



CHRISTIAN MEDITATION NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
St. Mark's
Myddelton Square
London EC1R 1XX
Tel.: +44 20 7278 2070
mail@wccm.org
ISSN 1316 4142
Registered Charity No 327173

The World Community for Christian Meditation

www.wccm.org

International Edition, Vol. 30, No. 2; July 2006



2006 WAY OF PEACE PRAYER AS MEETING

*A coming together of the
contemplative traditions of
Islam and Christianity*

September 16-17

University of York, England

This gathering of Muslims and Christians is a celebration and exploration of our experience and understanding of prayer. In common times of prayer – silent and verbal – we will learn from and with each other of how we pray and why. Central to this event will be the transformative quality of the Remembrance of God (dhikr) and Contemplative Prayer (meditation). In dialogue and friendship we will enter into the worship of God. The aim of the meeting is to bring together the contemplative traditions of Islam and Christianity in a spirit of enquiry and mutual respect.

Speakers will include Dr Musharaf Hussain, Chairman of the Kirimia Institute and Director of the Nottingham Islamia School; Father Laurence Freeman OSB; Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi, author of *Paths of Transcendence: Shankara, Ibn Arabi and Meister Eckhart on Transcendent Spiritual Realization*; Rev Deborah Holmyard, an Anglican priest and Fuad Nahdi, editor of the Muslim publication 'Q News'. The Meeting will also include workshops and a panel of young women and men from the Muslim and Christian faiths discussing contemplative prayer and our way forward together.

The Christian Meditation Trust (UK)

Contact: The London Centre -
uk@wccm.org or (44) 020 7833 9615

Meditation with Children *Ernie Christie Australia*

As Director of Religious Education and Curriculum for the Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Townsville, and a meditator for many years, I have been able to put into place a Diocesan wide program to teach meditation to children from Preschool to Year 12. With the support of my Bishop, Michael Putney (himself a patron of The World Community of Christian Meditation), the Director of Catholic Education in the Townsville Diocese, Dr Cathy Day and the 31 Principals of our schools in the Townsville Diocese, we have started what we hope will be a concentrated, coordinated approach to teaching Christian meditation. The year 2005 was a trial year for the program and Fr Laurence Freeman with Bishop Michael Putney launched the Diocesan wide initiative in 2006.

Since all of our teachers may not be meditators, the program acknowledges the journey that both the teacher and the child are on. The unfolding of this journey for teachers and children alike has been the real strength of this approach. The program also acknowledges that while meditation is about stillness, silence and simplicity, we remain complex people. Christian meditation is a gift. Accepting this gift and thereby allowing the grace of God to unfold in our lives is an essential component of this method of teaching Christian meditation to children.

The program is supported by a book titled "Coming Home; A Guide to Teaching Meditation to Children", a supporting DVD and associated multimedia presentations for teachers and parents. The Diocese will also conduct two intensive formation retreats for teachers every year to deepen their understanding of this form of prayer.

It may seem a paradox that children can be still and silent and enjoy it, but, like adults, children yearn for the experience of meeting God. Children do have a deep spiritual awareness even before

they are taught a religious faith. They come equipped for their spiritual journey; they have awareness and openness, which all too often can get pushed aside as the child grows older and becomes entrenched in the 'action' / 'doing' world they are so much conditioned by. When teaching Christian meditation to children, words are not everything, so by allowing communication through stillness, silence and the senses, we can trust in God to do the work of God and speak to children in the silence.

This program insists that teachers of Christian meditation to children must accept the following assumptions about the spiritual development of children if they are to be effective in teaching them to meditate: Recognise that each child is born as a spiritual being; be prepared to work with and alongside the child in the spiritual journey; listen to what the child has to offer; honour each child's relationship with the divine; always make the experiences of meditation positive; never judge the child's meditation.

In 2006, 31 schools have been introduced to the concept of teaching Christian meditation to children. This involves over 1,500 teachers and 15,000 children from ages 5 to 18. The seeds of Christian meditation have been sown and as these seeds take root we hope to see a rich harvest of young people and young adults begin to blossom into contemplative people who

are fully aware of these words: "be still and know that I am God."

A LETTER FROM LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Dearest friends,

It was a time of rainbows. From the meditation room on the cliffs of the Beara Peninsula in West Cork we looked over the sea's ever-changing displays of light and shade. There was a lot of weather. It came and went like a child changing costume for a play. In fact it changed so often that it made it difficult to speak about in the superficial way that one usually does speak about the weather, to fill in silences in conversation or to start a conversation with a new acquaintance. It was too powerfully present, too replete with its own sense of drama to be a safe topic. When you least expected it there were rainbows, over the sea and land, sometimes double and once a triple, quietly appearing to remind us of the primordial covenant of humanity with beauty. The height and sweep of the panoramic view encouraged the attitude of detachment, taking in the beauty without trying to imprison it. Simone Weil said that beauty is the proof that incarnation is possible.

Community and friendship are also living proof that we can know God in the flesh. And spiritual community is what we were there to discuss and to practice, especially as Christians and Buddhists in the retreat hosted by the Dzochen Beara Centre. Like meditation itself, which we practiced together during these days, the challenges and the fruits of community are universal. Sharing our experience of them across our religious differences proved how much, at the deepest structures of humanity, we also have in common. (*Spiritual Community*, Medio Media 2006).

MEDITATION CREATING COMMUNITY

When John Main bravely said that 'meditation creates community', he was expressing an insight born of his own deep and, at times, painful experience of both. The link between these two apparently separate aspects of the spiritual journey leads us through one of the portals of paradox that opens up onto the mystery of our own being and so makes us stumble upon the mysterious beauty of human life. Surely, one would think, meditation is solitary. No one can meditate for me, or on my behalf, and so it is one of those things, like birth and death which confronts us with the inescapable reality of our uniqueness. And surely, one would think, community is nurtured above all by communication and shared action. Being silent and still together might help us deal with the dynamics of relationship but surely cannot lead us to experience those strong connections with others that form community.

