



# CHRISTIAN MEDITATION NEWSLETTER

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The World Community for Christian Meditation

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## JOHN MAIN SEMI- NAR 2005



AUGUST 8-14, LOS ANGELES,  
CALIFORNIA,  
**A LEVER AND A  
PLACE TO STAND**

Richard Rohr is known worldwide as a modern voice of the Gospel emphasizing both the contemplative and the socially engaged dimensions of Christian life. In this year's Seminar he will lead a profound and stimulating reflection on the relationship between stillness and right action that overflows into justice.

As usual, the Seminar will be preceded by a retreat led by Laurence Freeman OSB ("Light and Dark: The Way of Unity") that will incorporate talks, meditation and integrated yoga sessions led by Giovanni Felicioni.

Full information and online registration is available on the Web site [www.mediomedia.org](http://www.mediomedia.org) or from your national Christian Meditation Coordinator. US and Canada may register toll

### MONTE OLIVETO RE- TREAT

The 2005 Retreat at the mother house of the Olivetan Benedictine family, in the hills of Tuscany, will be led by Laurence Freeman OSB with Giovanni Felicioni leading the integrated yoga, July 16-23. For details and registration visit [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org) or contact Susan ([susan@wccm.org](mailto:susan@wccm.org)) at the International Centre, St Mark's, Myddelton Sq, London EC1R 1XX, UK

# MEDITATION *in a Young Community*

For the last year we have been developing a small Christian meditation community for young people in south London. We are in what was an unused vicarage and have the place for another three years. We are four resident members, in our twenties and thirties, but the community also includes an extended network of meditators who come to our meditation group on Friday evenings. We have been blessed with a beautiful house with a large meditation room and garden and a guest room for visitors. We meditate together in the morning before breakfast and before we go to work. We try to meditate together in the evenings but our different work, study and social commitments mean that is less regular. Even this gives us the opportunity of learning to meditate individually as well. We have all found that solitude is as important to community life as friendship; in fact it is the combination of solitude and friendship, boundaries and communion that make living together possible and creative. On Sunday evenings we have our house supper and meeting to deal with practical things.

One of the fruits of our community is the Friday evening meditation group and supper for young meditators – who are moving towards a daily practice. In the summer, we rented a cottage in the Lake District, went for walks, meditated, shared dance, poetry, food, laughter, silence and the enjoyment of being out of London. We have shown films as part of a Spiritual Cinema programme. We are planting a vegetable garden. Father Laurence came for a day retreat which filled the meditation room. In the summer, we set up a tent at the Christian Arts Festival ("Greenbelt") where we had daily meditation, a presence that we will develop next year.



Some of us help with the local Church Sunday school. Others are involved in the Stockwell Inter-faith forum. We are closely linked to WCCM, especially the London Centre at St Mark's. Some find their spiritual home with the Quakers, some are more centred on St. Benedict's Rule. For all of us, though, meditation is the central expression of our faith and the hinge on which it swings into action. Meditation provides the quality of "being together" without analysis or judgment that is so important in making community a source of life and not a drain of energy.

Our aim is a shared home, open to the will of God and to all who come. It's not always easy, even with the support of meditation and "elders" from WCCM. But our daily return to meditation keeps us on track. Where that track leads us, who knows? God knows. But the shared meditation helpfully raises the question of contemplative life today. We haven't worked it all out but it is clear that contemplative life does not separate us from the world. It makes us more aware, more fully related to life. And, as John Main said, "meditation creates community".

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For the full version of this article visit [wccm.org](http://wccm.org)

# A LETTER FROM LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION



*Dearest friends,*

The Great Wall of China snakes like a dragon's tail looking in vain for its own head over an infinite regression of mist-covered mountains. Massively physical and ethereal, it is visible from orbiting space stations. Begun by the first Chinese emperor 500 years before Christ, it was intended to keep the barbarians at bay. But, like many measures of homeland security since, it failed both militarily and politically and was immensely unpopular with the Chinese people, untold numbers of whom lost their lives in its construction. Perhaps it was the first of the great security measures of history and so it seemed a significant place for me to hear the news of the U.S. election from a group of depressed-looking American tourists.

