



## Brothers in arms

The World Community and L'Arche came together for a silent retreat with Jean Vanier and Laurence Freeman in France. Read more on pages 2-5 and 9



Photo: Kayte Brimacombe

This issue

**6/7** Special Report

Witness of meditators recovering from addiction. Voices from the Bere Island Holy Week Retreat

**8** News

"Meditation is the biggest gift I could give to somebody" - Ray Dalio at the Leading from the Center Meditatio Forum at Georgetown Business School

**9/10** News

Laurence visits Russia for the first time. Meditation in the Arctic Circle of Canada

*Jeannette Friends*

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

"When I drove to meet Jean Vanier at Heathrow on the day he was to begin leading the John Main Seminar in 1990, I was secretly pleased to be getting away from the place where all the setting-up was taking place. We had become rather stressed by all the organizational details and the cracks were showing. (Today we've learned better how to hide the strain and we also have a bit more experience at organizing events.)

However I created my own stress on this occasion by getting lost as I drove Jean across London to the Seminar. There are few things to make you feel more silly and embarrassed than being responsible for transportation and doing the transporting the wrong way. Nor can it be very reassuring for the guest speaker you are supposed to be transporting. But Jean either felt or showed no irritation; perhaps because he lives with people with mental disabilities he has learned to recognise and accept them in anyone he meets. Eventually, with the help of the map-reading abilities that he must have learned during his years in the navy, we arrived in harbour. He had already taught me an important lesson before what was to be a wonderful seminar began.

In May this year, when we led a retreat together at Trosly, the motherhouse of L'Arche, I remembered this incident that I think he had politely forgotten. Over the intervening years his sense of direction, the power of his intuitive compassion and his insight into how we can accept the mistakes and weaknesses, equally of others and of ourselves, have grown stronger and evolved into a rich and deep theology of life.

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L'Arche is a worldwide community of communities composed of the disabled who live with those who feel called, as to a vocation, for longer or shorter times, to this very demanding life. It might seem a long way on the spectrum of spiritual life and community from The World Community for Christian Meditation and its focus on the practice and teaching of the

contemplative path. As different, but as complementary, as Martha and Mary. As *the Cloud of Unknowing* says, and as St Benedict well knew, there is no life that is completely contemplative or totally active. You always find a trace of ying in yang and some yang in every dose of yin. The life of Jesus, that exemplifies the human quest lived most humanly, reflects this interweaving of stillness and action, silence and expression.

The retreat itself was composed equally of members of L'Arche and of the World Community, many with overlapping identities and many common experiences. As the days of the retreat – 'Entering into Silent Prayer' – proceeded it struck me pow-

*As the Cloud of Unknowing says, and as St Benedict well knew, there is no life that is completely contemplative or totally active*

erfully how deeply Jean and I were saying the same thing; and how strangely, yet at the same time so obviously, the 'core experience' we were coming from leads to a transformation into the same, all-inclusive, infinitely tender, non-dual mind of Christ.

In my first talk I recalled John Main's belief that the most important thing for modern people to remember and recover is the meaning of silence. This means, in effect, to understand anew for our time what prayer always means. In our secularized society there is not a wholesale rejection of prayer. Statistically, more people pray than say they believe in God. But there is great confusion about what prayer is - and what it isn't. For many, prayer is either telling God what we are feeling especially when we are in trouble or asking him to do something about the causes of our feeling unhappy. The feeling that prayer is primarily about changing

external situations runs deep in us - even in the scientific research conducted on the effects of praying for people who are sick.

This is very understandable. Nature – either in the diseases that attack us and prematurely end our life in the tornadoes that rip through a town and destroy a primary school in seconds - is frighteningly unpredictable and mighty and terrifyingly impersonal. I recalled the night I was walking through the thick darkness of a Caribbean island without electricity towards the beach. What started as a pleasant stroll became increasingly terrible as I passed through a narrow canyon with the sound of the pounding surf ahead giving me my only sense of direction. I had never before felt, in my cells, how powerful the forces of nature are and also how insignificant the individual human being, and the human species, is in their presence. How casually and unconsciously the precious personal, with its unique and fragile story can be casually swept away by the anonymity of an iron fate. It gave me a small insight into how a Jew being rounded up in the holocaust must have felt. Or an insect we step on without even being aware of what we are doing.

So, it isn't surprising that, when we are confronted with this impersonal, anonymous power of nature, we imaginatively, desperately, associate it with God and invoke this imagined God to save us from it. Like the psalmist we may mystically hear and see God in the wild whirlwind and the devastating earthquake or the cold clinical diagnosis of cancer. But then we personalize these forces of natural energy - or biology - as expressions of God's anger or our own deserved punishment for sin. We anthropomorphise God, attribute our moods to him and project our fears onto him. Even in our culture of technoscience, which gives us explanations for many of these phenomena, we revert, in times of crisis, to this easy, emotive idea of God.

