



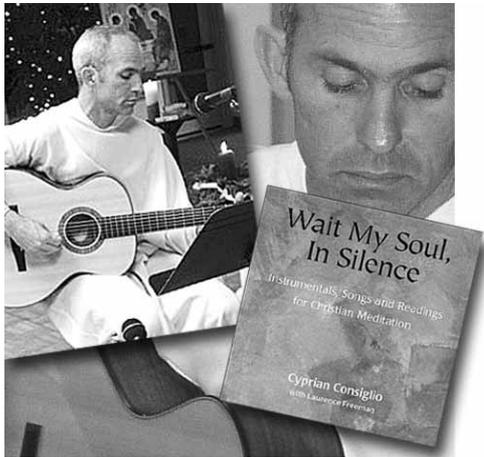
CHRISTIAN MEDITATION NEWSLETTER

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The World Community for Christian Meditation

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WAIT MY SOUL IN SILENCE

**CYPRIAN CONSIGLIO
with Laurence Freeman**

Medio Media has recently published a new CD of instrumentals songs and readings for Christian meditation. Fr Cyprian Consiglio plays and sings and Fr Laurence Freeman contributes some brief talks. Fr Cyprian is a Camaldolese Benedictine monk, musician, composer artist and teacher. He has led retreats with Fr Laurence in the US.

"Wait my Soul, in Silence" is a beautiful collection containing six 'suites' of music and readings for meditation. One may simply listen through and the entire collection becomes a contemplative experience. Or you can use one of the suites for a meditation period. After the short talk and instrumental there are three soundings of a bowl. Meditation can follow and can be concluded with a song and scripture reading.

Available from www.mediomedia.org

Sharing the with the Young



This year, when we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the first meditation group started by John Main in London, the teaching of meditation to the young is blossoming all over the world. It is heartening to see that many meditators are invited by heads of schools and that there are initiatives supported by bishops.

In fact, for many years now, meditators have shared the gift of meditation with their children and grandchildren. It's impossible not to share something so precious with those we love. A few years ago the more informal approach to this received inspiration with Greg Ryan's delightful book and CD 'My Happy Heart'. Soon it encouraged Barbara O'Halloran in Australia to pioneer an imaginative approach to teaching meditation to young children in schools which has led to a series of booklets for each grade called 'Like a Child'. It was published this year with a recommendation by Archbishop Wilson of Adelaide.

In the United States, Fr Ray Ratiri, pastor of St Matthew's parish, and Coleen Davis and Br. Tony Mazurkiewicz O.Carm at St Agnes', have introduced all the classes in two Catholic schools to meditation in Phoenix, Arizona; Gene Bebeau is teaching children in Florida; in Oakland Jeannie Battagin recently introduced Fr Laurence to her 4th graders in Oakland who she has been teaching meditation. Fr Laurence spun a tale about the two birds on the WCCM logo and meditated with four groups from these classes.

In Australia, which is leading this field at present, Ernie Christie, director of religious education in the Townsville

diocese, is developing a syllabus designed for 30 schools by 2006 in Queensland with the support of his Bishop Michael Putney. This will be a model for other countries. Andrea Baker, Belinda Cargill and Janet O'Sullivan have been regularly invited for the past few years to teach meditation in schools to older students in Sydney.

In other countries, too, the initiative is gaining momentum. Monique Eng has been teaching meditation in schools in Alberta, Canada for the past few years. At first this was very much her own initiative, but now she has been officially invited to introduce it to 9 classes of grade 10.

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A LETTER FROM LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION



Dearest friends,

All around in the fresh morning air there were vineyards, on the brink of spring and greening. They neatly populated the fields that stretched down to the Rhine which flowed sparkling through the valley below the monastery. Like many Benedictine monasteries it sits on the top of the hill, giving an overview of the world, expressing interest and involvement but also a certain detachment. I had arrived late at night and was surprised by the view that greeted me when I awoke, at first light, and walked to the church for mass. I was staying with the Benedictine nuns of the monastery of St Hildegard of Bingen.