When we look at the Wall now we see it in the misty vision of nostalgia, the beauty of remnants and misunderstood memories, like the ruins of Rome or medieval monasteries, tidied up for historians and tourists, detached from their original purpose. The hugeness of the cruel abstraction and hubris that led to its building is safely buried in the forgetting of time. We are impressed, moved, but also numbed and it is difficult to say exactly what the impression means.

I felt the same a few days later during my recent visit to China when I was looking at the terracotta army: thousands of life-size statues of soldiers, horses and chariots at the imperial tomb unearthed in recent times near Xi'an. The imaginative force of the Chinese soul was overpowering. There is something both repellent and fascinating, dangerously attractive about the static loyalty and silent discipline of these guardians of the dead. Today, in the aircraft hangers that house them for the hordes of visiting tourists, what we can see has been reconstructed from broken fragments, a dusty sermon on the transitoriness of earthly glory and power. But what redeems the massive impersonality of the army is the individuality of features of each soldier. Some historians think they are portraits of the actual soldiers of the emperor's guard. This may be another example of the emperor's megalomania but it also shows how we transcend our self-made prisons and come into real being. How we escape the crowd and become ourselves in community.

We are so easily impressed by uniformity and intimidated by size and numbers. It is the basis of the ancient rule of force, the use of violence to achieve our ends. Looking at the news the other night I watched a report on the US marines' attack on Fallujah. How necessary it was for the commanders to work them up before battle with a hatred of the enemy ("Satan is there" said one officer to his men). How necessary to convince ourselves before committing

violence that God is on our side and against the enemy, the unseen other. Isn't it disturbingly ambiguous, embarrassing, to see Mass celebrated for soldiers before they go to kill? And how different they seem after the battle. Personally shamed even when collectively victorious. Wounded, or mourning their fallen friends they ask not only if it was worth it but also who they really were who went so self-confidently into battle.

Success in violence depends on many factors but superiority in size and numbers is always important. We feel safer when there are more of us than of them, insecure when they threaten to outnumber us. Great Walls, immigration controls, a cold stare given to the refugee seeking shelter, like racism and scapegoating

- all illustrate one of the most ancient patterns of human consciousness: the bonds between fear, violence and self-deception. The pleasure we can take in violence is not, I think, a primary motivation. If it were, human beings would be far worse by nature than we are and far less capable of repentance and forgiveness. Enjoying violence is a technique for overcoming our innate aversion to violence. This itself is a sign that to be violent to another is to do violence to ourselves. "They who live by the sword will die by the sword". We are always

slain by our own sword even if it is in the hand of the enemy because our enemy like our friend is, at least potentially, 'another oneself'. The inhumanities of war which commanders say are inevitable, the mass rape, the torture of prisoners, the slaying of the defenseless are expressions of the destruction of the individual self that happens when the individual breaches the sacred prohibition of violence against another. Then, in the anguish of the deconstructed self, we seek what comfort we can find in the collective personality of the group. It is a pastiche of community because it cannot heal or lead to transcendence. The group constituted by violence and self-deception will inevitably and eventually deconstruct itself. The only community that works is that which embraces the eternal value of the individual, the paradox of solitude and community, the mysticism of the parts and the whole.

Some ancient Christian thinkers thought this through very deeply. The abstraction of their ideas may make their conclusions seem remote to us but they also confirm the monumental simple truths of the Gospel - the truths of contemplation and non-violence. These truths do not need complex arguments because they speak so universally for themselves to 'those who have ears to hear and eyes to see'. Great Christian philosopher-theologians,



like Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century for example, wrestled with the ideas of unity and multiplicity. For them, unity in the highest sense was something without number. For some thinkers, though, number and multiplicity expressed the fallen state of the world, sin, the collapse from original oneness with God. History for them was simply a circular movement from unity to multiplicity and then back from multiplicity to unity again. Other thinkers more subtly and imaginatively defended the multiplicity of things and found beauty and grace in it. It was the nature of the world to be full of difference, individuality, quirkiness and to resist the reduction to uniformity that every emperor and military commander insists upon. For great synthetic Christian thinkers like Maximus the unity of God defends and upholds the multiplicity of the world which, like each of us, rides the knife edge between being whole and being a part of the whole.

