



Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org

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"See you at the Seminar"



THE SHAPE OF GOD'S AFFECTION

The 2010 John Main Seminar
led by James Alison,
Priest, theologian and writer
5-8 August, Canterbury England

James (www.jamesalison.co.uk) is one of the keenest and freshest voices in shaping a new language for Christianity today- "*stunningly original and brilliant*", as Rowan Williams calls him. The Seminar is preceded by the option of a retreat led by Laurence Freeman. Offering a refresher course in Basic Christianity James Alison will remind us what the Good News about God really is. He will help us re-imagine the uniqueness of Christ and explore how the Spirit overcomes moralism and makes room for a more loving church. He points to new ways through the divisions and conflicts in ethical, sexual and social issues which can so distort Christian living.

The annual John Main Seminar is designed to broaden and deepen the teaching of Christian Meditation. It brings together meditators from many countries and those from other groups interested in a spiritual approach to contemporary issues. As well as learning from an inspiring speaker, participants meet in the silence of meditation, in discussion and in times of celebration and friendship. We hope to see you in Canterbury and share this time of renewal with you. **Information and registration at : www.JMS10.com**

MEDITATIO

2011 will be the 20th anniversary of the World Community in its present structure. The roots have gone deep in many lives and communities during this time and we have seen the branches spreading. To help this growth advance a new initiative is being born. **Meditatio** is a new outreach of the Community bringing the fruits of Christian Meditation to the secular world. From our new home in central London **Meditatio** will organize seminars on topics such as mental health, technology, business, interreligious dialogue - we begin with education in December 2010. These will enable dialogue between the contemplative tradition and the issues of our time. The insights gained will be shared with our national communities. **Meditatio** will also develop the oblate year program for young meditators. They will be based in the new London house for their personal spiritual formation

and then return to their own countries with skills and as leaders of the community for the next generation. We will also be developing a new communications approach, using technology to share the word about the simplicity of meditation.

In the next newsletter we will have more information and will be posting news on the website - www.wccm.org. Please keep **Meditatio** in your heart and please help with the cost involved in realizing it by making a donation as you can afford which you can also do through the website. A gift of any size will encourage all the volunteers and all those involved in this work. It will help us see that it is the whole community united in the silence of meditation that inspires us to respond to the new opportunity that the Spirit is now presenting.

Thank you!
Laurence Freeman OSB





A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Dearest friends,

Following is a short summary of the main ideas from Laurence Freeman's talks at this year's Monte Oliveto retreat. He led it with Giovanni Felicioni and Robert Kiely, oblates of the community. The retreat is held annually and brings together meditators in silence and friendship from many parts of the world in a spiritual centre of exceptional beauty. The full talks will be published soon by Medio Media.

"Return to the Centre": Introduction to the Retreat:

Welcome to Monte Oliveto. We have come to make a silent retreat in this sacred place – a place where 'prayer has been valid' for centuries – and we are full of noisy thoughts. We have carried them here with us, interiorly, as we brought our bags. We have a week to shed them before the activism of most of our lives will quickly try to replace them with a new batch.

There are various facets of the retreat – lectio, the conferences, the Eucharist, the yoga, the silence and the conversation we will have with each other during dinner before compline with the monks and a return to silence. For twenty years we have learned what makes this retreat a unique kind of experience. The prayer-rhythm of the monastic life, the great beauty of the buildings and of the natural surroundings, the weather and the simple but delicious food. But all these facets are given meaning by the meditation. At 6.30, 7.15, 12.30 and during mass we will meditate together. These are the pivotal points. During the solitude of the afternoons you can meditate on your own, walk, rest or write haikus. - short poems capturing the insights or impressions of ordinary things made wonderful-filled by the silence and the spirit of attention that deepens and purifies perception.

Many of these periods in the daily rhythm will engender good thoughts. Better perhaps than the anxieties, distractions, confused plans and memories that we carry in our heads most of the busy days. As John Donne said in the poem we will read for lectio later with Bob Kiely, 'pleasure or business' whirl our minds around making us disobedient to our 'natural forme'. We get caught up in external activity when we form mental and emotional attachments that make patterns that entrap us.