Whenever we are thrown up against the limits of our power to control events it

is natural enough to reach up for a higher power to protect us. Jesus felt the same as he struggled with his destiny on the night before he died. He prayed to his Father to save him from this hour but in the next breath relinquished the control-reflex of survival at any cost and handed over his will into the will of God. We see in this the universality of human weakness when confronted by our natural limits – who does not tremble before the tsunami of death? But we also see how human weakness, when it is accepted without denial or escapism, is transformed into something rich and mysterious, a union of love greater than fate or karma.

In meeting and accepting our limits – those living with the handicapped and those meditating in the work of silence soon meet these limits in themselves – we find ourselves in the field of God. As long as we refrain from denying reality or constructing fantasy escape routes; if we go the extra step into the heart of the darkness that our limits and the natural world are defined by; then the false gods crumble to dust and we find ourselves 'in God'. This means, in a boundlessly free space where every trace of fear has also dissolved; and all that is left is the infinite tenderness of an all-powerful reality that we know for certain can never use force.

The 'question' of God will always be with us. Even on the sides of buses in London where a recent slanging-match, slogan campaign of atheists and believers was recently conducted the question will not go away. Merely as this kind of argument, it goes nowhere. Cardinal Newman, one of the greatest of modern theologians, understood this as he stood aside from the scientific-religious debates of his time about the existence of God. Today, the question of God is no less present and intense. However, God can be the most deadening, dry and boring of questions. Or, the most quickening and illuminating of all our human questions about reality and meaning.

If the question stays merely at the mental level – tortured by words and

thoughts – it loses us and our interest. It brings us no sense that we are really drawing any closer to the answer, to the truth at the level of experience. We can never know God by thought alone. But, when it moves to the heart, into silence, the 'question that has no answer' becomes the very essence of prayer. We only know God by love. The heart's intelligence is love. Then God moves from being a question. It becomes an encounter with unsuspected levels of revealed reality, released into all the significant events and encounters of our lives. We find the answer there – as



*Atheist campaign in London*

John Main says 'in our own experience'. We know God in our own self-knowledge, fulfilling and transcending everything we know of ourselves. As Richard Rohr says, God comes disguised as ourselves. Or, as Simone Weil knew about Christ, 'he comes to us hidden and salvation consists in our recognising him'.

For this to happen – for God to become 'activated', as we activate a credit card or start a new phase of our life by finding what our work in life is – it is necessary that we crash into our limitations and that we accept them. 'The power of God is manifest in human weakness'. This hard paradox is the portal through which we move into faith. Here we encounter the living God, discovering that we no longer need magic and that false gods are only a cheap imitation. The Rolex that costs \$5

on a market stall cannot be the real thing (even less real, as a substitute for ultimate meaning, than the \$10,000 genuine brand).

Our limitations and weakness before the force of nature repeatedly test the authenticity of our spiritual life. In the gospel story of the storm on the lake, Jesus is sleeping in the stern of the boat as the waves threaten to sink it, and the disciples panic. They wake him asking him if he cares about them. He stands and tells the wind and waves to be still. But then he asks the disciples why they are afraid

and where their faith has gone. Not hearing the question, they simply marvel at his power over the storm. He points to faith, they look for magic.

Prayer is moving from being dominated by our fears of nature to experiencing (in faith) the infinite power of God whose nature it is never to use force. These fears can still beset us in our inner tempests and tornadoes and the eruption of shadow sides. But we diminish these inner forces as soon as we start to live in community, which means as soon as we enter into solitude. Living with others, sitting in silence – they are two sides of the same coin of the experience of God, the same unavoidable journey into the transformative silence of prayer.

For Jean Vanier, this is the point where we learn the art of wakeful waiting. He

commented deeply on the word that is so significant in St John's gospel – *menein* – which can be translated as dwelling, living, resting, staying, abiding, making your home. This is to pray deeply and truly to pray is to have already decided to live in a new way.

As the meditator discovers by persevering faithfully in the practice of silence each day; as the L'Arche assistant discovers by choosing to spend part of their life living with the disabled – the inner and the outer levels of life cry out to be synchronized. As soon as we begin to live in an authentic way a signal is sent to all our relationships and values, exposing whatever in us is inauthentic, shallow or false, demanding that it be harmonized with whatever is the highest level of reality we are in touch with.

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'Prayer is not a flight from pain' Jean taught. It is the way, he said, that 'we let Jesus into the place where I feel not a success, into my core wound.' It is in this place of the wound – where our limitations are most rawly exposed – that love meets us. Jean told us movingly how he has learned this by living with the handicapped and with those who live and care for them.

