



# Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org

INTERNATIONAL EDITION, VOL. 31, N°3; SEPTEMBER 2007

Way of Peace 2007

Fr Thomas Keating and Fr Laurence Freeman

## Is There a Way Through?

A dialogue between the leaders of two global contemplative communities on the importance of contemplative prayer for our times.

Sarasota, Florida 7-9 December

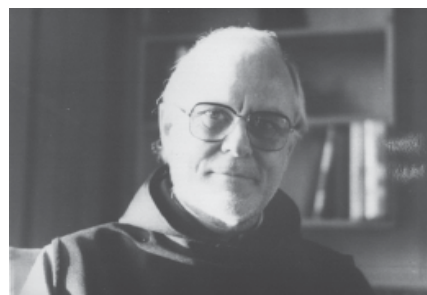
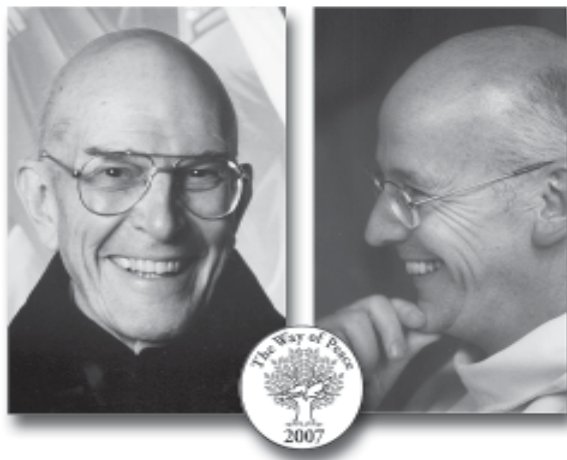
Public talk: Florida West Coast Symphony Hall 7th December, 7pm

Conference: Sarasota Hyatt 8th and 9th December

(Accommodation at the hotel)

For further information contact Chuck and Pat Prescott:

Email: [cjprescott@comcast.com](mailto:cjprescott@comcast.com) or +1 941 378 2521



### MEMORIAL MASS FOR JOHN MAIN

*A Eucharistic celebration of his life and continuing work*

*Westminster Cathedral, London*

*December 29th 2007 2.30pm*

*Principal Celebrant: Fr Laurence Freeman OSB*

Music by Margaret Rizza, hosted by the UK Christian Meditation Community with representatives from The World Community Guiding Board and national communities

### "COMMUNITY OF LOVE": A RETREAT PILGRIMAGE

*For the WCCM Benedictine Oblate Community - Led by Dom Laurence Freeman OSB: Italy, 31st March to 8th April 2008*

This, the first international pilgrimage and retreat of the WCCM Oblate Community, celebrates the quarter century of growth in John Main's vision of a 'community of love' rooted in silence, stillness and simplicity. We will share together in the daily rhythm of the Rule of St. Benedict: meditation, lectio, divine office and mass. We begin with a silent retreat at Monte Oliveto Maggiore where we will be welcomed by the Abbot General, a patron of the World Community, at the motherhouse of the Olivetan Benedictines founded in the 13th century and set in great natural beauty. The retreat will be followed by a pilgrimage to visit various sacred Benedictine sites and conclude in Rome with a liturgy with the Abbot Primate at San Anselmo, the Benedictine university where John Main studied during the Vatican Council. *Further information: Trish Panton ([pantonamdg@ozemail.com.au](mailto:pantonamdg@ozemail.com.au))*

