



# Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org

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JOHN MAIN SEMINAR 2008

## "Unity: Local and Global"

AUGUST, 14-17 | MAINZ, GERMANY

LED BY CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

This year's John Main Seminar will consider contemplation as the ground of communication. The principal presenter will be Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The sessions will include a dialogue between Fr Laurence Freeman OSB and Cardinal Kasper. An introductory session will be led by Giovanni Felicioni on the body in prayer and movement sessions will be led by Giovanni and Mariya Plotzki. Other presenters include Prof. Dr. Notger Slenczka, Sr. Máire Hickey OSB, and Sr. Katharina Klara Schridde CCR.

*For complete information and registration visit [www.jms2008.de](http://www.jms2008.de)*

*or write to the International Office in London.*

## Storming Manila in Silence!

Early on the 29th of January some young Christian meditators sped their way to the southern end of Manila, where a spiritual movement towards a deeper contemplative life was being renewed. Twenty-one year olds Gian, Hannah and Manu were helping make spiritual history in this part of the world. In their role as secretariat, they joined seasoned meditators and Fr. Laurence on his first visit to Manila in some years -storming Manila in silence!

Fr. Laurence's storm had its silent eye in two centers, the Diocese of Paranaque and Miriam College in Quezon City. The former was due to the enthusiastic welcome to the Christian Meditation Community and its work by the parish priest and concurrent formator of the Diocese, Msgr. Manuel G. Gabriel. In his introduction to Fr Laurence to religious and priests from eleven congregations and seven parishes he spoke of the Diocesan vision to "become a church in communio with a shared vision", which, he said, could be brought about through renewal and "there is no authentic renewal without being rooted in prayer". Later he shared with the lay pastoral workers of the diocese who gathered to hear Fr Laurence at the Mary Help of Christians Parish. This openness towards grounding ourselves in prayer was the springboard from which Fr. Laurence introduced the practice of Christian meditation. He exhorted the pastoral workers to pay attention to those they serve, convincing them that indeed they were serving as disciples of Jesus with a selfless attention born of contemplation. It is this attention that makes people feel loved, honored, treasured by God. In a church and society where so many suffer want this is an important foundation for teaching meditation.

Deeply inspired by this, Fr. Norberto Z. Ochoa of St. Andrew Cathedral Parish's Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) promptly asked us to start a Christian Meditation group. On the other hand, some of the lay pastoral workers who had come from parishes aired their concerns and misconceptions about meditation. They went home in higher spirits and clearer in their understanding about the simplicity of the practice. Many expressed interest in starting meditation

communities in their ministries.

At Miriam College the following day, familiar faces from the Christian Meditation community mingled with new members and entered into silence led by Fr. Laurence to welcome a new chapter in their life: working towards a personal transformation that ultimately transforms the world. Faculty from both the college (led by Dr. Vicky Apuan, PhD) and high school (led by Lolit Abano, MCHS Guidance Counselor) came out of the encounter resolving to start meditation communities in their departments.

While the silent storm blew in these two places, its also centered on our core group that had spearheaded preparations for Fr. Laurence's talks (Art Ledesma, Cesar Gomez, Chito Makalintal, Jane Dee and JM Rebueno). At lunch we shaped a new leadership team: Cesar as the National Coordinator succeeding Art who will concentrate on group development and teaching; and JM as general secretary. These three accepted their posts in the spirit of service, renewing the community and its work here in the Philippines, the largest Christian country in Asia. Guided by this new leadership, Gian, Hannah, Manu and the next generation of Christian meditators can feel more assured of continuity and growth in the practice. Fr. Laurence took the plane back to Singapore, perhaps to silently storm other centers!

*Cesar Gomez: [czgomez123@yahoo.com](mailto:czgomez123@yahoo.com)*



Seasoned meditators with Fr. Laurence (l-r) Chito, Theresa, Cesar, Art, Vicky, Susan, JM, Pinky and Bernard.