So, as we run into our limitations and fears, we also learn to wait. But we wait on a downward slope, getting weaker as we approach the great meeting with the infinitely tender power of God. As the desert monks knew, silence is the essence of prayer – its radical purity and its transformative simplicity. When we discover the silence and stillness that dwells in the hub of the many-spoked wheel of prayer, we uncover the secret, the mystery, of authenticity. Until this happens we remain - periodically or chronically - beset by doubts and the shame that arises from our failures in relating to the real. Soon we realise that this new silence is not a privation – not merely being deprived of words or thought. We are not less silent when we stand in the roar of a windswept cliff or in the middle of a forest with birdsong and the sound of the wind in the branches. Silence is simply being oneself, no more, no less. What a relief and how absurdly, graciously simple and obvious. It is then that

we awaken to the mind that is this silence. It is what Buddhism calls the luminosity of mind and what the Christian in the intimacy of faith knows as the light of the mind of Christ. Silence draws into (or out of) us a mind that is so much greater, more inclusive and more compassionate than our own small ego-centric consciousness. By this silence we may on different days be soberly intoxicated or wretchedly terrified of losing our own identity.

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In this silence of the mind of Christ we are content to be our selves because there is no need to perform or pretend to be anyone else. This contentment is the peace we have ever been thirsting after. For the religious imagination, this freedom from acting a part is a nonviolent revolution that unfolds as long-held images of God and of self fall away like old masks. But the struggle goes on. If silence is so natural and simple – we see

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this in every class-room of children who so readily grasp the opportunity to meditate – and if it is so refreshing and renewing, why in the flow of life do we run away from it and resist it? Why find weak excuses for avoiding the time it demands of us?

The desert monks mined and labeled this bedrock of resistance. They saw it was composed of different layers that they called the obstructions or the principal faults. Only later were these called the 'seven deadly sins'; not a good choice of words because sin came to mean 'what is my own grievous fault' that merits punishment and penance. The legal rather than the medical model of grace thus came to dominate the Christian mind and Jesus became seen as just the opposite of what he said he was – as a judge and enforcer.

But he called himself a shepherd and a physician. Shepherds pay attention and care. Physicians deal with problems and heal. They don't play the guilt card. A shepherd doesn't punish the lost sheep. The physician doesn't inflict more pain on the suffering.

The 'faults' or obstructions we face as we enter the silence of prayer are universal, as human, in fact, as all the virtues on our credit side: greed, lust, over-indulgence, depression, laziness, anger, vanity and pride. These fault-lines are the 'logismoi' or 'thoughts' of the Christian desert teaching. ('Prayer is the laying aside of thoughts'). The warrior monks identified the stages by which these states of mind take us over. Assault – when we first feel them forming. Interaction – when we start entertaining them. Consent – when we give in to them. Defeat – when they hold us hostage. And, Obsession – when they become addictive and cyclical.

The distractions we have to deal with in every meditation are often the visible waves of these deep currents and tidal patterns of our personal consciousness. They are the personalized forms of universal forces. They are waves of these movements of the soul that hit the shore of mental consciousness, gently or in a storm. By laying them aside we patiently change the patterns of the ocean. Silence is the work of laying the thoughts aside and returning to the pure, non-objectifying work of attention that makes meditation itself a work of love.

In this work we learn, by direct encounter with the master, that divine love is the ground of reality. And, that this love is non-judgmental. Judgment happens, as a reaction in ourselves, as the result of the total acceptance and unconditional love that we discover as the heart of reality. Judgment means seeing the difference between the real self that I am shown to be in this experience of love and the other self that I falsely identified with and which led me to act inauthentically. To the objection that this personifies the transpersonal we can only say that, for as long as we remain human, there is no better way than love for expressing it. It is also the essence and only reason for religion. As Ber-

nard Lonergan said, 'religious experience at root is the experience of unconditional and unrestricted being in love.'

This brings us back to the power of accepting ourselves as we are with all our failures and limitations. Does this mean that we accept no liability for our wrong-

Our core wound is both the source of pain and of the healing that we crave. All other cravings are substitutes - as our multiple forms of addiction and denial graphically illustrate. Addictive craving is more than hunger or thirst - whether for food, alcohol, sex, sugar, drugs or wealth.



Laurence Freeman and Jean Vanier

doings or make no effort to improve? The test of whether we are handling this judgment well is how well we treat others. As long as we cling to the ego's fantasy of perfection and self-sufficiency, we will be denying a vital part of ourselves. We will be divided and reject ourselves. This reflects immediately in how we handle the faults - as we judge them - of others. To reject ourselves produces a hatred and fear that becomes projected outwards. Failing to love ourselves mutates into prejudice and violence towards those weaker than ourselves.

It is the appetite for things that cannot nourish us.

