



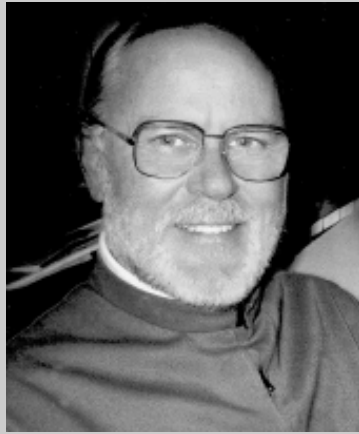
CHRISTIAN MEDITATION NEWSLETTER

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The World Community for Christian Meditation

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JOHN MAIN SEMINAR 2007
*"Still Present:
The Life and Legacy of John Main"*
*"Le Rayonnement de
l'Enseignement de John Main"*
18-21 October 2007, Mt Orford,
Quebec, Canada
16-18, Pre-Seminar retreat
led by Laurence Freeman
12-14, Pre-Seminar French retreat
led by Laurence Freeman

Speakers will include Laurence Freeman, Balfour Mount, Sarah Bachelard, Peter Ng and Yvon Théroux. They will lead a wide-ranging and in-depth exploration of the expansion of John Main's gift to the world over the past 25 years. The talks and workshops will lead to new ways of seeing the spiritual and social challenges of our time. For more information visit the WCCM webpage at www.wccm.org or contact jms2007@bellnet.ca

"THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION" *The Eleventh Step in AA*

A retreat - "Recovery and Spirituality" - was held recently in Geneva, Switzerland for people in 12-step programmes recovering from various forms of addiction.

As meditation and prayer are integral parts of the recovery process initiated by Alcoholics Anonymous (the "12-step Programme") and embodied in AA's 11th step, our purpose was simply to bring contemplative prayer into the daily practice of recovering men and women.

Opening the retreat, a meditating member of the program began by recalling the correspondence between Bill W., the co-founder of AA and Carl Jung. A member of AA had previously been in therapy with Jung and the doctor had told him that medically he was incurable. Jung went on to say however, that occasionally over the years some alcoholics had recovered when they had had 'vital spiritual experiences'. These two concepts (i.e. hopelessness and the need to recover on a spiritual basis), have become foundational to the AA 12-step process. Jung enlarged on what he had told his former patient by saying that alcoholism and addiction in general represented a low-level spiritual quest. Alcoholics used "spirits" as an ersatz for

"the Spirit". To Bill, this, coming from someone of Jung's stature, validated what he had always felt about the "divine dissatisfaction" at the root of the disease. In fact, wrote Bill, the steps of AA were designed to provide spiritual experiences "almost on a wholesale basis" through their practice. Fr. Laurence then spoke of meditation as a universal spiritual practice, a healer of wounds and as a reconciler of opposites. There was a short exposé concerning Christian meditation followed by a 20-minute meditation (repeated in the afternoon) during which a remarkable level of stillness and silence, considering that most of the participants were beginners.

The next day we went to walk, talk, meditate and celebrate Mass in a secluded hamlet in the French Alps on a glorious sunny Sunday. The atmosphere of grace was palpable and undoubtedly the weekend left the Geneva 12-step community with an enhanced taste for the spiritual life and in particular for meditation and for Fr. Laurence's teaching.

A WCCM website for practitioners of the 11th Step is being planned. If you would like to help or contribute please contact the International Centre: susan@wccm.org

Be a **Friend**

The outreach activities of the WCCM are financially supported by donations from meditators, weekly meditation groups, and well-wishers around the world.

We need more **Friends**

To find out how you can support us and help to share the gift of Christian meditation, individually or as a meditation group, please contact the International Friends Coordinator, Leonard Ong: friendswccm@yahoo.com.sg
Visit our web site: www.friendsinmeditation.com

Or we will connect you to the Friends Coordinator for your region if you write to:
International Centre
St Mark's . Myddelton Square
London EC1R 1XX - UK
Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7713 6346

A LETTER FROM LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

December 8, 2006; Feast of the Immaculate Conception



Dearest friends,

Next year marks the 25th anniversary of John Main's death, the last step of his earthly journey, and the beginning of his new life in the Body of Christ. His legacy has spread simply in the lives of people around the world, through silence and stillness, over this past quarter of a century. It is a growth that bears witness to the truth of Resurrection. The John Main Seminar in October 2007 will be hosted by the Canadian Christian Meditation community and will be held near Montreal where he died on December 30th 1982. It will celebrate this expansive influence of his teaching within and beyond the World Community. It will also explore the meaning of his teaching in the many areas of modern life into which the Community has moved and where he continues to inspire so many – to begin, to persevere and, in their turn, to expand.