### SILENT MEDITATION RETREAT AT MONTE OLIVETO

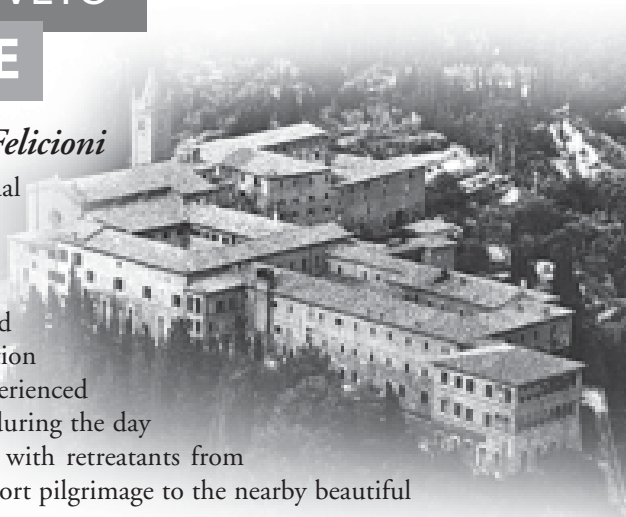
### THE SOURCE OF LOVE

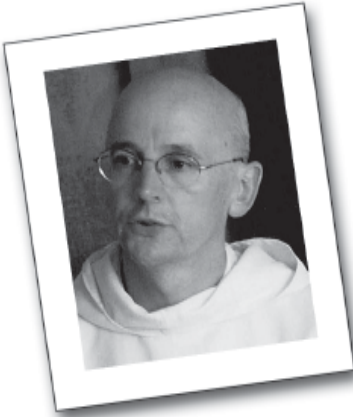
*August 2-10, 2008*

*Led by Laurence Freeman with Robert Kiely and Giovanni Felicioni*

Deeply written into human nature is the need for love. As life unfolds the individual discovers many aspects and forms of love, not without realising that the greatest joy can also occasion the greatest pain. Life can be seen as the search for that source of love which has so many different kinds of manifestation. In this retreat Fr Laurence will explore the range of love and our ways of understanding (and misunderstanding) it. In the tradition of John Main, he will focus on how meditation opens us the mystery of the source of love. All are welcome and both new and experienced meditators will find the retreat a renewal of their spiritual journey. The silence during the day renews the spirit and the evening meal as a time of relaxation and friendship with retreatants from different countries balance solitude and community. Mid-retreat there will be short pilgrimage to the nearby beautiful sacred monastic site of San Antimo.

For early reservations and further information contact the International Centre: [mail@wccm.org](mailto:mail@wccm.org) or the website: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)





# A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

*Dearest friends,*

In the beginning is the Word. Reflecting on this beacon-light statement of Christian faith St John of the Cross says that God has spoken only one word but speaks it continuously. Every kind of beginning contains the fullness of all that will later evolve. That is why to grow and to ensure we continue to grow in the best way and to correct our mistaken directions, we need to return to our roots. Cosmologists say that at the beginning of the universe energy formed into matter in one trillionth of a trillionth of a second. As the Cloud of Unknowing says in response to the question ‘how long does this work (of meditation) take?’: it takes no time at all.

And yet, experiencing and making sense of time is how we begin to understand the continuous and timeless creativity of the Spirit. During this year the World Community has been reflecting in different celebratory ways on the twenty-five years that have passed since John Main, the founder and inspiration of the community, stepped from this realm of existence into the realm of light. For many of us – and for the majority who have met him as a teacher of the tradition in the spirit rather than knowing him in the flesh – this has probably involved a remembering of how we first came to meditation. Maybe it was a book, a tape, a friend’s remark, a retreat we didn’t expect would be so much of a landmark in our spiritual journey. Meaning is an experience of deepening consciousness and it takes time – and memory – to become apparent.

I am writing this letter from Washington DC from the John Main Center at Georgetown University. Twice a day students and teachers and university administrators come to the Center on campus to meditate – an oasis of silence and stillness amid the stress and competition of a modern university. There is, for me, an odd symmetry in being here as it was in this city, at the Benedictine monastery where he was headmaster for five years, that Fr John introduced me to meditation. He made an indelible impression using a light touch and few words – the mark of a good teacher. As for most of us, the seed of meditation in me rolled around different kinds of ground for some time until it finally found a place to germinate and take root. For me this led to the monastery and eventually to our monastery without walls. The connection between the seed and its context of growth was the expression ‘community of love’. Fr John used it in those days of his return to London and the founding of the lay community house at his monastery there that soon became the prototype Christian Meditation Center.

I was intrigued and attracted by the idea that people could identify their personal search within a context that was not just institutional or professional but communal. It made sense in one way – community must first and foremost be personal. But it also seemed, possibly, too idealistic that any community could be so constituted around love that it could justify being called a ‘community of love’. It made one wonder what ‘love’ really meant. I can’t say the decision to pursue this idea has been fruitless either for me or for the mission from the Spirit that John Main was responding to and which has touched and deepened so many lives and continues to each day. Yet it can never be said to be ‘achieved’ and it remains a work in progress subject to all the frailties of the human beings who are the spirit’s hands in the work. Success (or failure) are hardly relevant terms to describe it. If it is something constituted by love it touches into transcendence on the vertical plane and, on the horizontal plane of daily life, it handles faults through forgiveness rather than by punishment. How then do you know if something like this is working?

In August, I visited China again in the company of Liz King, our China coordinator, and her husband, Albert, a renowned bio-engineer. Between events we visited Huangshan, perhaps the most famous of China’s beautiful and legendary mountains. Its natural beauty seems to imitate the art that it inspired because that tradition of painting has become so identified with it – the magical peaks, outcrops of pines, great boulders impossibly poised on high cliffs, evocative names imagined for the strange-shaped peaks (Celestial Basking Shoe, Monkey Gazing Out to Sea, Two Immortals Playing Chess). Above all there is the cloud and mist that rises and falls between the mountains. As you stand and look into a hazy foreground, suddenly the carpet of cloud dissolves and you see the valleys and distant ranges that a moment before were obscured. Clarity and obscurity alternate and with them the knowledge and vision of what is actually there.