It is better to have good thoughts than bad - negative, fearful, obsessive, painful – thoughts. But that is not the purpose of meditation or of the retreat. Being here is about 'laying aside thoughts', which is how the early masters of our tradition described prayer. Actually, good thoughts – compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, kindness – are generated naturally by the laying aside of all thoughts. For religious people this is often incomprehensible or, if they do understand it, even shocking. We have all been trained to think of prayer as thinking – thinking of God, speaking to him, asking for favours, praising him. These are perfectly valid forms of prayer but they occupy the mind. Meditation teaches us that we can do more in prayer than this and we are summoned to this 'something more' in the 'pure prayer' of the heart.

A Buddhist parable describes the problem of thoughts by comparing it to a dog for whom you throw a stick to run after. Time and again it will chase it and bring it back, just as the mind runs after thoughts as soon as you have laid them aside. Lions are different. You only throw a stick at a lion once because it looks at the thrower not the stick. The mind in meditation is attentive not to the various streams of thoughts but to the source, the centre of consciousness, the heart. There we find stillness and silence – the hesychia – of prayer. Silence is the answer to the endless questions the mind produces. As an early master said 'attentiveness is the heart's stillness, unbroken by any thought.'

The silence of the retreat, our mindful opening and closing of doors, our punctuality for the sessions, our avoidance of idle talk, our small acts of kindness to each other both in the silence and as the silence – all these will create the best conditions for discovering this simple, grand wisdom in our own experience. Let's meditate now.

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You have had some time now to settle in. Getting used to a new place, a new job, a new phase of your life is always difficult and takes time. At first everything is unfamiliar. You turn left for the bathroom and end up in the meditation room. The neural circuits of the brain need to be re-written and new information absorbed. Learning something new is always challenging because it will change us and change without security is threatening to our identity – perhaps that's why people think they can't learn as well as they get older. Losing your job or moving to a new place, finding your social status changed are all like awaking in a new universe which you have to get used to. I hope it's happening

peacefully for you. If you have any problems let us know.

When I mentioned the title of this retreat to someone they said, 'well that's pretty vague – could mean anything'. So to justify myself let me try to define what I mean by it. The symbol of the centre is a powerful and universal one. Symbols need to be studied and their effects on us observed if they are to remain potent and not become platitudes. I hope we can re-appropriate the meaning of 'centre' during these days and understand better what returning to it means.

When we feel lost, confused or when we are grieving we look for reference points which can serve as centres again – relationships or activities that stabilize us. This is perhaps why sacred places exist. The 'temple' was always seen as a centre of the world, with the altar as its centre symbolizing the heart the centre of consciousness. The great 'templum' was the sky itself but on the earth physical centres are necessary too, shrines, churches, mosques and monasteries.

Scientifically the centre is an invaluable concept. The centre of mass is the mean location of all the mass in a system. A rigid body has a fixed centre. But a more dynamic entity with different distributions of mass – like the solar system, the church, the Body of Christ – has a centre of mass which is a point that may not be identified with any particular mass grouping the system. So Christ is the centre of the church but doesn't belong fixedly to any particular institution or denomination.

Geometrically the centre of a circle is the point that is equidistant from all points on the periphery. So God has been defined as being like a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. The beauty of this is that it is an abstract idea with very practical implications. If God is equidistant (or equally close) it means God has no favourites and can be equated with justice. His sun shines, as Jesus said, on good and bad alike and so God can be equated with mercy too. This is general and also totally particular. The Greek word for centre means a 'sharp point'.

Centredness is desirable because it provides balance. Physical balance depends on a number of body systems working together as they are designed to. Being in one's centre, physically or psychologically, implies order, harmony, peace and a sense of fulfilling a purpose. Imbalance causes dizziness, disorientation and nausea. As we all tend to drift away from our own centredness and easily get lost we need continuously to be re-centering ourselves. This implies commitment and any commitment calls for discipline. The spiritual path begins consciously when we see our need to be re-centred and the value of a freely chosen discipline to enable this.

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Universal symbols – a centre is one – work at all levels of perception. Centredness physically illuminates what psychological balance means. And in the mystical realm the spiritual centre describes an ever-deeper penetration of and by reality. To seek God, we are assured, will lead to finding God. But once found the search is re-started as we let go of what we have found, relinquishing all that we

think we have achieved, and return to the poverty of spirit that is our fundamental relationship to God.