In my travels, as in the work of the Guiding Board, the International Office and in the work of national coordinators and group leaders around the world, we become aware each day of how much the life of this Community is developing – in education, health care and recovery, peace and social justice and in our sense of what the church means in our time. But however wide has been the influence of John Main's catholic, integral vision and of his radically simple teaching, what inspires and delights me most is to see the personal depth to which it leads so many people. That, not numbers, is really the measure of spiritual growth. In individual terms we usually see it happen over years, in terms of community over decades.

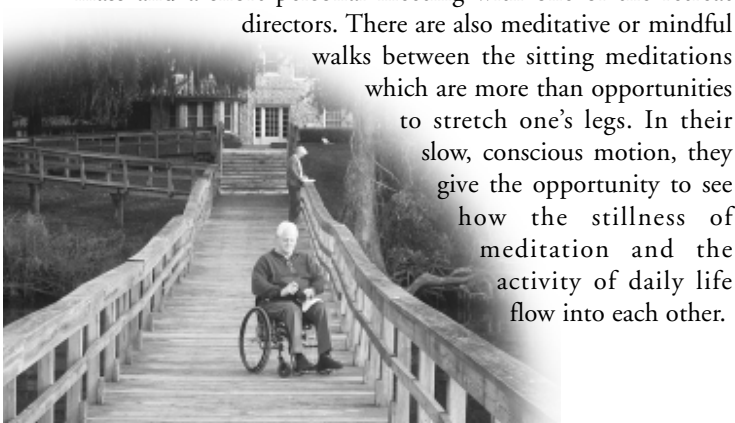
One of the signs of this deepening of experience and wisdom has been the School of the World Community. This is a program of workshops and retreats that gives meditators the opportunity to ground their personal experience in the wider sense of the tradition and to grow in the confidence to share the gift of meditation with others. It has also taken under its wing the program of teaching meditation to children. One of Eileen O'Hea's legacies to the Community is her work of visioning the School and in particular of developing the "School Retreat". This is an experience which I would love every meditator to have at least once. It is a weeklong, very silent retreat for a restricted number in a quiet setting. Daily, there are frequent meditation sessions in common, one short talk, a contemplative mass and a short personal meeting with one of the retreat directors. There are also meditative or mindful walks between the sitting meditations which are more than opportunities to stretch one's legs. In their slow, conscious motion, they give the opportunity to see how the stillness of meditation and the activity of daily life flow into each other.

WALKING IN STILLNESS

Earlier today I joined the walking group a few minutes late: a happy fault, as I was able to see it in a moment of vision and love. I knew that I knew and loved each person in the moving circle as it seemed slowly to coil around the central fountain and statue of Mary. Each one had their own peculiar way of walking that expressed their personality or special condition. It is the particularity of a human being that makes them loveable. There was the stooped sister of 85 with her oversized trainers and dark glasses. Behind her an upright young athlete and physiotherapist. Near him was Laurent, a stroke victim from his home meditation group whom he was helping, walking with a cane, dragging his left foot but as intent and mindful as the rest. More so perhaps, as he told me later, because every step he takes every time he walks needs mindful attention if he is not to fall over. Behind him was his wife, Nicole, who has cared for him constantly since his stroke a year ago. Then there was a line of others walking more or less ordinarily. And then Chuck, a meditator and long-term member of the community who has been in a wheelchair for thirty years since a skiing accident two years after his marriage to Pat. Their courage and fidelity has always been a wonder to all who know them. He turned the wheels of his chair in silent rhythm with the walking group.

My feelings as I watched them were not abstract and I didn't think then I would use this scene to open the next newsletter. It was a moment simply and totally unique and present but at the same time quite overwhelming in its transparency. Through it something quite ineffable became visible. Should we call it the life of Christ, the fragility and grandeur of the human? Or the meaning of community, solitude and communion? Even without these words you can probably recall the experience from your own memories because, although it is unique, it is universal. On the feast of Mary that we celebrate today it seemed all the more present because the courage of Mary was to be open to something so much greater than herself and yet that claimed the most intimate knowledge of her. The greatest revelations, such as the one that took flesh in her or that we see in the miracle of each other's ordinariness, manifest a disturbing paradox of strength and vulnerability. She was disturbed by the angel's greeting. We glimpse this paradox in every form of love and in the attempt to give our self to others. How can we give self without conditions or the expectation of a reward?