Perhaps that is true of the interior journey of meditation as much as for the outward form it takes in the community that the spirit shapes and reshapes continuously. Stability is one of St Benedict’s vows – staying with it, not giving up, coming back again and again. Complementing this is his vow of conversion, one that needs stability but also transcends it – letting go, moving on, changing one’s perspective and point of view. So, too, we can see what a ‘community of love’ has become, but what it is becoming, what lies behind the next peak or beyond the next valley, is unclear. More faith not less is needed, John Main said, to complete the journey we have begun in meditation.

This makes the question of the nature of community all the more urgent for us. For many today in our fragmented, atomised culture a sense of community is painfully absent although it may be an unnamed absence – the dull ache and feeling of inadequacy in many modern psyches. When found, it is a precious gift, but one people often hardly know how to recognise or value. So we

need to understand what great teachers like John Main mean by community and its relation to the inner journey.

Community is not the same as family – we leave father and mother to make ourselves ready for community as for marriage. Yet a spiritual community is a kind of family – one, however, in which a different order of needs are fulfilled. People often seek the completion of their family deficiencies in community and project inappropriate demands upon it. Our deepest and the most universal need is for the completion of every true desire in the reality we call God, in that experience of love which can heal the psychological wounds of the psyche but doesn't do away with them. Community is a place of healing where that unconditional love is mediated through persons who are each turned towards that deepest need in themselves and yet remain turned to each other's needs at the same time. Community, therefore, is not romantic and is not easy.

Family provides the first psychological model, the theology of the Trinity provides the transcendent and yet indwelling model and the Church exemplifies the social form. As the first and last of these components of our model of community are fraught with imperfections, it is not surprising that it is hard to make work. John Main never underestimated either the need for community, its benefits or the challenge it presents. His aim was high, a community of love, not one of convenience and not a place where polite strangers cohabit. The challenge this ideal presents makes one wonder why people undertake it. The question was answered once by some younger meditators with whom I was discussing the setting up of a community. After a year, they decided to continue the experiment although it had been more difficult than they had expected. I asked why they wanted to continue. One of them expressed it succinctly – it's easier to live alone, but in community you grow more in self-knowledge.

What makes it work, in part, is equality. There is diversity in any group and a range of approaches, gifts and expectations. A community of love has to respect the diversity but not try to make it easier by subjecting it to a power structure where the stronger or more dominant personalities take over and the weaker allow it but complain. Many groups do just this and repeat the power-play that ultimately prevents love from growing. There are many ways power becomes an oppressive force, too much distinction given to age, the use of dress to exalt or exclude (many churches, like the army, have their ranks marked in different forms of dress) rather than just indicate a role. Human organisation tends to hierarchy and hierarchy tends to power. Yet the Gospel is clear: it must not be like this among you, Jesus told the apostles when they began arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

This year the World Community was recognised canonically, in a simple form, in the Roman Catholic church as an ecumenical contemplative community. This will mean more to Catholics than others, of course, but I felt it was a move that helped mark this anniversary year appropriately. Building a community of love is, like marriage, a social as well as a personal affair. It affects the wider Christian institution just as the church organisationally influences it. John Main and his fellow monastic prophets, Thomas Merton and Bede Griffiths, loved the church

they belonged to but did not hide their frustration with the ways it can succumb to the temptations of power.

A community of love allows one to see that differences of role need not be seen as opportunities for domination or exclusion but simply ways of using talents and fulfilling individual vocations. At the deepest level, the power game reveals not an innately cruel streak in human nature but its insecurity and lack of imagination. There are other ways of dealing with problems than by using force but we often fail to see them or trust they will work. In a community, unlike a rigidly hierarchical institution, these diverse roles can overlay each other without causing turf wars or threatening personal identities. This is beautifully expressed in the meditation group in a parish where all meet in silence. I feel this, for a specific example, each time I meditate at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Los Angeles where I am often warmly given hospitality. Fr Colm Ryan, the parish priest goes to the group each week in the small quiet chapel in the parish office building. The group, however, is led by MaryAnn Gould and the feeling of complete equality, with no loss of respect for distinction of roles always seems to me to exemplify this particular aspect of the community of love. I hear on occasions of priests or deacons or other parochial officialdom treating the proposal for a new meditation group as if it were a threat to another prayer group or to the status quo of the power structure defending its 'orthodoxy',

"MORE FAITH NOT LESS  
IS NEEDED TO COMPLETE  
THE JOURNEY."

demanding that it be investigated and vetted by a committee with no sense of the contemplative tradition. The heart of any one who loves Christ must sink at any abuse of religious power or stifling of the spirit as when it acts,

not in confident catholic universality, but as if it were a sect under siege. This is the need for the contemplative life. Every parish should be both aware of and happy to help people understand what Isaac of Nineveh said – 'real prayer begins when we are no longer aware that we are praying'.