John Main puts it like this:

Meditation is a very simple concept. There is nothing complicated about it, nothing esoteric. In essence meditation is simply being still at the centre of your being. The only problem is that we live in a world of almost frenetic movement and so stillness and rootedness seem quite foreign to most of us. But in nature all growth is from the centre outwards. The centre is where we begin and that is what meditation is about. It is making contact with the original centre of your own being. It is to return to the ground of your being, to your origin, to God.

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I recently visited the ancient abbey of Montserrat in Catalonia, a distinct and proudly independent culture in Spain. The night before going there I spent in Barcelona where, on my way home after dinner, I was swept up in a wild street party celebrating the FC Barcelona's victory over Real Madrid. It was a good natured riot, no hooliganism or drinking, just the simple rejoicing of this particular form of religion with real moments of ecstasy. I thought how far the fans' joy was from the spirit in many churches where

"MEDITATION IS MAKING CONTACT
WITH THE ORIGINAL CENTRE
OF YOUR OWN BEING."

the language so flatly, unconvincingly speaks about joy and celebration. Many Catalans like much of Spain feel deeply alienated from and betrayed by the

church since its collusion with Franco's fascist regime and its later more reactionary kinds of spiritual movements. The monastery of Montserrat, however, is an exception. It is deeply loved and revered by the Catalans for its courage in maintaining the Catalan language and culture when it was repressed by the regime. It also bravely gave refuge to many artists, writers, students and politicians who opposed the dictatorship. Here it seemed was a religious expression – ranging from the devotion to the Black Madonna to intellectual research and discussion – that had retained its authenticity. The community of monks was peaceful and hospitable not frightened of the outside world but confidently centred in its vocation.

But there was another dimension to the story. Above the monastery are the hermitages, partly cut into the rock face where great masters like Fr Basili Girbau, whom the Dalai Lama asked to meet when he visited, touched the goal of the monastic – and human – life. The hermits were not preachers or travelers although people travelled to see them. Their influence radiated and was felt in the secular capital two hours drive away. The hermitages await new tenants as perhaps does the universal church and the world because the solitude of the hermit is a lesson to us all.

Where was the centre between the football crowd, the monastery and the Fr Basili's hermitage? Was each a separate, self-contained centre. Disconnected and each claiming primacy? If, as I felt, they formed a single manifest moving centre what does this tell us about our own lives? Where is the centre – or centres within the centre - of my life and how are they unified? Let's reflect on these questions

in the solitude of the afternoon before we meet for mass and dinner. How centred am I as I enter into this time of retreat? Where are the forces that throw me off centre?

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Today we need to think of the difference between being self-centred and being grounded in our own centre. When I was about to become a novice I was still smoking and had failed several times to quit. I was addicted and spoke about it with John Main. He pointed out that if becoming a monk was so important a decision and if meditation as a way of seeking and serving God was behind it then it was only necessary to consider what was consistent or inconsistent in what I was doing. Meditation, he reminded me, was about truly loving yourself. Smoking was doing harm to yourself. Meditation was a way of freedom. Smoking, like any addiction, was a loss of freedom. His cool and non-judgmental comments made it impossible for me not to give up the habit. He had helped me to get back on course.

Spiritual progress – in fact all human development because we shouldn't really separate the spiritual from the whole person – involves the art of navigation. This is the skill of steering a course, staying afloat in storms and not getting lost when the signposts fail in times of transition. Sailors speak of a 'day's work in navigation' which consists in running through a checklist of ten items, reading the position and verifying the course. Staying centred. The centre of the art is of course the ship or plane – the self – but it is a point in continuous transition, a still and moving centre.

Our daily times of prayer are the equivalent to the navigator's art. So much of the time, pleasure or work distracts us and we discover, after it has happened, that we have drifted off course. Then we have real work to do to re-centre and make up for lost time. Better – we come to see – to do a regular day's work (the two meditation periods a day suffice) than to keep on correcting major diversions

from our course. The meditation discipline twice a day can be seen as a minimum to realize and consolidate a sense of dynamic balance in the moving centre of daily life but it is an effective minimum.