The liturgy was precise and dignified. The nuns entered the chapel in the formal order and predictable choreography of a community that lives so closely together that it uses ritual to maintain charity and express friendship. The full black habits softening the stark stone of the church protected each individual but could not conceal her. The face, the way of walking, innumerable idiosyncrasies, showed why the Rule of St Benedict is about harmonizing differences not creating uniformity, embracing exceptions not worshipping rules. The novices, fresh from a different world, looked self-conscious but the older nuns had worn the old rituals into their own shape and were relaxed and easy in them. There was a quiet unmistakable joy in what might have been mere solemnity. There was no rush in the liturgy. Reverence held the joy. Afterwards I was ready for the good breakfast that priests look forward to after mass in a convent.

But instead I was asked if I wanted to join the procession and, not wanting to get forgotten and miss my breakfast, I accepted. We lined up with smiles and discrete organizational whispering in the cloister. At the Abbess's signal the sisters started to chant the Litany of Saints and we set off behind the cross bearer, down the cloister and into narrow corridors, as if the invoked saints were guiding us, and then out of a side door into the crisp sunlight. Past the young workers, putting tiles on the roof of the new guesthouse, who looked at us with a mixture of amusement and fear, knowing they were not meant to wave as we passed. The nuns sensed and were alert to everything around them but sang and walked as if their lives depended on it. The path took us all, young and old, limber and arthritic, up a steep hill past the garden where Hildegard would have raised her medicinal plants. As we walked upwards, the 'greening' of the earth that she wrote and sang so ecstatically about was visible, happening all around us. The air was fresh, full of innocence and potential. We walked ever upward, stretching out the chanting of the saints' names so we didn't run out of

them. I wondered if we would stop for lunch in Wiesbaden, twenty kilometers away. At the top of the path we stopped, the Abbess made a brief spoken prayer and then we turned round and processed back down.

Finally, breakfast. I amused the nuns by confessing that on the way down, along with the litany, I had had a counter-tune in my head, an English nursery rhyme that immortalized a famous military fiasco. 'The grand old duke of York, he had ten thousand men, he marched them up the top of the hill and he marched them down again.'

It's strange the things that make people happy. I hope the builders working on the roof were as happy in their work as the nuns clearly were in the work of their prayer and procession.

They also grow, make and sell wine, run a book restoring business and welcome guests. Certainly the work of putting up a building looks more useful and justifiable than walking up and down a hill asking heavenly citizens to pray for you. But the life of the nuns – or the meditator – does not need to (and cannot) be justified by the standards of the marketplace. Work is *good* work when it is true, and produces joyful, loving people. Good work needs people who know that it is the work they are called to do.

Whether one tiles roofs or chants litanies, whether one raises a family or lives in community, the foundation of the essential work of life, which is love, is coming to self-knowledge. Before this foundation can be laid and if it is to proceed past the first storey we need to realize what self-knowledge means and also what it isn't.

As a teacher of humanity, self-knowledge is the first level at which Jesus engages us. In my book *Jesus: The Teacher Within* I explore this through the great question that Jesus puts to his disciples one day as he is 'praying alone in their company'. The meaning of any question is the way it is asked and its context. The question of Jesus arises from the solitude that Jesus has plunged into in his prayer, the same solitude that is the basis of his communion with others. Solitude is the discovery and embracing of our uniqueness. It is the cell, the desert, we enter in every meditation. It is our liberation from anonymity by finding the 'new name, known only to the person who receives it' (Rev 2:17).

In fact Jesus asks two questions: first 'who do people say I am?' They tell him what people are speculating about him but he gives no response. Then he drops the real question onto them: 'But who do *you* say I am?' This engages us, hooks us (if we chose to pay attention to it) and leads us through contact with his

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self-knowledge into our self-knowledge. This is the point and purpose of the question. The teacher's intention is not to elicit the 'right answer' which will win us approval and inclusion in the company of the righteous, safely distant from the excluded company of those who got it wrong. That is not the religion of Jesus. The religion of truth and love is inclusive. Peter, typically, immediately responds. He gets the answer right but, far from congratulating him, Jesus tells them strictly not to broadcast the answer. Even if answers are right – and there *are* good and bad answers, of course – no answer is the truth. Just as self-knowledge is not information about ourselves.

