



# Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org

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## The Oblate Year

The first Benedictine Oblates who were united specifically in the community of Christian Meditation were received by John Main in the late 70s. Since then, the Oblate Community of the WCCM has spread around the world and for some meditators it has become a deep way of expressing the conversion of heart that the daily practice leads us all into. Last year, Fr Laurence welcomed three young meditators into the one-year novitiate of the Oblate Community – but with a new approach. The difference is that Rebecca Brewin,

Wojtek Karczmarzyk and Lukasz Gruszka committed themselves to a year of fulltime work and spiritual formation in the Oblate Community and to discerning their future direction within the community. This 'Oblate Year' beginning with the novitiate ceremony integrates times of work, service, pilgrimage, community life and retreat. Rebecca has spent three months working and teaching meditation with Fr Joe Pereira in Mumbai in his Kripa program for alcohol and drug recovery and she is now training in yoga in London. Wojtek and Lukasz ran the Meditation Retreat Centre at Cockfosters for several months and have since been working with the mentally ill. Their final oblation took place after the Guiding Board meeting at Cockfosters at the end of March and their life and work in the community continues in different ways. The Oblate Year is an opportunity for young people to take time to grow spiritually, with the support of a global and local community and the spiritual friendship of experienced guides, to be challenged by new environments or kinds of work, and to better discern the path ahead of them.



*For further information on the Oblate Year contact Fr Laurence at the International Centre.*

## TheSpiritualSolution.com



The SpiritualSolution.com has been online since March 21<sup>st</sup>. It is an ongoing project run by young meditators in the World Community. It is a portal for contributions, questioning and dialogue about the issues and concerns of our time. It invites all young – or young at heart – people of any background to share their thoughts, fears, beliefs, hopes and opinions on a range of topics. We want to connect people to each other and to discover the connection with the source of all being. Our feeling of distance from this source – as from God and nature – often makes young people especially feel rootless and disconnected. TSS.com hopes to show the way from this disconnectedness to the rootedness of the heart through meditation. Please visit and mention it to young people seeking: [www.thespiritualsolution.com](http://www.thespiritualsolution.com)

*Dirk Grosser, webmaster (dirk@thespiritualsolution.com)*



## 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](mailto:friendswccm@yahoo.com.sg)  
Visit our web site: [www.friendsinmeditation.com](http://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

*Dearest friends,*

I was told that Indonesia is one of the most densely populated parts of the globe. The statistic became more real as we drove through the Jakarta evening traffic to a meditation talk on the day before the recent floods. One of the distinctive features of the organised chaos we were pushing through are the boys and men who hang perilously out of buses by one arm. They vigorously wave competitors for the precious inches of space aside. They are not official employees but provide their service in the hope of a few cents thrown to them from the bus driver at the end of the journey. As a last resort, which always comes more frequently for the poor, they jump off the bus and block the traffic physically until the bus is able to pull out or across the line of traffic and continue its way. It is not the healthiest or safest of jobs and does not have much career prospects but it has its own specialised level of skill and certainly takes nerve. I was reminded of these entrepreneurial traffic controllers a few weeks later in a big western city when I visited a trading room at an international bank. In row after row the traders, all either MBAs or PhDs, sat in front of their computers assisting the tides of wealth, the traffic of money as it ebbed and flowed around the globe. Like the bus-hoppers in Jakarta these traders did not have much job security although they earned better bonuses. The greatest contrast between these brothers and sisters of our wondrous and dysfunctional human family was one that struck me particularly in the season of Lent. It concerned the body whose value is particularly highlighted by the spirituality of this season and its focus on preparing for Easter and for the celebration of the Resurrection which is the true lifestyle of the Christian.