To enter the silence at the core of our being - our true and unsullied self - is to expose the false craving and to begin the process of deconstructing the mental and emotional habits that keep us enslaved to them. But we must be prepared for a struggle. If we avoid the struggle we are merely running away. But if we accept the struggle (the 'discipline' of the way) we are thereby accepting the transformation that is the work of love.

So, Jean's thoughts and mine came

together in recognising the nature of the love that changes us. To enter the silence is the way because we are always entering it and beginning again. To arrive is to set out once more on the next step. At first this seems as if we are making no progress. Later, we see that this is what growth in the spirit really and gloriously means. We keep going in the face of felt failure, because there is no limit to the love that wants to lavish itself on us.

We need a laboratory for this great human experiment in which each person makes the same unique discovery of what being human means. It is simultaneously the discovery of God. 'The mystery of salvation is present in a hidden way,' according to *Lumen Gentium*. The Holy Spirit works within and outside the 'visible outlines of church'. Yet, written into the human quest is our need for others and others' need for us. Community is therefore the great laboratory of the spiritual journey that life is.

We may discover this by first joining an actual community, like L'Arche and then, before long, discovering both the obstructions within ourselves and the need for the inner work of silence. Or, we may discover it by responding to our thirst for silence and the work of meditation, learning then to see how, always surprisingly, it creates community and situates us in loving networks with others.

Either way, any way, will be a narrow path. Not because anyone wants to make it harder for us - not narrowness in that sense. But, because the way helps to focus us. Love, in this sense, is narrow - it focuses us personally on another or on other persons. But the narrowing expands our minds and hearts beyond their own boundaries. To wholly and truly love one person is to love the cosmos. This is the explosion that takes place as we enter the silence of prayer.

With much love,

Laurence Freeman, OSB

## Meditation and recovery from addiction

We invited people in recovery from alcohol and other drugs to speak about meditation. How does the practice help them to be free again?

### “The Daily Practice and the group are essential to my continued sobriety”

By Anne



*Step 11: “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”*

Recovery from alcoholism requires a continual shedding of my ego. Meditation is a very concrete and specific way of doing that. For 20 minutes a day, twice a day, I try to let go of my

agenda, my plans, my feelings, the day’s pressures, successes and failures, to simply be in the presence of God. Some periods of meditation I am able to let go, others I’m not. Usually it’s a little bit of both. These meditation periods are microcosms of my daily life. Some days I make progress in shedding my ego; other days I don’t. Most days it is mixed.

My morning meditation period helps me gather strength for the day. The evening meditation provides a time to surrender the day into God’s hands. In between, I try to live as I think God would want.

On Thursdays at noon, I attend an 11th Step meditation group. We begin with a reading from John Main or from Laurence Freeman. Then, we meditate together for 20 minutes. We close the meditation period with a reading from

AA literature. We then share our experience, strength, and hope with each other.

The twice a day meditation periods, and the once a week meditation group with others in recovery are essential to my continued sobriety. They keep me grounded in what is true, what is important, and what is enduring.

It took me a long time to become faithful to the twice-a-day meditation periods. The process of becoming willing to become faithful, and then becoming faithful, were important steps on the path of letting go of my ego... leaving self behind. In the process, I discovered God’s love for me and for all of us. His desire is that we be whole and holy.

ONLINE: Read a text by Mike M. and check our page on Meditation as an 11th Step in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

### “I used to feel as if there were 1000 conversations in my head”

By Steve

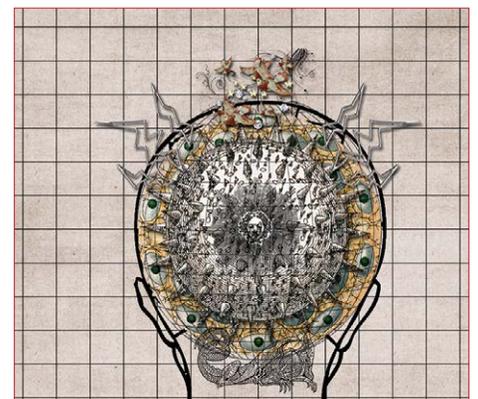
My name is Steve and I am a recovering drug addict. After trying all available methods to stop using drugs on a daily basis I found the twelve step recovery programme. I try to follow this spiritual programme in all aspects of my life and my life has quite literally taken on new meaning.

Prayer and meditation are (I believe) an essential part of my daily reprieve from a life filled with dishonesty, self seeking and despair and pain. As an addict I used to feel as if there were 1000 conversations and

thoughts going on in my head at all times .

Meditation enables me to take a step back away from the madness , to clear my head and to start with a clean slate. After being shown the discipline I now use meditation at least once a day to centre myself and my thoughts, a friend of mine calls it the matrix moment when everything around you slows down to a speed that I can handle without having to panic. In other words, I use it as part of a programme which means I have a

life to live instead of just an existence.