Answers may point to the truth and deflect us from wrong turnings. So we do need to work on good answers. But truth is never just an answer - not the living truth that sets us free, not the Spirit of truth that Jesus breathes into us and that, thus inspired, 'descended' on the apostles at Pentecost. If only correct answers were the truth, it would all be so much easier! But that they are not is obvious from the ways in which people can defend the right answers in ways that so evidently betray the very truth they point to.

What then *is* truth? This is Pilate's question and although he may have been asking it from a place of cynicism it is a necessary question to live by if we want to live and work well. Jesus asks us who *we* say he is. Usually we avoid the direct and personal nature of the question, preferring to answer his earlier and safer question about who other people say he is. But if we do listen and respond to the actual question he asks we are drawn directly into the process of self-knowledge through relationship with him – the one who knows himself and shares his self-knowledge (the Spirit) with us. This will not be comfortable. One way to know that a new level of self-knowledge, a deeper stage of growth is starting is that we immediately try to find a way out of it. We should immediately try and run back to safety. We are lucky if we have people to show us what we are doing and most fortunate if we accept what they show us because there is no truth without self-knowledge. We can never know God, other people or ourselves as if they or we were just objects of knowledge. We know by sharing. We share by letting go. We know because we are known. The knowledge that is at work here is, of course, love.

Truth is not an answer. Nor is just right thinking. It is an experience of personal consciousness; in fact, an experience that constitutes consciousness, not an add-on experience. Self-knowledge is consciousness in relationship with the greatest possible field of relationship of which we are capable at any one stage in our development. Hence we grow in truth as the field of relationships expands. And truth 'sets you free' because it liberates you from ego and sectarianism. Capacity for self-knowledge is integral to our capacity for relationship. Our relationships are what our self-knowledge allows them to be. Realizing this capacity for self-knowledge in love is human growth. And it depends, as Jesus goes on to teach soon after he poses his question, on self-renunciation. This is one good reason why it is not easy. We need the psychological foundation of love, attention and emotional security in childhood to prepare us even for the first

steps of this process that begins to get serious in adolescence. We all start off with varying degrees of resistance and fear. No one has had all the love they needed and even if they did, learning to love, to renounce self is intrinsically painful. But we can begin to meditate at any stage and with virtually any handicap. Just where we are, which is always where God, the wholeness and love we seek, always finds us first: that's where we always begin and are always beginning from.

Prayer is the path of self-knowledge that leads us into the mystery of our own being and so into the knowledge of God from whose love we emerge into consciousness. Prayer is the supreme and basic human therapy. It is healing and strengthening in the measure of its purity, which means its simplicity and authenticity. The further it takes us into our own depths the more healing it is and the more liberating is the experience of the truth. But it always involves us in the paradoxes of growth, the cycle of losing so that we can find and then of having to let go of what we have found. In Luke 15, a flurry of parables illustrates this central theme of the gospel, of losing and finding, that finds its greatest expression in the paschal mystery itself. The lost sheep, the woman's lost coin, the prodigal son. Loss is followed by finding and with finding there comes joy and celebration with neighbours and friends. The losing is necessary although

the finding shows us that what was lost was not really lost. We were just not where it was all the time. The joy we see described in the resurrection appearances is people realizing this. Don't look for him among the dead, he is not there, here he is, see. For every birth there is a death and for every death a re-birth – until the day of our resurrection which transcends this cycle in an ultimate fullness of being. Then we will not need to be reborn any more because self-knowledge has been achieved in the ground of being itself

where we are known even before we come to exist. We have lost ourselves fully and finally. And we find ourselves again in God, in the largest possible field of relationship, universal love. Then we see that before we are even visible to ourselves we are loved. 'Before the foundation of the world, he chose us in Christ' (Eph1:4).

If we understand this – if we get the point of the parables and see the Resurrection – we do not feel that our selves are being snatched away from us by the deaths and losses of life. The teacher invites us to see this. It is our deepest desire that we see the liberating truth that we can renounce our selves, lay down our lives rather than being passive victims of fate. We can turn loss into discovery, death into life. But much depends on how we understand the self – how we relate to ourselves - before we can do this.