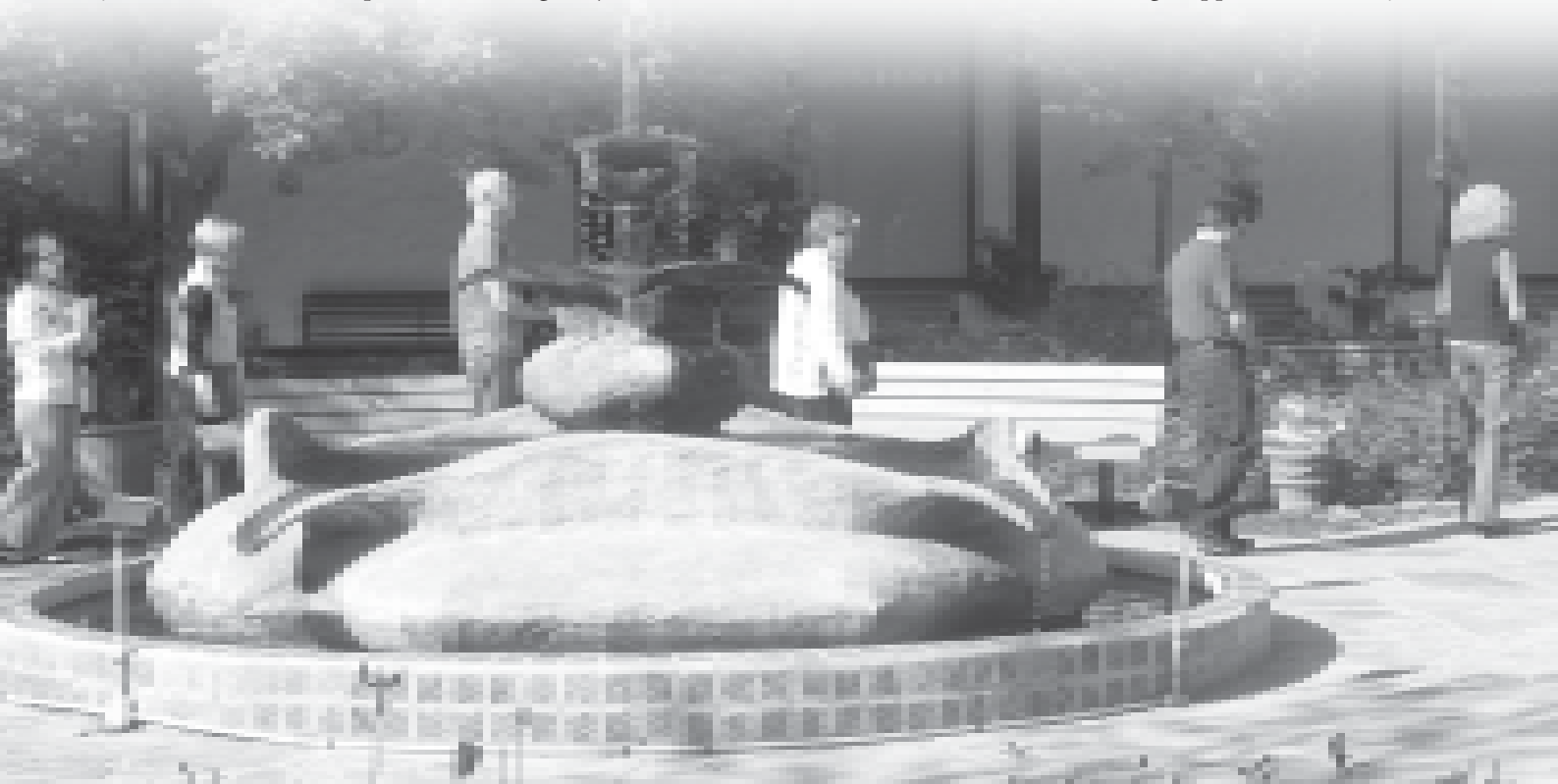
One of the aspects of navigation is accepting the singularity, the unique particularity, of your own position. However close you are to another your positions are unique. The hermits of Montserrat, like the early fathers of the desert, were teachers of this reality of solitude. We don't have to imitate them exactly – wear what they wore or live where they lived because we are in essence as solitary as them; but we should learn from them about how to recognize and embrace our uniqueness. Solitude in a mass society driven by uniform forces of unprecedented magnitude is an important dimension of the self to recover today if we are to retain our humanity in the midst of our crisis. The speed of communication, the multiplicity of choice and the lack of character building in our celebrity culture which enables us to deal with loss or suffering are, like the egocentricity of an education system that reduces knowledge to instrumentality, some of the reasons for

making loneliness so intense an experience in the modern psyche.