Many of the ancient thinkers liked to think of numbers as an endless race around the track of finitude – a depressing and meaningless picture of endless rebirth. Finitude itself is then felt as guilt. But others interpreted it differently. The race might be endless but it was also an infinite advance into the mystery of unity, a transformation ‘from glory to glory’. In the deepest and most genuinely Christian thought the tension between the poles of the paradox is held creatively. Human truth is a paradoxical unity between rest and movement, individuality and belonging to the whole, unity and diversity.

Again this might seem abstract. And it is, put like this. But it tries to express a truth that we lose touch with at our peril. The outcome of elections, the decision to go for war or peace, to love or hate is constantly at stake. Goodness in action depends upon our ‘knowledge of the truth’. And, of course, the truth does not depend on our being able to understand these abstractions or even find them interesting. The truth depends on our experience of it, our participation in reality, on our feeling-knowledge of the actual structure and meaning of things. In other words, upon our depth of contemplative intelligence, that intelligence of the heart that is most simply understood as love. To change the world depends upon our learning to love our enemies and we can only do this if we can learn to see and understand them with the eye of the heart. This is the wisdom and sanity of the Gospel. The other way madness lies.

Standing on the Great Wall, seeing its serpentine beauty and its elegant thrust through the contours of nature, you feel the awe of being connected across great stretches of human time, however small these may also seem on a cosmic scale. You feel a strange intimacy with distant people from another world whom you never met and yet recognize within a common, shared humanity. Even the crimes of the past can then be contemplated with compassion. It is even easier to see and accept yourself in the perspective of belonging to a universal human tradition. All the rich diversities of culture and race do not compete with this universality. In it, past patterns become obvious and it is not too hard to see how you are repeating them today in your own way. Whether in personality or

politics the patterns are deeply engrained and transmitted across time. They are fibrous, unbreakable programs of consciousness – until they themselves are seen and dissolved in the light of a deeper consciousness, the intelligence of the heart. The test that we are in fact seeing them in this light is when we can do so without succumbing to blame, guilt or condemnation but rather with humility and forgiveness. Repeating the destructive patterns of the past is sin. Freedom is not to defend against the enemy by force but to break the pattern of reacting against him with violence. Such freedom is definitely not the result of intellectual abstraction. In fact we can only commit violence by turning the other into an abstraction (the killing of children in battle becomes ‘collateral damage’).

Freedom is the gift of grace. Grace is the freedom of the love we find as the natural light of our heart. Non-violence is impossible without contemplation. Without contemplation religion remains sacrilegiously bound to violence: the rosary tied to the gun barrel.

Looking at the impassive terracotta soldiers in Xi’ang you feel confronted with the endless human tension between individuality and collectivity, between being ourselves and belonging to another.



With seminarians in Beijing

What no doubt began as an imperial gesture of massive hubris has through time, physical decay and reconstruction become an unwilling work of art. In fact an artist was originally at work in delineating the individual features of this massive statement of the subordination of the individual to the group and of the group to an individual. Subordination gives us security but also releases the terror of being annihilated. It is a false form of the loss of self which cannot be truly transcended until it has come to full freedom and self-expression. The very work of self-fulfillment, of human maturing, is a hard labour we escape from by a premature submersion of self in the group, the anonymity of the crowd. Even the most disciplined group, if it denies personal liberty, is a false image of that true community where each is fully him or her self, practicing the loving discipline of self-restraint.

