service with my three children.

Many, many years ago, I participated in a meditation group started by Liz King. I always found it very relaxing. On December 29th, participating in a mass in a wonderful and gorgeous cathedral, and meditating for about 15 to 20 minutes with about 800 people, was a totally different experience. I was amazed at how those participating in the service, including children, were able to keep silent and dedicate those minutes to God. One felt such unity with everyone spiritually.

I am really glad that through many years of effort, the practice of meditation is spreading. It not only allows one to lift spiritually, but also improve one’s health. I applaud Liz and her committee for the progress made.

Stefan Reynolds
UK

THE SIGN OF PEACE

I was supposed to do a reading at the beginning of the service and I was late. The underground had conspired against me. As I hurried into the Cathedral, an old familiar place of prayer for me, the music had already begun, the readers were already sitting behind the lectern and an extra person called in at the last moment to fill my vacancy. Did I have the courage to climb the sanctuary in front of everyone and relieve him from doing a reading unprepared? No, in all my rush I felt quite unprepared for the solemnity of the occasion. Already the beautiful music had composed the congregation in a dignified hush. I would only trip on the way up or cause a scuffle of confusion in the handover of papers. No, like a repentant publican I settled in a back seat having missed my chance to be called up higher.

The Eucharist is a banquet but we are not called to take the lowest place we are all called to concelebrate. When we attend the mass we take our place as priestly people. From my place in the back row I was able to spot a lot of friends especially among my fellow last minute arrivals. Only the opening readings from John Cassian (which I should have been doing) and John Main stopped me from little turns and waves to say hello. But I was alert to the lines that I had been preparing to read; “if you want to keep your mind centred take a fixed formula and cling to it come what may”. It was this teaching of the mantra that John Main discovered in Cassian that had brought us together. So the best way to be together was to be mindful of the mantra.

The service was beautifully simple and yet splendid with the choir of Margaret Rizza filling the dome, Laurence at his best and the congregation palpably prayerful. For me the high point of the service, however, was the sign of peace. The joy of turning to each other and wishing each other the peace we were practicing daily in our meditation was like a sparkle of grace. As a community we don’t fit too comfortably in Churches, with their divisions, formalisms and hierarchies but here in the sign of peace I felt we came home to the place, inhabited the vaulted Cathedral as a temporary home, another tent for us to be together under in our journey to the promised land.

Religious services tend to objectify the truth – with creeds, set prayers, ritual, sacrament but I was reminded of Jesus’s saying that “the kingdom of Heaven does not admit of observation – you cannot say ‘look here it is’ or ‘look there it is’ for behold the kingdom of heaven is within you, the kingdom of heaven is among you”. I felt that as meditators we were living both the interiority and the community of that truth and the living of that gives meaning to the symbols and traditions through which we attempt to express it. As I say, at the sign of peace we came into our own, that is our sign as a community, and the Eucharist that we shared in was a sharing in that peace that is within us and among us due to meditation – the peace Christ gives, his peace.

So to meditate after the Eucharist as a group was the best way to celebrate John Main who showed us that, as the Upanishad’s say, “the Spirit is in the human heart and in silence is loving to all”. This was the source of John Main’s great love and as we had our tea and cakes in the Cathedral hall after the service we looked at some slides of his life and the community that has grown all around the world. Here in the human family of fallible people it didn’t matter if one was late or even that we were there at the service at all. We are bound together by something much more than time and place. I had the feeling that everyone who meditates, at all the different time zones all around the world, were there with us. And Fr John from his humorous place in the communion of saints (no doubt playing practical jokes on the pious)

was there. And in that peace that passes all understanding we shared our own little journey into peace.

Thank you, John Main. Peace be with you, and thank you for sharing it with us.

George Indulen
Riga, Latvia

It is hard to express in words all the feelings that came to me while participating in Fr. John Main's Anniversary Mass in the Westminster's Cathedral in the very heart of London. In this same cathedral where Fr. John started his way. And now it gathered over 1000 people from all over the world. What a celebration! The very order of the Mass with prepared readings from John Cassian and John Main strengthened the special feeling of the event. And the orchestra by Margaret Rizza was amazing! I was there as a pilgrim from a small northern country, Latvia, where a year ago the seed of Christian Meditation began to grow. It was very important for me to feel the support of experienced brothers and sisters who have developed Christian Meditation in their countries for decades. And to experience this special unity which flows from the silence of meditation, meditation that creates Community.

John Main

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