Loneliness is a sense of isolation; it is often a feeling that we are being

punished, singled out, for an unknown fault entirely of our own. It can be generated by loss, betrayal, disappointment, ageing or simply by being unnoticed. In extreme manifestations it is pure hell and can tip some over the edge. The feeling of estrangement is the worse for it often being so sudden – when all that one took for granted is uncentred and made to seem foreign or phony. Everyone to some degree will experience this, even children when they painfully realize that the world is not as hospitable as they had been led to believe. Our response to loneliness is often to deny or evade it. We increase our activity or self-distraction and even look for things to get addicted to. For some, a moment of awakening happens when they realize

“SOLITUDE IS OUR TRUE NATURE,
OUR REAL SELF.”



that most of the activity of their life is an escape from the fear of loneliness. When we distract ourselves the person or thing we are using becomes an instrument. We become attached to them so that even when we become tired of them and seek novelty, we still feel bound to them. Then the fun starts and the devil – the power of division and duality – comes into its own.

The hermit keeps busy – idleness is a characteristic of loneliness – but his activity is useful, productive, enjoyable and other-centred. Solitude is not a passing state of mind, threatening by its impermanence like loneliness that can strike unpredictably. Solitude is our true nature, our real self. As we come closer to the centre, our goal, we gradually move into deeper solitude and become more comfortable with the uniqueness of our moving point. Sometimes in the early stages of meditation we can get a vivid insight into solitude – our true still and moving centre – and we can be frightened by it because it is so different from the ego's view of itself. The non-attachment demanded to enter solitude is great and its price can slow us down. The road that leads to life is narrow and few they are who find it.

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While our faith is still weak we won't like the sound of this. It sounds negative. The Cross seems to many in western culture today a gloomy image to live under even though the way to solitude and the bursting forth of the Resurrection, unlimited being, leads through this way. The Buddha sitting under the bodhi tree with the smile of enlightenment seems more attractive to many post-Christian westerners today. But they can also forget what Buddhism reminds us of that the three nights of sitting that brought him to this state were also a kind of crucifixion. He was assaulted by inner demons. Mocking his spiritual determination, tempting him with desire and urging him to find more spiritual merit elsewhere. But he stayed centred, determined 'not to be driven from my post'. The only way to penetrate the centre and become one with it is to die into it through the renunciation of the identity we cling to.

This – not merely the stress-reducing relaxation of the purely secular approach to meditation – is what leads to the divine stillness of the moving centre. "Whoever has achieved stillness has arrived at the very centre of the mysteries," explained St John Climacus. The way to this is not to try to think the un-thinkable but to renounce thought in order to come to what the French Benedictine Henri le Saux, Abhishiktananda, a great pioneer of modern Christian identity – called 'the solitude that has no name'. Solitude is precision, the truth that frees. When we drift off-centre by forgetting the realm of silence and stillness, we imprison ourselves to the approximate or the substitute. Negative solitude is achieved by exclusion. True solitude is the discovery that in our particularities we share in the universal and there is no gulf between me and God or others and myself.

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Mother Julian declares that "God is in our sensuality". This reminds us that in the non-dualistic vision of reality

the centre is not a concept but a real place of integration and expansion. The loosening of attachments is the way to freefall in to the centre – to love God – and it is by the way the purification of desire. This means we have an infinite potential but also that we accept a divine vulnerability.

What knocks us off-centre can be what re-centres us more strongly and deeply. We are not centred as long as we are attached to the position we have reached. Letting go is the condition of growth. But these ideas are merely words. The minor knocks of life can be recovered from quickly. Major catastrophes can shatter the centre and seem to dissolve our identity. They push us into affliction – a far more threatening experience than suffering alone, though it contains suffering.

