

# Meditatio

Newsletter of The  
World Community  
for Christian Meditation



[www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

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## Seeds of peace

Teaching meditation to children around the world now will change the future (p.6-9)



*Students meditating in a class in Fiji (top) and in Australia (below)*

## Meditation Retreat at Bonnevaux for Young Adults (24 July-4 August)



Bonnevaux will host a retreat for young adult meditators (18-40) led by experienced practitioners under the guidance of Fr Laurence. The first part offers times for meditation, silence and yoga, as well as creative activities such as pottery, writing, music, and dancing. Participants will share in the life of the resident community. The second part (optional) will be walking the Camino to Compostela. See page 10 for more.

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*Dear Friends,*

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB:  
December 30th, Commemoration of John Main

Dearest Friends

The great Benedictine scholar Jean Leclercq, who was also a great traveller, once wrote an excellent article on Stability for *Monastic Studies*. Maybe to deflect critics who might accuse him of inconsistency – and they are always close at hand – he used to say ‘I am a very bad monk. But I am very much a monk.’ Humility (the genuine kind) and humour (in moderation) are great defences and strengths. They enable us to live with the self-contradictions we all carry with us as part of the baggage of life, not to be too dependent on others’ opinion of us and not to take ourselves too seriously. All these are essential attributes for the spiritual life. Baggage there will always be. However much we may reduce it, there will always be some we have to drag on and off the various vehicles that carry us from one phase of life to the next.

At the cusp of a new year we try to shed some of the baggage. We look backwards and forwards. Janus (after whom January is named) was the Roman god of beginnings and transitions and of doors, gates and time. He was two faced, looking in both directions at once. There are moments when we too see like this. For me this time of the year recalls the loss of John Main as well as the beginning of what became the World Community – something at the time he saw coming more clearly than I could.

Jean Leclercq wrote to me soon after John Main died (December 30th 1982) to say that he had heard the news: “So Fr John has leapt into the light. I envy him. I pity you.” We are born into contradictions and we live with paradoxes.

Relationships change constantly.

When someone tells me they have a relationship that has no weaknesses, doubts or frictions, I wonder. I sense an attempt to persuade themselves of something they may not really believe themselves. When we are in any relationship, but especially one in which we have invested our identity and hope for the future, we are continuously edged towards new, uncertain levels of self-knowledge. So are those we are in the relationship with.

Even in the deepest relationships, where profound communion has grown, we remain individuals with our baggage that we have to carry ourselves. Sometimes we prefer stasis in a relationship – pressing the pause button when we are in a good phase – but, whether we like it or not, we are always changing and helping

*We are born into  
contradictions and we live  
with paradoxes*

each other to grow. However settled and domesticated we become, something will always happens to start a new adventure. One person may relish the challenge while the other resists it. Rarely do we grow at the same rate, in the same ways, and never always in sync.

In Bonnevaux the other day I was looking at some garlic in the upper meadow planted recently by Thomas, our enthusiastic permaculture gardener who is cultivating our first fields. He was excitedly showing me the first green shoot to appear. But he couldn’t tell me why that one had sprung up first or how far behind the others would be or when the last slow one would eventually appear. We grow together, obedient to the

same laws but differently.

To be in relationship with someone whose self-knowledge is more advanced than your own presents challenges but also wonderful opportunities. Perhaps marriage isn’t the best receptacle for that formula of relationship but it is certainly at the heart of the guru-disciple relationship. Many marriages struggle for a long time to achieve a balance of personal strengths and integration of roles. The imbalance of power in a marriage is often a cause of jokes – the over-submissive or over-dominant spouse – but also of suffering. If there is not a conscious process in which balance is being achieved – even if it is hidden deep in the secrets of the relationship – the relationship will struggle to be the vehicle of self-knowledge that all relationships should be.

At both the deepest spiritual level and the highest cosmic level we can see this happening in our relationship with the Mind of Christ. Jesus claimed to ‘know where I have come from and where I am going’. That he ‘knew the Father’ meant that he knew himself. And thus he knows us and the whole great plan of which we and the rest of humanity are part. No one, Christian or not, would deny that he (and all that Jesus of Nazareth began) has changed humanity’s awareness of itself. The disciple of Jesus, even at an early stage of that journey, experiences that change at an intimate, interior and integrated level. Encountering the self-knowledge of Jesus (which is the Holy Spirit he said would come) is to feel an explosive boost to our own process of knowing and understanding ourselves.

