



CHRISTIAN MEDITATION NEWSLETTER

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JOHN MAIN SEMINAR 2006
MARGARET RIZZA:
THE FIRE OF SILENCE:
MUSIC AND MYSTICS
Penang, Malaysia; August 10-13

The John Main Seminar in 2006 will be held for the first time in Asia. Margaret Rizza, who is known around the world for her distinctive contemplative music, is not only a composer but a gifted and acclaimed teacher of scripture and the contemplative tradition. She has been leading a Christian meditation group at her home in Britain for many years. We are very blessed to have such a gifted speaker and musician to lead this exploration of the 'harmonies of the soul'. The Seminar will be preceded by a 3 day silent retreat led by Laurence Freeman. (The Seminar will be held in a Penang coastal hotel with air conditioning and ensuite rooms.) After the Seminar there will be a pilgrimage led by Margaret and Laurence to significant places of worship in Penang and Kuala Lumpur where a day inter-faith conference will be held. The pilgrims will also visit places in Kuala Lumpur special to John Main, including the Pure Life Society meditation hall where he was first introduced to meditation while he was serving there as a young diplomat.

For further information visit www.wccm.org or contact **Patricia Por**, the Seminar coordinator, at ppor@pc.jaring.my

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION RETREAT CENTRE LONDON



The former guest house at the Monastery of Christ the King Cockfosters, Fr Laurence's monastery in London, has now begun a new life as a Christian Meditation Retreat Centre. It is easy to reach from Heathrow or Central London by the Tube on the Piccadilly Line. It offers a number of recently modernized comfortable ensuite rooms for meditators and friends from the UK and around the World Community. We can welcome fourteen guests. The spirit of the Centre will be maintained by daily meditation periods which have been led at Cockfosters for some years by the core team of the House of Meditation, Jo, Rita and David, who will continue their involvement in the new Centre. The daily monastic schedule of prayer in the church and the liturgy of the monastery's parish also offer rich spiritual support for retreatants and visitors who wish to participate in them.

Desley Deike (*above, left*), known to many as the UK National Coordinator, is the Coordinator of the Retreat Centre and is preparing a schedule that will include monthly weekend Introductions to Christian Meditation, a monthly Simple and Silent Weekend and other retreats with themes of interest to meditators and others on the spiritual path. She and the community running the new Centre see it as a place of silence, where 'we learn from silence and relationships in silence, where we come into deeper relationship with ourselves, where we find God and learn to love the path.'

To book accommodation and for further information you can contact **Desley** at Desley@wccm.org phone the **Retreat Centre** at +44 020 8449 1319 or write to **The Christian Meditation Retreat Centre**, Monastery of Christ the King, Bramley Road, London N14 4HE, UK.

A LETTER FROM LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION



Dearest friends,

It never ceases to amaze how religious people can get their priorities wrong. A parish can be thrown into internecine strife over the moving of a statue. A whole denomination can split over a single minority issue of sexual morality which wholly absorbs its attention away from the crises of global poverty, economic oppression, AIDS, the evils of the arms trade or indeed its own institutional sinfulness.

As Fr Richard Rohr reminded us powerfully during the John Main Seminar last month, we have to be ever alert to the danger of turning religion into a refuge for the fearful and the angry. When we forget that it was not Jesus' first aim to start another new religion, but to show humanity what religion itself really means, religion easily turns into yet another power base for our own opinions and prejudices. Yet the power of the Gospel is its spirituality of powerlessness. And this mystery at the heart of Christianity plays out in the suburban parish as well as on the world stage.

***“To demonise
others is to
claim power over
their lives.”***

LIGHT AND DARK

As I sat to write this I heard a report of a leading American evangelical, founder of the 'Christian Alliance', calling for the assassination of a Central American president who is at odds with US foreign policy. As he spoke, I could not doubt his sincerity or his firm conviction that what he was calling for must be God's will which he knew about first hand. He spoke with the calm, almost rational assurance that every imperial power has been seduced by, that its political interests are divinely sanctioned. One could imagine millions listening to him feeling the satisfaction of having their own fears and prejudices, the inevitable companions of power, confirmed and endorsed. He said it would be better to eliminate this opponent with a covert operation than launch another multi-billion dollar war. Economies of scale always sound persuasive. Yet behind the calm exterior of this call to murder lies a dark distortion of the very purpose of religion, the essence of the Sermon on the Mount and the meaning of Golgotha.