During these deep days of silence and friendship we have been holding in our hearts and prayed for the parents and young brothers of Aisling Sullivan from Bere Island. Her beautiful five-year-old life, so full of joy and pure goodness, ended unpredictably and unavoidably in a tragic accident. It plunged her parents into the worst pain human beings can suffer, confronting them and us all with one of the unanswerable questions of life.

Affliction, as Simone Weil, describes it is different from suffering because it can seem even to dehumanize us in a kind of helpless slavery. She compares it to a nail (one of the old meanings of the word 'centre') driven into our souls and fixing us to the very centre of the universe – the true centre which is not just in the middle, is not even in space and time, because it is God. This point of intersection, as in the two branches of the cross, overwhelms us at every level. Thinking about it leads to the temptation to take comfort in lies or pious platitudes and so before such a reality we have to go beyond thought and the self as we know it. We have to let ourselves fall into the mind of Christ who continued to be the truth through the time of his own affliction.

Affliction seems unbearable, even cruelly ridiculous and meaningless. Yet, like beauty which is its twin, it leads through what seems like non-being, total uncentredness into the fullness of life. And our experience of it allows us to be of help to others as they pass through it. Both affliction and beauty – and what greater affliction than to lose the beauty of a child – mystify us. The awful 'why' they raise leads us into a silence where we discover that silence is not an absence or evasion. It is the word of love.

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We have shared the journey of these days of retreat and now we have also shared our responses to it. As we now return to our ordinary lives we will best absorb what we have learned through solitude and community and allow it to grow by sharing it with others. Safe journey home!

With much love,



Laurence Freeman OSB

NEWS FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY

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

BERE ISLAND HOLY WEEK RETREAT

Being a young meditator- as I am – one gets the feeling sometimes of being one of a rare species wondering why we fail to breed in the wild. Considering that, maybe we do pretty well in the wild (in a society which often flees from true wilderness). But on Bere Island, with its wild beauty, for the third year running a large group of young meditators came together to celebrate Holy Week and the mellow coming of spring.

There were a variety of events each day – meditation, talks, meals, silence and conversation and the liturgies. The young meditators took it in turns to entertain Mikey, the 18 month old son of one of our number, so that his mother could participate. He entertained us more than he us. He tended to become the centre of attention and we adored him. He had a knack for pulling odd faces and seemed quite comfortable with all the adults. And he was remarkably quiet when necessary. Some times were for silence, others were singing and laughter.

During the week we explored the Easter mysteries in different ways, coming from the same sacred space of the frequent meditations. Laurence gave talks illustrated by insights from St. Irenaeus of Lyon, which sparked my interest and were particularly poignant at this season. Phrases like “The glory of God is the human being fully alive and the vision of God is their life” struck a deep chord. I always find it enriching when I discover the unity between the daily practice of the pilgrimage of prayer and the life of the church. Irenaeus, like St. Paul, has taught me this. After the Saturday Vigil mass we rose early and watched the sun rise on Easter morning. We did stretch the term “young meditator” a bit but we met many from across the globe committed to the daily pilgrimage of meditation. I am fond of my local little group of meditators in South Hobart, Tasmania (hello folks!), and I found this similar, but this had a more global feel, and it was definitely a beautiful island too.

Maximilian Hogel,

Hobart, Australia in London as an oblate.

USA

After waiting three years for Fr. Laurence to return to California to lead a silent weekend retreat, the arrangements were made for April 23-25 at the beautiful Franciscan house of San Damiano in Danville. The theme was The Shape of a Wave. Fr. Cyprian Consiglio, from the Camaldolese monastery at Big Sur was joining us again to provide his beautiful music, registration was filled and everyone eagerly anticipated the shape the wave of this retreat would take.

As I sat in front of the television mesmerized by the awesome photos of the eruption of the volcano in Iceland and the gridlocked airports of Europe, it did not occur to me that any of this would impact the retreat. Yet with one phone call, the shape of our wave took a turn we had not

expected. In spite of great efforts, Fr. Laurence could not get a flight out of London. We were called upon to let go of our expectations again and allow the Spirit to flow.