Experience, however, shows that genuine and lasting community is precisely related to the encounter with our own uniqueness. Any human organisation that does not admit and revere the uniqueness of its members – even at the risk of its own survival – tends to degenerate into oppressive structures that prevent rather than facilitate human growth. Meditation permits us to experience directly the common ground we share with everyone and with all nature and so we see, to our surprise, how silently but radically it dismantles the barriers of fear and exclusion with which we have to deal in most human encounters.

The test of community – and what makes it interesting and transformative – is not whether we can love those of our own tribe (that's hard enough much of the time), but whether we can make community with the stranger and even the erstwhile enemy. One evening during my recent month-long visit to Australia I shared the platform with a Muslim. Shortly before 9-11, he had formed an organisation to help overcome the suspicion and stereotyping that were already at work in many minds towards the Muslim population. He has had great success, but this evening there was a proposal that as Christians and Muslims, all children of Abraham, we should not only talk but also meditate together. Much discussion took place before the evening about the possible negative reaction that could happen among those who, suspecting either a Sufi or Christian plot, might feel uncomfortable or manipulated. In the end, we wisely agreed to play it by ear and, hearing with the ear of the heart, we did indeed take a period of silence together in the course of the evening. In the discussions and encounters after, it seemed that it was the meditation that had opened people's hearts to the experience of the meaning of the nice and good words we had all been using. Not for the first time, people thanked me not for what I had said but for saying nothing.

Some theologians are still arguing about whether we can (or should) actually pray with people of different faiths. When we refuse to pray with followers of our own faith it is a sure sign of schism – the tragic suffering which the Anglican communion is undergoing. As regards other kinds of believers, it is a sign of exclusion or of fear that ultimately changes the enriching potential of our differences from portals of paradox into divisions of contradiction. The World Community's *Way of Peace* this year is called "Prayer as Meeting" (University of

York, September 15-17) and it brings together Muslims and Christians who will meet not only in the discussion of our respective spiritual traditions but also in their practice. We will observe the *salat*, the five daily prayers of the Muslim, which relates so closely to the Christian Liturgy of the Hours, but we will also integrate silent meditation periods. In organising the conference we have found the response to this proposal universally positive. It is as if in our extreme and increasingly violent global divisions we are discovering a need and hunger for what will most powerfully heal us of our aggression and fear: sharing in silence together the constant presence, so often forgotten or ignored, of the Spirit. The early Christians thought of the Eucharist as the 'medicine of immortality'. They meant that which overcomes the culture of death in human relations. If we understand this profound insight – and see what the Eucharist really means – we are compelled to seek the spiritual counterpart to the Eucharist in our wounded and often death-dealing relations with other faiths. It is demonstrably in meditation, the universal dimension of prayer, that this medicine can be found.

COMMUNITY WITH CHILDREN

Spiritual community can be experienced, therefore, not only with our own co-religionists but with members of other faiths. It can even be realised in relations with those who do not so much have different language or beliefs but who seem to live in parallel universes: children.

For the past two years, the Catholic diocese of Townsville in Australia has been introducing meditation to the children in its school system. With the support of Bishop Michael Putney and the creative development and implementation of the vision by the Director of Religious Education, Ernie Christie, a remarkable model of global importance has been generated.

During my week in the diocese in June I spoke to and meditated with a thousand teachers and met with those who have been responsible for leading this pilot project. I also meditated with some of the children, from pre-school to grade 12, who have been the beneficiaries of this initiative. I remembered the first time I had meditated with children. In the first year we were in Canada, John Main asked me if I would like to take a small group of children on Saturday mornings. I said I would not. I was too busy with my studies and the running of the house. But under obedience I did and soon discovered what a gift it is to meditate with children and to see how direct and simple is their experience of the Kingdom within. It taught me how much the Kingdom of God is about presence – being present to the presence of God in the present moment. But although the children were clearly able to sit still and silent they had no questions or comments. So I began to doubt if they were really doing it. Maybe, I thought, they were just daydreaming, biding time before the juice and cookies. Then when they brought their friends along I asked them to introduce the newcomers to meditation and,

listening to them do this, I was reassured that they not only understood it but were actually practising it. Through those years when the group was meeting the only two spontaneous comments, made immediately after meditation, that I remember were, "Phew that was difficult" and, on another occasion, "That was nice". They could summarise the whole of mystical theology.

Greg Ryan's popular picture book "My Happy Heart" later went on to encourage many parents to introduce meditation to their children at home. Now the Townsville project has taken this contemplative dimension of prayer and Christian faith into the broader vision of education. Children not only can meditate but they love meditating. Without exception the pilot teachers reported a positive response from the children and their enthusiasm for regular practice. It is not necessary to restrict children to 'guided meditation' sessions where their prayer remains at the level of imagination or to vocal prayer alone. They are capable and willing to embrace the gentle discipline of apophatic – imageless and silent prayer. I think they like it because it is real and because naturally human beings prefer reality to illusion. Better than we might think children can understand what Origen said about prayer in the third century: "We do not pray to get benefits from God but to become like God. Just prayer itself is good. It calms the mind, reduces sin and promotes good deeds."

PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDHOOD

Throughout history the spiritual community of the human family has tended to exclude children. Much depended on the dominant social perception of the child and this has gone through phases. In the ancient world the child was transitional and insignificant perhaps because of the likelihood that most children would not survive through childhood. They were often buried as we might bury a family pet today. Later, children were recognised but treated only as miniature adults, objects often of ridicule as little clowns. In the later Romantic and Freudian periods of culture our perception of childhood became more complex and interesting. Adults have become painfully aware of how the influences of childhood determine personality and character for the rest of life. With the contemporary exposure of the prevalence of child abuse we have also been shocked into a selective but highly protective attitude to children even while their commercial exploitation continues in western consumer culture and in the third world.