A community of love offers support and nourishment to its immediate members. It also acts as a witness to the true priorities of life to the institutions it relates to. The community of love has a membership without fees or even profession of faith. It expresses a Christ-like hospitality to all and a firm trust in the core goodness of human nature. Institutions can do some things that communities cannot but if they do them at too great an expense to these priorities they become counter-productive. The equality within diversity of such a community thus becomes a social force arising from its mystical experience. In this experience the unity of all in Christ is manifested. It represents the integration of lay and clerical vocations, of men and women, and even of the generations. When a teacher meditates with her class of six year olds and has the courage and faith to close her eyes and really meditate with them she is also really teaching them a lesson they will understand and apply later in life. There are 1700 different types of bamboo some of which flower only every 140 years. It takes a broad mind to understand the nature of bamboo; imagine how much further we must stretch our horizons to understand ourselves.

He brought me to an open space.

He rescued me because he delighted in me (Psalm 18:20)

A community of love expresses the equality of Christ in human terms, as far as its considerable human weakness allows.

John Main helped generate faith in the real possibility of such a community that I like to believe has grown through our many failures. His confidence in this vision was the Christian virtue of 'parresia'. This word appears mostly in the Gospel of John (e.g. Jn 16:29) and Acts and means both outspokenness, plain and public speaking, and boldness to speak without fear or the desire to please. It is hard to achieve, harder to sustain, and our public life today has effectively given up trying. Yet all human relations, personal and social, depend upon this truthful sincerity. Perhaps even the integrity of language itself depends on it, too. I asked my students at the beginning of classes this term to drop the artificially complex, computer-manual kind of style that for some strange reason they are encouraged to adopt to get through their entrance exams. They looked a little distrustful at the foreigner telling them how to write American, but, happily for those reading their essays, they have taken the leap into finding their own voice and expressing themselves with a healthy trust in the validity of their own experience.

St Paul urges Christians to 'tell the truth in love' and thus grow up in the faith. We need teachers to encourage us to do this and, of course, we learn mostly by example and imitation. What I learned from John Main was that a community of love has to be founded upon equality and truthfulness and yet at times how impossible to achieve this can seem. Failure or a weakening of hope are dangers for any community or family (institutions tend merely to deny them). As an historian of the 16th century Reformation has recently remarked, the attempt to reform idolatry often leads to one of two extremes – ideology or ritualism. The 20th century Reformation illustrates this, too, in the divisions and anger set loose within the churches today. What restores hope in its reality is, and only can be, love.

John Main saw a community as the home in which its members were turned towards each other drawing the other into the light of love. He knew that this other-centredness was not easy. It needs the regular practice of meditation in which we turn towards the other in ourselves, the other that is simultaneously the ground of our being – God in our true self. This practice is the work of pure attention. With the simplicity and confidence of genius he identified it with attention to the mantra. It is more than a technique, though, because if practised with the requisite fidelity it becomes unconditional and absolute love, the laying down of one's self, the gift of self, to the other.

Love has many aspects. John Main saw that the traditional sequence of love of God, love of neighbour and love of self needed to be seen reversed if one were really to understand the meaning of the love of God. We cannot understand God's love or God as love without fanning into flame whatever experience of being loved we have had in the human realm; or, without learning from this experience that we can indeed love ourselves if others love us. This does not mean that the love of God cannot intervene directly or that grace cannot suddenly erupt in life just as a sudden shower can fall in a drought. But human nature, on which grace acts, works to a normal scheme in which the degree

we are loved and know that we are loved determines the degree to which we can love. The gift of a self that comes towards us goes far to remove the fear we have of giving our self. Seeing how this is the meaning of Christ is finding Christian faith.

Love always has three aspects, all of which, as Pope Benedict's encyclical reminded us, are found in God. We can call them eros, friendship and agape. Eros, of which Christianity early became suspicious and afraid, is simply the deep power of attraction that awakens the hope of one's own fulfilment in the other. Many Christian thinkers identified it with sex and degraded sex in separating its merely physical function from that wholly integrated sexuality in every human being – we cannot enjoy beauty in any form or communicate except through our sexuality. This led to a de-eroticised sense of love, both human love and divine. Eros cannot be isolated without harm to human wholeness or without leading to the death of love and that terrible hardness of heart with which much of religion became associated. When all windows of love are kept open eros leads to friendship in which truth, benevolence and equality flourish. No one makes a true friend without glimpsing the peaks of agape on the horizon through all the mists and clouds of life. This is the divine dimension of the receding horizon in which the loss of self in the other fulfils existence boundlessly.