Possibilities for a Plan B started to emerge. Fr. Laurence had it all figured out. The concept of a video conference was born for the WCCM. What followed were three days of planning, filming, coordinating, and executing a most amazing achievement. Fr. Laurence spent hours preparing talks and Martha from Colombia who was staying at the London Center filmed the conferences. Adriano Massi in Rome coordinated the systems and posted the conferences on the web. Here in California, our hero, Dan Harvey worked with Adriano and San Damiano to make sure everything worked. A true community effort was in the works.

While the number of attendees had reduced we began our retreat as scheduled on Friday with the first of three video conference talks by Fr. Laurence. Sunday brought a special treat. Fr. Laurence was on the big screen live by the modern miracle of Skype for a Q and A session. All agreed the talks were wonderful but actually seeing Fr Laurence talking live was a special blessing for all. We concluded by meditating live on screen with Fr. Laurence. As he said “even if the connection is broken it is not lost!”

As Fr Laurence said afterwards: Above all, I learned again what a wonderful, generous and resourceful community we are. In the fourth century, our contemplative ancestors – the Desert Fathers - would retreat to the silence and emptiness of the desert and seek out the wisdom of more experienced monks. They would say to them – “Father, give me a Word”. Today in the 21st century, we received our word across thousands of miles by the miracle of technology unimaginable to our ancestors.

Maria Forner (Mariaf@ocsnet.net)

ITALY

The annual Italian National Silent Retreat was held in March among the woods of the monastery of Camaldoli, high in the mountains of the Casentino in Tuscany. The Prior General, Dom Bernardino, gave a particularly warm welcome to Father Laurence and to our community. In Italy the Comunità Mondiale per la Meditazione Cristiana has spread and consolidated its work not only in the north and the centre, but also in the south; last January Father Laurence held a well-attended conference in Naples and many people came up from the south to the retreat at Camaldoli.

The theme of the talks was “Spiritual practice, meditation and other ways to spiritual growth”. His words on the Eucharist especially moved many of us to tears, but all three conferences reminded us of the sacramental roots of Christian meditation. This was important for those who had drifted from the Church but have now started their return journey with a fuller understanding of what being a

Christian means. A cheaper registration was possible for those for Bruno Guidantoni, the Florentine coordinator of the retreat arranged a large empty room for those who with their own bedding and back packs. This innovation was very popular. There were well-attended yoga sessions and a long silent walk in the woods with pauses for meditation

led by Marisa Paniuzzi, There were 120 but the silence was strong and the deepening sense of community was evident during the contemplative mass on Saturday evening. On our new web page you will find recordings of Father Laurence's talks, in English and Italian.

Jennifer Greenleaves



MEDITATION PODCAST @ iTUNES

Search for "Christian Meditation" in the podcast section of iTunes to find more than a dozen series of podcasts by John Main, Laurence Freeman, Bede Griffiths, Peter Ng, Gerry Pierse, David Wood and others. Though the podcasts are offered without cost, we suggest users send a donation to the Community at <http://www.friendsinmeditation.com/friendsprogramme.html>

IN FOCUS

Why Are You Angry?

I may have been young and restless as an 18 year old from California, but I don't believe I was particularly full of rage. And yet, that was the title of the theology course I chose to enroll in for my first semester at Georgetown University. I think I believed the course in non-violence would, because of its subject, garner me an easy 'A.' However, it was this theology course which determined the course of my college career and continues to define me today. For it was in this course that I found Fr Laurence Freeman.

While the course's subject was intriguing, following the writings of Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr. among others, it was the unseen and unheard practice at the beginning and end of every class that really stimulated my eager mind. Fr. Laurence introduced the 25 students in this course to meditation in the Christian tradition for 15 minutes at the bookends of our time together. Some thought it simply interesting, but a group of about 5 of us really took to the message. A movement had begun on campus.

We began to publicize Christian meditation about campus. We organized a few Good Heart Dialogue seminars in small back rooms of buildings with names like Kennedy and McCarthy. We had Wednesday meditations at 6pm in Copley Crypt, yet snuck back late at night to practice another meditation at 10pm. Within a few years, with the support of Dennis and Jane McAuliffe, Dean of the University, we were given a small townhouse off campus to begin the John Main Center for Meditation and Interreligious Dialogue. After I graduated in 2007, the Center was given an official home in the oldest building at the heart of campus - situated not far from the classroom where Fr. Laurence and I met at his first course at Georgetown.