In the 17th century the French philosopher Rene Descartes searched for something absolutely certain in human existence that could never be subject to deception. (He wanted an answer to be the truth. Who doesn't?). He thought he found it in thought itself. This gave rise to an idea of the human self that has dominated an ever increasing range of personal and social life ever since. It is the idea that 'I am a thing that thinks; I am a mind,

*“The essential work
of life, which
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self-knowledge.”*

intelligence, intellect. I think therefore I am.' Descartes wanted to demonstrate the existence of God but in fact he reinforced a direction in western culture that progressively undermined religious faith and isolated the self from other autonomous, thinking 'selves' and even from nature. It set body and mind at odds in new and damaging ways. The human sense of self became increasingly cerebral and completely egocentric. Today we look out from this observation post of the self onto a world which shows all the consequences of this idea of the self as object, as isolation, as disembodied. There are good consequences too, antibiotics, better plumbing, email (some might disagree). But the accumulation and acceleration of the negative consequences is our modern crisis.

Knowing who and how we truly are. Freeing ourselves from this mis-conceived image of the isolated, thinking self. This is not only the spirituality of our time. It is our best hope for saving the world. Only in the work of self-knowledge can we find a new way of seeing things that will lead us back to our senses and to a radically new direction in time. St Gregory of Nyssa once said that to seek God is to find God but also that to find is always to seek. The same is true of the self because self-knowledge and the knowledge of God are so intimately connected. In renouncing self we find our self, as Jesus, said, but not as a 'thinking thing', a mental object. The human self is not a 'deficient angel' – a 'pure' astral entity that has fallen into the mire of the flesh. We know ourselves only in the body, not beyond time and space and earthiness. Meditation is a direct and simple way of self-knowledge because it integrates the wonderful and complementary (and so easily contradictory) dimensions of being human. If we understand meditation correctly we see it, like the Eucharist, as a most incarnate spiritual practice. The whole self – body, mind and spirit – collaborates in the work.

Then we experience that self-knowledge is not self-consciousness. Meditation is not what you think. Knowing our self is not thinking about our self.

Self-consciousness makes us imagine ourselves as outside community, even as essentially outside all relationship and time. In this mode we think of ourselves as psychological onions, peeling through layer after layer until we come to a core of – nothing, or at best seeing life as a meaningless uphill procession of one. Rampant self-consciousness also leads us to behave as if we were God. Even the *other* in other people becomes merely a projection of (or an obstacle to) my self.

Self-knowledge is entered by knowing that we are known and loved. If this felt knowledge is deficient in our relational life we feel humanly impoverished, alone and inadequate. What sense can it make to tell such a person that God loves them, if they have never felt loved sufficiently by another human being? What human experience can they relate to in order to understand the divine? We may thrash around in many directions chasing after substitute forms of this knowledge. But the self-knowledge that is born in love is more purely experience than anything we usually call knowledge. So, more than ever we today need meditation. We need to plunge deep into solitude to escape this loneliness that

breeds anger and many other viruses of the modern world such as the systemic exploitation of the weak and marginalized.

The first step is always the most important and the most difficult. It is so easy to hide behind a facade of cultural conformity. It is easy to do just what people expect you to do, when you know you should be doing something else that would better realize who you are. Often we start to meditate with a kind of sense that something is missing in life: a feeling of loss or of not finding something. So, for most of us meditation at first feels disorientating. 'Is this really prayer?' we ask. We won't really understand why we feel drawn into this journey from head to heart, from Cartesian self to real self, from thinking thing to silent being. We have to face the disorientating sense of loss and we need to penetrate it deeply enough before we can be led into the joy of finding.