I was saying mass on Bere Island recently for a major feast and asked the two altar servers what they knew

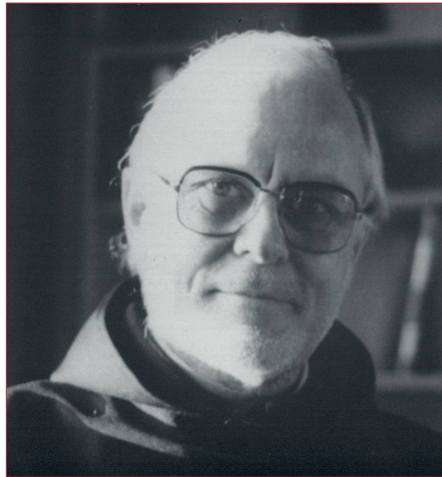
about the feast. Neither of them had any idea. The habits of religious practice have diverged from the basic narratives of Christian faith as ways of meaning. Without these stories that grow in meaning as faith deepens the external practice soon becomes empty and meaningless. Do we need a massive PR campaign and advertising blitz to reignite the transmission of the faith as some church leaders desperately think? Or do those who are neither ambivalent nor embarrassed by their Christian identity need to speak less, to deepen their silence. They then allow the Spirit to turn them, not into salesmen of the gospel but into the gospel itself. In this tradition the disciple has always been seen primarily not as a promoter but as an *alter Christus*, another Christ.

I had my own time as an altar server. I even continued to go to church until, as I got older, I found that the Church and its promoters just didn't seem to connect with the questions and issues I was dealing with. I didn't get angry, just drifted away. In John Main I came to see that I was seeing Christ. After a while I felt that Christ was patiently, steadily, lovingly, gazing at me in a way I had never expected possible, without judgement or conditionality. Over the years and through his dying I saw Fr John become another Christ even as he became more uniquely and irreplaceably himself. There are no words to describe this union of identity because in such a union words are increasingly redundant until eventually they dissolve into the absolute silence of a presence that is love.

I found this (I wasn't looking for it) within monastic life. The outward form of the life was not very appealing and at times even embarrassing

but the emerging encounter was far stronger than that. I realised that the mystery of this relationship needed stability, fidelity and endurance that serious relationship requires in any form of life.

In married life there is a danger of domesticating the stability into routines so that the relationship gets buried under daily busyness and distraction. In the life of any contem-



John Main OSB

plative community there is a similar tendency to equate domesticity with stability, to see the chant of the rhythm of prayer as a lullaby or to make the cloister an escape rather than a *laboratory*.

I like that compound word *laboratory*. It is made up of *labor* - work, like planting garlic or welcoming guests; and *oratio* - prayer, like singing psalms or saying the mantra. It captures the dynamic, not just of monastic but of all life. I have come to feel that if the monastic life achieves radical simplicity – in any authentic form – it harmonises with all other authentic kinds of life. This is our vision and aspiration in Bonnevaux – to harmonise and reconnect different forms of modern life through the radical stability of meditation and a contemplative community. This in-

volves solitude but it is also an endlessly renewed encounter with others.

All the members of a community, like members of a family, live together at differing stages of their journey. They connect to each other and heal and support each other through their weaknesses and strengths. Both their desire for and their fear of personal change bring them together. This is achieved if the community is built not on the principle of narcissism, seeking *my* own fulfilment, but on the principle of service, caring for *your* fulfilment. Service not self-seeking. A 'school of the Lord's service' is how St Benedict describes it. This is today, as always has been, about as counter-cultural as you can get.

The glamour of novelty, the illusions spun by false expectations, wear off quickly when the 'school' starts to bring you down to earth. It can then teach you how to learn and *how* to serve. Self-deception and denial are soon exposed. How do we react to this? Either with blame, anger and self-withdrawal or with humility, humour and deepening commitment. Many people are attracted to community (or marriage) for authentic reasons but they also fear the challenges and demands. They want to escape their sense of disconnection and loneliness. But they also resist reality when it appears too starkly. Just as many today postpone the commitment to become spouses while remaining 'partners', others want to come into community but with reservations and conditions.