After graduating with a BA in Theology (Religion and

Culture), I worked in several enterprises. I taught at a prestigious private school in Los Angeles. I volunteered for AmeriCorps, working in colleges and universities in the state of Wisconsin. I built a communications company with my family involved in corporate and entertainment work. However, I was innately dissatisfied. I didn't bring happiness in teaching outdated lessons in technology to privileged youth. I didn't experience happiness in my adventures to America's Northland. I didn't see happiness in the faces of Hollywood's elite.

And so, like the Prodigal Son, I returned home. I returned home to meditation, and as luck would have it, I returned home to my ancestral homeland of Cork, Ireland. This Easter, which coincided with my 25th birthday, I went on the Bere Island Holy Week retreat.

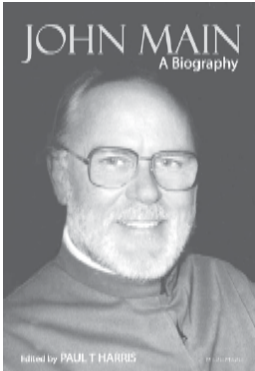
It was here, reunited with Fr. Laurence, WCCM, and my meditation practice that I determined I would take the next year to become an oblate and was asked to return to Georgetown in the fall as director. On June 4th, I was honored to begin my postulancy here in London at the midday prayer and meditation at the new Meditatio centre in which the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was participating when he came to lunch with the community. As my oblate novitiate approaches on the uniquely American date of July 4th, I can say with confidence and a smile, that I am uniquely blessed to be part of this community, and, if I ever had been, I could not now be angry.

Tim Casey





Christian Meditation Bookstore - NEW ITEMS!



John Main – A Biography : When God Disappears Paul T. Harris, ed. : Robert Kennedy

JOHN MAIN OSB (1926-1982) is recognized as one of the major spiritual teachers of the twentieth century. His teaching on contemplative prayer has transformed many lives worldwide and his influence continues to grow.

John Main taught that to be with God does not require words, thoughts

or images, but the silent consciousness of a *Presence*. He reminds us that the spiritual pilgrimage invites us to have the courage to become more and more silent. The journey starts when we accept the discipline of silence, stillness and simplicity.

This booklet tells the story of John Main through letters, anecdotes, reminiscences by family, friends and colleagues. A collection of photographs adds a personal touch to this story. The booklet gives a new dimension to our understanding of the man, the monk, and his teaching. Fr Laurence Freeman, Fr John's spiritual successor, says: "It is important to see how John Main's pilgrimage and mission were fully inserted into his humanity. It is the authenticity of his life that in the final analysis teaches us."

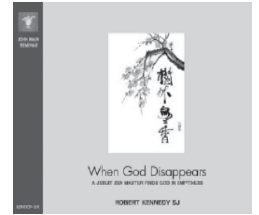
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Robert Kennedy, the author of *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit and Zen Gifts to Christians*, is one of three Jesuits in the world called 'Roshi' or Zen Master. He is also a psychotherapist and professor of theology at St Peter's College in New Jersey. He is a representative of the Institute for Spiritual Consciousness in Politics at the United Nations.

As a Christian Fr Kennedy has found meaning and deep reverence in the practice of Zen Buddhism. He conducts *sesshins* (Zen retreats) in the United States, Mexico and Ireland. They reflect the Jesuit statement, which calls on Jesuits to be familiar with other religious traditions and even immerse with them in theological exchange and a dialogue of life, action and religious experience.

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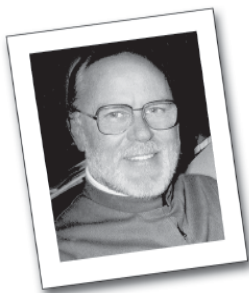
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Words by John Main...

Purity of heart is sharp vision. As we learn to say our mantra we narrow our concentration to a single point, the mantra. That single point leads into this vision. Everything else, distraction, thoughts about ourselves, the ego, is put aside as our vision is concentrated wholly ahead into the mystery, the vision of God. (Door to Silence)

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