At first the work of self-knowledge involves facing a not so attractive self-reflection in the mirror of the mind. At times we seem to see only our faults, our distractedness, our endless self-mirroring ego. Quite naturally this will seem pointless and lead to *acedia*, the feeling of discouragement and the temptation to give up the regular practice. There will be lots of rationalizing of this feeling – I am too busy to meditate; I will take this up again at a better time in my life; let's try something new. Or there will be the subtler tendency to deceive ourselves that we are meditating (renouncing self) while in fact we are finding cozy corners of the ego to shelter in (seeking inner consolations and clinging to them). The reasons for not meditating are so many - and attractive at times - that they show that grace must be at work to keep us persevering.

Gradually, we understand that self-knowledge is not looking at our own reflection in the mirror of the mind. It is not thinking about ourselves. It is seeing ourselves in the mirror of the other. That is only the first step. The next step is, in the unself-consciousness of love, to pass through the mirror, to lose ourselves in the other. We hardly realize the sacrifice that we are making. Finally, we find ourselves in and through the other. The losing begins again. We walk up and down. The procession up and down this hill of truth at times seems pointless. But a new spring of joy within us, the greening of our new creation, become the irrefutable signs that it has meaning. For sheer joy the man who found the treasure buried in the field went and sold everything he had. With joy the woman who found the coin she (thought) she had lost celebrated its discovery with her friends and neighbours.

This human self-knowledge is even what Jesus knew. The authority of his teaching is the humility of his self-knowledge that he discovered in loving us. He tells us that when we love even the most insignificant person in our lives we have loved him, even if we did not think that this is what we were doing (Mt 25). This doesn't mean that the other person we were loving is not really there or ceases to matter when we 'see' Jesus. It is deeper and more mysterious than that. It means that the otherness of the person we love is the very field in which we find Jesus and in which we lose and find ourselves. We are not saved in isolation. The Cartesian Christian who claims to be saved

*“Self-knowledge
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while excluding others negates the greatest grace and wonder of Christ as well as the warm, human, inclusive heart of the gospel. Christianity often veers between condemnation and exoneration. Forgiveness, the heart of the gospel, is more than this. It is not just letting people off or giving a reprieve. It embraces the hurt and the shadow itself. Christ is steadier than we are. Mercy precedes repentance. Love overrides judgment and the human ego is left speechless at the grace of true divinity.

It should never be: 'I am saved' but rather 'we are saved'. And thus there *is* no salvation outside the church because the church is always and essentially catholic, miraculously inclusive of the full hundred sheep, of the lost coin and of the prodigal children that we all are. Losing and finding together form the whole truth that sets us free. But in what sense and at what depth of holiness and self-knowledge is the church truly inclusive? How can it really contain everyone? Clearly not at the Cartesian level of self-knowledge where Christians see themselves as divided from other churches and other religions. "No one comes to the Father but by me" can hardly mean a requirement to belong to a particular church or even to being baptized. This would give it a tone that would clash with the nature of Jesus as it is expressed everywhere else in the gospel. It would be a fundamentalist reading - one in which we don't find the meaning but we plant one in the text that we have already decided is there. This is a kind of sin against the Holy Spirit, a stifling of the living Word of scripture and a projection of human attachments upon the divine self-revelation. If we hear these words as meaning exclusion many more than one per cent of the sheep will be lost and never found. Surely Jesus is speaking here from the deepest reaches of his self-knowledge where he loses and finds himself again as the Word in all creation.

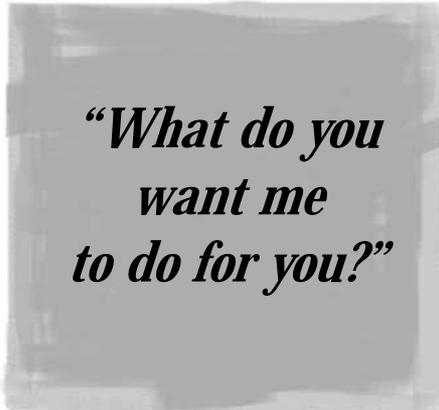
It is from this same level of self-knowledge that his Spirit is transmitted. At this level the church is the Body of Christ and we know ourselves in this all-inclusive field of relationship to be His Body. That is the homecoming, the finding of ourselves that we hunger and thirst for.