The self, however, is not a privatized, isolated individual competing for limited resources and hanging on to what he has while always desiring more. The individualism of western consumerism obscures the nature of the self and replaces it with a more or less mass-produced identity. In the great terracotta army there is at least the redemptive recognition of individual identity within the group. In mass society this recognition is insincere. The individual is flattered through the collective intelligence of the mass media into believing he is different. But his very difference is only the wall that separates him from others who are in all respects just like himself. This feeling of inauthenticity, hollowness and mere multiplicity without unity now pervades western culture. And even as it drives us into ever more frantic productivity it fills us with the creeping suspicion of the meaninglessness of all effort.

The self is a community. It (“it” cannot, however, be objectified) is the field of all the relationships that make us who we are. There

is no self without an other. But we can only discover this by suspending our own defensiveness, our clinging to our own point of view or opinion, and by learning to see reality from the other's point of view. This is a prospect that raises many fears because such multi-dimensional identity fills the ego with the dread of extinction. Yet without some degree of self transcendence we can hardly claim to exist at all. All we feel is a deep longing, along with a fear of recognizing that longing and even of fulfilling it. We do exist with unique personal and individual value – numbers matter, diversity is good – but not outside the community of self-transcending persons.

Perhaps this is why we so eagerly and often foolishly look to leaders to symbolize our true identity. The emperors of China, like all totalitarian rulers, were imprisoned in their immense role of bearing the projections of a whole culture. They were the 'Sons of Heaven' and they formed the centre of high civilizations. The modern cult of the increasingly totalitarian American presidency and family dynasties is a very pale shadow of this civilization, of course, if not its mirror image. But what it expresses in the subordination of the individual to the collective suggests the same risks for society and the individuals who compose it. The early Christians could not in good conscience – for them a matter of life and death – make this projection upon the Emperor, even formally. For them the true meaning of Jesus as "Son of God" had definitively broken the cycle of violence which is contained in the subordination or repression of the individual.

Jesus was not just another god upon whom we project our unresolved neuroses. He was a person with whom a living relationship in the Spirit transformed the parameters of personal identity and of human society. The community of believers was his body but his body was in continuous expansion towards the unity of all creation not just another closed group of us against them, concerned with numerical superiority or inferiority. Within this community you were denied the opportunity either to escape your personal responsibility or of committing violence against a demonized other. It was a delicious liberty, the only true and exhilarating freedom. But it demanded hard work and constant watchfulness to carry it all through life. It is said that Chairman Mao, the latest in the line of Chinese emperors, never dared to enter the Forbidden City, the home of the dynastic emperors, because he had been told by a Feng Shui master that he was not a true dragon. This would please monarchists but perhaps it only illustrates the prevalence of Chinese superstition even at the highest levels. Mao Zedong however knew something about the nature of revolution. The only revolution that could succeed, he said, is the one that never ends. Life in the spirit, the lifelong conversion process of the Gospel is such a revolution.

Visiting the Great Wall, the terracotta army, walking around the Forbidden City, like visiting old romantic monastic ruins makes you easily philosophical in a vague and nostalgic way. The rise and fall of dynastic civilizations through the long history of China show up the cyclical nature of things. Yet at the heart of Chinese cultural


identity, through all the change, was the awareness that this cycle could be understood and guided by respecting the deepest principles of reality. We are not at the mercy of our passions but passion can be integrated and directed. Desire need not be destroyed because it can be transformed. These principles are universally recognized in the perennial wisdom – modesty and moderation, kindness and prudence, the self-disciplined avoidance of extremes and restraining from exploiting or willfully harming others. My idealized image of China before I went there owed much to these ideas. It was also influenced by the beautiful, minimalist brush paintings of scholar retreats in mountainous settings, a solitary philosopher writing in his walled garden or a small group of friends sitting in conversation beside waterfalls.

Romanticism is fine as long as you still recognize the real thing when you meet it. In modern China, booming economically and numerically, not waiting to deal with the destruction of the environment its progress is causing, dangerously unsettling society by massive inequalities of wealth, the wisdom of the I Ching and the peace of scholars' gardens are not so easy to find. But I was not there as a tourist. As I stood at the Great Wall or inspected the terracotta battalions I was looking into the past, the rear view mirror of history. Far more exciting and refreshing was to look at the faces of the young seminarians I had come to speak to about meditation. In four major seminaries I looked into their eyes and realized I was looking into the future of Christianity in China.