**"CARO EST CARDIO SALUTIS: THE BODY IS THE HINGE OF SALVATION." - TERTULLIAN**

Manual workers like sex-workers and suicide-terrorists employ their own bodies often as the last thing they can use to survive or, as the young terrorists must have been made to believe, to make their presence felt and their voice heard. For the desperate the body is a tool. For the affluent and the leisured, those whose anxiety revolves around how to spend their wealth, the body becomes an ornament or mere packaging. This is not

merely a matter, as it might appear, of egotistical choice. It often reflects severe mental pain because of the conflict set up in us by the conditioning forces of our society. I met a woman recently who was struggling against the temptation to spend thousands on a face-lift which she knew in herself she did not truly want or even need because she was, in her own way, very beautiful. Her daughter however had just had one and the peer pressure felt almost irresistible. Among the sedentary traders, working only with their brains, there were the body-worshippers, muscular after-work gym members and also those whose levels of stress and unhappiness were reflected in their neglect of their body.

The body tells us the truth as nothing else can. Our relationship to the body – which is a problematical expression in itself – expresses our way of being in the world and our attitude to others. It can be no more than an object we sell or exploit, a sign of desperation. Or it can be a possession whose appearance and well-being we become obsessed with, a reason for living rather than a means of living. It can be a bridge, a means of mingling our identity with that of others. Or it can be a castle where we raise the drawbridge and keep the enemy at bay. It can be physical or become almost a pure concept, a sacred thing or a fetish.

The care of the soul and our whole human development depends upon the care and, when necessary, the cure of the body. This is the universal wisdom of the spiritual traditions and the meaning of asceticism. Lent or Ramadan are not meant to be times of suffering. Life brings suffering without our having to induce it. Pain, disappointment and loss can bring us closer to truth and liberation but so also can pleasure, joy and fulfilment. As Simone Weil says, both suffering and joy are messengers. We feel and we know through and with and in the body. Every proposition applies to the



body and gives substantive meaning to thought.

Spiritually, the body is an instrument for the raising of consciousness and developing our participation in the great dance of the universe. The *Cloud of Unknowing* expresses the healthy attitude of Christian faith to the body when it tells us 'for God's sake avoid illness as much as possible' and that 'this work (of meditation) demands a relaxed, healthy and vigorous disposition of body and spirit. For the love of God, discipline yourself in body and spirit so that you preserve your health as long as you can.' (Ch 41). In the next chapter, the *Cloud* addresses one of the perennial issues of the spiritual journey – how we achieve moderation in everything without becoming excessively self-conscious about trying to do so. Its explanation reflects the tone of the mainstream mystical tradition. Be content with what comes along. And lift up your heart 'with a blind stirring of love.'

**"REAL PRAYER BEGINS WHEN WE ARE NO LONGER AWARE WE ARE PRAYING AT ALL."**

**ISAAC OF NINEVEH**

Lent is traditionally a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. But we don't give these up after Easter Sunday? St Benedict tells us that the monastic life – the monk is simply a typical Christian – is a continuous Lent. All our life we live with a sense of expectation. Even when our hopes are fulfilled or our goals achieved we don't feel we have arrived at the final destination. To be conscious in the body is to be aware of everything as transition. It is the 'no abiding city' mind that St Paul describes and it is the emptiness (*sunnyata*) of Buddhism.

To live with this insight into impermanence and at the same time to be content with what we have and accept who we are is a balancing act that we have to learn to get better at day by day. Lent would be meaningless, a time of self-fixation not much better than a spiritual gym with mirrors, without its relation to Easter. Discipline without celebration misses the mark entirely.

Yet they are still different seasons of the year and, if the liturgical year symbolises a human life-span, it is also a metaphor for the different levels on which we follow the human journey. Lent

expresses the need we always have for clarification, simplification and continuous re-calibration. Only in the conceptual realm can we imagine fixed and unchanging states. To stay in that cyber-realm is disaster for the cause of human wholeness and happiness. In an integrated consciousness we live with the ebb and the flow, the rhythms of existence which can

make us aware of a deeper stillness and stability but do not fool us into thinking we are extra-terrestrials. Lent reminds us of the humility, the earthy reality of rebalancing the musical instruments of body and mind. It speaks to us of the need for self-control as a means of happiness, for freeing us from divided self-consciousness and for raising our capacity for enjoyment. In the daily Lent of life we learn the wisdom of moderation on which our own happiness and the survival of our species now depends.