So when John Main envisaged a community of love he embarked on a big project, one that can hardly be fulfilled in this realm of existence but which must be begun here. People are often drawn to a community that expresses this vision and can become passionately committed to it (spiritual eros). They see it as a place

in which they will be fulfilled and genuinely try to lose themselves in it. The first fervour of conversion – as St Benedict called this – cools, like all forms of eros, with time. Every meditation group witnesses this when people come and join the group faithfully for a few weeks or months, or longer, and then suddenly disappear. One may never know why. Perhaps they are meditating faithfully at home. Perhaps they hit an inner obstruction that they could not surmount. Perhaps they lost faith and need to have it revived through some other source. The group may feel discouraged and feel it as a rejection or as its own failure. It needs to deepen its own faith in its mission and stability. This serves to awaken the selflessness and radical detachment of love at the heart of its teaching of meditation. Then it will help to reflect that, even if not everyone does meditate – and daily meditation is not the only way to heaven – everyone benefits from knowing about it and from having experienced it even once. The simple teaching and the personal experience may, however briefly, dispel the clouds and reveal the Celestial Basking Shoe or even, if lucky, the Two Immortals Playing Chess. In any case, one never looks at the mist in the same way again.

John Main had this committed and detached approach to his mission and one hopes that the community that he inspired has it too, twenty-five years after his death.

The powerful attraction to the deeper levels of the self and of prayer that bring one to meditation has to evolve. At first it is



'what can meditation do for me'. One is filled with desire for spiritual fulfilment and the hope of all the fruits of the spirit. There can even be short ecstasies. But then it becomes 'what can meditation help me do – for others.' Eros expands into friendship. The love of our enemies that transforms foe into friend in our eyes is hard to achieve without having some friends with whom we enjoy equality, benevolence and trust – whom we simply love to be with. In the meditation group a form of spiritual friendship develops that is unique in the human range of relationship. You may not know much about them or see much more of them than at the weekly group but over time meditating with them reveals not that you are in love with them but that with them you are in love. You do not meditate together because you are friends but you have become friends because you meditate together. Somehow with these individuals your own deepest, most mysterious and ineffable search for love has crossed paths and shown that we are all, as human pilgrims, on the same path, heading in the same direction. You may not even remain visible to each other for long. Friends like teachers disappear into the mists of time. But you have learned that knowledge is not only what can be seen. As the great theologian Bernard Lonergan said, a 'shift to interiority', has happened and you have begun a new phase of the fall into love.

Eros is – beautifully - about attraction and bonding. Friendship teaches us detachment and prepares us for the experience of loss without which our discoveries become meaningless possessions, relationships gone stale. Discovering the level of spiritual friendship awakens the sense that in every person you meet you find your self and that their self is seeking to turn towards you. Friendship begins to expand from the security of a small band of companions who protect you from strangers to see that every stranger is a neighbour and every neighbour a brother or sister. Agape then begins to flood the mind. The essential Christian experience is the transformation of one's entire view of reality through the experience of the 'love of God flooding the inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us', whenever utter emptiness turns to plenitude.

A community of love does not dissolve when its size expands or contracts. It does not cling to the friends it has made and defend itself against strangers or charge admission or check people's credentials. It does not cease from exploring the experience of love it began from and which must inevitably, eventually, lead it to a peak from which one sees the boundlessness of love.

By your light we see the light (Psalm 36:9).

When John Main died there was not a lot to show for his vision and his parresia. There was a small monastic community and the bare beginnings of a global one. But he recognised even then that it needed to change direction, even further from the institutional and deeper into the mystery of community that is achieved at the price of solitude. He saw that the vision of his community of love was to be seen in people not structures or institutions. Before his last illness he felt drawn to a more withdrawn life in order to better realise his vision of community. His death became that step into solitude. Even today when one celebrates the expansion and diversification of his mission worldwide, a community of love that has spread to so many

cultures and penetrated so many forms and ages of life, with the exception of the monastic which ironically had been his immediate wish, we cannot mistake community for institution.

It would be wrong to approach this celebration of the expansion of his work triumphally. Celebration is more than a triumph; it is about personal growth and development. On the one hand I am amazed by the news of growth, for example from our community in Indonesia where the groups are multiplying and where Hendra Widjaja, a young doctor working with HIV and AIDS programs is sharing the teaching of meditation so well and widely. But on the other, I recently visited the groups in a large city where I have been visiting for many years and find them struggling, worried about numbers and how to communicate their simple message. It is wonderful to have the John Main Center on the campus of a major university, but I just came back from the Saturday evening meditation where no one turned up (yesterday there were nine new students), as on the many occasions when Fr John and I were beginning the community and we meditated alone. Just as we don't measure progress in meditation by results or feelings so the growth of a community of love is personal, interior, not statistical. Learning

this is perhaps what the growth of a community of love really means – that the inner and the outer obey the same laws.

Kerry Taylor, who will be in charge of music at the John

Main Seminar next month in Montreal, told me recently how he had been practising his keyboard skills and discovered something of the trill that he had not understood before. It suddenly occurred to him that, as in the art of saying the mantra, the thing was to drop the 'block and push' approach and instead to 'release and enjoy'. It was, he said a 'small observation' but a stream of discovery followed with its implications. The work becomes easier, more gratifying and more immediate to what is happening. Occasionally there is the graced moment of the sense of doing nothing while playing some complex piece – ample reward, he says, for the work that prepared for it.