Today, a new attitude to childhood is developing which is surprisingly but deeply linked to the spiritual aspirations of modern men and women. Faced with the accelerating, complex crises of the environment and socio-political life we are awakening to the need for a spiritual approach to our situation. We can only fail to solve our crisis if we fail to see it with the eye of the heart. Only a contemplative consciousness can produce the wisdom and self-control we need. Only

simplicity can resolve complexity. This is why childhood is becoming our teacher. Jesus who in this respect as in many others stood apart from the limited perceptions of his time presented the child as a model of the spiritual journey. "Unless you become like a little child," he said, "you will never enter the Kingdom of God." Going even further he said that to receive a child meant to receive him and not only him but the 'one who sent me'. Teachers and parents know what it means to "receive" a child: to give children sustained and selfless attention, to reverence the emergence of their gifts and their questions. And so to receive a child involves both taking responsibility for them but also learning from them. (Visit the new WCCM website for meditation and children: www.meditationwithchildren.com)

Spiritual community requires leadership but leaders tend to become elements of power systems that themselves can impede the growth of the spiritual life. When I was visiting a class and was wearing my white habit a little girl came up and asked me with a devastating absence of irony 'are you an angel?'. We learn from children that although we relate to each other in all the ways we serve and love one another there is no hierarchy in the Kingdom, only the equality of the spirit. This is connected with the other aspect of my Australian visit that I learned much from, the relationship of the modern world to the indigenous peoples. For two hundred years the Aboriginal people have suffered greatly from the arrival and arrogance of the white man. But although their culture, with its deep contemplative spirit, has been so devastated they are still extraordinarily empowered to teach us both what we need to learn to survive and to remind us of essential aspects of human nature that, to our cost, we have forgotten. We must take seriously any culture that allows its people to feel concerned for those who have abused them and who remain willing to share the wisdom of their tradition which so many of their abusers have trampled on.

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Community is always a bigger undertaking than we imagine it will be. We are attracted to it for good reasons but often with romantic expectations. It promises to ease the ache of human loneliness. It offers us what seems a luxury to modern urban people, the opportunity 'to be a local'. This aspiration was third on a list of thirty things that a young person said she wanted to accomplish in her life. And it promises us a supportive context of life in which we can reconnect our work to meaning and value from which they are today so often severed. Yet community challenges us. Any real experience of community will soon melt the masks of the ego-identity and bring us to feel the shame and regret that accompany egocentric behaviour. We are soon confronted with the choice of being plunged into further purifying depths of self-knowledge and honesty or of retreating back into protective isolation. It is hard to live in community.

Usually, those who think they are living in community have privately ceased to do so just because it is so hard. It is especially hard to see that the church itself is essentially a community that, as Rowan Williams says, 'exists because something has happened that makes the entire process of self-justification irrelevant.' It may seem to us easier to evade the situations where we have to justify behaviour that deep down we know to be wrong. But it is even more difficult to admit our faults within a group of people who are held together by an experience of this 'something that has happened' to make it unnecessary to justify ourselves. Forgiveness and acceptance seem things we have to earn and merit. Then they won't overwhelm us and change the way we see ourselves. The *something* is a continuous release of love into the human realm, flowing through the heart of the human person that anticipates even our repentance and makes the prodigal son's set speech of apology unnecessary. It is hard to believe because it seems too good to be true. It is hard to trust because we are fearful of being changed by being open to experiencing it.

It is this something realised in spiritual community that is the treasure of the Christian experience and really all we have to share. It is a secret, as St Paul called it: 'the secret is this: Christ in you, hope of a glory to come.' But it is not a secret in the sense of an esoteric knowledge reserved for a few and guarded by them – a secret that gives us power over others. This sense of the 'spiritual mystery' still fascinates us and sells books and film-rights. But it is altogether superficial and deeply unsatisfying. The secret which we discover in meditation and share in community is universal and open. Children know it as children. Adults usually have to re-discover it.

LOSING AND FINDING

Spiritual community is the context in which the dynamic of losing and finding is faced and lived. It is the cycle of the spiritual life, personally and communally. Jesus often uses the metaphor to describe the dynamic of the Kingdom as well as the evolving process of the individual's journey. Remember the last time you suddenly realised you had lost something precious or valuable – your wallet or passport, car keys or a ring of great emotional meaning. The feelings that surge up – panic, self-reproach, grief, anxiety – seem out of proportion to the actual value involved but connect us to all the patterns of past loss and our fears for the future. It touches into the fear of death that lies hidden most of the time and so reminds us that death itself is the ultimate separation we dread. We feel helpless, we begin to bargain with our gods; the most rational person can become superstitious. And when we find the lost treasure what do we feel? Relief, an overwhelming happiness and sense of reassurance, a glimpse of resurrection – and the nature of community. In the parable where Jesus uses this theme those

who find what they have lost call in their friends to celebrate its recovery with them. In their experience of loss they were aware only of isolation and the terrible individualism of suffering. In finding again they are restored to their essential connectedness. They belong again. They are at home with themselves.

In community we discover that this dynamic of losing and finding is a cycle through which the nature of life is discovered and lived authentically. Even what we have found again we must lose another time, let go of, otherwise it becomes a possession and we become possessed by it and it loses its own true nature. In the joy of finding we touch the gratuitousness of the gift of life. But very soon we doubt this and begin to cling to what we gradually learn to receive and to hold as freely as it is given. It is a hard lesson because we can only learn it as long as we are practicing it. The instant we conceptualise it and stop living it we slip out of the wisdom of the childlike experience of the present moment. We forget it almost as soon as we have learned it again.