In Luke 18 Jesus is approached by a rich young man who rather patronizingly calls him 'good master' and then asks him what he should do to find eternal life. It sounds as if he has asked many rabbis this question and is a little self-satisfied with his way of evaluating their replies. But Jesus pulls the carpet from under his feet and throws the flattering projection back at him. 'Why do you call me good? Only God is good.' Then before the man can find a new posture he gives him the answer - just keep the commandments. Inasmuch as the truth is ever the right answer here it is. But as Evagrius said, keeping the commandments is not enough because for the healing of the whole soul a contemplative activity must be practiced that will penetrate the spirit. The rich young man shows that, for all his self-satisfaction, deep down he knows this and so he is a real seeker. When he tells Jesus rather disarmingly that he has kept the commandments we hear not pride but genuine hunger for more, a thirst for being and self-knowledge in God that is deeper than his strong religious ego. It is the thirst for something more that brings us to meditate. Jesus gazes on him and loves him and gives him what he is seeking:

the invitation to leave everything and follow him. But the young man leaves heavy-hearted because he has many riches. It is not, however, a depressing story of rejecting the truth or of spiritual mediocrity and failure. We don't hear what happens to him next because we are him. What happens next is us responding to the meaning of the story. But we can see that he has been propelled into a new stage of his journey. We might imagine the new struggle he has started but be happy for him that it has begun. A few verses later in the same chapter Jesus responds to the importunate cries of a blind beggar imploring his mercy. The crowds tell him to be quiet but Jesus - as ever seeing the person and calling him out of the crowd into personal truth - turns his attention on him. 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asks. And the man who knows what he truly wants begs for his sight to be restored. Jesus tells him it *is* restored and that his faith has healed him. The man and the crowd rejoice and follow Jesus.

The rich young 'ruler of the people' and the blind beggar portray different stages of the arduous human journey to self-knowledge. They show the role that Jesus the teacher within plays in guiding this journey, the procession up and back. Perhaps the ruler and the beggar are the same person separated only by the seasons of their pilgrimage and the stages of their relationship to Jesus. They show the processes of simplification and of the purification and transformation of desire. The young man doesn't know what he wants and is not touching the painful reality of his deepest desire. The beggar does know and expresses it with all-powerful humility. The ruler was caught in the web of his self-imagination and his ego was monitoring everything from a safe, detached Cartesian distance. The beggar was dis-illusioned of these unreal ways of being and seemed blind to the world but through his loss of sight came to find his vision.

Our thirst for pure being in a world glutted by too much having is getting deeper. No sign of hope in our time, it seems to me, is stronger than the sign of people meditating, forming meditation groups and teaching their children how to reverence the presence of the Spirit in their hearts. When we see that this is the work that makes for happiness we will have suffered some painful losses but we will have found wisdom.



*“What do you
want me
to do for you?”*

With much love,



Laurence Freeman, OSB

continued from page 1

Hubert Debeukelaere and Bert Evens have started this year to share the gift with groups of youngsters in Belgium.

A group of younger meditators (19-35) are meeting with Fr Laurence in Los Angeles in June to reflect on the spiritual needs of their generation and how our community can respond. They will confer with Lucy and Edward Appert in New York and Greg Ryan the WCCM webmaster who are working on a website for this age group. A similar idea is behind the website called 'Smile' in Flemish started by Geert van Malderen for Belgium and The Netherlands. A Meditation and Inter-religious Center at Georgetown University is being developed by Dennis McAuliffe. A symposium on the

teaching of meditation to the young is planned for 2006 in Australia to share and further develop resources.

All those who teach meditation to the young – children or young adults – describe the enthusiasm with which meditation is welcomed. There is a growing thirst for silence and spirituality amongst the young of all ages. There must be many more initiatives taking place worldwide. The International Resource Group of the School has already composed guidelines for different age groups and an e-mail working party is operational for mutual support and sharing of resources. If you are teaching the young or planning to do so, please get in touch!