A community of love demands much work, as does the inner work of meditation, but its mystery is seen in grace, as the free gift of the spirit who starts the work from the beginning and sees its completion in the eternal present. It is this work of the spirit that we celebrate. It is a work in progress that John Main became a great and selfless teacher of. Countless meditators around the world continue it. As his transformative simple teaching is passed on to children in schools, students at universities, homeless men and women in shelters, to people in recovery from addiction or psychological suffering, to the dying, to those striving for peace and justice and friendship with other faiths, to businessmen and doctors, to people in parishes and religious communities, we are sometimes able to glimpse the highest peak of any community of love, the Trinity, the source of all human communion.

*With much love,*



*Laurence Freeman, OSB*

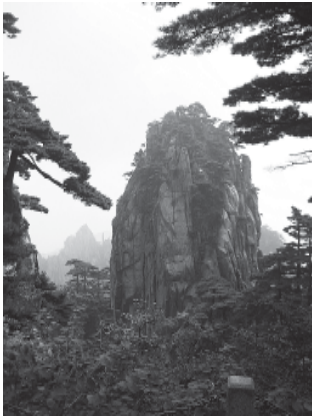
## "THE MEDITATION GROUP FORMS A SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP."

## 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)

### CHINA

#### FEEDING THE HUNGRY IN CHINA, HK AND TAIWAN



In August Fr. Laurence visited China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. He gave retreats to Chinese sisters, who live very simply and were well prepared for contemplation through their daily lectio. They responded warmly to Fr. Laurence's talks. And their faith and generous service taught us much in return. The meditation groups they will form in their convents and clinics will be the first in China. In Shanghai, Fr.

Laurence met with a new priest and seminarians who travelled far to meet us. They had met Fr. Laurence during his first visit here in 2004 and continue meditating and are now forming their own groups. After this Albert and Liz King and Fr. Laurence made a 2-day visit to Huang San (Yellow Mountain)—China's paradise. In Hong Kong, Fr. Laurence gave two talks which, thanks to the work of our Coordinators, Lina Lee and Anthony Ng, drew large crowds. An eighth HK meditation group will form at St. Margaret Mary Parish, where Fr. Laurence spoke. At St. Margaret's Bishop John Tong, auxiliary of the HK diocese, was welcomed as a WCCM patron. In Taipei the talk was another miracle. Fr. Edgar Butong, SVD, director of the One World Center was our host, the artists Francisco and Ana Borboas created two masterpieces for the occasion and the Catholic radio station taped the talk. Over 150 showed up on that humid Tuesday night: many first-time meditators: Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, clergy and sisters. Next day I contacted 80 of the participants and visited Fr. Gary Carbon, pastor of Don Bosco. When he was still a seminarian a decade ago in Manila, he had met Fr. Laurence and meditated for four years until he became distracted by new work and travel. He says "I feel that the coming of Fr. Laurence last week was a blessing and a reminder for me to come back to this practice. I was even teary-eyed during that evening since I remembered that I had, in some way lost touch with silence and solitude but still, the yearning for it is still there, it never left me..." He will start two meditation groups in his parish (Chinese and English-speaking). I will visit the groups here next year. The need for more books and materials in Chinese is urgent. WCCM (HK) is creating a new Chinese website which will help Chinese Christian meditators in this the world's largest population. Liz King Coordinator of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan ([eking2133@gmail.com](mailto:eking2133@gmail.com))

### POLAND

In May Fr Laurence visited Poland for the third time, now on the invitation of the Polish Christian Meditation Community in collaboration with the Benedictine monastery in Lubin and the Jesuit Centre for Christian Meditation in Krakow. The three day retreat, *Meditatio, Krakow 2007* was on "Deepening the Simplicity: progress on the path of Christian Meditation" and drew over 120 participants from many parts of Poland. Fr

Laurence's teaching served as a powerful encouragement and strengthening for all the participants on their various meditation paths. It was also a milestone in WCCM.PL history in Poland. Fr Laurence met with those of the participants who wished to continue their introduction to meditation in the World Community and appointed Paulina Lesniak as a new national coordinator. In October the first Polish School will be held.

*Paulina Lesniak,*

*(Andrzej Ziolkowski: [ziolkowski@pacific.net.sg](mailto:ziolkowski@pacific.net.sg))*

### AUSTRALIA

#### GIOVANNI FELICIONI

Giovanni is a Rolfer and Yoga teacher and member of the WCCM Guiding Board for many years. He is well known to many in the community for co-leading the annual Meditation Retreat at Monte Oliveto with Laurence Freeman and Bob Kiely. He is also active in leadership with groups of younger meditators in London and elsewhere. During August he led retreats in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne for the Australian Christian Meditation Community. His new website is: [www.rolfing-yoga.com](http://www.rolfing-yoga.com)