Of course, at first that's sensible and necessary. It takes time to be clear about any serious commitment and to become familiar with the path of self-knowledge. A time in community may be right for a period

to teach you how to make a deeper kind of commitment in another form of life. (In some Asian monastic cultures a short period as a monk is seen as preparing a man to be a better husband). By gently growing in a spirit of service we learn what commitment means. We also learn how to commit and what to. We discover that the experience of relationship, of community, of communion that we thirst for requires that we learn to serve.

John Main invites us to a serious commitment to meditation practice but he also recognised it takes time – differently for each person – to arrive at the discipline of the twice-daily sessions integrated into ordinary life. His own commitment was not only to the practice but to the extraordinary focus of his teaching on practice. He did not speak so much of the benefits – social or personal – although he saw the value of the practice in transforming both. His commitment was to inspire and encourage people to begin and keep on beginning. He once described meditation to cleaning a tarnished bronze table and said how it was small repeated strokes, in one area after another, that would best restore its obscured beauty.

‘Commitment’ is a scary word at the best of times and these are not the best of times. A friendlier word to describe what it means is ‘embodied’. The ‘-mit’ part of the word commit comes from the Latin meaning to *send*. By commitment we *send* ourselves. We go out from ourselves, push out from shore into the ocean of faith. To commit means to give oneself to the tangible, the actual, the embraceable and to feel that you truly belong in the arms of the real.

..that which we have heard and we have seen, that which we have perceived with our eyes and we have touched with our hands (Jn1:1)

John Main was a very embodied person. He was also very much a monk and a good monk. But his

insight penetrated far beyond that particular form of life. It led him to understand the meaning of relationship itself and how we are capable of it – or not – in modern culture. He saw the painful prison of individualism, isolation and loneliness in which so many feel locked. Since his day digital culture has greatly intensified this problem. For him, though, salvation meant, firstly, to be liberated from that separated sense of self and healed of the experience of division from our self and others. These experiences drive much of the depression and mental illness among the young.

He also knew that the ‘crisis of the self’ has gone so far that traditional ways of communicating the healing message of the gospel merely bounce off this wall of separateness. The good news is that we are not alone and divided. We are embodied and tangible and known. Our true self, embedded in the web of being, is loveable like everyone and everything else. Self-knowledge is to touch the love which is the source of our being, and is being itself.

Through his own struggles and within his monastic tradition John Main saw a way through our modern crisis. It begins by recognising that the core of the crisis and its cure involves the rediscovery of the human spirit. For religious institutions this simple first step can be a huge stumbling block when religion itself has become de-spiritualised. Religious forms, loyalties, identities and beliefs can even become force-fields that deflect the energies of the spirit. Religion has fallen into this sorry, self-contradicting state in other periods of history, as Jesus understood about the religiosity of his own time. In each of these eras where religion became disconnected from people’s spiritual hunger the way forward comes as a rediscovery of the contemplative dimension. This dimension applies to all forms of human

life and to each personal consciousness. We may debate about whether Jesus imagined a new religion called ‘Christianity’. But there is no question about the contemplative nature of his spiritual teaching – interiority, silence, equanimity and being in the now. This underpins his social vision of a world finally freed from violence and injustice.

According to John Main nothing is more urgent for us now than to rediscover the spiritual dimension and its energies. He did not say meditation was the only way to do this. He believed that love is the way. But meditation is a work of love that dismantles all that disempowers our capacity to love. For the new meditator love will become visible as the first fruit of their new practice. It may not be what they expected or even thought they needed. It will also reveal that the solitude of their practice connects them to a different kind of experience of relationship, of community. This evolves. As a ‘school of service’ it becomes a place where the hard shell of loneliness cracks open to reveal the true self in the boundless nature of relationship.

Fr John’s theology breathes through the model of relationship expressed in the Christian understanding of the Trinity. Here God is seen as relationship, communion and community. Not an anthropomorphic God. But as the way for human beings to understand themselves. Not God as a philosophical idea to be proven or debated. Or as a magical ego-projection offering false consolation. But God as the love that every human being seeks and that cannot be reduced to biology, neurotransmitters or even to desire.