Easter is a time of glory. Every good celebration requires a time of preparation – for a party or a feast or a launch. The preparation itself is enjoyable if we have a sense of the worthwhileness of what we will be celebrating. In fact, getting ready itself then becomes a form of celebration. Where, in fact, does one end and the other begin? This is why the Scriptures do not describe the actual moment of Resurrection. The disciples were given advance notice but failed to understand it. Therefore, they were plunged in fear and gloom. By the time they became aware of the presence of Jesus over and beyond the borderline of death, the Resurrection had already happened. It was in them and they were in it.

As in meditation, at least when we are no longer watching ourselves praying, the Easter experience bypasses the usual mental congestion caused by the conflicting traffic of the past and the future. Easter is an experience of being suffused with unmerited and unexpected light in the present. Grace is felt as a pure thankfulness for being alive. It floods us from an unobservable depth within ourselves but its welling up sweeps away the boundaries we imagine between inner and outer.

**"WHAT WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO CALL PRAYER IS ONLY A PART OF IT." - ORIGEN**

The body is not lost in the Resurrection experience which lifts us over and beyond all the cycles of death and rebirth. Whether or not we 'believe' in these cycles continuing after death, they are plainly visible in the experiences of loss and finding that make up the spiritual meaning of life. Physical consciousness – which is really what we mean by the body as, like everything else, it is a form of conscious energy – is a solid criterion for human health and sanity amid the flux and flow. Just as it helps to maintain balance, self-control, spontaneity, joy and compassion the body also makes them visible. The resurrection stories of the gospels seem so strange and yet so clear and familiar because of the shadowless light in which they take place.

During the night after my experience of the traffic jam in Jakarta, the city was hit by some of the worst flooding in memory. On our way to a talk at the Catholic University we had to take many detours and we worried about making our flight out in the evening. These were small worries compared with the disaster that had struck the poor. As we drove around the city we could see how the water had devastated the poorest, low-lying areas. Homes, markets and shops were ruined. Eventually the water would recede but, as Hendra, our national



coordinator with whom I was travelling pointed out, that would be just the beginning of the disease and epidemics that would bring greater and prolonged suffering.

Hendra is a young doctor who works particularly in AIDS relief and prevention throughout Indonesia. Since he began meditating some years ago after dropping in on a group in Bangkok during a conference, he has been sharing the gift of the teaching as he travels around the country. Because of his work there is probably a greater proportion of meditating doctors in Indonesia than anywhere else! But meditation has entered into the life of the church at every level. In Malang, my talk was sponsored by the Adoration Society and I visited and prayed with them in a beautiful centre devoted to this form of prayer. They asked me to describe how the worship of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is related to meditation and the presence of the prayer of Christ in the heart. I tried to do so as best I could in words, but the real explanation came in the silence that we shared during meditation later in the day.

There are, according to John Main, really no forms of prayer, only prayer. This makes sense – despite the obvious diversity of the ways we pray – as the effect of prayer makes itself felt. Its effect is a simplicity, purity of heart and singleness of vision that transforms everything that falls under its attention. If the presence is really felt in our hearts, the true centre of consciousness, then it will pervade everything. For those who are united with Christ, there is a new creation, as St Paul says. In this experience the old dualities melt. Prayer is no longer restricted to the conscious occupation or obligation we can observe ourselves doing. Prayer also happens through us. Life expands beyond all limitations as we become conscious of how we are *being prayed*.

Compassion – the power of experiencing with and in what others are going through – then really becomes a more significant way of understanding our human family life than charity. If we were all empowered with compassion there would be no need for what we call philanthropy and organised charity, for fund-raising, fighting for relief programmes, for challenging government aid budgets, for charitable institutions

that have sometimes to collaborate with the very forces of injustice that make them necessary. Until that happy day, of course, these are all necessary. But deeper structural change, real change that lasts, is realised through contemplative consciousness not only through the corporal works of mercy: through the contemplation of Martha and the action of Mary. To serve all we must become as if we were nothing.

The poor we will always have with us, Jesus warned. Yet reducing the degree and inhumanity of poverty is also his sharp injunction – the physical expression of the Kingdom that does not belong to this world. Prayer does not stop when we get up and go to work.