Meditation is the great teacher of how to live because through meditation we learn to accept the gift of being and let go of it. The very particular work of the mantra teaches us this. We say it, we lose it as we get distracted; we find it as soon as we start saying it again and in coming home to it so faithfully we make the journey. Attention and distraction together express the dynamic of losing and finding. Like the two sides of a ladder this is the spiritual ascent, through solitude into human community and through this community into communion with the Trinitarian community that is God.

FR BEDE AND FR JOHN

No one saw this connexion between contemplation and community more clearly in modern times than John Main. And no one saw the importance of this insight better than Bede Griffiths whose centenary of birth we celebrate this year. Recently, on another high cliff, this time at the Camaldolese monastery at Big Sur, California, looking over the Pacific, I took part in a conference that explored his prophetic influence. In *The New Creation in Christ*, the book of Fr Bede's John Main Seminar in which he discussed John Main's vision of community, we see how radically Fr Bede had come to re-imagine modern monastic community in the light of meditating lay communities. Meditation does not replace other forms of prayer and the new forms of monastic community it generates will not necessarily replace the conventional monastic institutions. But meditation does change things at every level. It opens up for those open to change a new way of living in community in the modern world. The prophetic insights of Fr Bede and Fr John into this connection do not foretell exactly what's going to happen. But they help us see deeply into what is happening: to see, for example, that the dissolving of old forms in Christianity, tragic as it may feel because it is truly a death,

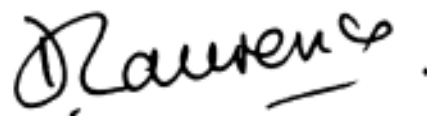
is, nevertheless, not all bad news. For those who can lose what they find and find it again the present crisis is a way of sharing more deeply in the death and resurrection mystery itself. The strength and hope we need to go through this with faith and good grace is found by entering into the still centre of the storm itself through the pattern of faithful meditation. Community offers the spiritual friendship and leadership necessary to sustain this journey beyond the ego. And community is the spiritual fruit of the practice itself. We are involved in a deeply intertwined mystery of unity.

For many modern people the biggest obstacle to entering into this mystery is the inability even to approach it in the right terms. We look at everything in the measure of success and achievement or self-fulfilment and we are increasingly impatient for quick and measurable results. As a manifestation of the transmission of wisdom, spiritual community is a powerful help in overcoming this obstacle. It teaches us by the love and acceptance we experience through others that the "I" that wants to be perfect is the first hurdle that must be transcended. It is the first renunciation to be made. Experience is the teacher, said the early desert monks. Community is the way in which the experience becomes grounded in daily reality and therefore becomes transformative. Several of the teachers who have been teaching meditation to the children in their classes remarked to me on the transformation it was working in the children both as individuals and as a group. They lived and learned together as a happier and more harmonious community. If we can see what the children we are teaching are teaching us there is hope.

The inspiring work that has been done in the Townsville diocese points to the profound fruitfulness of daily practice. It could not have happened had there not been people there committed to the pilgrimage. When I was visiting Mount Isa, a small mining town five hundred miles west of Townsville I was giving an evening talk in a church when a great muffled explosion and rumble made me stop. I wondered if there had been an earthquake until I saw the audience smiling at my surprise. I learned that the explosion marks the beginning and end of each working day and locals take it for granted as naturally as sunrise and sunset. I remarked it might make a good reminder for times of meditation. We may not all have such convenient means to help stay on the daily pilgrimage but the explosion of silence which our world needs calls us to faithful and loving practice nonetheless.

11 July, St. Benedict's Day

With much love,



Laurence Freeman, OSB

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

COMING HOME FOR CHILDREN

I was with Fr Laurence in Townsville in June as he launched the Children's Meditation Programme (see page 1 and Father Laurence's letter).

At the opening session in Mt Isa, Bishop Michael said how fitting it was to launch the programme there on the fringe of the desert, as this form of prayer had its origins in the monastic desert. In meditation, he said, we enter into the heart of God through the experience of Jesus through the Spirit. It was not just praying to God, he said, but finding a way to enable children to taste the deep waters – the deep experience of God through stillness and silence. It was a form of prayer that is finding a home in our time and will speak to the hearts of young Australians.

Fr Laurence spoke challengingly on the role of The Contemplative Teacher and posed the question, "Is prayer important to me? How then do I pray?" To the early Christians, "the way you pray is the way you live. Can we say the same?" Jesus is the teacher of prayer, St Augustine says because "Jesus prays in us, with us and for us." So, we teach people to pray by praying with them. He urged teachers not just to be a religion teacher, but to live out the model of Jesus as teacher in their vocation. Teachers who had piloted the programme also shared their insights and experiences. For all of them it had become a personal faith journey.

I also accompanied Fr Laurence when we visited some classrooms to meditate with the children. We visited children in Year 6 (11 year olds) and despite a film crew, local journalist and photographer in the room the children sat still in a circle and meditated with Fr Laurence for 10 very silent minutes. Later we visited a delightful preschool class of 4 year olds. They were having group work when we arrived and when some music played I heard a little one say, 'It's meditation time'. They busied themselves setting out their prayer mat, prayer bear and candle and set out their sign: "Quiet please! We are meditating." They settled quickly and quietly when they heard the chime and began to say their mantra (Maranatha) silently.

Cathy Day later said, "In many ways this is counter-cultural to the busy secular world we live in, but the Christian message has always been counter-cultural. Jesus challenged the conventional wisdom of His time. His message today continues to challenge the conventional wisdom of our time. It may seem a paradox to many that children can be still and silent and enjoy it, but like adults, children also yearn for the experience of meeting God."

Thanks to the Townsville Education Office, the World Community will have the 'Coming Home' book and an accompanying DVD to use in sharing this experience in Townsville with other parts of the world.

Pauline Peters, Chair of the Guiding Board.

For further information visit:

www.meditationwithchildren.com

MONTE OLIVETO RETREAT: SEPTEMBER 2006

Siena, Italy

Silent Retreat with Laurence Freeman OSB

Saturday September 2nd to Saturday September 9th.