We seek love, named or not. Therefore, we seek God whether we believe or not. ‘Whoever loves lives in God and God lives in them’. The ego will fail to understand this because it wants to possess what it seeks, if and

when it finds it. Whoever truly seeks will find but then, as truly, we *will* lose, in myriad ways, in each phase of our life. God is the human quest that gives meaning to life whether or not we believe. Religion wants us to 'believe'. God just wants us to love. Once any goal has been achieved we soon become restless again. We will never be fully satisfied even by finding what we are looking for. After a few cycles, this leads either to cynicism or faith. We either disdain the search or plummet deeper into the whirlpool of reality. We find God and lose God in the same instant. The mystics of all traditions understand this better than the 'learned and the clever'.

For many clever thinkers today all this is an outdated mystique for explaining the human condition. They believe (and it has become a new orthodoxy) that the meaning of life is better described by a combination of psychology, economics, social science and neurology. God is just bad fiction. The spiritual dimension is just a room of mirrors. Consciousness? Well, we don't know yet how consciousness arises from the electrical activity of the brain but it *must* be merely a product of things not the origin of everything. This new materialism has become a dogma and generates its own prejudices just as religion does. It is a two dimensional humanism with length and breadth but no depth. It often ridicules and denies the spiritual, depth dimension, rejecting it after identifying it with the worst aspects of religion. Culturally, this is a receipt for deceit. Psychologically, it burns the bridges that connect us to all wisdom traditions. Spiritually, it strands us on a floating iceberg where we just imagine how we can bio-engineer ourselves to become the God we no longer think is real.

So when John Main said thirty years ago that the most important of modern tasks is to recover the spiri-

tual dimension, has this become any less true or urgent? Maybe because of his background in diplomacy, law and education he was eminently practical. Maybe true contemplatives are the least abstract and the most embodied of contemporaries. He believed that recovering the spiritual must begin by learning to know and love ourselves. If we cannot get back into relationship with ourselves as we are how can we relate to anything or anyone else realistically?

However resistant we may be to that process of self-discovery, there is



*Contemplative Exchange 2017*

no way of sidestepping it. I was once participating in a conference with scientists and religious leaders. One scientist impressed me intellectually more than the religious leaders but he was irrationally condemnatory of religion – the cause of illusion, wars, intolerance etc. I asked him if, on the same premise, he thought we could ban science because the scientific method was applied in the concentration camps and the best scientific minds of the time produced the atomic bomb. In the meditation period he sat in front of me ostentatiously and loudly leafing through a booklet. Later someone said to him 'meditation is so important because it helps me see what's going inside me' With wonderful honesty the scientist replied 'that's why I don't meditate. I don't want to know what's going inside me at all!'

It's not only some scientists but many religious and other kinds of people who find the first step so difficult. We all resist a self-knowledge that is deeper than that found at the

conceptual, self-reflective level. But if we don't go there we cannot discover the spiritual dimension. Just how resistant we can be is evident when we say we want to meditate and then make excuses for not meditating.

What we actually believe at this first step is not so important. But we must have enough *faith* in ourselves to take it. The beauty is in discovering that it is always a first step. Soon, if we allow sufficient space and time for the experience of love to emerge, we see how self-knowledge ripples outwards affecting all our relationships and propelling us towards the ungraspable horizon of the unknown God.

This year's John Main Seminar (in Vancouver, Canada) is on the theme of 'Contemplative Christianity' and is led by a masterly young theologian, Sarah Bachelard. She leads a contemplative parish community in Australia and participates in the Contemplative Exchange group that emerged from our Snowmass meeting last year. We are living in times that are often dark and disturbing. To hear the spiritual leaders of the future looking, from a contemplative perspective, at what we are going through helps restore hope and revive faith. These qualities produce love and it is love, in unexpected manifestations, that will illumine our decisions. In July there will be a retreat for young adult meditators at Bonnevaux. They too see things differently. Maybe together, meditators from different generations meeting in the same experience of community will be able to see the blessed simplicity of the next step, the big leap of consciousness, that humanity must take.