# A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

*Dear friends,*

It is a beautiful spring Tuscan morning, a little fresh but promising a warm afternoon. The hope of Easter we celebrated so recently is being articulated by the greening of the world around us. I just received a message from Australia describing a beautiful autumn day there which reminds me that in relation to ultimate reality everything is a metaphor; however real to the senses an experience may be it points inwards to a deeper clarity and consciousness. As I write this from my room in the monastery, the fifty or so Oblates of the World Community who are here on retreat at Monte Oliveto are finishing breakfast. Soon we will be preparing for Mass and the first of the final oblations we are receiving during this pilgrimage to Benedictine sites in Italy. Most will be made in the cave at Subiaco where St Benedict began his monastic life in the 6th century. But this morning we will receive the oblation of Pierre Corcoran a young Irish meditator, who will also be committing himself to the fulltime service of the community for the coming three years. It is a day of many meanings.

The alleluias of the Divine Office we have been singing in the Church go on sounding throughout this liturgical season insisting that Easter is not completed on a particular day but expands within us, as individuals and as community, continuously, beyond the limits of time.

With a group of young meditators from different countries I celebrated Holy Week on a small Irish island. It was a happy time of spiritual leisure, that rare commodity in urban life today that is yet so essential for personal growth and self-knowledge. What the retreats there and here teach us is that community is composed of the gift of ourselves. Our unique, idiosyncratic solitudes join with others to form the whole of which we are an essential component and which we yet contain wholly within ourselves. 'You and I form one undivided person', as the Risen Christ tells us in the second century reading from the Breviary of Holy Saturday. I hope these slightly expanded messages from that week can illustrate that experience of the present moment that the non-dual dimension constantly awakens, that radiant is-ness of life that is resurrection from the dead.

## WEDNESDAY, HOLY WEEK

As Holy Week unfolds I am writing from our retreat for young meditators on Bere Island. At this moment there is not a cloud in the sky and the clear light is calling out every hidden colour, shade and texture of the sea, trees and mountains. Reading the book of Nature can be easier than other books. It makes it simpler to believe that we are on the essential human journey into growth and expansion of being. The light of Christ, the Sun of Resurrection that never sets, is the light in which we see this light. Enlightenment is not something we have to earn or acquire. It may take us years to realise that. Then after much striving and complicating effort we understand that the given is grace. So a beautiful, significant day. But the weather forecast is warning us of some cold snaps and showers (this is Ireland) just as we know realistically, in the best of times, that life includes suffering.

In our conversations during the retreat we are looking at this and other tensions that we have to balance in our day to day living. How to manage the balance between family commitments and meditation or retreat times? How to deal with the challenges to faith that the organisational Church in its culturally conditioned forms can confront us with and still remain within the church? How to read the essential revelations of Christian doctrine in the light of modernity and develop a contemporary language while staying rooted in tradition?

Sacred time, such as we have entered upon this week, gives us the wiggle room for these tensions. Liturgy (literally, 'public worship') opens the inner space that gives us the elbow-room to accept what seems unacceptable and balance what seems unsupportable. During these next few days we have the opportunity to be better empowered and sensitised to help us respond to that whole spectrum of being human that Easter encapsulates. Tomorrow, for example, in our presence to each other at the Lord's Supper we experience the joy and the tensions of being in community, washing each other's feet and learning what faithful relationship means. We read the words of Jesus and the narrative of his Passion in the light of this liturgical experience.

The Triduum, however, is an opportunity not an obligation. Holy Week reminds us that we can, unmindfully and even by default, prefer to opt for immobilised security of the modern atomised individual. So protected that we cut off the risk even of growth. On Good Friday we face the biggest risk of all: all letting-go,

all losing is a death. Death is the greatest loss of all. If we cannot turn it into a choice we risk missing life's greatest opportunity.

But the fear of death which Jesus suffered in Gethsemane, is the deepest repression of our psyche. In the Desert (our Lent) he faced, as other great spiritual leaders, every aspect of his shadow, tempted by every form of the ego. But alone in the garden the night before he died, he went further to wrestle with the angel of death itself and mastered it before his final moment came. The inescapable fact of mortality and our easily denied fear of it, the terror of absolute loss and abandonment, is present even in the feasts of life, our happiest and most fulfilled moments. Only by facing it can we move into a meaning that opens the door through which we pass to a greater spaciousness of living, the Spirit itself. But it is a passage into the unknown. We can choose to ignore or defer the passage (Passover) offered us. On Saturday we rest, or tremble on the horizon of that meaning, balanced on the knife-edge of the spirit, between losing and finding.