"Wholeness: Cutting the bonds that control us"

2007 WORLD COMMUNITY PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA

Next year's WCCM pilgrimage (1-17 March) will build on the dialogue begun by the 1998 Way of Peace Pilgrimage and developed in the 2005 visit to India and Sri Lanka. We will visit Buddhist sites in and near Bodhgaya, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, as well as the holy Hindu city of Varanasi, on the banks of the Ganga. We travel 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 Arunachala, and the ashram of Shantivanam founded by Abhishiktananda (Fr. Henri le Saux) and Fr. Bede Griffiths. As before, the pilgrimage is being organised by Soul of India Tours. Full details, including prices and booking form, can be found on the website ([wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)) and also on Soul of India's website, at <http://www.soulofindia.com/pages/WCCM2007.html>.

ITALY

The Italian Group Leaders met at Torrazzetta in March and in May Fr Laurence led the annual silent retreat at the monastery of Camaldoli.

Discussions are proceeding with the community that runs the beautiful large retreat centre of Torrazzetta, near Milan, and with the local diocese which we hope will lead to the Christian Meditation Community in Italy taking responsibility for its direction. The 2006 Italian national Conference with Fr Laurence and other speakers will be on the theme of 'Silence: A Way to Life' at Torrazzetta, Borgo Priolo (PV) in September.

Mariagrazia Dusi, National Coordinator
(wccmitalia@virgilio.it)

GERMANY

Annual Weekend Retreat with Fr. Laurence

In April we had a wonderful and inspiring retreat ("The Cycle of Growth: The Pilgrimage and Process of Meditation") with Fr. Laurence in Würzburg. This annual retreat is very important for the German WCCM Community as it always gives everyone strength to persevere on our pilgrimage. Among the participants were a good number of young people as Fr. Laurence's book, *Jesus, Der Lehrer In Dir*, has become popular. His wide-ranging interview on a well-known German radio station will also help the work of the World Community in Germany. We are delighted that the 2008

John Main Seminar will be held here in Germany.

Mariya Plotzki, National Coordinator
(*hm.plotzki@gmx.de*)

FIRST GROUPS IN CHILE

We started our first Christian meditation group in November 2005; we are a group of 10-12 men and women. We have been meeting every week since then. Among the wonderful things about our new beginning is the gift of extraordinary friendship. We have all been blessed, with the practice of Christian meditation rooted in our "Maestro Jesús"; so as Father John said, "There are always greater, deeper community experiences ahead". We have a local newsletter in Spanish, and we will start with retreats soon. We have just started our second meditation group, for university students, most of them, from 5th year of Medicine School of the "Universidad de Concepción". This group is also very special; from the beginning you could feel the wonderful energy of young people, joy, and lots of responsibility; these students make a great effort to meet every week, and every week you can see the changes and the confidence growing day by day. We started another group at the end of April, and we are also making plans for our Meditation Center for next year. For now we have 2 offices downtown, and a house in the suburbs where we meet every week in the middle of a noisy city but when we hear the sound of the meditation bell, even that noise becomes softer. Since I read this phrase, many years ago, it stayed in my heart: 'Even though you may be physically distant from other meditators, you are united with them in the Spirit'. Here in Concepcion in the south of Chile I feel the World Community's love and support every day for all of us here and thank all of you who have written encouraging me.

Maria Rosa Gonzalez B. (mr_meditacion@yahoo.es)

Visite también la web en español de La Comunidad Meditación Cristiana: www.meditacioncristiana.com.

FIRST GROUP IN PERU

The first Christian meditation group has formed in Peru. I first found the Spanish website (www.meditacioncristiana.com), subscribed to the weekly newsletter, and am becoming increasingly committed. You will find the contact information on the WCCM homepage.

Contact: Pedro-Luis Lozada, Coordinator
(*pllozada@gmail.com*)

UNITED STATES

The School: Essential Teaching Workshop in California

There will be a WCCM School "Essential Teachings Workshop" at Santa Sabina Center in San Rafael, CA, November 3-5, 2006. The School's main objective is to support and nurture those growing in commitment to the practice of meditation. The weekend workshop is the first stage of The School. Its aim is to deepen knowledge of the tradition and to build up confidence to pass on the gift of meditation to others. Part of the weekend will be presenting an introductory talk in a small group setting and to discuss frequent questions concerning the teaching. There are also talks given on the Essential Teaching, the History of the Tradition, and Psychological Stages of the Journey followed by small group discussions about Word into Silence and Cassian's Conferences IX and X. The presenters are Gene Bebeau, US Coordinator of the WCCM School; Joanne Rapp, Director of Cornerstone, a WCCM Center in Phoenix; and Steve Lodesky, Director of Medio Media US.

Jeannie Battagin, San Francisco Coordinator
(*jbherenow@msn.com*)

INDIA

Deepening the Practice

In April a group of meditators from Mumbai completed one year of regular monthly meetings aimed at deepening the practice of Christian Meditation. We began with the regular practitioners but soon found that our meetings attracted the novice and the curious as well. The result has been a year-long programme of exposure to various aspects of meditation. It has also turned out to be an initiation to many. There was a two-day Silent Retreat during the Season of Advent. 'Days of silence were held in March and April during Lent. The online "Weekly Readings" are sent out to meditators. Supplementary Readings from the WCCM website are also made available each week with the readings. This has in good measure made up for the lack of access to books on Christian Meditation that are not available at present. Two years after Fr. Laurence visited us, the practice of Christian meditation has taken firm root in this city. It is a time to give thanks and rejoice.

Christopher Mendoca, Mumbai Coordinator
(*pach7882@yahoo.co.uk*)

Fr Laurence will be leading a group of students on a pilgrimage and retreat in India in July. He will be returning to teach in Mumbai in January.