Yet how can we be fully human unless we do? This is the dilemma of human meaning that finds resolution in the moment of Christ. We can be fully human because we receive the unconditional gift of self that is God incarnate. Christ is a gift, 'full of grace and truth', that is humanly as totally unique as were each one of us in the slow circle of walking meditators. In Jesus we experience the absolute self-giving that *is* God. So it helps to transform our understanding of our humanity as well as expressing the real nature of God. Any gift of self, rare as it is, maybe



unsustained or incomplete, is never a commodity. It is not a possession or a form of control. It gives the gift of self-giving. Love empowers us, in turn, to give our selves to the best of our capacity. What else is the meaning of giving presents, like the Magi, to each other at Christmas or on birthdays? They can be true gifts only when they are unsolicited and unconditional. Would they have the same meaning if we were to say I give you this on condition that you are grateful, acknowledge me or give me something equal in return? Learning to say the mantra is applying this essentially human truth. We say the mantra 'without demand or expectation', as John Main often remarked. It is a work of love. As a simple self-giving it also becomes – something rare in human gift-giving – a complete letting-go.

TIME TO BE PRESENT

I noticed on the first day of the retreat that our mindful walk was quite fast and individualistic. To some degree each person was still in the world they had come from and their way of walking showed it. It was not synchronised with others and it was trying to catch up with something invisible or elusive – the universal rush of most modern living. It takes time to become present – that's the work of patience and the need for discipline. But even by the second day the walk had begun to slow, to become more mindful. Even though everyone walked personally, in the same direction but not usually in single file, we were in a less isolated space and less individualistic. I remembered Rumi's line, 'everything revolves around what it loves'. Soon people were also moving more harmoniously in the dining room and other areas, entering more carefully into the chapel for meditation. Doors were being closed more quietly. There were fewer anxious, distracted looks scanning the space around them. These changes came as everyone present became present to themselves and to the others without words or gestures. On the opening night we had shared where we came from, why we thought we were there and what we were looking for. But in the ethos of the retreat we agreed to trust silence as a form of intimacy and friendship and the result was that day-by-day we felt we were growing closer to others but also to ourselves and to God.

For a number of reasons it takes time to come to this level of trust and stillness. First, it is just because it is an unfamiliar state to be in. We may feel intuitively drawn to it but also a little scared of it, as we do when we find ourselves in a new country without the local language and without bearings. The Cloud warns us that beginners in meditation easily mistake the spatial metaphors of 'in' or 'up' or 'deep'. It insists that the spiritual work is not done in any particular place. *"But to this you say, 'Where then shall I be? By your reckoning I am to be nowhere!' Exactly. In fact you have expressed it rather well, for I would indeed have you to be nowhere. Why? Because nowhere physically is everywhere spiritually."* (Chapter 68). The wisdom of the Christian contemplative tradition advises us at this early stage just to persevere in the 'work of love' especially when the mind rebels against this sense of meaninglessness. Meditation takes us nowhere. It enriches us through poverty. Its emptiness is fullness. One thing the retreat confirmed for me was that we must once again become confident and familiar with the mystical language of paradox in our tradition before we as Church can find our true place in and for the world. Only when the meaning of this experience has re-awakened among us can Christians learn to deal with the differences – so often cultural rather than truly

theological anyway – which cause such catastrophic divisions and undermine the witness the Church is meant to make for the Kingdom.

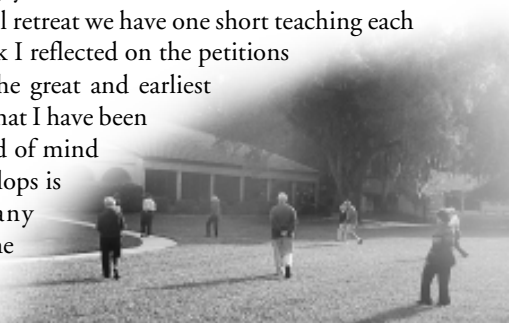
IMPATIENCE AND ILLUSION

But meditation is a journey. It may be the subtle journey of consciousness from the mind to the heart but before it is completed the process will take us through every aspect of our selves, psychologically and socially. Modern consumer conditioning that we bring to meditation as to everything wants to know it all now and to be in control. It assumes that once it has read the product description on the package and paid the price that the purchase is complete. In the spiritual transaction, however, there are no consumer rights, only grace, only self-giving. Our extreme impatience has already condemned us culturally to organised distraction and addictive fantasy.

Impatience and illusion meet their match in meditation. Whatever is false within us is exposed, not ruthlessly but with the artlessness of a child telling the truth. Wherever we have settled unconsciously into prejudices or false compromise, alarm signals will sound. Conscience or our hidden integrity will show us how they have been offended and how we have ignored or repressed their complaints.