“IF YOU WANT TO PRAY YOU NEED GOD WHO GIVES PRAYER TO THE ONE WHO PRAYS.”

EVAGRIUS

From infancy, the very beginning of consciousness, we suffer the anxieties of insecurity. Will the child get enough of the pie or enough of the maternal attention? What would happen if...? So, we construct habits and homes to reinforce patterns that are always more tenuous than we like to admit. The need for security is extended from the physical to the mental level, too, through the operation of the ego at work in hierarchy, enforcement of right ways of thinking and behaving and the policing of social conformity. Often even more than what we call the secular realm, religion can create substitutes for God. It is the prophet more often than the priest who reminds us of this.

In prayer, however, we break through the security ring and break out into the liberty of the children of God, free to be ourselves. This very freedom that we think we want may also become a source of anxiety. After all, there is security in numbers and some degree of predictability in routines. Again, it is the balancing act of life as a spiritual path. As St Benedict prudently knew, we must vow ourselves to conversion no less than to stability.

Prayer is the ever-deepening centre of spiritual gravity, the pivot of the human balance. In the coming era of the world, prayer is the major field of research and development. To ignore it is like denying the evidence for global warming, feigning a doubt that we cannot honestly afford to indulge. It is the practice of the present moment, and therefore gives us sanity, a right relation to past and future. The hope for the salvation of the world, according to the Book of Wisdom, is the greatest number of wise people.

Understanding the nature of prayer and practising it is the responsibility of religion on behalf of all humanity. It is anchored in a non-dual attitude to the body where the body is treated neither as an object nor a concept but as an instrument of beauty and wonder which mediates the meaning of both joy and suffering. Much of the interest in spirituality today reflects an imbalance in Christian attitudes to the body that have developed because of certain ideas and fears relating to sexuality. By deepening the experience of prayer, leading us from mind to heart, these profound imbalances can be



corrected. If we see the historical struggle of Christian faith as its confrontation with the dark forces of paganism it is easier to understand how this imbalance occurred. It is naïve to pretend that these dark forces do not exist – that earlier forms of religion were all idyllic – or that they do not at times infiltrate even those who oppose them. They are perceived above all as forces of fear controlling behaviour and in the contents of the unconscious obsessing the imagination.

The gospel brought a message of hope in its affirmation of a God who does not punish, its assurance of grace and its message of the transcendence of all karmic forces by love. But it had – and has still – to confront an idolatry that keeps the human soul in a state of division and fragmentation dependent on the whims of many gods. As religion, however, tries to move beyond idolatry it risks pushing people to the extremes of a spectrum running from magical ritualism to cold ideology. The bitter conflict between so-called conservative and progressive reflects this in our time. The gods are still around, brand names and celebrities, as are the fears and collective paranoia we seem addicted to. The teaching of the mystical tradition to adults and the teaching of contemplative prayer to children become all the more indispensable at times of religious upheaval like our own. The religion that does not respond to this need for spiritual depth risks collapsing into forms that promote the very forces it is meant to overcome.

**“TODO Y NADA – ALL AND NOTHING.”**

### **ST JOHN OF THE CROSS**

Meditation moves us beyond duality, dividedness, and the fragmentation of our idea of divinity into the healing experience of the one God. Gradually, the incremental effect of contemplation purifies the heart and permits the vision of God. The ‘single eye’ that Jesus speaks of develops through the unifying of our consciousness. Duplicity of vision merges in a greater coincidence of opposites.

And yet, the gift of an apple crumble with homemade custard can still reveal a kindness and goodness at the heart of human nature that is our universal truth. The test of Lent and Easter is that it combines preparation and celebration with a simple daily ordinariness that only the child or the sage can clearly see.

We need the discipline of the daily practice in which every meditation is a Eucharist. Without the contemplative experience it is easy to drift towards idolatry, superstition,

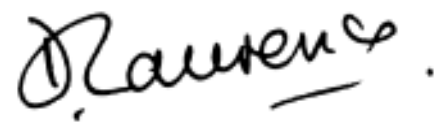
doubt or superficiality. We need the community that helps teach and support this discipline. And yet the discipline and the community point to a greater good and higher simplicity in which no effort is needed, where our true nature manifests itself in its own light, where the presence of the Risen Christ appears without, at first, our even recognising who he is.