Dearest

Friends

of the World Community for Christian Meditation

St. Mark's
Myddelton Square
London EC1R 1XX
Tel.: +44 20 7278 2070
friendswccm@yahoo.com.sg
www.friendsinmeditation.com

“Thank you.”

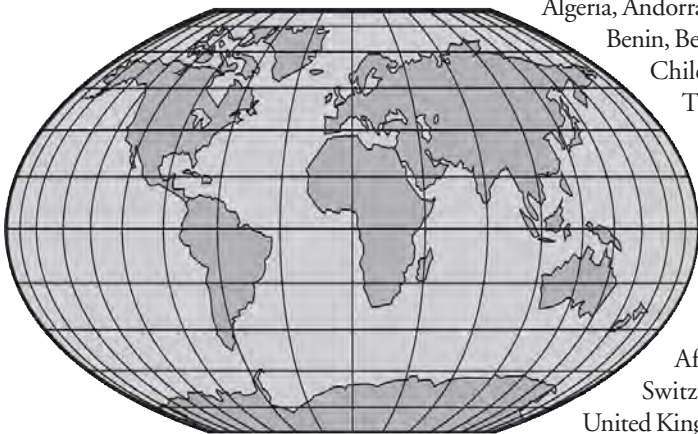
“Here in the heart of Africa, in the ‘Pearl of Africa’, there is a small group... there are hearts that are ‘breathing’ the Spirit that was specially spread by John Main” *Uganda*

“Your generosity (of the free Meditatio CDs) that you sent has supplied our community with ‘manna from heaven’ – a manna that will feed us with inspiration for years to come...” *Australia*

“The hole in my soul has been healed... I have finally come home.” *China*



There are close to 1,500 meditation groups in over 110 countries, sharing the teachings in more than 15 different languages.



Algeria, Andorra, Antigua, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Bermuda, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burma, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dutch Antilles (Curacao), East Timor, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Gibraltar, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Caledonia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, St Lucia, St Vincent, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tobago, Trinidad, Tunisia, UAE, Uganda, United Kingdom, USA, Venezuela, Vietnam, West Africa, Western Samoa, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Did You Know

A number of the writings and publications of Fr John Main and Fr Laurence Freeman have been and continue to be translated and published in an increasing number of different languages to facilitate the sharing of the core teachings of Christian Meditation among the growing number of seekers and meditators around the world.

Fr Laurence Freeman's book,

“Christian Meditation – Your Daily Practice” has, alone, been translated and published in more than 12 different languages, including French, German, Italian, Dutch, Czech, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, and Malayalam.

Much of the translation, editing, and publication work is undertaken and supported by volunteers and *Friends*.

Not all of the published translated works are financially viable if viewed and measured in commercial terms; sales and anticipated sales have not yet reached a point where they can overtake time and production costs. Nonetheless, the works are published in the hope that they will make a difference to seekers and meditators who will be introduced to the core teachings in their native language.

Dear Meditators & Friends

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the re-launched **Friends** newsletter!

The Friends Programme celebrated its 10th birthday last year. It was launched in 1995 when we realised we could not meet the demands of our growing community without financial support, even though most of our work is undertaken by volunteers.

Our outreach programmes now extend worldwide to places, communities and causes as diverse as:

- PRISONS
- HOSPICES
- REHABILITATION CENTRES
- NURSING HOMES FOR THE AGED
- SCHOOLS FOR THE VERY YOUNG
- YOUTHS GROUPS
- BUSINESS LEADERS
- SEMINARIANS AND NOVICES
- INTERFAITH DIALOGUE
- PEACE & HEALING

The call for financial support for our work has never been greater with the increasing demands for:

- RETREATS and introductory workshops

- TRANSLATIONS
- TRAINING for new teachers and group leaders
- RESOURCES for communities and lone meditators in countries without infrastructural support.

Christian Meditation is making a significant difference in people's lives and the call to reach out further is urgent, as the messages in this newsletter testify. We hope therefore that meditators and meditation groups worldwide will be inspired to support our work, as Friends of the WCCM.

You can choose to support the WCCM as:

- AN INDIVIDUAL FRIEND or
 - A GROUP FRIEND
- (with your meditation group members)

If you would like to find out more about the Friends Programme, please do not hesitate to contact us or visit our [website](#) at the contact details provided at the end of this newsletter.

I wish you peace.



Leonard Ong
INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR,
FRIENDS PROGRAMME
friendswccm@yahoo.com.sg

Did You Know

Since 2005, the Community has been editing and producing transcripts as well as CDs of various audio recordings of talks on Christian Meditation that were given by various teachers, including Fr John Main and Fr Laurence Freeman.

The talks in these "Meditatio" CDs were edited with meditation groups in mind; each track on these CDs was edited to fit nicely into a one-hour meditation group meeting.

A free copy of these "Meditatio" CDs is then sent out to all group leaders around the world for their use and transcripts are provided upon request.

It takes on average at least 80 production hours to edit, transcribe, produce, and distribute each batch of "Meditatio" CDs.

This project has been made possible by the generosity of **Friends** and volunteers who give generously of themselves, their time, energy, and resources to transcribe, edit, produce, and finance the production and distribution costs.

MEDITATION BRINGS HEALING & WHOLENESS

Where there is Emotional Emptiness

Retreats, talks and presentations by Fr Laurence and other teachers of meditation have transformed lives. People the world over ask for their presence, but many cannot afford to pay for the travel expenses.