*Laurence*

Laurence Freeman OSB

Special

## Education for a new World: Teaching Children to Meditate Sowing now for a Contemplative Future

Teaching children and young people to meditate is an urgent endeavor, a gift and a contribution to the sanity of our world. This outreach work shows increasing activity around the world. In the latest international report we see 30 countries reporting work in this vital area. With very few exceptions, the activities are conducted by a very small team of volunteers. In this issue of our newsletter, we highlight some of this work around the world.

### Uruguay: Third Retreat for Children who Meditate



This September we held the third retreat for children who meditate with growth in numbers and depth. Almost 100 children came to the *Mary Help of Christians House* in Lezica, Montevideo. They came from different parts of the country, representing Schools, Parishes and Children's Clubs and showed an infectious joy in the contemplative path they are beginning. The theme was *Interiority*. With coordinators from our community and educators who came with the children, we walked the path to the centre, to the heart that the children understand so well. We had unforgettably beautiful moments of communion in the Spirit through silence, games, the contemplation of nature, the sharing of food and art. We are so thankful for the promise of peace that these children bring us and the future of our world. (Carina Conte)

### Fiji: Meditation Team visited 53 Schools in 2018

Each time we visit a school we leave edified by the openness of both teachers and children to the practice. This year we visited 53 schools both primary and secondary, urban and rural, as well as Boys' Town, Navesi. Without the generosity of the meditation team this would not have been possible. Sr Torika and I are also grateful to Mere and Tema, members of our community at the Prayer Centre, who have always, smilingly and graciously left us free to do this work. (Sr Denise McMahan)



### Luxembourg: Meditation included in First Communion Preparation

Christian meditation was introduced to two classes of 35 children preparing for their first Holy Communion in our parish - the city parish of Notre Dame in Luxembourg city. Our congregation meets in the Redemptorist church and monastery in the center of town. We are a very multicultural and multilingual community drawn from 44 different countries worldwide. The language of communication and instruction is English. This year the numbers have far exceeded expectation and an additional class has been formed. Par-

ents are responsible for leading the classes under the guidance of an experienced catechist. It is the first time that meditation will be incorporated into the teaching program for first Holy Communion. The parents were informed of this by the catechist who oversees the program. At a later stage it has been proposed that I speak with the parents as a group. The children are eight years old. We began with two minutes of meditation and intend to build up to eight minutes over the course of the six-month period. ( Marcella McCarthy)

## Special

### South Africa: Project will Bring Meditation to Rural Schools

The Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) serves the needs of 334 Catholic schools in South Africa. Many of these schools lie in deep rural areas and encounter the hardships and problems typical of poorer communities. A WCCM project in partnership with the CIE aims to bring Christian Meditation to some of these schools. According to the WCCM National Coordinator, Paul Faller, since access to the meditation events and materials relied in the past on the ability of schools to travel to central venues – often some 100-200 or more kilometres distant – this project seeks to bring the work to schools that have not previously enjoyed the benefits of being in attendance.

An ongoing effort to bring meditation – as taught by John Main and the World Community for Christian

Meditation – to Catholic schools in South Africa has been a feature of the work of CIE's Religious Education Department since 2012. The inspiration for this work was the project initiated by Catholic Education in the Diocese of Townsville, Australia. Introductory workshops, short courses, provision of supporting materials and the maintenance of a teacher network have been some of the ways in which the Department has attempted to instil a practice of meditation among teachers and students in the schools.

It is proposed that meditation will be introduced and monitored in six areas of South Africa where the work would be supported by the presence of CIE offices and their regional managers. Introductory workshops will be followed up by



a second visit within three months to schools that have shown some level of commitment to meditation. Such commitment would be demonstrated by monthly reports from a designated person at each school. Further support will be given on an ongoing basis through the provision of monthly materials and visits from regional managers. (Paul Faller, National Coordinator)

### Philippines: Spreading the Gift for Parents



*JM Rebueno, leading a meditation session with with parents of the gratuating seniors in Philippines.*