Kim Nataraja (nataraja@onetel.com)

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

AROUND THE WORLD COMMUNITY IN THE LAST 90 DAYS

The Guiding Board met at the Monastery of Christ the King, London in February. Dom Willibrord Schlattman, who led meditation for many years at Cockfosters, has retired to a monastery in Holland. The Guesthouse of the monastery at Cockfosters will begin as a retreat centre for the World Community in July and will be led by Desley Deike. Fr Laurence spoke at Westminster Cathedral that week and later led a weekend with Andrew Harvey in Tucson. He led a weekend retreat with Giovanni Felicioni in Phoenix in March and conducted a contemplative Easter Retreat back in London at Cockfosters. He spoke at the UK National Conference on the 'Fruits of Meditation'. In April he led a weeklong silent retreat in Sydney, Australia for 250 and later paid a short visit to New Zealand, visiting Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. In Melbourne he was invited by the Archdiocese to give a lecture on 'The Eucharist and Silence' to launch its new School of Prayer. This talk can be found on the webpage. He made his first visit to the Czech Republic and spoke in Prague and then led the annual German retreat in Wurzburg. His "Jesus: The Teacher Within" has recently been published in German and Spanish. In Italy he led the national retreat in Padova and then spoke in Milan and Brescia, where he also gave an evening with Suzanna Tamarro. In Detroit he led a weeklong retreat at Manresa Retreat Centre with Giovanni Felicioni and a weekend retreat in California. The Christian Meditation Center in San Damiano, CA has begun daily meditation and will be the centre from which the Contemplative Parish Program will be administered. Fr Frank Cassidy for Los Angeles launched the first six-week parish introduction in this program in his church and has welcomed an average of 70 participants each week. New oblates of the World Community have been received in Australia, Italy and New Zealand. Trish Pantan will represent the World Community Oblates at the Congress of Oblates in Rome in September. The Christian Meditation Centre in Montreal has found a new location in Notre Dame de Grace and will be blessed by Fr Laurence. A group of young meditators from Australia, the UK, the US and Canada will meet with Fr Laurence to discuss the spiritual needs of their generation and how the World Community can respond. They will also participate in the Buddhist-Christian Conference at which Fr Laurence is a speaker.

UK NEWS:

SOME FRUITS TO WARM A COLD SPRING

The UK annual Conference 2005 was led by Fr Laurence at Oakham School which Thomas Merton attended during his schooldays in Britain. The theme was "Fruits of Meditation" and, as if Merton himself was smiling upon us, very unusually for April, the sun shone, the blossoms graced us with dappled lacey splendour, and the joy of the community burst forth with much laughter. The workshops explored beauty and peace with Giovanni Felicioni and Margaret Rizza taking yoga and voice whilst Dave and Sheelah Hidden explored Christian ethics in the workplace and the peaceful resolution of conflict. The school campus was spread over the old English market town which proved a perfect backdrop.



As soon as the weekend closed, the weather returned to its cold bleak English chill. Two days later Fr Laurence explored the ongoing theme of trying to resolve conflict before it flared into violence at St Ethelburga's, the church in the City of London destroyed by an IRA bomb. It has been turned into a Peace and Reconciliation Centre so once more the message of peace in the contemplative tradition was brought home in a restored and very beautiful building. Interestingly, we were told many more people come through the doors since its sensitive restoration than before the bombing when it was a very old traditional church providing worship.

In May Fr Laurence returned to Ealing Abbey for the second year running. It was a warm bank holiday weekend and we feared people would stay with their families or remain in the park enjoying the lengthy light filled evening. Wrong! The topic "What is Truth?" filled the New Chapel with people squeezed into every available space and overflowing outside. Indeed as we approached the UK general election it seemed a perfect topic to explore.

Desley Deike, UK National Coordinator (desley@wccm.org)

IS YOUR GROUP RECEIVING THESE CDS?

Meditatio CDs contain a selection of short talks by Fr Laurence. The CDs are a quarterly gift from Peter Ng, the Singapore National Coordinator and the community there. They are published free and distributed to all groups listed in the Directory of Christian Meditation Groups Worldwide. Peter is a member of the Guiding Board and particularly wants to support Groups and develop

the sense of the global community. The Directory of Christian Meditation Groups Worldwide is still very incomplete but contains details of over 1200 groups and is updated every quarter. It is currently held by National Coordinators and provides information to:

- Help new meditators find local groups
- Traveling meditators to meet and meditate with other people worldwide

- Group Leaders to link with neighbouring groups for events etc.