*The mind, By sbpoet/CC*

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Once you do learn that discipline you will begin to live your life in harmony: harmony within yourself, because everything in your life will come into harmony with God, and harmony with all creation, because you will have found your place, your place in creation. (John Main)

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## Voices from Bere Island Easter Retreat 2013

By Hayley, from South Africa

### “It is worthwhile persevering on this journey”



We board the Bere Island ferry in driving wind and rain, arriving in darkness. The long journey and this final coming away from the mainland have helped the concerns of the last days to recede. It was a push to complete things, to carve out this time for ‘deep rest’. I have resolved to go offline for a full week.

When I wake on the first morning,

I have a child’s sense of expectation and the view from the house back over the water does not disappoint. It is bitterly cold and the light plays moodily on the sides of the mountains. That afternoon I wrap in layers of clothing and walk up and up on the track behind the house, past the lambs in the paddock, past the farm, up to where the houses end and winter-brown bracken spreads out to wilder slopes. I am expecting a view over the middle of the island. Instead, as I reach the crest of the ridge, there is a breathtaking sight of cliffs falling down to the vast grey swell of ocean. It is a small island then. Caught up in a howling cocoon of wind, I get a sense of my insignificance, of the transience of my concerns. Eerie, yet thrilling, to feel a pulse of time to another metronome. In the distance, rays of sun break through the low cloud and illuminate a circle of sea.

Over the next days we are invited to enter into the account of the passion,

to read it alongside our own story. It is a rich encounter, but challenging also. What does Jesus’ example teach about responding to suffering and betrayal, about acceptance? I am struck by Christ’s ongoing presence to others in the moments of compassion, an understanding extended even to his persecutors. The denial of self is a central theme of the talks. What does a crucifixion of ego mean as I think back to my everyday of working life? Do I recognize Jesus when he reveals himself? What does resurrection mean?

On Bere Island there are as yet few signs of spring. As we huddle behind the standing stone early on Easter morning, the wind is still bitter and rain and even hail obscure the sunrise. I come away knowing that it is worthwhile persevering on this journey, and with a renewed appreciation of the sustenance of fellowship along the way. I want to hope in resurrection on a daily basis: “A transformation into Love.”

### “Meditation is like preparing for a moment, like on the seaside”

By Lukas Tomborek, from Poland

Some days ago I met with a very interesting, amusing and introverted question. It had come surprisingly and suddenly. Currently I suppose that the searching part of my heart asked this question: Why do people speak? What is the reason of this skill, this evolution’s language, this particular phenomenon? Silence.

I didn’t know. Nobody ever asked me this question and now it is presented to me by my own heart! Wow, now I know how difficult it is to express something that is beyond words. I think people speak, because they speak. It could be a wonderful tool for expressing something non-

linear, unnamed.

My time in Bere Island was exactly this; a silence where something that is creating my deepest self has the possibility to be born. I remember the ocean, the extent of infinite water, a little bit of wind and the sound of shaggy ground. Walking along the shore. I have always dreamt to see an ocean for its eternity, stillness and oneness. For a lot of years this image was for me a mirror to contemplate the experience of myself. This point of deepest me, is my cave, temple, grotto, castle whatever we can call it. One moment of this experience was worth more than any number of

books which I have read.

Of course meditation, spiritual practice is a seed of heaven, and time spent in meditation is very valuable. But even more, meditation seems to be preparing me for a moment like that on the seashore. Where does divinity live? I had been giving love and I was filled up with love. I gave cheerfulness to trees and I have discovered much cheerfulness. I decided to notice in a sky, The Sky, and This Sky was experienced in my soul. The time on Bere Island gave me the certainty that I am an artist of this breathless image, which is called life. What would I like to give the world?

## News

## Meditatio

## Ray Dalio: "Meditation is the biggest gift I could give to somebody"

The Meditatio Forum "Leading From the Center" at The McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University



Over the last year, WCCM has been collaborating with the Georgetown McDonough School of Business and has begun to introduce meditation

to their MBA students. On 9th April, this collaboration resulted in an event led by Dean Thomas, alongside Laurence Freeman, Ray Dalio (founder

of Bridgewater Associates) and Sean Hagan (General Counsel of IMF). The event, entitled Leading From the Center focused on how the practice of meditation can not only enhance the professional effectiveness of leaders but also help them to examine their own values.

These were the opening words of Ray Dalio: "Meditation is the biggest gift I could give to somebody. Do it, find out what it is like and then you will know. I will tell you my story and why I think meditation is the greatest reason for whatever success I have had."