"...Giovanni's knowledge of the science of the human body was inspiring and his enthusiasm contagious. In the afternoon session we examined 'posture' and were given opportunities to find the best positions for meditation whether it is using a chair, stools or cushion. In assuming a 'naturalized' posture we found that the body was then prepared for the practice of meditation. Our meditation sessions were introduced with 'lectio', the art of sacred reading. This is where some scripture is read slowly and thoughtfully, perhaps repeated to allow the words to sink to a deeply personal level. The other contributing factor to the 'stillness' was that much of the retreat was conducted in 'silence'. After the Saturday evening meal we surprised Giovanni with a huge birthday cake. It was a wonderful night of friendship, thanksgiving and unity. On Sunday Giovanni spoke to us further of gravity (ground) and grace (sky) and of the practice of meditation being an invitation to sit in a totally loving and benevolent space where one can be free from concepts of good and bad, right or wrong etc. He referred eloquently to the gospels to illustrate examples of how to live life fully. This was a thought-provoking and inspiring session. The weekend concluded (all too soon) with lunch served outside in 'perfect' spring weather. Some described feeling 'unravelling', others 'fresh'. Personally, I felt free, content and grateful that meditation is part of my life, and blessed that I have the opportunity to spend time in such good company." (*Lorelle Di Cosmo, Sydney*)

### UK

#### FROM PIGGERY TO MEDITATION BARN!

Once a year the UK community is fortunate to be able to deploy Fr Laurence on a short speaking tour outside London. This June he gave eight talks in four days in East Anglia – at Norwich, Eye, Sudbury, Cambridge, Chelmsford prison and Brentwood.

The tour began with a special event at the home of Anne McDonnell, coordinator for East Anglia. Anne and her husband Mark have been converting a ruined piggyery in their garden into a meditation barn, which Fr Laurence inaugurated by celebrating a contemplative Eucharist there. The day continued with a packed talk at a Norwich city centre church and ended with Compline at the restored 13th century cell of Julian of Norwich. This was indeed a memorable start to an eventful and successful speaking tour. (*Roger Layet, National coordinator: roger.layet@btinternet.com*)



Mark, Fr. Laurence and Anne

## 2008 MEDITATION RETREAT FOR PRIESTS

In Rome, next year, 30th May to 6th June Bishop Michael Putney and Fr Laurence Freeman will lead a retreat for Catholic priests on the contemplative spirituality for active priesthood.

A retreat for priests of other denominations will be held later.

*For further information: Catherine Charriere (catherine.charriere@gmail.com)*

## BRAZIL

### SOCIAL PROJECT WITH THE POOR



The Christian Meditation Centre of Jacarei, Sao Paulo, started a social project with the poor. With the help of the meditators we are making "baskets of food" to give to poor families. Every month we bring to their houses the material food and also offer ten minutes of meditation to them as spiritual food. We read a short passage of the Gospel and keep the teaching of meditation very simple - the poverty of the mantra and the richness of the presence of the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts.

*More information from Carlos Siqueira: info@wccm.com.br  
Site: www.wccm.com.br*

## IN FOCUS

# Kim Nataraja

In 1993 I met Sr Mary of the Columban Sisters in our Anglican church in London. Realising that I prayed contemplatively on my own she soon directed me to the London Christian Meditation Centre at that time in Kensington where Eileen Byrne was the Director. Eileen warmly welcomed me and invited me to attend the weekly meditation groups. Week after week I listened to the insightful words of the speakers at the groups and, to my intense delight, realised I had at last found my spiritual home. Coincidentally, at this time, a colleague of mine at the college where I was lecturing introduced me to the writings of Bede Griffiths. His message resonated with me and led to collaboration with Ria Weyens and Stefan Reynolds to co-found what is now the Bede Griffiths Sangha. In 1996 I took early retirement and became a regular volunteer with the WCCM, and then strengthened my commitment by becoming an Oblate of the Community in 1998. In 1999 Father Laurence, learning of my teaching background, invited me to lead 'The School'. My first task in this post was to collate the 'Resources Book', a compendium of essential information for group leaders. I studied in depth John Main's teaching and the transcripts of the meetings of the first 'School' to make this a useful resource. Slowly over time a dedicated group – the International Resource Group – came into being, with many of its members agreeing to become the National School Coordinators in their own countries and thus sharing the responsibility of running

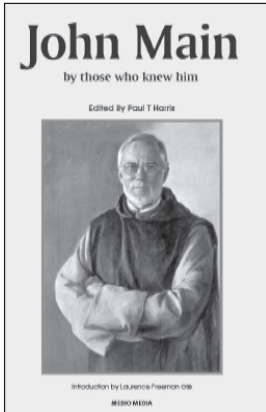
'The School'. We meet yearly and keep in regular e-mail contact to share ideas and materials: the 'Six Week Introductory Course', the contents of the School Website, and the recent 'Meditation with Children' initiative are some of the ideas that have been brainstormed at these meetings. My recent book *Dancing with Your Shadow* has grown out of the many talks on the psychological stages of the journey of meditation I gave as part of 'The School'. 'The Roots of Christian Mysticism Course' started as the brainchild of Father Laurence, who perceived the need for meditators to understand their own mystical tradition. He invited me to be the 'Godmother' and organise the Course. For the past 4 years, my husband Shankar and I have run a very well subscribed 30-week Course at the London Centre. I have supported others to follow suit and there are 'Roots' courses springing up across the globe! I am currently finalising a book based on all the talks given during the Course in London, which will be published by Canterbury Press in 2008. Because of my role in coordinating 'The School' and the teaching of meditation to children I travel widely, giving talks and retreats to support the work of the Community. It is a joy and a privilege to do this work in our community.