Religion is no longer persecuted in China but the parents of these aspirants to the priesthood had once been denied the right to worship and even to believe. They come from Catholic families who kept the faith in the darkest of times. One 83 year-old bishop I met, a pure and holy soul of very powerful gentleness, had been in prison under the Communists for 20 years. His smiling eyes held no bitterness and he dealt day by day with the new order of things with patience and humour. Today, instead of violent persecution there is obsessive governmental and bureaucratic, busybody interference which varies greatly from region to region. Perhaps the Chinese have grown used to intrusive government and they don't have the expectation of rights that we have in the West, so they accept it all as a minor evil of life. More importantly they are clear and confident about their vocation and have a hunger for spiritual depth. One young seminarian told me with disarming simplicity that he was grateful to learn how to meditate because he knew he needed to pray better if he was to be a good priest and that was what he wanted most of all in life.

At the seminaries I spoke of meditation and practiced it with them. They were excellent students, attentive, responsive, relaxed and serious. I spoke using the "seed parables" of the Kingdom (in chapter 4 of the Gospel of Mark), knowing that that was what we were doing in the short time we spent with each group: planting seeds or helping seeds to grow.

In the parable of the sower, we hear Jesus describing the apparently disappointing rate of return on the investment of the



*"Life in the Spirit  
is the lifelong  
conversion process  
of the Gospel"*

Word. Some of the seed falls along the footpath and is immediately eaten up by the birds. Others fall on rocky ground with shallow soil. It sprouts quickly but having no root it withers when the sun rises. Some of the seed falls among thistles, the worries and cares of the world which eventually choke it. But some fell on good soil and produced an abundant harvest. It seems a mixed message. However much we may rejoice at the good return, what about all the sad waste, the interrupted progress of growth, the regrettable failures? It is not only the long history of China but the story of our own lives that tell us this. An ecological interpretation might console us that nothing is wasted, everything is recycled; but in personal lives does that help much? And where do we place ourselves? Do we dare say we are the good soil returning a rich harvest when we feel so often we have missed the Word of God or had it choked by our worries?

Perhaps in the light of meditation we can go deeper than a narrow allegorical reading. We are not either the footpath or the shallow soil or the choked seed or the rich soil. We know from the day-to-day practice of saying the word that we are at various times all of these. Our performance is variable and that is why we have to go to a level deeper than can be measured to understand what is the work we are really doing and what is the work that the Spirit is doing in us. The important point of the parable is not that it condemns us by pigeonholing us in a second- or third-rate category. That would be to reduce us to a faceless uniformity that is the antithesis of Jesus' teaching. The extravagant generosity of the harvest and the certainty that this will be reaped is the real point. The failures and the false starts are all part of the whole picture – life viewed as a whole with the intelligent heart in wisdom and compassion. The important thing about progress in meditation, as John Main said, is not to measure it but just to be on the way and to start again as soon as possible when you have stopped.

To see this we have to understand the second parable in which Jesus describes the Kingdom as like a seed a man plants in the soil. He leaves it to grow as he goes to bed at night and rises in the morning. All the time it grows 'how he does not know'. But grow it does and in time and by stages the growth becomes visible until it reaches fullness and then harvest. We see the fruits of meditation in ways that surprise us, often only when we have given up trying to see them. When Jesus tells us we cannot tell by observation when the kingdom will come, he is saying that it lies beyond the dualism of the rational mind ("here or there") and the race-course of time ('how long?'). Different rhythms and cycles are at work simultaneously in any human existence. Our physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions are different time-zones. While one is asleep, the others are awake. Yet, we are one person held in the greater rhythm of the divine creating.