How does it happen that the way of light so easily becomes the valley of the shadow of death? It is clearly not

only the Muslim extremists who manifest this today. That is why I felt so relieved when in the immediate aftermath of the July 7 terrorist attack on the London Underground, Rowan Williams, standing outside one of the stations, used the word 'evil' so mindfully. He spoke of the 'evil acts' that had killed more than fifty innocent people on their way to work and mutilated hundreds more. But he refrained from calling the perpetrators of these acts evil. It is a restraint we have to practice if we are to follow the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and not be repeatedly sucked into the vortex of the cycle of violence. When we claim the divine right to

judge others so absolutely as to call them evil, we have lost control over ourselves and soon our own inner shadows are unleashed. We have then lost touch with the laws of our own moral universe. To demonise others is to claim the power over their lives and destiny that belongs only to God or themselves. 'Judge not that ye be not judged' does not mean we cannot discern the difference between light and dark but that we recognize our human limitations and our own

potential for moral ambivalence. After all, Jesus even challenged the presumption of the person who once called him 'good'.

The Gospel teaching on non-violence is embedded in his teaching on contemplation and can neither be understood nor practiced outside that context. If we aren't shocked and confused to be told that we should love our enemies, we haven't heard him or have refused to listen. If we say it is a beautiful ideal but impracticable – or only doable in special or merely private situations – we are telling Jesus what he should have said. His teaching on prayer immediately follows his teaching on non-violence. If we don't see why, we have missed the point.

MORAL AND MYSTICAL

The teaching is both moral and mystical. It affects the way we live, act, think and respond both to our inner responses and to outer events precisely *because* it touches the deep core of our true nature. It not only tells us what we should do but what we are like. In this teaching we recognize ourselves and that *re*-cognition (knowing

ourselves *again* in a new light) is self-knowledge. This is not just knowledge about ourselves at the psychological level, although knowing how we tick under these laws and patterns of the psyche is very helpful. But self-knowledge is not self-reflective. It transcends self-consciousness and awakens us to an experience of who we are. The sign that this has happened is not only a better insight into ourselves but a more complete self-acceptance. And this in turn leads to a blessed healing of our wounds and a more healthy integration of the self with the world.

Demonisation, hatred of our enemies, throws off this natural sequence of events and can lock us – even for generations – in destructive cycles. Whenever we are victims of the darkness unleashed in others, we have to be reminded of our own shadow. It is this that preserves the sense of corporate moral responsibility which is the basis of future reconciliation. It is also what underlies the Christian insight into corporate salvation. We are not saved merely individually but always within the Body of Christ that in this world will be forever groaning and suffering to remain whole and inclusive and to keep growing. Jesus asked the soldier ‘why do you strike me?’ It is a more devastating response than to strike back. It thrusts the violent back into a painful encounter with their true self – the appointment with our true self is the only hope we have of self-transformation.

Why did they bomb us? We should be asking this question. It is not because they are pure incarnations of evil, intent on mindless destruction. Their own tragic moral deficiency was to have failed to deal with their own shadow as their religion taught them, to make an inner *jihad* rather than project it on to others. Forces of darkness are raised by humiliation, alienation, neglect, abuse, despair. It does not justify them but it explains them. And without understanding our enemies there can be no alternative to the shadow also being stirred up within ourselves and in turn overwhelming us. Seeing why inner darkness manifests as outward evil action does not exonerate people from responsibility, but it is the beginning of forgiveness. And forgiveness, as the great Sermon tells us, is the only hope we have of ending the cycle of violence that – in the end – destroys more innocent sons and daughters, mothers, fathers and loved ones.