The next step will be the introduction of an accredited course, dedicated to this subject, to be held in the McDonough School in 2014. It will be taught by Laurence Freeman and will include well-known leaders as guest speakers.

## Meditatio Seminars

### Environment

A one day seminar is being planned on this topic to be held in October in London.

If you have an interest in environmental issues and action and would like to be part of a group to help develop our work in this area (and you don't have to live in London for this!) please contact [briji.waterfield@gmail.com](mailto:briji.waterfield@gmail.com)

### Meditation with Children

Cathy Day and Ernie Christie who have been pioneers of meditation in schools will be leading Meditatio Forums in the US and Canada from 18th September to 2nd October (Sept. 20th: St. Paul,

MN; Sept 23: Houston, TX; Sept. 24,25: San Francisco, CA; Sept 27:Phoenix, AZ); Sept. 30: Jacksonville, FL; Oct 4,5: Toronto, Canada). For more information and to send your enquiry to [wccm-usa.org](http://wccm-usa.org)

### Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Laurence Freeman and James Alison will explore this topic in a Meditatio Seminar in Mexico City, 11-13 October. For more details email Enrique Lavin: [wccm.mexico@gmail.com](mailto:wccm.mexico@gmail.com)

### New resources in Meditatio Store

The talks of the Meditatio Forum "Leading from the Center" and the first

two sessions of the Roots of Christian Mysticism are available in video at [www.meditatiostore.com](http://www.meditatiostore.com)

### Activities at

### Meditatio Centre

The new course of Roots of Christian Mysticism was opened on 25th April, at the Meditatio Centre in London. Booking is now closed for the summer term but you can still attend individual classes, and you can book for the autumn term which starts on 12 September. There are many other activities at the Centre, like workshops, Yoga sessions, A Moment of Calm and Meditation. You can check the full programme at [www.wccmmeditatio.org](http://www.wccmmeditatio.org)

## News

## Laurence visits Russia for the first time

By Albert Zakharov and Maria Zakharova



On 8-10 May 2013 Laurence Freeman OSB visited Moscow to give several seminars and participate in a conference. This event was organized by a group of Russian-speaking oblates: Maria Zakharova and Albert Zakharov (Ukraine, Lviv), and Josephine von Zitzewitz (London). The seminars, held

at different venues, were aimed at people of various ages and denominations, and also spiritual seekers belonging to no particular religion. The Moscow event is a good illustration of the cosmopolitan character of our community, because it was organized in Moscow by people from Ukraine and England and attracted the attention of many different groups of people in Russia - people who are interested in the meditative dimension of Christian spirituality, and in interreligious dialogue.

In view of the conservative and nationalistic moods that can be found in Russian society today, this event was an important step towards the new and higher level of spiritual consciousness

that is created by meditative practice. The lectures of Fr. Laurence triggered great interest, and new reports about them still keep appearing on Russian-language social networking sites.

The event's main result are the first attempts at creating Russian-language meditation groups. There are now three young groups meeting in Moscow, St Petersburg and Blagoveshchensk. We hope that in the near future these beginnings in the Russian community will turn into a dynamic and lively movement that can stimulate spiritual renewal in the country.

See all photos and videos on the Russian WCCM website: [www.wccm.ru/meditatio\\_ru\\_2013](http://www.wccm.ru/meditatio_ru_2013)

## Fr. Denis Mahony dies at 73

Fr. Denis Mahony, a Marist priest from New Zealand, and WCCM Coordinator in Fiji, died peacefully, April 26, at 73 years of age. As founding member of the Marist Contemplative Prayer Community at the Nazareth Prayer Centre, situated on the outskirts of the capital, Suva, he battled cancer for the past ten years, but continued to carry on a deep commitment to sharing the teaching of Christian Meditation in Fiji.

In the eulogy delivered at the Funeral Mass, Sr. Denise McMahon, a community member and a co-worker with Fr. Denis, pointed out that: "He was a much sought after spiritual director, counselor, retreat master, mentor, and a friend to so many people. He was a teacher of great magnitude, and brought these gifts to the teaching of Christian Meditation, which he considered his most important life's work." Read the full obituary of Fr. Denis at our website ([www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)).

## Jean Vanier and Laurence Freeman led a retreat in France



The retreat *Entering into Silent Prayer* brought together WCCM and the L'Arche Community in Trosly, France, between 22nd and 26th May. Fr. Laurence Freeman and Jean Vanier led the retreat, that was webcast live.

You can watch all videos of the talks at our website (You can watch all videos of the talks at our website ([www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org))).

## Christian Meditation grows among the homeless in US



The homeless meditation group founded by Rev. Christina Rathbone in Boston is bearing new fruits. The group leaders in this photo are: Paul Estes, Patricia Clark, and Judy Kane. The photo was on the steps of All Saints Episcopal Church in Worcester, MA, where a group from a street church have begun to meditate. This is the fourth homeless Christian meditation group in the state now: two in Boston, one in Waltham and this one now in Worcester.