The growth of the kingdom is the transformation of the person. So it is we who are growing. And the eye that sees cannot see itself. Yet, we do come to see that we exist in a reality richer and deeper than our individual identity. The self is a community in which all see and love each other. So it is often through others, how they

relate to us or what they tell us about ourselves, that we know that the daily labour is bearing fruit. But the real and mysterious fruit is that we are more concerned about them than about ourselves or our progress.

This is illustrated in the third of the seed parables. This is the one about the mustard seed which grows from being the smallest of seeds into a great plant in whose branches birds come to roost. The true self, our real and fulfilled identity in selflessness, is hospitable. It dismantles the great walls of division, it overcomes oppression and forms community that respects and celebrates individuality. The birds that roost in the branches of the fully human person are not restricted to a single species. The diversity of species is an expression of a transcendent unity when all are welcomed. I sensed this in a quirky way early one morning as we arrived at a church where a wedding was underway. Eager to see what a Chinese Christian wedding was like, we stopped and watched. In many ways it seemed fairly western-style, the priest on the altar, the procession and the applause. Only later did we learn that the couple were not Christian and that the majority of weddings held there were not. It was a source of income, of course, always a factor in religious practice, but also a way of bringing the church closer to the majority of a society that sees itself as entirely non-religious. Was this diluting the purity of a religion or of allowing the tree to welcome all kinds of strange birds?

My idealized image of China, as I said, was not easy to find. But I felt I recognized the real thing one night as we left the Shanghai seminary. It is a way from the city in a beautiful semi-rural area. The buildings and facilities are simple and the student community a peaceful and centered group. After a full day of talks and meditation we had supper with the director and then began to make our way back through the cool night air. Everything was quiet. As we passed the chapel I saw it was full of the students and teachers spending an hour of silent prayer before going to bed. It had no sense of an obligatory observance but just a deep and genuine reverence. A surprising and natural stillness after a busy day. They were many individuals seeking and finding God, finding and losing themselves, in the heart of a peaceful, united community. It was obviously not just an ideal but something that is actually realized from time to time in the flow of history.

With much love,



Laurence Freeman, OSB



## NEWS FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY

The following is a small representation of the life of the Community. For weekly news and more information visit the Community web page: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

### REST IN PEACE

Brother Wayne Teasdale, a friend of The World Community, and a lay monk who combined the traditions of Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism in Christian *sannyasa* died in October. Memories from friends and fellow meditators may be found at [wccm.org](http://wccm.org). Dorothy Deakin, of the Canadian Christian Meditation community, and a retired pioneer speech/language pathologist living in Kelowna, B.C., died in October aged 82. She was one of the 60 contributors to the book *The Heart of Silence: Contemplative Prayer by Those Who Practice It*.

Paul Harris ([paulturnerharris@aol.com](mailto:paulturnerharris@aol.com))

### AN ARGENTINIAN JOURNEY

My first encounter with Christian meditation came in 1999 while



watching a TV programme about interreligious dialogue. I saw Father Bede Griffiths talking about silence, meditation and love. He represented what I have been looking for all my life. With this my spiritual path took then a definite direction. I felt an urgent need to communicate this to others and, being bilingual by birth, I started translating some of his books, such as *The New Creation*

*in Christ*. I contacted Susan Spence in London, Joe Doeffler in Tucson, Greg Ryan in New Jersey and Paul Harris (who helped me so much in understanding meditation). Sr Pascaline Coff encouraged me to read John Main and I translated *Word into Silence*. I had a wonderful experience at the meditation retreat in Rio in 2004 led by Laurence Freeman. Through his teaching and style I learnt that we are all on the same spiritual path, the way to discover the "Jesus within" as a way of life. Fr. Laurence's book *Jesus, the Teacher Within* helped me to see this more deeply and personally. After Rio, I was more committed within the WCCM. I started translating the weekly readings for the Web page. Then I began to receive e-mails from all over South America asking for information about meditation. I have been invited to speak about Christian meditation at seminars which will soon extend to Paraguay. Not least of these developments is that I translated *Jesus, the Teacher Within* which will be published by Bonum Publishers in Buenos Aires in April 2005.