Miriam College, an all-girls school, asked that I facilitate a Recollection with parents of the graduating seniors. This event is hosted annually for graduating students. Parents were introduced to and experienced Christian meditation, with some contemplative breathing and listening as a preparation, while waiting to pick up their daughters at school after a two-day out-of-town retreat. The theme of the student retreat concluded with the line, "bring themselves and their family into the presence of God." This theme under-

scored my sharing simple contemplative practices with parents open to meeting their daughters halfway in the presence of God. Based on their wide-eyed nods, happy smiles, questions, comments and feedback, I feel they had indeed learned how to begin to meditate. Feedback ranged from feeling relaxed, calm, mind-rested (after a stressful drive), gratitude for reminding them to deeply listen to one another with eye-to-eye contact, with no agenda, and the simplicity of the practice to connect them with God. (JM Rebueno)

## Special

### Canada: Noel Keating presentation to school boards in Toronto area



Meditation with children continues to spread in Catholic schools throughout Ontario. As part of our Meditatio Outreach, we brought Dr. Noel Keating to Ottawa and Toronto area to present his research findings on meditation with children. Noel is the WCCM National Coordinator and leads the Coordination for Meditation with Children in Ireland. His book *Meditation with*

*Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents* based on his research has been widely acclaimed in education fields. Noel presented to five school boards with a focus on the role spirituality plays in the well-being of children and how meditation provides both benefits and fruits. In February 14, 2019 I will be presenting a workshop at the Catholic Educators' Conference in Vancouver with the hope of bringing CMC to schools on the west coast. I will also be doing a presentation with Mary Theresa Coene in Ottawa on April 5, 2019 at the National Conference on Evangelization and Catechesis hosted by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. (Paul Tratnyek, International Coordinator for Meditation with Children)

### Australia: focus on the formation of teachers



In the Lismore Diocese (New South Wales), Christian meditation continues to be embedded within our schools. 2018 has seen particular interest from our secondary colleges with very positive results from both teachers and students alike. For staff, our inaugural two-day retreat of Stillness, Silence and Simplicity was held in Lismore and was very well received. The deep-

ening of the staff experience adds further to the student experience. The number of staff who attended more than doubled.

We also held a Full day "Sharing the Gift" Teachers' Workshop in Adelaide (South Australia) on 6 September for 50 teachers. A further day will be held in March 2019 to train those who will facilitate such days in the future and a whole school introduction to Christian meditation is scheduled for that time too. Each State has a programme and facilitators who respond to individual schools and also embark on Formation Days and Teachers Retreats to gather many who are "Sharing the Gift" with youngster in their care. (Helen Hunter and Penny Sturrock)

### Scotland: growing interest



I am presently concentrating on setting up meditation in three secondary schools and their sixteen associated primaries in Motherwell Diocese. For some of the primaries it has meant going back after a change of Head or of staff and for others teaching the staff from scratch and then illustrating this by teaching two or three of their classes. In each of the secondaries I taught forty or more Sixth Form Caritas students. Then we went, initially together, to teach six classes of first year pupils in their Religious Education classes. In one school we also arranged to visit the primary schools and support meditation there.

One of the secondaries reported an extremely positive effect on the first year classes as a result of the classes taught by the Caritas students. This format is now being introduced into the other two secondary schools. There are too many schools for individual visits to each one. Consequently, I have been asked by the Religious Education Advisors for Glasgow and Edinburgh dioceses and the Motherwell Diocese to give in-service sessions to their Primary Headteachers. (Pat Hay).



## Special

### Indonesia: a day for teachers and parents to go deeper



Fr. Laurence came to visit us in November. He spent time with the Christian community in Semarang, Central Java of Indonesia and had the opportunity to speak to teachers and parents about meditation with children. The 204 participants from the Christian community included 112 teachers, 2 Jesuit priests and 7 intermediate seminarian students.