We are as yet still uncertain, unconvinced about what lies on the other side but we have not closed ourselves to possibility, the reality of the unseen, the closeness of the unknown – the possibility that rises early the next day in the uncertain light of morning from the nowhere of the tomb, the horizon of death transcended by the rising sun and the slowly flooding reality of a new life force, a new day.

Liturgy is communal, even for the most solitary. We are held together in the communion space of meditation during these holy days. We feel supported in the presence of community as we risk entering the mystery. Even physical distance and the different time zones separate – but cannot divide – us.

## HOLY THURSDAY

Last night, at the Mass of the Lord's Supper that ends Lent and opens the Easter Triduum we entered into sacred time. This is a different kind of time than, say, juridical time – “if Lent ends now, when we sing the Gloria for the first time in weeks, can I eat sweets again now, break my Lenten fast, or do I have to wait till Sunday morning?”

Here on Bere Island where, anyway, time is different from the mainland a mile away, we are making a spiritual retreat. Not a holiday; not a weekend break. But what does “spiritual” mean?

We often use the word only when we don't know what else to say. Sometimes we use it to distinguish a level of experience that is different from the grossly ‘material’ or something especially meaningful. Yet often, as we explore these meanings of ‘spiritual’ in the light of daily experience of work and relationships, we see how the boundaries between mind and matter, the spiritual and the material, simply dissolve. The spiritual in fact pervades everything. It is the dimension of all reality whether it is seen or not.

Science provides humanity with illuminating, exciting ways of describing reality and how it works at some levels. It doesn't exhaustively explain it. We can say today, for example, in scientific terms what mystical writers have always said, that what we call solid matter is as impermanent and evanescent as mental energy. Everything passes. Just as thoughts or moods pass, so eventually the most solid things disappear. All is energy. The doctrine of Creation does not depend on scientific proof but it has to be understood today within this understanding. Nothing exists outside of God. That is, nothing (except God) is permanent and even the unchangability of God is the most dynamic of all energy, interpersonal love. Einstein said that all matter is a form of energy and Teilhard de Chardin that spirit is “matter incandescent”. With the discovery of ‘dark matter’, composing a major part of the cosmos, we have another disturbing and provoking metaphor to help us understand the horizons behind which we know ourselves, consciousness and the cosmos. A horizon event is both a revelation and another limitation to our understanding. This is how we see the Cross and Resurrection too – it allows us to see further into the mystery of Creation, even to be touched intimately by it, but it leaves us still in the realm of unknowing.

## “WE ARE BALANCED ON THE KNIFE-EDGE OF THE SPIRIT, BETWEEN LOSING AND FINDING.”

How do we reconcile the tensions among mind, matter and spirit? It is not an abstract question. It is the same as asking, how do we balance our personal

lives in a harmonious, peaceful and healthy way? How do we live with receding horizons?

The mandorla is an ancient symbol illustrating the overlap and intersection of two adjacent circles, creating a zone of integral unity – what we might call the expanding and contracting realm of the sacred. It could be interpreted as the overlapping of mind and matter that reveals the spiritual realm, not as a separate but as a distinct reality that stays hidden until integration takes place. It then becomes the innerness and connectedness of everything we experience.

At the Eucharist we taste this union of the spiritual and material, living out the deepest implications of the Incarnation itself. We ingest the bread and wine which become part of us physically and then, through us, a deeper part of the world (both human and impersonal) that embodies itself in us, the world's microcosm.

In meditation we bypass and transcend the egoistical force that separate the physical, mental and spiritual and which is responsible for making these divisions into substitutes for the sacred. Whatever divides (the ‘di-abolic’) negates the sacred. Symbols (the ‘sym-bolic’) heal these divisions. Behind the mysterious communion of spirit and matter, self and others, that we celebrate in the Eucharist, there is not magic but the self-giving of Christ that incarnates the divine self-giving. At Mass we bring our particular selves, embedded in particular times. But we are made more personal, less individualistic in the divided sense, through the celebration.