Magdalena Puebla ([malen\\_puebla@hotmail.com](mailto:malen_puebla@hotmail.com)) – Tucuman

### OBLATES OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY

As the number of meditators drawn to live the Benedictine way of life increases, there is a concern to connect all oblates with the wider oblate community in their country. Each Oblate Coordinator serves their national community by sending out the

oblate newsletter, reflections and other articles and by helping with arranging cell gatherings and retreat days. We ask everyone in the meditation community to help: if you know of an oblate of The World Community who is not in contact with their national oblate coordinator, please ask them to contact me and I will put them in touch. In future, we ask regional coordinators to pass along this information whenever someone makes their oblation. Information required: Name, address – (country, phone, fax, email). First oblation date, where received and by whom. Final Oblation date, where received and by whom. Any comments, suggestions or questions, please send to:

Trish Panton – e-mail: [pantonamdg@ozemail.com.au](mailto:pantonamdg@ozemail.com.au) P.O. Box 555, Pennant Hills, N.S.W. Australia, 1715 Ph. 61 2 9980 8135 - Fax 61 2 9980 5963

### MEDITATION CENTER IN THE DESERT

Fr Henri, Prior of Holy Trinity Monastery in St David's Arizona, is a long-time meditator and friend of Fr Laurence. They agreed to begin a World Community center, known as the Desert Meditation Center, at this monastery an hour from Tucson where Medio Media is based. It began in October in a small house and has two daily meditation periods, morning and late afternoon. The Center also offers a weekly teaching group that includes a taped talk from John Main or Laurence Freeman. This group already has several of the monastery community and retreatants participating. Because the meditation center is on the monastery grounds, any visiting meditator can experience monastic life as it is lived here in an Olivetan family. Retreatants can share in the monastic prayer schedule, with daily Mass and Office in the chapel several times a day. They can eat their meals with the monastic community and so truly get a flavor of Benedictine life! It is this opportunity to combine meditation practice and monastic life in a daily rhythm of work and prayer that has attracted me here. I considered monastic life for many years and searched for a community with a meditation practice in their prayer schedule. This center provides an excellent opportunity for me and, we hope, others who are considering this form of life and for whom meditation is also essential to their spiritual growth. But even if you have no great interest in monastic life, but could just use a place to rest and catch your breath, you will be welcome. The quiet, peace-filled environment of the desert offers a gentle walk or a tough hike in the mountains. The Desert Meditation Center is perfect for silence and a restful retreat. I hope to see you soon!

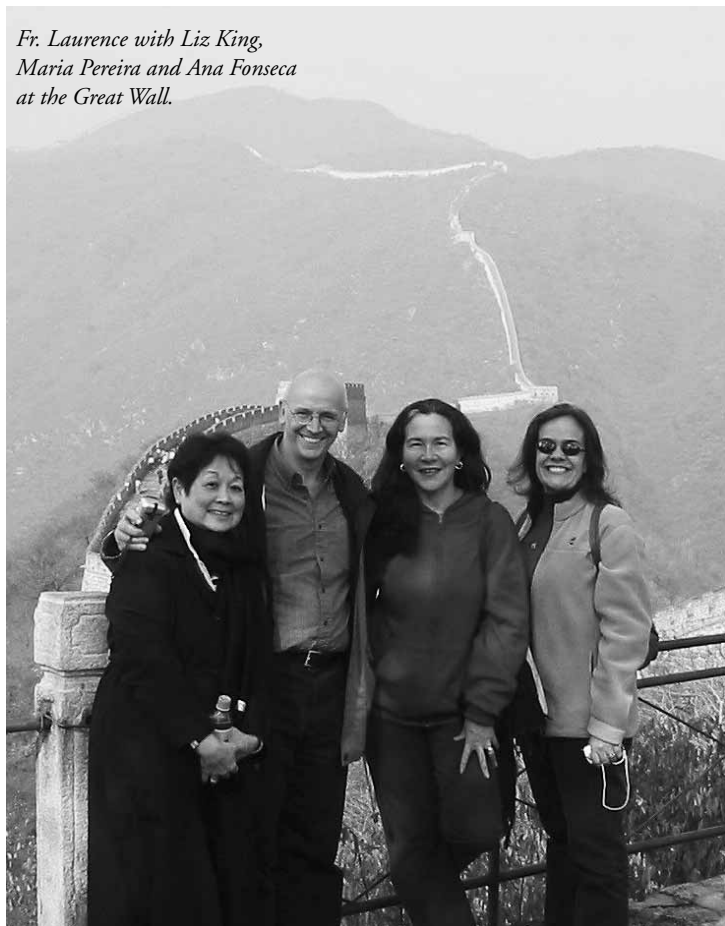
Marco Svoboda ([svobodma@hotmail.com](mailto:svobodma@hotmail.com)) Tel: (1) 520-720-4124