## News

# Meditation in the Arctic Circle of Canada

By Paul Harris



A new Christian meditation group has just been formed, two degrees north of the Arctic Circle in Canada, in one of the coldest areas of the world and in what is termed: "The land of the midnight sun" (the summer sun never sets). Based in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories of Canada, the new group meets in what is called the "Catholic Igloo Church" in this community of 3,600 souls. This new meditation group includes the parish priest (from the hot weather country of Nigeria), a

deacon, a college president, nurses, social workers, students and other professionals.

Inuvik is the homeland of the Inuit and Dene aboriginal peoples, as well as the residence of other people and cultures transplanted from the south. In addition some families are ancestors of European whalers and prospectors from the days of the gold rush in northern areas of the country.

The members of the group feel that beyond the bustle of a small town, where the temperature sometimes reaches 40 degrees below zero, one can feel the vast silence of this snow covered land. They point out that the Arctic thrusts one into the world of stillness, and the frozen environment is an assist to the contemplative dimension of spirituality in this area of the world.

Contemplative leadership was begun in the Arctic 30 years ago by the late Oblate missionary from France, Fr.

Henri Tardy who began to meditate following the teaching of John Main in the 1980's at a mission north of the Arctic Circle. Fr Henri once wrote this beautiful passage in the book: "The Heart of Silence: Christian Meditation by Those Who Practice It" about the Arctic and the contemplative life.

Wrote Tardy: "I spent years looking at the frozen ocean as far as the eye could see, listening to the silence of the snow-covered land and the wind, which so often forces you to stay home. I also observed the Inuit hunter, who remains motionless for hours, waiting for a seal to harpoon. I observed the silent Inuit traveler riding on his dog sled or building an igloo to shelter from the storm. The whole lifestyle plunged me into the world of silence".

"That's it" according to Inuvik meditators: "The Arctic is made for contemplatives and the practice of Christian Meditation".

## Understanding the Guiding Board

By Roger Layet, Chair of the WCCM Guiding Board

The WCCM constitution lays down that we have a Guiding Board (GB) to "articulate a vision to sustain and share the development of Christian meditation around the world and to oversee the Community's life and growth".

The GB meets annually for two or three days, and sometimes also during the John Main Seminar. At the main meeting it reviews reports from the Director, The School, and the national communities. Recently we have discussed the future directions of the community, drafting "The Way Forward" which was sent to national communities for comment. (This

document, which includes ideas for central and local actions, will be discussed later this year at meetings of national coordinators). We have discussed priorities for the Meditatio programme of outreach to the secular world. We have endorsed the need for a stronger central staff - to relieve Fr. Laurence of administrative tasks and to facilitate outreach to the secular world. We have nearly completed an overhaul of our decision-making process, clarifying the roles of the GB itself, the Trustees, and the Executive Committee of the GB. The Trustees have the ultimate author-

ity, because the WCCM is a charity registered in law. The Executive Committee meets bi-monthly by WebEx, overseeing the central staff and helping the Director address operational issues.

The GB comprises 17 people, 3 each from the USA and the UK, and one each from Australia, Belgium, Brasil, Canada, China, Malaysia, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, and Venezuela – plus Fr. Laurence, surely a citizen of the world! Seven of the 17 are national coordinators in their countries. Profiles of members are on the international website ([www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org))

## In Focus

By Jan, National Coordinator for Holland



For over fifty years, I have lived in a small Roman Catholic village with a rich Christian culture in the south of Holland. However, during the years of my youth I was not very aware of that Christian culture. And during my teenage years this Christian landscape remained quite hidden to me as well. The most important thing at that time was the forming and the protection of my ego. I was into Wado Kai karate for a couple of years. This is a form of martial art where, at that time, the fighting was done without any means of personal protection. I was also being inspired by the Japanese monks practising Zen. As far as those monks were concerned, I did not get any further than reading the books by Janwil-

lem van de Wetering. Until the small hours of the night I was reading his books "The empty mirror", "The dawning nothing" and "The pure emptiness".

Slowly but surely, my interest in and need to practice karate diminished and I started to intensively acquire knowledge. My approach was very direct: to simply study as much as I could. I tried to get to the core of scientific knowledge. However, the more and more knowledge I acquired the colder that knowledge started to feel. In spite of that, my world was still makeable and kneadable. In order to empty my head and arrive at inner stillness, I found a quiet spot for about half an hour every day. I concentrated on my breathing and often fell asleep.