In meditation we are led to a definitive threshold. It is not a sectarian line dividing one group (the 'enlightened') from another (those who are 'in the wrong'). The contemplative does not enjoy the luxury of knowing they are right and others wrong. If it divides anything (sheep and goats, for example), meditation separates those who divide from those who do not divide. It makes this distinction, not with an indiscriminate tolerance for everything, but in favour of those who do everything possible to include rather than exclude. Meditation – the work of developing the contemplative consciousness – therefore requires and creates a truly catholic mind. This is a mind that is ready to wait and to hold apparent opposites in creative, loving patient tension. There is suffering in this patience as the very word 'patient' implies. The catholic mind knows that to reject the opposite of anything that we hold to be true, without the deep wisdom that comes with the contemplative vision, the eye of the heart, we also often discard what is most true in what we believe. We are then led into self-contradiction. This follows as soon as we take sides with any kind of lack of charity or with any degree of violence. In a world of violent contradictions with fewer and fewer civilised ways of even controlling it, let alone practising the sanity of a non-violent resolution of conflict, we urgently need to develop catholicity. Perhaps we have to start doing this much earlier in life than we do now and why children, who can and like to meditate, benefit themselves and our future by learning to meditate. People still often ask 'is meditation Christian?' I find myself often replying 'yes, it is catholic.'

During the School retreat we have one short teaching each day. During this week I reflected on the petitions of the Our Father, the great and earliest Christian mantra. What I have been saying about the kind of mind that meditation develops is also the fruit of any continuous *lectio* of the Lord's Prayer as part of the Christian life.



Experience illuminates the scriptures and the scriptures nourish experience. Let's look briefly at these petitions as they are recorded in the Gospel of Matthew.

OUR FATHER

Firstly, we begin by saying 'our' not 'my' Father. Jesus spoke of ascending to 'my father and your Father', insisting that his deepest knowledge of the Father *includes* us. And although 'we' tend quickly to begin limiting those who are included in this collective pronoun, Jesus does not. As I remarked on the change of walking style and body-language during the first few days of the retreat, the natural direction into which the development of consciousness takes us is away from narrow individualism into relational personhood. We see that our deepest identity is inseparable from others and when we see that clearly we see ourselves in others and others in ourselves. Our way of behaving towards others naturally changes as a result of this new clarity. The sense of the Church changes also. It is no longer an embattled sect seeking ways of dominating others but a place – a nowhere, universal place – where all see themselves and others as equal children of God even though we or others are not equally aware of that fact.

Our Father is therefore our common ground of being. Not an impersonal but a creative and overwhelmingly loving source that continually challenges our notion of love and pushes it towards an ever more complete integration. Perhaps we could say that in Jesus we feel the powerful attraction that the Father feels for us, the erotic aspect of divine love as Pope Benedict spoke of it in his first encyclical. This we can readily relate to because it is what we feel most often and most instinctively. But Jesus emphasises in his turn the agapic – selfless, boundless and self-giving – nature of the Father's love. The Father is like 'the sun who shines on good and bad alike and is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked'. There is no punishing will in this God and therefore no violence in the Father that we can use to mask or justify our own violence. In fact, to be true to ourselves we have to be 'like our heavenly father'. *We do not pray to get benefits from God, said Origen, but to become like God.*

The biblical revelation shows – and it is its great contribution to the human understanding of the nature of reality – that God is being and that being is love. The Father then, which has to be a linguistic term, transcends sexual duality. In Christ too there is neither male nor female as competing contradictions but the realisation of one new, wholly integrated form of humanity. Only wonder can comprehend God's incomprehensible power, as the early Church teachers kept saying. The surface levels of our

mind are quite comfortable with dualities but become uneasy with the resolution of paradox. To understand this we have to approach that threshold of silence that the narrow path of meditation leads to. Its narrowness is not like the narrowness of a mind that can only see from its own point of view. It is rather the focused attention that can rest steadily on a particular manifestation of reality – the wonderful diversity of the people in our meditation walk for example – and be patient until the expansion of consciousness into the

universal takes place from within that small band of attention.

Mystery is the resolution of paradox. It can be known but not fully described. The best way to approach and communicate the mystery of the Father which is the ultimate union of opposites is celebration – as the feast of the kingdom imagery of Jesus suggests. When what is lost is found – another theme of Jesus' teaching – the response is joy and conviviality. The sadness of the sin-centeredness that has so often characterized the Church's teaching and spirituality is deeply at odds with the spirit of the Gospel. Once we have glimpsed this reality in our own experience – meditation 'verifies the truths of our faith in our own experience' according to John Main – we see the whole world differently. St Gregory of Nyssa expresses this sense of a new creation in Christ in which all is sacred when he says that 'everything that exists prays to thee'.