## OTHER NEWS

*For a full review of news of the Community and many other articles and downloads visit the website at [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)*

The tapes of the John Main Seminar held in August in Vermont and led by Joan Chittister are now available from Medio Media. In November, Fr. Laurence visited China, Hong Kong and Taiwan on a recent visit organized by Liz King and accompanied by Ana Fonseca and Maria Pereira. In October, he was teaching in Canada and addressed the Canadian Theological Association in Quebec. Polly Schofield led daily meditation at the Palliative Care Congress for the Terminally Ill in Montreal in September. In India, a daylong orientation programme was held in September led by Fr. Joe Pereira with 3 periods of meditation followed by a time for questions and clarifications. The afternoon focused on the formation of groups in the Archdiocese of Mumbai. A letter from the Cardinal will be sent to parish priests encouraging the starting of groups. In Adelaide, Australia meditators met with Archbishop Philip Wilson who was the speaker at the South Australian Christian Meditation Community Day in July.

*Fr. Laurence with Liz King, Maria Pereira and Ana Fonseca at the Great Wall.*



## IN FOCUS

# EUROPEAN



Two years after the first Europe Conference of Christian meditators was held in Epernon (France), the European coordinators from Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands and the UK met again in September at the Monastery of Roosenberg, in Belgium. This confirmed for us that Christian meditation has become a reality in Europe,

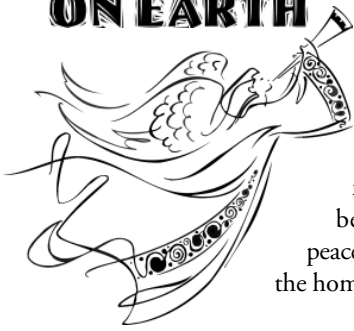
not yet fully developed, but germinating and still needing loving care. Europe faces new possibilities and opportunities, not only political but spiritual. So, we came together to share and support one another at this level of unity. John Main's vision of Christian meditation is so central to life, personally and socially. And the spiritual life has an important impact on social behaviour. But you need a language, (your own!) to convince others of the value of silence. So, translation of material is a priority. As Belgium and the Netherlands sent out their 50th newsletter, Eastern Europe became represented in our European Christian meditation community. Czech, Polish, Hungarian, and Latvian translations have been published and the progress in these countries is encouraging. All this inspires me immensely. I have just recently stepped down as National Coordinator in Belgium but continue to run our Christian Meditation centre in Grimbergen. I will also take part in another historic meeting next July in Florence, the first one for WCCM National Coordinators from around the world.

*Agnes d'Hooghe ([dbooghedumon@pandora.be](mailto:dbooghedumon@pandora.be))*



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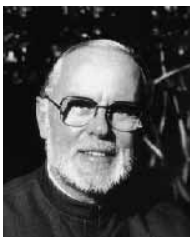
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## WORDS BY JOHN MAIN....

*"To see our self we must look at another, for the way  
of selfhood is the way of otherness."* (from *Word into Silence*)

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