I focus on this again because it seems the inescapable lesson our dark times are relentlessly teaching us. Even the young people who went to Taizé this summer and witnessed the tragic death of the gentle and holy Frère Roger were not spared.

CHANGING HABITS

We are being taught with increasing urgency that we must change our habits. This includes those habits of mind and soul that are so deeply engrained, almost inherited, that we think of them as ‘second nature’. We don’t even realize they are habits but think of them as natural and inevitable. Like violence itself – humanity’s oldest acquired habit and addiction.

Spiritual growth is human development. It’s the way we see meaning rather than random probability or chaos in how we change through time. Growth means becoming more conscious at every level of our humanity and when consciousness has reached a sufficient degree we may begin to speak, tentatively, of enlightenment. Even if there are sudden and wonderful experiences that illuminate our path from time to time, the deeper work, of turning the dark places in our unconscious into light, is gradual. So it is also ordinary, humble and needs perseverance – like meditation itself which serves this essential human work of growth.

So, in the Christian understanding in particular, perhaps, enlightenment is linked to moral maturity. What is the point or meaning of ‘spiritual experiences’ if we have not become nicer people, more patient, more kind, more attentive, more truthful? The unloving know nothing of God, is the simple reply of the New Testament. It reminds us that only the moral and the mystical in harmony can enlighten our darkness and free us from the habits of darkness. It is love, meaning the single experience of loving and being

*“Meditation
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loved, that is our deepest desire and joy and only the fulfillment of that desire and the celebration of that joy really changes us. Anything else is not growth but a temporary adaptation from which we eventually revert back into old habits of being.

So the spiritual journey of human growth is gradual – ‘shining like a lamp in a murky place until day breaks and the morning star rises to illuminate your mind’ (2 Pet 1). Yet it is also a timeless process, not of acquisition which is a tedious business, but of realization which is simply seeing and recognizing. Plato said that all true knowing is remembering. ‘The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining’ (1Jn 2). What we yearn for is already ours or we would not be yearning for it. The only insight that holds us through this paradox is the one that tells us that God is love and that whoever says ‘I am in the light’ and hates others is still in darkness. ‘Whoever loves others dwells in light... he walks in the dark and has no idea where he is going because the darkness has made him blind.’

Powerful, rich, famous people find it very difficult, as difficult as camels in the eyes of needles, to accept that they

don't know where they are going. After all, it is they who pay the driver and build the roads. But eventually the loss of a sense of direction, as in American foreign policy today, becomes blatantly obvious. Without a seed of contemplative consciousness in the equation – someone in authority who has their wits about them – another violent conflict is engineered to distract from the failures of the previous one. This is the history of war.

The political implications of this are pretty clear. But I am not focusing on politics as much as on how the mind deals with the interplay of its own alternation between light and dark, pleasure and pain, good and evil. We feel these to be opposing forces. It is this perception and their opposition that causes conflict, confusion, anger and violence within ourselves and that eventually impinges on the world 'outside' our mind. This is not only the history of empires but the story of relationships. A friendship, a new job or new home, a new life begun with fresh hope in a new place, putting the past behind us, learning from our mistakes. All is sweetness and light, pleasure and goodness. Novelty fades as old habits impose themselves on the new environment. Complications, differences, anger, ego-conflicts appear and friends can turn into enemies, the bedroom becomes a court of law, colleagues become competitors. The new life becomes horribly like the old. Patterns of mind seem to be our destiny.

How can we change? What changes? What is change?

FALL AND ASCENT

We start to form habits as soon as we become conscious. As soon as the heart starts to beat. I was meditating with a group of young children recently. As they came into the room and sat on the floor, they took off their shoes, all except one who, I was told, never took his shoes off but sat uncomfortably with them on, cross-legged. The teacher did not know why. Perhaps the boy was scared of showing he couldn't put them on again by himself. Did the boy himself understand why he was different from the others? Adults who can't read form elaborate evasive patterns of behaviour to conceal their shame and such patterns tend to form new patterns to counteract their side-effects, as we use a cocktail of medical drugs today.