"It was not until September 2000 when I met Fr. Laurence that my prayer life took a new turn. I knew that I had found my teacher. Since then, I have, together with a few others, accompanied Fr. Laurence to visit China, Hong Kong and Taiwan in 2004. There Fr. Laurence introduced and spoke to hundreds of seminarians and sisters. Now the seedlings are taking root. As I write this, my heart is full of gratitude and peace. Not only has the hole in my soul been healed, but I have finally come home. I have found my mission, the purpose I was created for."
CHINA, L.K., Jan 2006

"Fr Laurence's South African visit in February 2004 was seminal. About 300 South Africans receive the quarterly newsletter of the WCCM. Group members coming into contact with this practice for the first time are surprised to discover beauty and peace inside of themselves and among friends in small groups."
SOUTH AFRICA, Christa Roodt, Dec 2005



Where there is Spiritual Hunger

Meditators worldwide cry out for resources to sustain them on their journey. Group leaders ask for resources to help them share the teaching. We send out teachings quarterly in a newsletter and a free CD. We also publish books and audio-video resources in as many languages as possible even where they are not commercially viable.

“Thank you for the materials you sent. Here in the heart of Africa, in the ‘Pearl of Africa’, there is a small group of about 15 meditators whose hearts are ‘breathing’ the Spirit that was specially spread by John Main and other great spiritual writers.” *UGANDA, Pierpaolo Monella MCCJ, Jan 2006*

“I received your letter and package. Indeed, I was very happy and my friends and fellow seminarians were happy, too. To tell you the truth, whoever has gone through those works marvelled at them. Some are even writing articles based on the inspiration gotten from them. We are continually reaping the fruits of the materials. They are highly simplifying and they treat very practical issues. Thanks for your magnanimity.”
NIGERIA, Okechukwu Gerald Ndubuisi, Mar 2004

“Now that I am in a very good position of forming a group of meditators, I need very urgently a copy of A Pearl of Great Price and anything else that can be useful to me.”
KENYA, Sr Agnes Njiera, Nazareth Sisters Novitiate, Jun 2003

“I receive your newsletters regularly. I practice meditation twice a day. I need it to find myself and the people that I am assisting in God. They are mothers, widowed and single, plus children in the slum, people that are really starving, living in a single rotten room with no sanitation, sick people, many of them affected by AIDS, children so hungry that they are searching for food in the rubbish of the market. Some of the women are also prostitutes. I try to help these people to know God, our loving Father. We pray together and then meditate for a short time.” *KENYA, Sr Carmela Corona Nicoluzzi, Jul 2003*

“Growing up in a Christian tradition, I could believe in it, but I was not fulfilled by it. In the stillness and the concentration of meditation I experienced the meaning of love and, for the first time, Jesus’ teaching became very vital, very clear and I was able to recognize that life is love, that love is God. I read Word into Silence, and was so enthusiastic about the vision in that book that I started to translate it into Dutch/ Flemish. I also made other translations.” *BELGIUM, Agnes d’Hooghe, Jan 2006*

“There are a lot of very good books published here in the Czech Republic, but only one so far with the Christian Meditation topic, John Main’s Moment of Christ. So it is like the wintry day hovering over the country. We know the light is there, the sun is shining, yet it is still cloudy and cold.”
PRAGUE, Karel Fousta, Dec 2005

Where Children are in Need

Young children and youths experience loneliness and a yearning for God. Bringing meditation to them early can nurture wholesome growth.

Children have a yearning to experience God within them, but often they do not have the words to voice these desires. I realised that they didn’t want merely to learn about Jesus and God in their religion lessons: they wanted to experience God in their heart.

The teachers at Emmaus Catholic School in South Australia found this to be true. The children liked meditating so much that after the first day, they asked if they could meditate every day. Here are some comments from a few students:

“I felt like I was in Jesus’ house”

“I felt God inside my heart”

“I like meditating and anyone can meditate”

“When I meditate I become calm and still”

AUSTRALIA, Barbara O’Halloran, Dec 2005



In the **Anguish of Pain**

“The most significant change I have observed in myself since I began to meditate, is my attitude to ‘Pain.’ Ten years ago when my doctor remarked that I had been given a ‘raw deal in life,’ I agreed wholeheartedly. To know that there is no cure for this pain, that each and every day for the remainder of my life, the pain will increase in intensity. Yes, it is easy to feel sorry for myself, and believe that I have indeed been given a ‘raw deal in life’.

More than eighteen years have passed since I began to tread the way of the mantra. Wonder of wonders, I now have a way to gain a reprieve from this awful pain. Whenever the pain is at its peak, I go to my Meditation Room. I close my eyes, and in silence begin to repeat my mantra – Maranatha. The greatest distraction for me is the pain. However, I continue to listen to my word, until it sinks deep, ever deeper into my heart. Then it happens; yes, the pain has gone maybe just for a moment or two. As I end my meditation I am relaxed, refreshed; ready to continue the journey of my life.”
PERTH, AUSTRALIA, Marie O’Leary (who has lived with chronic pain for many years), Dec 2005

When facing the **Fear of Death**

“I have been teaching Christian Meditation for almost 6-7 years to very ill men and women. And I have some wonderful stories like Pablo’s story. He was a 32 year old young man, and a week before getting married the doctors discovered that he had terminal lung cancer, though he had never smoked. He called me immediately. I said OK, I know you are very scared, but I know we are going to survive this moment.

On Saturday when he was getting married, I taught him and his bride, Angelica, how to meditate. I told him to trust in his perfect master, Jesus. He listened, smiled and said, “I know I will be OK”.

They got married that night. The next day he went to the hospital to get his first chemotherapy treatment. After some weeks I went to see him and started meditating together again. After two months, they received the incredible news that Angelica was pregnant. He meditated many times a day with a seriousness that I had never seen before, and after a couple of months, meditation was an important part of his daily life. He was HAPPY and concentrated on his health, and on his baby about to be born.

He received his baby in the delivery room of the same hospital where he would receive his treatments, went home and then he started meditating with his baby, Clemente, in his arms, many times throughout the day. He baptized him and the next day, while sleeping early in the morning, he left his physical form, in absolute peace.

Meditation works so well in a terminal situation. It changes the fear of death into a peaceful development of the correct attention and, because of that, the person allows himself to feel at peace and connected to his inner light.”