How odd, then, that we can so easily turn the Eucharist into another power structure, ringed round with rules and regulations that divide rather than unite. At the heart of the Mass is the supreme energy of powerlessness, the all-powerful and all-creative energy of love. Last night, as we washed each others' feet in the small island church, meditators and islanders mingling with their many differences, some performing this 'lost sacrament' for the first time, and as the wind blew hard and blustery outside, I felt we were trying to express and understand a very simple and all-unifying truth – that we are one in love. Jesus celebrated this last supper with his friends and washed their feet in order to redefine the human relationship with the divine. This joyful moment initiated the Passion. The Eucharist permits us to enter into the darker valley of Good Friday without fear.

## GOOD FRIDAY

"It was a good crowd today", one of the Bere islanders was heard to say. We – meditators and islanders – celebrated the Liturgy of the Passion in the church at 3pm today. More people come to Good Friday liturgies than Holy Thursday or Easter Sunday, here as elsewhere. For many, the Cross seems sufficient. It is so powerful a symbol of empathy with human suffering. It can seem as far as some dare go in the exploration of the Mystery of Christ. Certainly, it is the place we all start from. As the lines of people came up to kneel before the cross and kiss the wood, an act of faith deeper than words was being performed. And, indeed, if we are open to the Cross we experience the beginning of a relationship of faith with Jesus that will lead us beyond suffering, disappointment, betrayal and the universal "tears of things", on through the limbo of Holy Saturday and into the new creation that the Resurrection is about.

About two weeks ago three young men were tragically drowned near here; one of them from the island, Colm Harrington had just celebrated his 21st birthday. His two friends were younger. Because of the sea, tragic deaths are not uncommon here and many families have been riven at some time in their history by these personal good Fridays.

Whenever death strikes it is a good Friday, a meeting with the angel of death, St Francis' Sister Death that we

find so alien until it recognises us, an inescapable reminder of the horizon within which every life unfolds. We celebrate the death of Jesus and call this Friday Good because in it we can see a meaning that transforms our sense of the horizon and gives us unexpected grace to deal with the tragedies and limitations of our lives.

The key to this meaning, and the effective power of the Cross, is its display of powerlessness. Before Pilate, the consummate politician, the spinner of words and worker of crowds, Jesus stood silent, embodying the truth. He told the devious Pilate that he was there to 'bear witness to the truth' and then let the silence speak for him.

Hard as it is for us to trust powerlessness, the overwhelming energy of Good Friday teaches its truth. Our reflex is always the opposite, to control, dominate, manipulate, especially when we feel threatened. So we are generally economical with the truth or suppress or package it. To tell the truth is to trust a power that can only be released in powerlessness, the transcendence of the ego.

All Good Fridays, personal or liturgical, remind us of this. And whether we embrace the truth or not, we cannot realistically deny it. But in meditation, in saying the mantra, we do trust and embrace it and entrust ourselves to it. "Every time we meditate," as John Main says, "we enter into the dying and rising of Jesus". The silence of Jesus, his freedom from words, is most truthful in the silence of the Cross.

## HOLY SATURDAY

The spare day. The day off. The day after the funeral. The day of blessed solitude and of unusual loneliness. When the worst has happened and despair has been achieved. As after enlightenment there is still chopping wood and drawing water and doing the laundry. But with a new intensity and unhurried sense of anticipation.