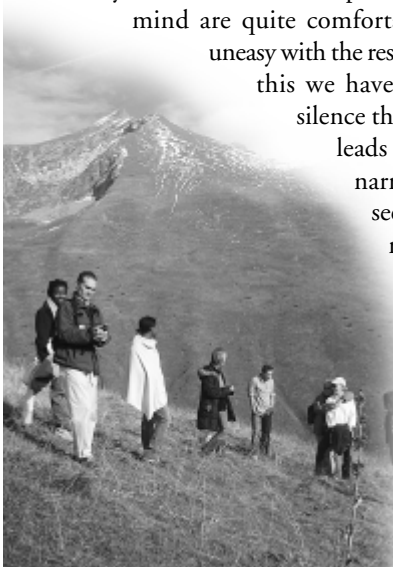
IN HEAVEN

During the retreat one of the participants who is a bird-watcher told me she had seen a rare bird, a peliated woodpecker, in the woods of the retreat centre. I mentioned it during my reflection on the second petition because it seemed to be a good metaphor for the Kingdom – something always present but not always visible. I may have caused a distraction because several retreatants went out in search of it during their free time and there were many claimed sightings.

The Kingdom is the Father's, that is it shares his nature. It is our conscious experience of God. We cannot enter the Kingdom unconsciously though we can intuit or dream of it. But to enter it we must be awake, alert and vigilant – the qualities that meditation develops. Yet as Jesus teaches we cannot observe the coming of the kingdom with the dualistic level of mind. We know it by sharing in it. This is perhaps why its epiphanies seem to come and go. It is why the Incarnation both reveals and conceals the Father, as ground and source of being, in Jesus.

The threshold of consciousness that meditation takes us to marks our capacity to know and live in the Kingdom. Our journey there will take us through moments of intense conscious presence and also, on many occasions, through a sense of intense absence. We keep on meditating, after a certain point of spiritual growth, for the same reasons that we stop meditating in the early stages of the journey: because of this alternating rhythm of presence and absence. In time we see that it is the cycle of growth – the growth that Jesus often uses to describe the Kingdom – and through the strengthening of the faculty of faith we become able to grow as well through the absences as through the times of presence. As long as we are evaluating this experience with the dualistic mind (success and failure, or pleasant and difficult) we interrupt the rhythm. The Desert Fathers and Mothers taught this quite strongly – that we are most fully praying when we don't know that we are praying. The way of unknowing is the only way of knowing God by love rather than thought. Grace explodes most powerfully and silently as mental activity ceases to block the deepening of consciousness and as we learn to lay aside all thoughts.

Doing this work, the laying aside of thoughts, is the essential asceticism of the Christian life because with the thoughts go our ego. If this asceticism has found its central place in our life we see that not so many other attempts of 'self-denial' – except that of moderation in all things – is really needed.



HALLOWED BE THY NAME

In the early church 'blessing the name' was an expression for martyrdom, bearing witness to the Father in Jesus by the power of the Spirit. It means more than singing God's praises verbally. In this sense everyone is invited to be martyrs. And we most fully accept the invitation when, at moments of greatest weakness or darkness, we give our selves over into the mystery of Christ.

This is another way of learning to know God by unknowing because at these moments we can't be sure of anything. Faith is always more than certainty. The Name of God is unspeakable and it is spoken in everything that has being. It has an uncountable number of meanings. The mantra leads us into the Name and our saying of the mantra glorifies the Name. As it becomes rooted in our heart and accompanies all we say and think and do during the day we grow in the capacity to 'praise the name of the Lord in all things'.

THY KINGDOM COME

The Kingdom transcends dualities. It is in us *and* among us. The fruits of the spirit, which are the fruits of meditation, appear both through transformation in ourselves and in our ways of relating to others. To see others as a miracle of God's creation is a sign of the Kingdom.

We experience the Kingdom in glimpses because although it is continuously present, we are not. As we come closer to the threshold of stillness in meditation these moments of presence – always reciprocal presence – can deepen and increase in frequency. They are known by their pure joyfulness – a joy that is not dependent on the mind's usual pre-conditions for happiness. Moments of grace mean moments where there is no bargaining and no regret. In one sense they are moments of pure receptivity because 'the love we speak of is not our love for God but God's love for us. God loved us first.' And yet receptivity is not passivity. To be receptive at this level of consciousness requires a deep and sustained gift of self, proceeding from the ongoing contemplative work of renunciation and integration.

THY WILL BE DONE...

The 'will' of God is not a secret command we have to decipher. It is inseparable from the divine act of creation and salvation. And this act is not an act in the human sense but a continuous self-giving in love. It is even simpler than that suggests: God is love.