That is, we are all wired. We have to be wireable but the wires can get crossed and bad habits develop. We don't fully understand why 'original sin' exists like this. Why do we get suicide bombers, alcoholics who destroy their families and themselves, child abusers who were themselves abused as children, businessmen addicted to

power who let nothing, even the health of the planet, stand in their way? Evil is as mysterious as goodness.

Mythically, we explain it by some kind of "Fall", a primal disobedience or transgression whose consequences get passed down the line forever. But in the light of modern knowledge about history and psychology we read these myths differently, less literally. Perhaps it is not so much a fall as a faltering ascent which explains our predicament and the disorderly pattern of human development. Maybe we are slowly climbing a ladder of consciousness. We climb a few rungs and slip down a few and then leap ahead again. It is not all straight progress, all American optimism. There is an upward movement but it is tragic not facile. Each backward step costs dearly. We still have a long way to go but we have come a long way too. The sense of a Fall is in fact an awareness of the long climb ahead.

How have humanity's great teachers – Jesus, the Buddha, Lao Tsu, the author of the Gita, the Hebrew prophets – as well as the greatest artists and scientists, understood the whole picture so clearly and been so far 'ahead of their time'? They understood and pointed to where we have reached and even beyond to where we are headed. It takes a long time for us to understand what they saw and to realize that our admiration for them is really an awareness of our own potential.

*“Habits form
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conscious.”*

HABITS OF FREEDOM

They were, amazingly, free of the bad habits that still trap the rest of us in patterns of darkness, of which violence is the most obvious and insidious. Instead of becoming suicide bombers or failed 'heroes' like Hitler who determined to take the world down with him, they offered themselves in love to humanity. And generally humanity says thanks but no thanks. Only very gradually does the teaching of an enlightened master become understood and accepted.

A key motif of St Mark's gospel is the stupidity of the disciples, among whom Peter is often shown as the most impetuously dense. Not bad, but 'slow to understand'. Jesus is frequently shown exasperated and frustrated by their dullness. It is hard work to get re-wired to the truth even when it is staring you in the face. Perhaps it is especially difficult *when* it is staring you in the face because then it poses the strongest challenge to change. It is easier to admire the truth as if it were someone else's achievement at a safe distance from us. But we have not learned the truth until we have un-learned the bad habits of understanding that make us feel the truth is *out there* rather than forming the essence of our true self.

Yet we do need habits. Children most obviously require the certainty and predictability of routines which give them the trellis or framework on which to grow. They start screaming when they lose this comfort zone. Forming habits is a reflex response to danger and insecurity. But what matters is the level of consciousness on which these habits form and whether they help us grow or hold us back. In the monastic life for example the structure of the Office, monks' regular prayer-times, is a good habit that it takes time to learn. But why learn it? Not because the divine office is the goal of prayer but because in the 'school' of Benedict it is the first framework of learning to pray at the level of the heart. Yet monasteries generally halt at this stage. And, as a young meditator considering a monastic life told me recently when he enquired at a monastery, he was told 'we don't have time for meditation here'!

There are interior emotional habits, mental patterns that can be created by abuse, neglect or the plain absence of affection. These then entrap us in habits of guilt, shame, self-rejection or addiction and make us harmful to others in turn. So, how can we build the necessary structures, the good habits we need and still remain open to the realm of pure spontaneity? How can we live well-ordered lives and still breathe the spirit and enjoy the freedom of grace?

It helps to distinguish what we might call habits of the heart from habits of the hearth. The hearth's habits are external patterns of behaviour. They are measurable and observable. The habits of the heart are deeper and more formative. They are subtle and interior, already partaking of the rhythms of the spirit. It is these habits of the heart we need to work on developing. They constitute the process of spiritual growth and all human growth. Struggling anxiously and often guiltily against our bad habits has limited value without this affirmative action. Like shouting at a naughty child, it may only make the bad habits more enraged. Jesus never got angry with sinners, only with religious hypocrisy. Instead of making the negative feel more negative, he raised their self-knowledge and showed them an alternative way of living.