The great Tibetan teacher Dilgo Khyentse said that ‘we are a symbol of our own enlightenment’ and this expresses a truth found at the heart of every contemplative tradition. Put into practice, it means that we should be faithful to our meditation but not complicate it or put it into an esoteric category. Nothing is simpler, more ordinary than the way to the Father that Jesus makes humanly visible. We need help – not to make God happen – but to remain simple and ordinary and in touch with our own innate and indwelling divine goodness.

As Jesus told Mary Magdalene and also taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus, reality is not something we can cling to or even see objectively. Meditation is necessary for most of us in order to realise what he means. It gives us a new capacity to be committed to work without attachment, to put our whole selves into it and take ourselves out of it, leaving only what is true. There is no good or bad meditation, then, in any measurable or meaningful sense. There is trying and there is giving up, which of course are different, but even the giving up becomes a grace as soon as we come back and start again. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. By their fruits you will know them – and by the fruits of meditation we know ourselves.

As the silent transformation of mind proceeds, as the daily practice unfolds, we know that something is changing because we are responding and relating to things differently. What maddened us, may now merely amuse us. What caused us grief becomes a teaching we are grateful for. It is this new way of seeing and being that also in time opens us to the one who has risen and has not left us alone. We see this in and with all our brothers and sisters and thus we begin to learn new ways of living together.

*With much love,*



*Laurence Freeman, OSB*

## **“ESSENTIALS” PODCASTS**

A special series of talks on the tradition and practice of Christian meditation by Father Laurence Freeman OSB, Father Gerry Pierse CSsR, and other teachers of The World Community for Christian Meditation ([www.WCCM.org](http://www.WCCM.org)). These talks are available at iTunes and are ideal for listening to alone or before the meditation period at weekly Christian meditation groups.

*John Main Podcasts | 2007 | Communitas One*

One of the most valuable legacies of John Main’s teaching on meditation is this series of talks. Each series of podcasts offer introductory talks suitable for absolute beginners or for people or groups relatively new to meditation – or indeed, for anyone who understands that we are always beginners. The *Communitas* talks nourish a worldwide community of meditators. Subscribe to the free *Communitas One* series of podcasts at iTunes.

## NEWS FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY

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

### NEW ZEALAND

Fr Laurence will lead the New Zealand community's first national retreat from April 18-21, titled *Wholeness: Breaking the bonds that control us*. For information contact Janet at [jrprice@maxnet.co.nz](mailto:jrprice@maxnet.co.nz) or phone +649-473-3518. He will also be giving a keynote address at an interfaith day on April 22. On the last day of his visit, he will be meeting with the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference at their invitation to encourage the development of meditation groups within parishes and also within the Catholic school system.

*Peter Murphy, National Coordinator*  
([petermurphy54@hotmail.com](mailto:petermurphy54@hotmail.com))

### ITALY

In April, Italian group leaders will meet in Torrazzetta (Pv) for the second Italian annual conference for meditation group leaders. The theme will be "*Who wants to follow me, renounce himself. Leadership or service?*" led by Prof. Germano Bellussi, psychologist and lawyer and Father Alfredo Jacopozzi who teaches on the Theological Faculty of Florence. Prof. Bellussi, editor of the Italian review "Religious Psychoanalysis", recently published a conference by Laurence Freeman titled "Meditation and spiritual life". In November, Fr Laurence will join the Bishop of Piacenza and the Abbot General of Monte Oliveto for our national Conference at Torazetta which will celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fr John's death.