CHILE, Maria Rosa Gonzalez, Chile, Jan 2006

When facing **Alienation in Prison**

“We have been meeting weekly at Mulawa Women’s Correctional Centre since June 2000. Some of the women have shared that they find themselves naturally returning to their mantra at difficult times. Some of them have committed violent crimes and find it difficult to accept and forgive that about themselves. Meditation helps them to face what is and to experience God’s love for them, regardless.

Late last year, the ABC came to the gaol to make a radio program on Christian Meditation in the prison. The women spoke powerfully about what it has meant for them, one saying she forgets she is in prison when she meditates, and another that she has been in worse prisons outside, within her own head, and that knowing Jesus gives her a great sense of freedom.” **AUSTRALIA, Judi Taylor, Feb 2005**

And we contribute to **GLOBAL PEACE-BUILDING**



“Launched in 1998, the Way of Peace is a programme of our Community that strives to bring contemplative awareness and inter-religious friendship to bear upon the global work of peace-building. The most recent event took place in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in November 2005. As reported in the Belfast Telegraph:

‘In an age when many Christian churches are half-empty, it was encouraging to see Belfast Cathedral brimmed to overflowing with people of different denominations and faiths. There were contributions from the Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Baha’i, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and other faiths, and a musical contribution from the (Olivetian) Benedictine monks from Rostrevor followed by a 10 minute period of silent meditation. Nobody made a protest, and nobody stood up and walked out. It was so refreshing.”
BELFAST, Clem Sauve, Toronto Canada, Jan 2006

If you would like to support our work as a **Friend**

1. Visit our website: www.friendsinmeditation.com

2. E-mail or write to us for contribution details at:
 WCCM Friends Australian Coordinators
 Judi and Paul Taylor
 8 Montague Rd., Cremorne. NSW 2090
 email: palmy@ozemail.com.au
 Phone: 02 9904 4638





Christian Meditation Bookstore

MEDIO MEDIA
INTERNATIONAL

SINGAPORE



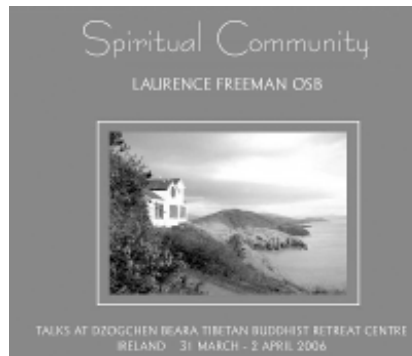
Two New Releases Just Published....

Spiritual Community

Laurence Freeman OSB

Talks at Dzogchen Beara Tibetan Buddhist
Retreat Centre Ireland 31 March – 2 April 2006

This extraordinary event at Dzogchen Beara builds on the ground-breaking Christian-Buddhist seminar that Laurence Freeman OSB and Sogyal Rinpoche (author of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*) led in 2001 at Dublin Castle. Drawing on Christian teaching and the Dhammapada, Fr. Laurence explores the nature and challenges of friendship and community in spiritual life. He explains how the work of attention in meditation creates community, and enhances relationships through our thoughts, words and actions. Comments, readings and chants accompany the talks.



5 Audio CD Set #8127 £20.00 • US\$ 38.00

TO ORDER

USA

www.mediomedia.org

Tel: +1-520-882-0290

Fax: +1-520-882-0311

CANADA

www.meditatio.ca

email:

christianmeditation@bellnet.ca

Tel: +1-514-485-7928

UK

email: mail@wccm.org

Tel: +44-20-7278-2070

Fax: +44-20-7713-6346

AUSTRALIA

ACMC Bookshop

Joe Panetta

Ph +61 2 9482 3468

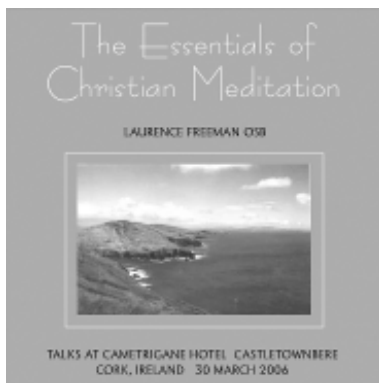
jpanetta@energy.com.au

ASIA

email:

daulet@pacific.net.sg

Tel: +65-67376279



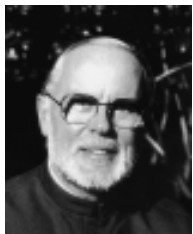
The Essentials of Christian Meditation

Laurence Freeman, OSB

Talks at Cametrigrane Hotel
Castletownbere, Cork, Ireland March 2006

In this public talk Laurence Freeman OSB focuses on the essential elements of Christian meditation: *silence*, *stillness* and *simplicity*. Meditation is the “hidden treasure” and “pearl of special value” at the heart of spiritual practice. Once discovered, meditation bears fruit in the practitioner’s life in loving relationships and the joy of contemplative living. With simple instructions on how to meditate, this talk will be especially helpful to newcomers.

1 Audio CD #8128 £6.50 • US\$ 12.50



WORDS BY JOHN MAIN....

In meditation we must have the courage to attend solely to the absolute, the abiding and the central. To transcend we must be still. The stillness is our pilgrimage and the way of the pilgrim is the mantra. (Heart of Creation)

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.



The *Christian Meditation Newsletter* is published four times a year by the International Centre of The World Community for Christian Meditation, St Mark's, Myddelton Square, London EC1R 1XX, UK (tel +44 20 7278 2070 / fax +44 20 7713 6346) Email: mail@wccm.org (Copyright The World Community for Christian Meditation) It is distributed by national communities with national updates.

General Editor: Gregory Ryan (gjryan@wccm.org)

Graphic Design: Carlos Siqueira (info@wccm.com.br)

International Coordinator: Susan Spence (susan@wccm.org)

The World Community Web page: www.wccm.org

Medio Media Web page: www.mediomedia.org