PRACTICE

Meditation bridges the gap between the habits of the hearth and the habits of the heart. Meditation is an observable and measurable habit – "did I meditate this morning for the full 20 or 30 minutes?" But in learning this daily habit we also naturally, maybe imperceptibly at first, unlearn the bad habits we thought were second nature. Life changes and we see this because we respond

differently to the situations that always seemed to evoke the same set response. Prejudices weaken. Tolerance grows. A non-judgmental wisdom which allows insight into the actions of others replaces fantasies of assassination. Transformation – the real purpose of religion – happens 'how we do not know' through an integration of the inner and outer dimensions of our selves. Eventually, the inner and outer are as one.

Why does life seem so different in the light of meditation? Perhaps because we learn how to see both sides of the coin at the same time. The 'dark side' is always the side we cannot see and so onto which we project any aspect of the shadow that we happen to notice in ourselves. But if we can be conscious of this shadow even when we are acting in our positive mode we will avoid the self-righteous hypocrisy and the blasphemous self-contradictoriness that religious people are notorious for. Oddly enough, this is the real source of religious authority. A direct effect of this stereoscopic vision of reality is a greater level of insight into the darkness of other people and, consequently, a greater capacity for forgiveness, love of enemies and the making of peace.

It's hard work, otherwise we wouldn't have to talk about it so much. Early Christian monks called this work 'praktike'. Before they used this word to describe the labour of the spiritual journey it meant just ordinary daily work, earning your living, doing the next thing that had to be done. The

Christian monk's use of the word to describe the good habits of prayer, self-awareness and self-control was inspired. It reminds us that mysticism and morality are related, that meditation has to be practiced and that it all takes time. It teaches us that contemplation is the human goal not the privilege of a spiritual elite. Indeed that is a responsibility we must fulfill if we are to respect our full humanity. If enough people could see this then the level of stress in the modern world, the anger and impatience we all have in ourselves and that clouds our perception, might at least begin to diminish. More people would begin to see how some of the worst and oldest habits of humanity can indeed be changed and that truer, deeper habits of the heart can be awakened.

With much love,



Laurence Freeman, OSB

*"It is easy
to admire the
truth at a
safe distance."*

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



FIRST NATIONAL COORDINATORS MEETING: FLORENCE

In July, National coordinators and representatives from forty countries in The World Community met at Villa Agape in Florence. It was a historic milestone in the life of the Community, as Fr Laurence pointed out in his opening remarks. Discussions ranged over the approaches to teaching meditation in different cultures, the need for more translations, addressing the needs of children and younger meditators, social justice issues and the Community's involvement in schools, prisons and hospitals. Decisions were reached but the deepest import of the meeting was the growth in the sense of community and friendship which is at the heart of the Christian meditation family which now extends to 117 countries. Particularly moving was to hear of the early stages of the growth of the teaching in small or developing countries such as the Czech Republic or the Solomon Islands and to explore how communities in more well-established countries could support them. It was agreed to hold a National Coordinators gathering at regular intervals. See the full report at www.wccm.org

CANADA: A CONTEMPLATIVE VIEW OF CREATION

On October 1 the Canadian Christian Meditation Community of British Columbia will host a *Day of Reflection* based on the work of John Main led by Fr Charles Brandt, a hermit and environmentalist who will talk on "Wonder." "*We all have a great work, which involves us all: to make a transition from a society that is having a disruptive influence on the earth, to one that will have a benign presence on the earth. We make this transition (as we undergo transformation) by experiencing creation with a sense of 'wonder and delight' rather than a commodity for our own personal benefit. Meditation nourishes our sense of wonder, and so helps us to have a benign presence on the earth.*"