*Mariagrazia Dusi, National Coordinator*  
([wccmitalia@virgilio.it](mailto:wccmitalia@virgilio.it))

### SILENT RETREAT - SINGAPORE

The Singapore community started 2007 with a flurry of contemplative activities. In January, Fr Laurence led a silent retreat on "The Art of Happiness" at the Trinity Theological College for about 200 participants. On 10 February, Fr Cyprian Consiglio gave an encore performance of his original compositions. He had stopped over in Singapore en route to India in December 2006 where he gave the community a performance laced with the teachings of Fr Bede Griffiths. The response to that first performance was overwhelming, as was the reception to the encore performance. In the first week of March, at the invitation of parish priests, introductory workshops to Christian meditation were launched in two different parishes: a full-day workshop at St Mary of the Angels, and a three-session programme stretching over three weeks at Holy Trinity Church, both leading to the formation of new weekly meditation groups. The work of Medio Media International continues to develop globally from its new home in Singapore directed by Dominic Heng and other Singaporean meditators.

### SCHOOL FOR TEACHERS - INDIA

The visit of Fr. Laurence in January was part of a miracle of grace for us. For the first time, Bombay had an experience of the School. The deepening of each one's commitment was felt on the level of one's personal practice as well as on the level of taking up leadership to spread this beautiful practice in parishes. The School also culminated with the Eucharist during which the first WCCM Oblate in India, Christopher Mendonca, made his final oblation. A talk by Fr Laurence on "Death and Meditation" was attended by about 500 people in the basilica of Mount Mary at Bandra. One of the highlights of the visit was the launch of the Indian edition of John Main's *Moment of Christ* by John Main. This book provides the entire community of meditators with an invaluable resource of John Main's teachings. We look forward to many more Indian editions of WCCM materials in the future.

*Fr. Joe Pereira, National Coordinator*  
([jpst\\_1995@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jpst_1995@yahoo.co.uk))



### NEW BLOG - VENEZUELA

After attending a silent meditation retreat with Fr Laurence in Buenos Aires, Antonio J. Sosa, a development banker from Venezuela, is publishing a Spanish blog in Caracas as a reference for a future community of meditators. You can visit this blog in Spanish called "Silencio Interior" at :

<http://meditadores.blogspot.com>  
or contact Antonio J. Sosa ([asosa@CAF.com](mailto:asosa@CAF.com))

### MEXICO

In February, Fr Laurence led a retreat for Mexican meditators, old and new, in Ixtapa and then taught in Mexico City for two days. (*Begona Siegrist - [begonas@yahoo.com](mailto:begonas@yahoo.com)*)

### AUSTRALIA: YOUNG MEDITATORS

A young Christian Meditators group in Sydney has now been meeting at Paddington for more than six months and Claire comments that she feels that a sense of community is forming well. We have enjoyed meditation followed by a communal meal. From time to time, members are asked to speak to groups of young people. Fr Laurence will be here on Anzac Day to share lunch and the afternoon with them to continue the conversation begun at Varroville on how to share Christian meditation with the young. They also will look at preparations for the World Youth Day in July 2008 for which they are proposing to develop a short DVD along the lines of the *Coming Home* video. One possibility is to have a continuous

or frequent presentation at a dedicated venue with meditation sessions and talks by Father Laurence who will be here for that time. We are in the process of preparing a submission regarding ACMC participation in the World Youth Day. The itinerary for Giovanni Felicioni's tour is in place. He will be in NSW for an evening and a day event in late August (both mid-week), the venue for the latter is yet to be decided. There will also be a young people's weekend at Mittagong on the 24-26 August.  
*Judi and Paul Taylor (palmy@ozemail.com.au)*

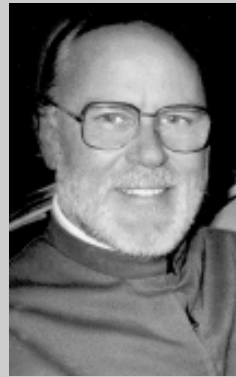
### MONTE OLIVETO - 21-28 JULY 2007



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*

## 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 Thérout. 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](http://www.wccm.org) or contact [jms2007@bellnet.ca](mailto:jms2007@bellnet.ca)

## IN FOCUS

# Meditation in Indonesia

One day I was strolling around a shopping mall when I was approached by two men eager to convey their beliefs as born-again Christians. They were sincere and nice people and I enjoyed our discussion, but after a while I felt tired as if we were at a dead-end. We seemed to be talking superficially rather than about the essence of Christianity, even to be building a wall instead of a bridge. Eventually I said it would be better to go deeper into our own heart and find the love of our Lord there. To be honest, I felt satisfied with this insight but I had no idea how it could be put into practice.