As long as we think of the will of God as something we are meant to obey, as if it were a command from on high, our knowledge of God stays trapped in the image of God formed from our experience of human authority and power. We will fail to understand the heart of the Gospel revelation and the meaning of Christ – that, as love, God is, in a real sense, powerless. Can love impose itself or force us to respond? It can persevere and influence but it cannot over-ride the uniqueness of the person who is loved. Meditation gradually accustoms us to this way of seeing God because it detaches us from those images of God that the ego has constructed and clings to.

OUR DAILY BREAD

The Eucharistic food reminds us that we know and love God in the flesh as well as in the spirit. But the daily bread we are usually preoccupied with, the material needs and solutions to life's problems, is not the only kind of bread. The other and more nourishing bread is prayer itself. Not what we pray *for* but

that we pray – 'praying itself is good', Origen says. Just as we need physical food at regular times and on a daily basis so we need to pray regularly, daily and at depth. We pray for the gift of prayer and our morning and evening times of meditation are in themselves both the appetite and the satisfying, the request and the response.

FORGIVE US AS...

We love because we know ourselves to be loved, and to the same degree. And the same is true of our capacity to forgive. Forgiveness frees us from the self-fixation of resentment and breaks the cycle of violence precisely as it snaps the addiction to the past. It happens by grace but also by our own efforts, firstly as an interior healing and then as the process of restoring the balance of relationships. Meditation opens us to this grace because if we are truly silent and still we will be exposed to those wounds that find healing by becoming conscious of the divine other.

TEMPTATION AND DELIVERANCE

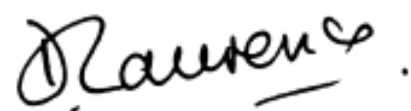
The great temptation, that we are never free from, is to give up. At quite unexpected moments, even after special moments of the Kingdom, it can seem alluringly attractive to float back to the surface of consciousness. Even in the period of meditation itself this tendency – temptations are tendencies – makes itself known in the lethal sleep or the pernicious peace, the holy floating where we say 'I am so near to the threshold of silence that I don't need to do this work of the mantra, which is so faint now anyway, any longer'. Evil is the ultimate and terrible result of superficiality.

*

As the silence of the retreat deepened I found myself remembering a story that a young meditator had told me a few days before we began. He is a young father and a committed meditator. One day on his way home his car was struck by a truck and he went into a tail spin, at one point seeing the truck heading straight for him. Time slowed down and almost stopped. He felt great calm in the stillness even as he was aware that he was on the knife edge between life and death. He was filled with the consciousness of his family and his love for them. And at the same time the mantra arose in his heart. He waited in faith for whatever would happen while trying all he could do to save his life.

It seemed a more dramatic example of what we were doing on the retreat and what we do every ordinary day as we meditate each morning and evening. The meditator takes on the mind of Christ. We do so even as we approach the threshold in our own souls that we know we must cross to become fully alive and fully awake. Day by day – and very clearly at this time of the Christian year – we also see that God has already crossed that threshold in our direction and so the continuing incarnation that we call *our* life is changed by what is accomplished in *his*.

With much love and every blessing in our community for the Christmas Season and the coming year,



Laurence Freeman, OSB

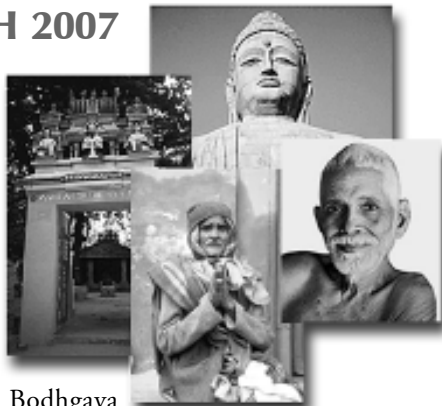
NEWS FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY

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

WCCM PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA

1-17 MARCH 2007

This visit builds on the dialogue begun by the 1998 Way of Peace Pilgrimage, and developed in the 2005 WCCM visit to India and Sri Lanka. We will visit important Buddhist sites near Bodhgaya and the holy Hindu city of Varanasi, on the banks of the Ganga. We will go South, via Chennai, the city of St. Thomas, to some important ashrams where WCCM has enjoyed fruitful dialogue: the Ramana Ashram at the foot of the holy hill of Arunachala, and the ashram of Shantivanam made famous by Abhishiktananda (Fr. Henri le Saux) and Fr. Bede Griffiths. The pilgrimage is being organised by Soul of India Tours. Full details, including prices and booking form, can be found at www.wccm.org and also www.soulofindia.com



MONTE OLIVETO

21-28 July 2007 The theme for this year's retreat will be 'Losing and Finding'. Led again by Laurence Freeman, Giovanni Felicioni and Robert Kiely.