To receive the CDs and/or a copy of the Directory, Group Leaders are requested to contact their National Coordinators. This project is run by volunteers and thanks goes to all the National Coordinators, the International Office, Fr Laurence, Peter Ng, Leon and Andrew Milroy, Daulet Manecksha and Jane Grafton who is the coordinator of the project.

Jane Grafton (janegrafton@waitrose.com)

FIJI

THE CALL TO HOLINESS

Each year the Fiji Christian meditation community holds four retreat days in two venues in the principal languages of the country: Fijian, Hindi and English. This year the first English retreat day was held on Saturday, April 9th in Suva, the capital and repeated the following Saturday in Nadi, the gateway to Fiji. This rapidly growing town is a three-hour trip from Suva along the coast and through verdant sugar cane fields and rolling hills. The theme was the 'Call to Holiness' and both days were well attended. It was most heartening to see new faces and much interest in contemplative prayer.

*Fr Dennis Mahoney
(frdenis@relpac.org.fj)*

IN FOCUS

Steve Lodesky

Twenty years ago, while a seminary student, I began to spend time on a daily basis before the Blessed Sacrament reading, praying and silently "resting in the Lord." Though I've always felt comfortable with silence and solitude, I look back on those days as the beginning of a more contemplative path in the journey of prayer.

After that, I met my wife, Marie, and became fully immersed in the "active" life, both as an elementary school principal and as pastoral associate in a Catholic parish here in Florida. I've tried to give full time to doing God's work. But how long could I give of myself without spending significant and regular time in prayer? Aren't we called to be the Lord's friends, and not just His servants? The times when I would sit in silence, open to the transforming presence of God, continued to speak to me. I knew I needed to rediscover the sort of relationship with God that was rooted in the depths of being. Signs, symbols, rites and religion weren't enough. I needed to go directly to the Lord and learn to sit in His presence.

At that point I did two things of importance. I began a three-year program in spiritual direction training and I attended my first John Main Seminar. These were the catalysts for me to recommit myself to silent prayer and to attending a weekly Christian meditation group.

Fast-forwarding to just over a year ago, I happened to mention to Joe Doerfer, the Director of Medio Media, that I could see my wife and I moving to Tucson someday and helping with the transition (Joe is "supposed" to be retired though he works harder than any mere mortal). I wasn't exactly saying that I wanted to take on the responsibility of Medio Media, but that I might be able to help in the process.

The Lord – and Joe – works in mysterious ways. I'm



Catherine Willis (Co-Chair), Joe Doerfer (Director), Laurence Freeman, Steve Lodesky (incoming Director) at Medio Media in

scheduled to begin working full-time at Medio Media this July. Joe will be my mentor; he knows I have a lot to learn! Medio Media is more than a bookstore and is becoming almost an organizational center for the World Community here in the US and around the world.

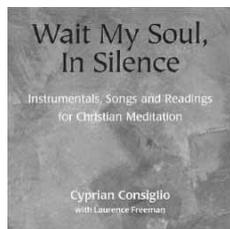
I'm in the process now of packing and selling our home here in Winter Haven. My wife, her 87 year old mother, and our 3 little dogs will be heading West in just a few weeks. Sometimes don't you just have to let go, take the leap and plunge in?

*Steve Lodesky
(s.lodesky@juno.com)*



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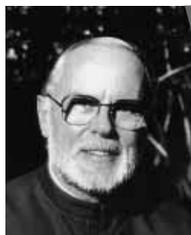
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WORDS BY JOHN MAIN....

The essence of the Christian vision is that the Spirit of God dwells in our heart. It is the spirit of compassion, of understanding, of forgiveness and of love. In meditation we experience ourselves as loved, forgiven, accepted – not just as barely acceptable. When we know this in relation to God we do not have to go around making ourselves acceptable to others. (Heart of Creation)

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