When do we ever get what we want? And how long do we have to wait for it? Just as Eros pursues the unattainable, so faith can never grasp its goal. Yet, as this holy interval between death and resurrection teaches us, waiting is not about intensifying desire or trying to make time pass more quickly. It is about dissolving the boundaries of time and allowing the consciousness of the present to flood through and fill us to whatever capacity we may have so far attained. We wait for what already is. We have only to see the significance of what has happened

This morning and afternoon we meditated on our own or in small spontaneously formed groups. Solitude and community, freedom and discipline, melted into each other. Holy Saturday is a timeless time stretching between sadness and joy. It has a sense of unanticipated spontaneity, a freedom we probably could not endure for very long. At 6 we met in the island church to turn on the electric heaters and meditate and then rescue it from its bareness. Some had collected yellow flowering gorse, daffodils and anonymous branches. Some with strong convictions decided where they would be best placed as others practiced the music,



ranging in the end from plainchant to Celtic to Leonard Cohen. Even on Bere Island, any island, any life floating in an ocean of otherness, we are touched by everything.

We often prepare for parties or liturgies long before they happen. The passion with which a liturgy is prepared shows who is really religious, who can lose themselves most in worship. Preparation itself is an act of faith and half the fun of the final event. In fact it's a way of life, a way of preparing for the end. As the day and hour come closer the feeling of excitement rises, the sense of coming up against the horizon that we have been looking at for so long. As the long-awaited arrives, we may wish we had practiced more patience. We may wonder why we did and said so many things that were impatient and unmindful when what was going to happen was always going to happen in its own time. But in the happiness of its happening our un-wisdom is forgiven and disappears in the light of the long awaited event.

Meditation, too, trains us in a passionate patience. It teaches us that we wait and even get impatient in the here and now, the all-inclusive present. There is no escaping what we wait for.

O Happy Fault.

## EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Sunday is eight days long, the Octave of the greater feasts which distend liturgical time to keep us more focused in the present. It gives us extra time both to have the experience and to get the meaning. This long day began with a Vigil that ended late and started up again, very early.

The meditators and the islanders gathered in the church for the first Easter Vigil to be held on Bere Island in many years. Ignoring warnings we had been given, we started the Easter fire in an old wheelbarrow on the church steps. It was roaring as people arrived but then quickly burned its way through the bottom of the wheelbarrow and began to consume the rubber tire. The theological interpretation came later from Giovanni who lit the fire – the love of God that consumes everything it loves, the fuel and the fire becoming one. We changed positions with the shifting winds to avoid the black smoke. No mention of smoke in the description of the burning bush, I thought. Yet it was still the atavistic moment of the sacred fire, reminding us of how far back in human time the meaning of this liturgy reaches. The wheelbarrow blazed in the light of the full moon just rising over the bare hill. Soon it became the tender flame of the Easter candle and then led the hundred or so worshippers towards the dark womb of the church. After the second proclamation of Christ our light it was communicated like good news to the little tea lights that people were carrying. Peter sang the Exultet and we began to listen to the ancient story once more, to sing the long-absent alleluias and an adapted Leonard Cohen, to plunge the candle into the waters of the font symbolising a transcendent fertilisation of human existence, to celebrate the Eucharist and to meditate.

A few hours later we braved a cold wind, trudged across a wet field and gathered in the dark looking out over the sea. Like our Neolithic ancestors we huddled close together around the menhir, the standing stone that legend claims as the exact centre of the island. Not the mathematical centre, science has shown, but maybe a centre of another kind. We formed a witty, laughing shivering body of Christ as we sang chants and hymns, beginning with the cosmic gayatri and evolving into the Christian music that expresses and feeds our faith. As the horizon turned to light we read from John's gospel of the disciples discovering the empty tomb, of Mary staying behind weeping and of her hearing herself spoken in the recognition of Jesus. The slow recognition of all the disciples became more understandable in the slowly growing light of day. In the gradual enlightenment one body pressed up against me identified itself as an islander who had joined us and another as a new addition from Prague. The Resurrection has a moment in history, or we would not have been able to be touched by it, but it never ceases to expand and surprise.

To die always leads to rebirth, that is the law of karma and of physics. Energy cannot be destroyed only re-formed. But if we enter death with faith active

in love we are assured (and in the resurrection we are convinced) that it is not rebirth but resurrection that ensues. A breaking out of the cycle of birth and death into eternal day, the moment of Christ, God's I Am.