For more information contact Jan at mail@wccm.org

MEXICO RETREAT

Fr Laurence will be in Mexico from 9 to 13 February 2007. You are invited to join him either in Ixtapa at the retreat or to attend one of his conferences in Mexico City. You can find all the information in the website: www.meditacioncristiana.com/events or you can e-mail Lucía Gayón, national coordinator at pax@meditacioncristiana.com or call her at + 52 (755) 55-3-01-20. You are welcome!

CANADA

The Canadian Christian Meditation Community National Conference, June 29-July 1st 2007
Keynote Speaker: Laurence Freeman OSB
Location: University of British Columbia, Vancouver B.C.
Conference Coordinator: Joyce Rogers (joycerogers@shaw.ca)

USA

The US Christian Meditation Community National Conference, February 23-25 Phoenix, Arizona
"Christian Meditation: An Infinite Expansion of Love" with Paul Harris. Dr. Keith Egan and Sister Constance Fitzgerald, OCD will be guest speakers.
Conference Coordinator: Joanne Rapp (joannemr@att.net)

AUSTRALIA

The Australian Christian Meditation Community National Forum, April 27-29 with Laurence Freeman
"Meditation and the Future of Christianity"

More information at

<http://www.christianmeditationaustralia.org/>

ITALY

The Italian Christian Meditation Community
Silent Retreat led by Laurence Freeman, June 15-17

Camaldoli monastery, Arezzo

More information at <http://www.meditazionecristiana.org/>

INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

IN FLORENCE

For some years an inter-religious group has been meeting comprising the Christian Meditation Centre in Florence and other important religious groups of the city, Zen Buddhists, Tibetan Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Anglicans, Bahà'í (Iranian), Ananda Magra (Indians), Sukyo Mahikari (Japanese), Hare Krishna (Indians) and Protestant Christians.

Our work together is to create times of meditation with the purpose of reinforcing the collective commitment towards dialogue and peace. We have two monthly meetings: one takes place in a room in the Palazzo Vecchio lent to us by the city of Florence; the other meets in the centres of the religious groups that are part of this project. Each gathering starts with a reading from all the different traditions present at the meeting and then we have 25 minutes of silence followed by a time of sharing. The participants number between 30 and 60 according to circumstances. Everything is very simple and the atmosphere is always very welcoming and receptive.

The President of the City Council of Florence, Eros Cruccolini supports the program: "This effort shows that at root, experiences of unity and commitment towards peace can be born and develop. Meditation meetings like these are useful for peace because they give ordinary citizens the possibility to be part of the effort to understand the meaning of the world and to resist resigning ourselves to the fatalism of war and hate. These spiritual citizens have chosen to rediscover the value of one's true and deep identity as part of a commitment to a world of peace. This unites more than any declaration of principles."

Marco Lazzeri, Director of the Christian Meditation Centre, Florence: m.lazzeri@infogroup.it

OXFORD

A new weekly Christian Meditation group has started in central Oxford: St Theosevia Centre for Christian Spirituality, 2 Canterbury Road, Oxford
Every Wednesday starting at 7:30 pm.

IRELAND

Kim Nataraja is giving a silent retreat in Dromantine Retreat Centre in the Co Down hills near Newry, Northern Ireland. The theme is "Roots in the Desert", 1-3 June 2007.

ARGENTINA

The first Christian meditation retreat here, held with the support of Bonum, the publisher of Christian meditation titles, attracted nearly a hundred and has stimulated new weekly groups. We are also working together with the meditators in Chile and Paraguay. Magdalena Puebla, National Coordinator, Argentina (malen_puebla@hotmail.com)
Website: www.meditacioncristiana.cl

PORTUGAL

An extended six-week introduction to Christian meditation has started in Lisbon. For more details contact the national Coordinator: Maria Cristina Guedes de Sousa mcristinags@netcabo.pt



MEDITATION PODCASTS

Web visitors may subscribe to RSS feeds or iTunes podcasts of Newsletters and "Meditatio Talks" by pointing their podcatchers to www.wccm.org/images/audio/meditatio/MeditatioTalks06.rss. Direct link at iTunes: <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/viewPodcast?id=203765825>. More podcasts will be posted throughout the coming year.