Joyce Rogers – B.C. Coordinator at joycerogers@shaw.ca or 604-531-0001

BRAZIL: ADULT LITERACY MEDITATION GROUP

I would like to share with you the beginning of a new Christian meditation group. Every Thursday our weekly group meets at the Parish of Imaculada Conceição, in Sao Paulo. At the end of last year the parish's Social Assistant invited me to talk about contemplative spirituality at the last class of the Adult Literacy course. In a simple, practical way I talked about meditation and we meditated together for 20 minutes. As it was the end of the year's course it was a party day with relatives and children all around. The children were free to leave but they all stayed. The silence was absolute, although we were 40 people. At the beginning of next year's course the teachers invited us to meditate together with the adults before class. We have been meditating regularly since last March in two different groups, sometimes for only 10 to 15 minutes because they come to class late after a hard working day. Many of these adult students went to Fr. Laurence's talk at the Monastery in Sao Paulo last July and have since come to class earlier to meditate for 20 minutes. I am sharing this experience with you to show the wide horizons for the teaching of Christian meditation in parishes, churches and poor communities.

Sonia Mari – Coordinator of Bela Vista, Sao Paulo.

SOUTH AFRICA: BRIDGING THE GAPS



The July 2005 National Coordinators Conference gave me the chance to experience a deep level of openness, trust and a sense of true community. This wonderful opportunity enables me to work and plan for the communication

of the teaching with a clearer sense of direction and with renewed confidence. Our forthcoming events include a one-day retreat in Stellenbosch in the Cape on 26 November 2006 to introduce people in that region to Christian meditation and to pave the way for the retreat and the school due when Fr Laurence will visit South Africa again in 2007. Six-week introductory courses were offered to Catholic communities in Johannesburg during May-July 2005. Paul Jackson presented in Florida and Paul Webb in Bryanston. Christa Roodt will be offering the course to Protestant communities in Pretoria, starting 5 October 2005.

Christa Roodt – South Africa National Coordinator christa_r@global.co.za

LATIN AMERICA: NEW BEGINNINGS

In July, Fr Laurence visited Brazil and Argentina. In Brazil, he celebrated the tenth anniversary of his first visit there and spent a week in Sao Paulo, giving talks and retreats. He and Ana Fonseca, the



National Coordinator, then visited Buenos Aires for the launch of *Jesus: The Teacher Within* in Spanish (Bonum). Meditators from Chile and Peru also attended and plans were made for a visit to these countries, where groups are forming, next year. In Argentina contact **Magdalena Puebla** (malen_puebla@hotmail.com). In Honduras Fr Louis Poirier

who began to meditate in Montreal 15 years ago and **Margaret Rendon** (maggiemed2004@yahoo.com) have recently started to teach meditation in Tegucigalpa.

YOUNG MEDITATORS MEETING



In July, a group of young Christian meditators met for a week in Los Angeles and Tucson to discuss the spiritual needs of their generation and how our Community can respond to them. The group has formed the nucleus of a growing network of young meditators worldwide. Some are organizing the Christian meditation presence at the Greenbelt Festival at the end of August in England where thousands of young Christians gather for a holiday weekend. Chris Rowland (Australia) and Lucy and Ed Appert (US) are developing a website aimed specifically at this generation. For further information or to join the email network of young Christian meditators contact **Chris** at c.j.rowland@telstra.com

2005 JOHN MAIN SEMINAR: A LEVER AND A PLACE TO STAND

Richard Rohr, OFM (Thousand Oaks, California)

Carla Cooper of the Guiding Board thanked Fr Richard in these words:

Fr Richard, it is the custom of the John Main Seminar that a member of our Community offers thanks on behalf of all – and attempts to capture the key points of the Seminar leader's teaching. So here I stand at Niagara Falls with a thimble. I think it's safe to say that the 250 people before you today feel much like you say you feel each year coming away from your hermitage: "There's nothing in any book that's better than what we've just experienced." And indeed we haven't just been to a lecture series. We've been soaked in the living waters of the Gospel. The Gospel of the one who didn't hate back, who told and showed us the one thing necessary: Fear Not. You showed us what's possible if we're not afraid—the new view from the new point. Of course, you didn't say that the new view was an elevator ride to the top of the Basilica. It was more like "Welcome back to the catacombs," to the "edge of the inside." The place where we have an honest encounter with the "inner river of fear" that runs in all of us, but that, in wisdom, we *are not* fated to disguise or project or moralize; that, in love, we have the courage to bear.