As we left the island on the ferry later that afternoon I spoke with the ferryman, Colm, whose son had been one of the three boys who drowned a few weeks ago. It was the first time I had seen him since his tragedy, tragically familiar to him, too, as years ago his brother had also been drowned. His rugged face, lined from decades of ferrying in all weathers, and his sad, observant eyes did not flinch from talking about his grief, describing it with astonishing completeness and openness in brief space – but really saying only that there are no words, no easy explanations for the mystery we live.

No words to describe such loss as he was suffering, just as there are no words to describe such hope as Easter insists on giving. Suffering has not ended but it has a new context, a new syntax and meaning. The ancient faith is renewed each year as we are still doing in this Easter season. It enlarges the space we inhabit each day and includes even the doubt that, at times, the poverty of our words and the failures of our imagination make inevitable.

*With much love,*



**Laurence Freeman, OSB**

**"THE LOVE OF GOD CONSUMES  
EVERYTHING IT LOVES, THE FUEL AND  
THE FIRE BECOMING ONE."**

## 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)

### GERMAN SILENCE

The German Christian Meditation Community ([www.wccm.de](http://www.wccm.de)) has developed during the last years, slowly but steadily. Seventeen groups exist in different regions from the north to the south. Regular weekly meetings are held in most of the groups as well as in Himmerod Abbey directed by Fr. Martin Storck O.Cist. Himmerod is the eldest foundation (900 years old) in Germany made by Bernhard of Clairvaux. The Silent Retreat after the John Main Seminar 2008 will be held there.

An important event for our German community is the annual retreat with Fr. Laurence in Würzburg which is the biggest help for the growing of WCCM in Germany.

The community looks forward to the 2008 John Main Seminar in Mainz (August 2008 : 9.8. – 14.8. = Monastic Tour – 15.-17. = Seminar - 17. – 21. = Silent Retreat). We hope to see many friends of meditation from all over the world in our country!

**(Mariya Plotzki, National Coordinator: [mariya@wccm.de](mailto:mariya@wccm.de))**

A weekly meditation group meets in the protestant Lutheran church of St Nikolai in Flensburg. There are always new participants but we have a core of five to ten. We started in 1998 with daily meditations during a 'decade of peace'. After a while we continued weekly and begin the group with a sung canon. Sometimes, during a decade of peace or during the Holy Week we still offer daily meditations.

**Dr. Ekkehard Kruger**

### PORTUGUESE SILENCE

On the 13th October we arranged for a day of silence, meditation, reflection and its sharing, in a quiet small village near the sea. We met at 10,30 a.m. and began with a teaching of John Main. It was a beautiful and shining day, most suitable for reflecting while strolling. The heart of the day was the planting of a tree (an hibiscus with beautiful red flowers) to commemorate John Main's life and legacy. We conceived a short ritual with some poems and prayers and in the end we planted the tree. Then we rejoiced with juices and cakes and at 6,00 p.m. we departed.

The most exciting project of the year was the inter-religious meeting for meditation. To organize an interfaith event was one of the ideas in the list of 30 suggestions we received at the end of 2006. We also saw on the News from the World Community an item about inter-religious dialogue meetings in Florence. We thought the task was beyond our capacity but we emailed Marco Lazzari, at the Christian Meditation Centre in Florence for details. He was so receptive and encouraging that we decided to try something similar. We approached Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Bahai's, Ismaelis and Jews as well as all the other Christian churches, and met personally with the representative of each tradition. Most of them gave us a warm welcome and loved the initiative. The meeting took place with about 70 participants.

A silent retreat took place in November in a quiet seminary outside Lisbon, led by Father José Tolentino de Mendonça, a priest well-known here for his spiritual depth and poetic wisdom. Everything ran in a most smooth, beautiful, peaceful and profound way.

**(Maria Cristina Guedes de Sousa, National Coordinator: [mcristinags@netcabo.pt](mailto:mcristinags@netcabo.pt))**

### POLISH SILENCE

Special thanks to the Benedictine oblates from London: Giovanni, Stefan and Lukasz, all of whom led the School. To Giovanni, for the joy with which he shared his knowledge and thanks to whom we could feel and relax our bodies. To Stefan, for concentration and attention and to Lukasz, for teaching and his assistance in translating. Their dedication and ideas made it possible for the School to reach such depth and allow us to experience our community of faith and prayer. Participants, mostly young, came from all over Poland: Warsaw, Lodz, Poznan, Gdansk, Gdynia, Ilawa, Katowice, Ornontowice, and Rybnik. Most, however, were Katowice WCCM members, who became even more united not only by the time spent at the School in Szczecin, but also by a long car journey together!