*New John Main Titles and Editions
from Canterbury Press and Medio Media:*

Monastery Without Walls (Canterbury Press)

A new complete edition of John Main's spiritual letters edited by Laurence Freeman

Word into Silence

John Main's first and enduring classic on meditation – how to and how it is situated in the Christian tradition

Door to Silence

A collection of hitherto unpublished teachings by John Main presented in a new format for more reflective reading

IN FOCUS

MEDITATION CREATES COMMUNITY SOUTH AMERICAN STYLE

I joined the Brazilian Christian Meditation Community in 1996 and began to coordinate the annual visits of Fr Laurence throughout Brazil in 2001. I became the National Coordinator in 2002 and joined the Guiding Board of the World Community in 2003. For the past two years I have been helping to develop the Christian Meditation Community in other countries of South America where groups are now forming, including Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Venezuela. After ten years of meditating and five of coordinating Fr Laurence's visits to Brazil I have begun to learn from experience the meaning of these words of John Main – 'meditation creates community'. I never cease to wonder how so many different kinds of people – with big cultural, national, social and age differences – can feel part of the same community simply by praying (and working) together without most of the links formed by strong structures, rules or organisation. After following the growth of the Brazilian community – which has now more than fifty weekly groups – and then seeing the first groups form in Argentina, Chile and Paraguay, I have come to believe in the truth of Fr John's words. I have come to feel the power of the spirit acting in the silence of prayer and uniting people in a community of love.

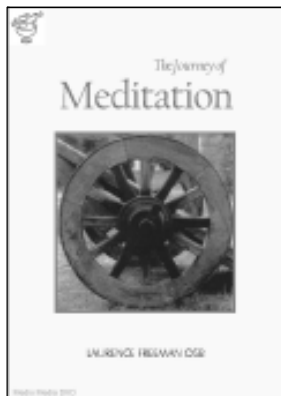
I have just come back from Argentina, Paraguay and Chile where I have seen the familiar signs of a new life of this community. From experience I know there will be crises ahead in the growth process. But I also am sure that through the power of silence we can transcend them because meditation opens the heart directly to love and to the presence of Christ. The need to share this experience within – and beyond – the community is inescapable. It is love that generates community while the 'devil' is the force that divides. After these years of experience I feel that I am part of a spiritual community in all these countries. There is always another step in community: I was talking with Antonio Sosa from Venezuela who came to the retreat in Argentina and will now begin a group there. As we spoke of the experience of community he remarked that his mother had always reminded him that he was named after St Antony of the Desert. The community we belong to extends far back historically as well as geographically.

*Ana.Fonseca@umusic.com
National Coordinator, Brazil*





Christian Meditation Bookstore



THE JOURNEY OF MEDITATION Laurence Freeman OSB

A lucid presentation of the essential teaching on Christian Meditation by Fr Laurence Freeman. These teachings are enriching for the experienced meditator and help to lead the way for the novice giving direction and understanding.

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Laurence Freeman OSB

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72 pp booklet #6292 £3.50 \$6.95

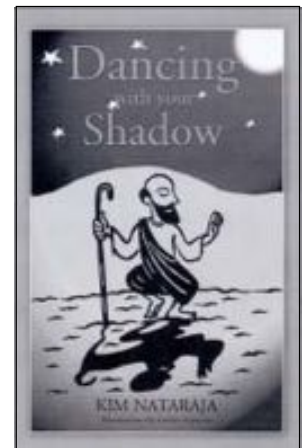
DANCING WITH YOUR SHADOW

Kim Nataraja

Illustrations by Carlos Siqueira

“Written by an experienced teacher of meditation, *Dancing With Your Shadow* not only describes the practice of the ‘art of arts’, giving due weight to stilling the mind and dealing with such problems as distractions and restlessness, but looks at it from the point of view of the whole person, body, mind and spirit. This wide ranging and comprehensive book will be of great interest to all meditators, but especially to those following the Christian meditation re-discovered by John Main. And the stories and quotations from various traditions with which the author illustrates her points are a joy in themselves!” – Shirley du Boulay

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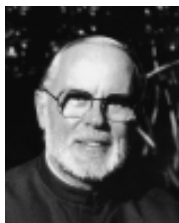
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WORDS BY JOHN MAIN....

We can know no peace if we do not exercise gentleness. Peacemakers must be at peace with themselves. Only peace makes for peace. The only power that can create peace in our world is the power of peace found, known, and experienced in human hearts.

Once found in us this peace is invincible. It is stronger than violence and wiser than fear because peace is creative. It is patient. It knows how to suffer, whereas violence is impatient and destructive.

These truths we must verify not in words but from personal experience. We cannot find peace within ourselves by using violence against ourselves. Door to Silence (2006)

THE WORLD COMMUNITY DEPENDS ON DONATIONS. PLEASE REMEMBER THE COMMUNITY WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR WILL. FOR INFORMATION OR ADVICE CONTACT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE IN LONDON OR YOUR NATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR.



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