The next day, I went to the Catholic Book Centre and unintentionally found an interesting looking book with an eye-catching title: *Light Within*. I enjoyed reading it because it answered my question about the journey inward. I tried to meditate but soon gave up. A few years later I got a chance to join the meditation group at Mater Dei School, in Bangkok, led by Sr. Laetitia OSU. Nothing extraordinary happened during this 10-month period, but surprisingly I felt a sense of community among us.

After returning to Indonesia, I had no intention to start a Christian meditation group but then a helping hand came from Peter Ng and a friend in Indonesia. Eventually, Fr. Laurence, Peter and Patricia came here. I was still quite hesitant about starting a group and was not sure how to nurture it since most of my time was spent travelling. There was much enthusiasm with Fr. Laurence's first visit but I

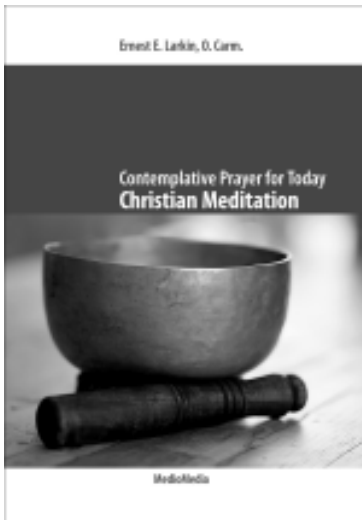
thought it would die out slowly. To my surprise, these groups still exist three years later and are now growing in other cities like Surabaya and Malang some of which we visited on Fr Laurence's recent tour here when he was accompanied by

James Loh from the Singapore community. After meeting with the Vicar Generals of Malang and Jakarta and Diocese administrator of Surabaya, they gave a 'green light' for WCCM Indonesia to teach meditation in these three dioceses. They are eager to have meditation groups in parishes. We are fortunate, too, to have Fr. Tan Thian Sing MSF with WCCM Indonesia. To respond to inquiries about Christian Meditation in Indonesia we need a Center. Fortunately, Dr. Kristanda, director of Atma Jaya hospital has offered a space in the hospital and Dr. Lucia Gani will run it.

So far, two books, *The Gethsemani Talks* and *Your Daily Practice*, have been published in Indonesian, but more are planned. This recent visit is being followed up with 6-week programs and as we need more group leaders we will have a 'School for Meditators' soon. It has been a wonder and mystery to see this growth and a grace to feel part of it.

*Hendra Widjaja (hendrawidjaja2001@yahoo.com), National Coordinator, Indonesia*





## CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER FOR TODAY: Christian Meditation Ernest E. Larkin, O.Carm.

Fr. Ernie has been described as a 'modern pioneer of Carmelite spirituality.' This book is the conclusion and fruit of many years of personal search, relating his own journey into Christian meditation. He brings the Carmelite tradition into dialogue with other contemporary

spiritualities of the desert. Fr. Ernie's untimely death came shortly after this book was completed. The book is a legacy to us and shows the wisdom and love to which he is now fully united.

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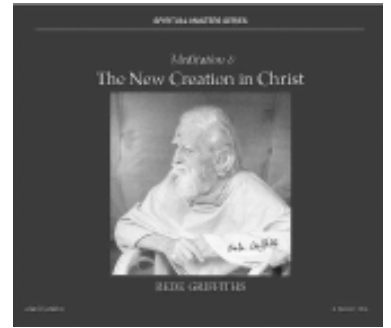
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## Words by John Main....

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**Door to Silence (2006)**

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**General Editor:** Gregory Ryan ([gjryan@wccm.org](mailto:gjryan@wccm.org))  
**Graphic Design:** Carlos Siqueira ([info@wccm.com.br](mailto:info@wccm.com.br))  
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