In January 2008, The Polish Christian Meditation community was invited to participate on air in a discussion on meditation. The program presented different forms of meditation, the other speaker being a Zen master. The discussion that took place was in a spirit of an inter-religious dialogue. Many listeners called in witnessing to a growing hunger for a deeper form of prayer. For us, it was a wonderful opportunity to present our teaching. In June, we are planning the second School. This time the organization is in the hands of our meditating group from Katowice. In November, we will hold a retreat with Fr Laurence. This retreat will be a special one. We are planning to invite our Buddhist brothers and sisters for a day of an inter-religious dialogue to mark the first Polish edition of The Good Heart (planned in September). Through our Web page we are receiving more and more inquiries and a warm feedback from all over the country. It gives us hope and encouragement that the Spirit is slowly working with us for the growth of Christian meditation in Poland.

**Paulina Lesniak, National Coordinator:**  
**([paulina\\_szczecin@wccm.pl](mailto:paulina_szczecin@wccm.pl))**

### IRISH SILENCE

Sylvia Thompson ([sylviathompson@eircom.net](mailto:sylviathompson@eircom.net)) has taken on the role of National Coordinator from Fergal McLoughlin. Fr Laurence led a Christian-Buddhist retreat ("Passion and Compassion") at the Dzogchen Beara Buddhist Centre followed by the Holy Week Retreat for young meditators on Bere Island.

## LATIN AMERICAN SILENCE

### URUGUAY

In July 2007, the first known group of the Christian Meditation Community was formed in the parish of St Alexander and St Peter Claver in Montevideo. Father Daniel Kreber, the parish priest, who had already read about Christian meditation, welcomed the group of eighty people of different parishes who were then addressed by Carlos Reis, a Brazilian, who learned meditation from Fr Laurence in Montreal in 1983 and has since then been practising and teaching it.

*(Carlos Reis, carlosreisxl@uol.com.br)*

### SPANISH WEBSITES

In October 2005, we launched the Spanish Website [www.meditacioncristiana.com](http://www.meditacioncristiana.com) and there have been 148,359 visits so far, especially from Latin American people, most of whom found it through Google using the key word "meditacion". As a result, many people write to express their joy to have found the Community and to learn that Christian meditation is within the Christian tradition. Many subscribe to the weekly newsletter and receive readings from Fr John's books and can hear or read Fr Laurence's talks, translated into Spanish. They also receive news from the Latin American Community and information about the WCCM events and programs.

The Latin American meditators need three things: 1. Learn how to meditate and deepen their spirituality. 2. Make friends. 3. Be part of a supportive Community. Many meditators live in areas where there are no coordinators or groups. So in November 2006 we launched a Yahoo group [<http://mx.groups.yahoo.com/group/meditacioncristiana/>] on which we share our experience and offer support for each other in our daily commitment. We have also found a way to meditate together across the distance. In August 2007 we launched the Calendar whereby we write our meditation schedules and meditate together. This simple exercise has helped us immensely as we know that we are not isolated; that we can pray with others even without knowing them. As a result, friendship is blooming and we know that it is Him who weaves His love through the Net. You are welcome to join us!

*(Lucía Gayón: pax@meditacioncristiana.com)*

## INDIAN SILENCE AND KRIPA

### TOUCH CANADIANS : FR JOE PEREIRA

At the invitation of the British Columbia Christian Meditation Community, Fr Joe Pereira, member of the WCCM Guiding Board and Director of the Kripa Foundation in Mumbai, spoke on Christian Meditation and Coping with Addiction. He introduced the KRIPA Foundation's addiction treatment programs which incorporate yoga and Christian meditation. We welcomed Fr. Joe and over a hundred people to the event held at St Mary's Catholic Church.