*Kim Nataraja, International School Coordinator (kimsbankarnataraja@googlemail.com)*





## Christian Meditation Bookstore - NEW ITEMS!

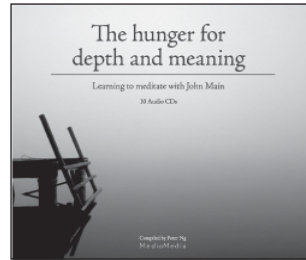


### JOHN MAIN by those who knew him Paul Harris, ed. (Updated edition with new contributions)

Meet the man who discovered an ancient form of contemplative prayer rooted in the Gospel, the letters of St. Paul, the teachings of the fourth-century Desert Fathers and mothers and the English spiritual classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. This collection of personal reminiscences by John Main's family, friends and

colleagues is often funny, sometimes touching, always illuminating. Each one adds a new dimension to our understanding of Fr. John Main and his teaching.

312pp Softcover #6013 £6.00 \$11.95US



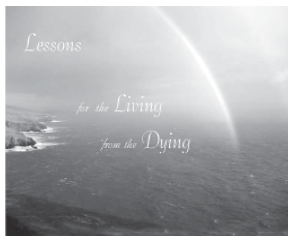
### The Hunger for Depth and Meaning Learning to meditate with John Main Peter Ng, ed.

Sixty-nine talks arranged thematically as both a book and

10-CD set (purchased separately). They offer a clear and comprehensive overview of John Main's teaching on Christian prayer for people in all walks of life. The talks retain the authority, simplicity and humor with which Fr. John taught...Fr. Laurence Freeman says: "I know of no other teaching in this form that carries the spirit of the gospel, the living Word, so directly and purely straight into the heart."

10-CD set #8144 £13.00 \$30.95US

208 pp Softcover and book #6324 £7.00 \$12.95US



### Lessons for the Living from the Dying Dr. Balfour Mount, Fr. Laurence Freeman and Patricia Ng

Reflections on life, death, suffering, meaning, healing and wholeness from the experience and authority of many teachers – a spiritual guide, a patient and a

medical practitioner. Fr Laurence speaks about ways we might approach the spiritual meaning of death and ways we can

accompany others into this meaning; Patricia Ng shares her personal journey from panic to peace; Dr. Balfour Mount reflects on the path towards healing from the experience of an oncologist and an authority on palliative care. Each brings immense wisdom and understanding to a subject we often seek to avoid in Christian theology.

3-CD set #8147 £8.50 \$19.95US

#### TO ORDER:

MEDIO MEDIA  
INTERNATIONAL



Please contact your resource center or supplier for the price in your local currency

UK: email: [mail@wccm.org](mailto:mail@wccm.org)

Tel: +44-20-7278-2070

CANADA: [www.meditatio.ca](http://www.meditatio.ca)

email: [christianmeditation@bellnet.ca](mailto:christianmeditation@bellnet.ca)

Tel: +1-514-485-7928

ASIA: email: [daulet@pacific.net.sg](mailto:daulet@pacific.net.sg)

Tel: +65-67376279

USA: [www.mediomedia.org](http://www.mediomedia.org)

Tel: +1-520-882-0290

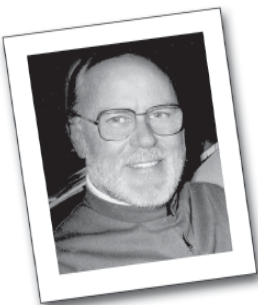
AUSTRALIA: [jpanetta@energy.com.au](mailto:jpanetta@energy.com.au)

Tel: +61 2 9482 3468

(also) Rainbow Book Agencies

[rba@rainbowbooks.com.au](mailto:rba@rainbowbooks.com.au)

Tel: +61-3-9481 6611



## Words by John Main....

*Jesus does not condemn anyone. Every one is eventually redeemed by the universal love that flows from him personally. To be redeemed is not to enter an exclusive club. It is to be thrown open to the universe. It is to be made free from all our chains of fear, of guilt.*

*Door to Silence (2007)*

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](mailto: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](mailto:gjryan@wccm.org))

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

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

The World Community Web page: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

Medio Media Web page: [www.mediomedia.org](http://www.mediomedia.org)