It's the inward, downward journey that sets us free.

Free from explaining or defending or justifying;
Free from criticizing or denying or destroying; and
Free from the equally toxic tyrannies of me and we, that turn the other into an object of hate, where fear moves like a bullet toward violence.

The price of this freedom, you taught us, is not cheap. The path of dispossession is so narrow that we have to die to belonging; die to rebelling; die to self. We can't hold on to anything except our poverty – *and our lever*, our contemplation and our action.

So we ask, what's the upside of being one of the mystics and sinners? Of being, as Merton describes, at the far end of solitude? You answered: only love – and a world to move. And *that* is a good Gospel.

So we thank you, Fr Richard, for the bountiful truth of your teaching – and for the radiant example of your life. We hope you hear and feel our love and gratitude. (August 14, 2005)

ITALY:

NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN ASSISI



The Italian National Conference will take place in Assisi October 7-9. Speakers include Prof Dennis McAuliffe (Georgetown University) on the Spirituality of Dante and the Italian monk P Michael Davide Semeraro on Etty Hillesum.

Contact Devis Maccarelli: macdev@tiscali.it

ROOTS OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM COURSE SPREADS ITS ROOTS

A "Roots of Christian Mysticism" course, similar to the one pioneered in London, will start on September 10, 2005 at the Dominican Sisters Meeting Room in Houston, Texas.

This three-year course (the London Course is weekly over one year) will be held one Saturday morning each month for nine consecutive months per year. It will be taught by leading scholars, including professors from The University of St. Thomas and St. Mary's Seminary. It will survey the key figures of the Christian mystical tradition: from the Hebrew Scriptures to the New Testament roots of this tradition, to the great patristic teachers, and then on through the Desert Fathers, Meister Eckhart, the English Mystics, the French Mystics, the Protestant Mystics to modern times, with a special emphasis on Thomas Merton, Simone Weil, John Main and Bede Griffiths. To complement the course, two optional four-day silent retreats will be offered in October and in April each year. They will be held at Lebh Shomea House of Prayer in Sarita, Texas, which is a center specifically for contemplatives. Silence is required all the time. Also, to complement the program of the Saturday morning course, a set of afternoon seminars on a variety of subjects will be available free of charge. As of August 19, 2005, one-hundred-and-one people have registered to the course. If you would like more information, contact **Nicole Meister** at ntmeister@sbcglobal.net



New Items Available from Medio Media

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

NEW releases! The John Main Seminar - 2005



A Lever and A Place To Stand Richard Rohr, OFM

Fr. Rohr invites us to re-evaluate the place where we stand as a people of faith and test our leverage -- realizing that without an inner anchor our religion is simply a belonging system, a worthiness competition. In his loving and humorously confrontational

manner, he reminds us to embrace our humanity and encourages us to question the ways in which we live our beliefs.

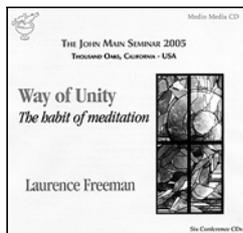
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Laurence Freeman, OSB

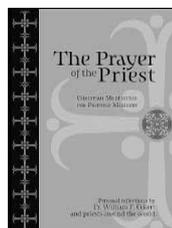
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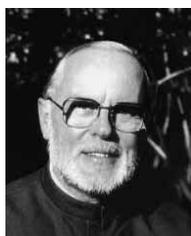
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WORDS BY JOHN MAIN....

A group of Christians who meet together to meditate, to pray, to worship is not just a social gathering. It is a group aware of its power arising from the transcendent reality of the presence of the Lord Jesus in their midst. The purpose of their meeting is, above all, to attend to the reality of this presence, to deepen their silent receptivity to it, to make it the supreme reality of their lives. If each member of the group is other-centred, turned away from him- or herself toward the living Lord, the group becomes truly a community – like that described in the Acts of the Apostles: 'A sense of awe was everywhere, all whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common with unaffected joy.'
(Letters from the Heart)

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