The KRIPA Foundation began with just three patients. It has now grown to over 50 locations in India. Fr Joe had

noticed that the 12-step programs, with their origins in the Oxford Group, included five steps that referred to spirituality, though not to any specific religion. In the Indian context, Fr Joe discerned that yoga would both be culturally appropriate and, providing it was a pure and "no-nonsense" style of yoga, would be acceptable to people of any religion. He also discovered that this physical component to an addiction treatment program would by-pass the ability of "clever" addicts to talk their way around their counselors. Fr. Joe also found the sheer stillness of the postures to be valuable in treating addicts. This stillness is deepened in Christian meditation and the individual discovers that the body is the temple of God's spirit. There are other forms of meditation for those who are not Christian. A full program at the KRIPA Foundation lasts a minimum of three months. The percentage of participants who are substance-free after five years is 38%, which may sound low until you realize that the general five-year success rate for addiction treatment programs is only 2%. For more information on the Kripa Foundation, please visit [www.kripafoundation.org](http://www.kripafoundation.org) or write Kripa Foundation, 81/A Chapel Road, Mt. Carmel Church, Bandra (W), Mumbai, Maharashtra 400050, India.

*(Colleen Donald, Regional Coordinator: cdonald@shaw.ca)*

### OBLATE COMMUNITY

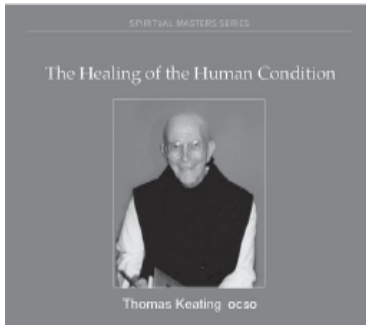
A retreat and pilgrimage for the WCCM Benedictine Oblate Community was led by Fr Laurence in Italy 31st March to 8th April. The first of its kind, it celebrated the quarter-century of growth in John Main's vision of a 'community of love'. We began with a three-day silent retreat at Monet Oliveto followed by a visit to Norcia, St Benedict's birthplace. At Subiaco, in the 'sacro speco', where Benedict spent three years of solitude, fourteen of our group of 53 either made final oblation or became novices. In Rome, we celebrated mass at the church of Sta Francesca Romana, the 16th century Olivetan oblate and later met with the Abbot Primate at San Anselmo. On the last evening we joined the Rome meditators at the Church of the San Egidio community in Trastevere where a weekly group now meets.



*Devis Maccarelli, Coordinator Italian WCCM Oblates gathering the pilgrims in Rome.*



# Christian Meditation Bookstore - NEW ITEMS!



## THE HEALING OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

**Thomas Keating OCSO**

Thomas Keating OCSO is a Cistercian monk at St Benedict's Monastery, Snowmass

Colorado. His many books include *Open Mind, Open Heart, Invitation to Love, and Manifesting God*. In these talks, Fr Keating explains how contemplative prayer heals the human condition, how it brings us out of our false-self systems and connects us with our true self. Talks from a Singapore Holy Week 2001 retreat.

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It is a paradox that the soul that longs for harmony is challenged by inner conflict. We often battle with the shadow side of ourselves. Exploring the

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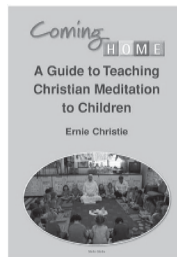
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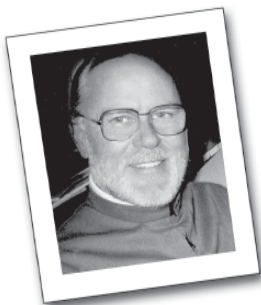
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## Words by John Main....

*"The way of meditation is simplicity itself. All we have to do is to make time available every morning and every evening of our life. For that time, we must be open to the light, to God, to love. This will mean a radical conversion from egotistical, unenlightened consciousness. Not thinking about ourselves, not constructing our plans, we enter into an evermore profound silence, an evermore profound reverence of being that is rooted in God."*

**The Heart of Creation**

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