Around my fiftieth birthday my life changed a lot: in other words, I had little control of anything anymore. Somehow the pressure had become so much that the layer of protection which I had built up in previous years collapsed, and a deeper level came to the surface like a gift of grace. During that pivoting moment I had the experience that the way I followed until then had reached its end, and that I had already entered a different path without realising it. Suddenly I saw the rich spiritual Christian landscape in and around the village I lived in, the

Christian symbols were full of light for the first time, the prayer words became audible and daily life became more of a reality.

Three years ago I came into contact with Christian Meditation during a meeting with Father Laurence in The Netherlands. From that moment on, the hidden landscape of meditation in the Christian tradition became visible to me, and my search was extended. Not to the distant but to the nearby. Through meditation prayers become deeper and more meaningful. In turn, meditation is being nurtured by prayer. You could state that the interplay of meditation and prayer is guiding me to grow from being ego-oriented to God-oriented.

In April 2013 I became the National Coordinator for Holland. One could interpret the role of National Coordinator as the role of a tour guide. A tour guide who gives direction and takes care of the mutual connections. He hears the sounds in the silence and makes sure that we jointly use our various talents. A tour guide who experiences the vulnerability of others and of himself. A tour guide who, from the Source, is allowed to strengthen the wind in the sails of the other.

*May we always have the Wind in our sails.*



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E-mail: [welcome@wccm.org](mailto:welcome@wccm.org)  
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Editor: Leonardo Corrêa ([leonardo@wccm.org](mailto:leonardo@wccm.org))  
Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano  
International Coordinator: Pauline Peters ([paulinepeters2@gmail.com](mailto:paulinepeters2@gmail.com))  
Coordinator, International Office: Jeroen Koppert ([jeroen@wccm.org](mailto:jeroen@wccm.org))  
The World Community Web page: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)  
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Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is September 15th

## New Resources

### Books

#### A Pearl of Great Price, Laurence Freeman

In this new edition, Laurence Freeman encourages meditators who appreciate the treasure they have discovered in meditation to share it with others by starting a meditation group. "All it takes to start a group," he says, "is the faith to begin and the support of those who have gone before". Contributors include many teachers of the community, including John Main OSB (excerpts from his writings), Laurence Freeman OSB, Kim Nataraja, Paul Harris, Peter Ng and Carla Cooper.

#### Sharing the Gift - Resources Book for Passing on Christian Meditation

This book contains a wealth of articles to support you in sharing the gift of Christian Meditation with others at all levels. The range of contributions allows you a great choice and covers all the aspects of the Essential Teaching of the tradition as taught by The World Community for Christian Meditation. These resources could be used for deepening your own knowledge, nurturing a group you are leading, or as inspiration for giving a talk or organizing a meditation event. Contribu-

tors include John Main OSB (excerpts from his writings), Laurence Freeman OSB, Kim Nataraja, Paul Harris and

other teachers of the community.

To order, go to our Meditatio Store ([www.meditatiostore.com/](http://www.meditatiostore.com/))

### Audio

New Thinking for a New Era - Richard Rohr and Laurence Freeman Febr. 15-17th, 2013, Chicago, US

Sharing a long friendship, Richard Rohr and Laurence Freeman are each deeply engaged with the renewal of

the spiritual dimension of our era. In this conference, these two spiritual friends offered ways we can put our deepest aspirations for personal realisation and social transformation into practice.

### John Main Seminar 2013

Desert Wisdom & Oriental Spirituality: Inner Silence Led by Joseph Wong OSB Cam Hong Kong September 20-22



The practice of Christian meditation taught by John Main can be traced back to the Desert Fathers, in their effort to achieve inner silence and thereby union with God through purity of heart and unceasing prayer.

The contemplative-prophetic spirituality of our time is a development from this tradition. Joseph Wong will explore this ancient wisdom, showing its affinity with some Buddhist practices and indicating its contemporary relevance. Fr. Joseph is a Benedictine monk of the Camaldolese Congregation. He holds MTh from the University of London and STD from the Gregorian University, Rome, and is a member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology.

Pre-Seminar retreat led by Laurence Freeman OSB - September 16-19 (Limited Places, please contact Secretariat before enrolment)

Post-Seminar Interfaith Journey- September 22-25

See more in [www.johnmainseminar2013.com](http://www.johnmainseminar2013.com)

**To order:** Please contact your resource center or supplier for the price in your local currency

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Tel: +1-520-882-0290

CANADA: [www.wccm-canada.ca](http://www.wccm-canada.ca)  
email: [christianmeditation@bellnet.ca](mailto:christianmeditation@bellnet.ca)  
Tel: +1-514-485-7928

ASIA AND REGION  
email: [enquiries@mediomedia.com](mailto:enquiries@mediomedia.com)  
Tel: +65 6469 7671

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Pleroma Christian Supplies  
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(also) Rainbow Book Agencies  
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