The day began with Fr. Laurence meditating with those assembled. After, he described the first time he

introduced meditation to children in Canada in 1977. Fr. John Main had been asked to go to Montreal to establish a Benedictine monastery to teach lay people Christian meditation and he went, accompanied by Fr. Laurence. A woman in Montreal soon approached them to give religious teaching to her children. Being busy, Fr. Laurence initially refused but after some prompting from Fr. John, he accepted. Each session, after teaching them about the gospel, he taught them to meditate just as as adults do, with the only difference being the duration of the meditation time (one minute per year of their age). Fr Laurence was amazed at their response and enjoyment of the experience. He discovered then that giving the gift of meditation to children is a gift for life

In the middle of the seminar Fr. Laurence led another meditation

session. Prior to meditating he talked about “letting go and letting God” followed by some basic instructions on how to meditate. Fr. Laurence provided several guidelines for the teachers on teaching meditation to children. He said the most important element to teach is attention. It is not easy for children to pay attention in the times we are living because of all the distractions around them. We see this everywhere with their gadgets. This will be a challenge for teachers.

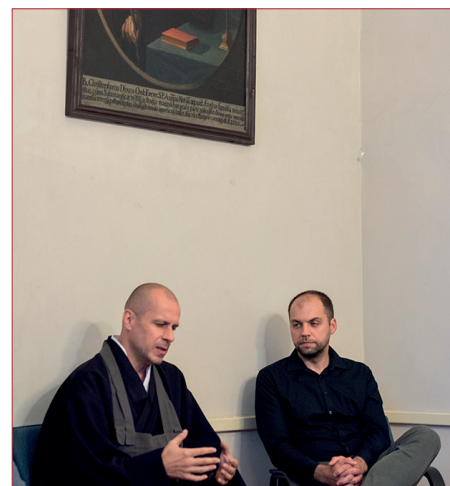
At the end of the session, Br. Bayu, CSA from Semarang community gave a presentation about meditation with children currently taking place in several Indonesian cities. Where children are meditating, teachers have observed them to be calmer and more focused in class. We left the day with the message that basically it is not difficult to teach children how to meditate. (Johanna Wisoli)

## News

### Interfaith Dialogue in Czech Republic

After ten years, the WCCM in the Czech Republic took part for the first time in an interfaith event. The gathering happened in September in a refectory of St. Thomas monastery in Prague and was well attended and received. The theme was reflecting our ‘experience of meditation’ with representatives from other religions. I think it is more and more urgent to understand our common ground in this experience in order to find a source of healing and re-integration in our troubled world. We were four: myself (Vladimir, from

WCCM), Petr Vacíka ( Jesuit), Won Hye (Zen Buddhist monk from Korean Kwan Um Zen school) and Radek Steiger (ordained monk from Japanese Sotó Zen.) We meditated together which always seems the best way to share space and time in intimacy and friendship. Then, we introduced our respective traditions and discussed our perspectives on practice, techniques of meditation and fruits of silence. We didn’t agree on everything, but we deeply experienced a spirit of mutual understanding. (Vladimír Volráb)



## News

# A new year, a new era for Bonnevaux

This year Bonnevaux re-opens as a contemplative centre. It is also the 900th anniversary of its foundation as a Benedictine monastery in 1119. During this new era we will bless the first phase of the renovation and hold the first retreats and events.



On June 15th a blessing will open the Abbaye and Conference centre while the work on the Guesthouse continues with scheduled completion for December 2019. The WCCM

Holy Week retreat will be held at Bonnevaux, although because the Guesthouse will not be finished participants will stay in nearby accommodation. Other retreats will be held during the year and these will be published shortly on the Bonnevaux website. Individual meditators and groups from national communities will be welcomed. Contemplative Leadership events for the business world will host companies and institutions wishing to explore new ways of work and service to the world. The Bonnevaux Centre for Peace is a physical expression of John Main's insight of the power of meditation to transform individuals and society and of a global monastery without walls.

Underpinning the programme will be the daily rhythm of silence, *ora et labora* and 'welcoming each guest as Christ himself', as St Benedict says.

## Retreat for Young Adults

'Young' is a state, not a measurement, but this retreat focuses on meditators between 18 and 40. Those with more experience of life will be of help to the younger and the younger can help re-energise the older. The retreat is in two parts: the first at Bonnevaux (24-31 July) sharing in the life of the community, meditation, yoga, worship, work and study, as well as creative activities such as pottery, writing, music, and dancing. There will be an opportunity to work on the land and our new organic farm project. There will be times for sharing and personal direction. In the second part (optional, 1-4 August) there will be a few days walking along the Camino to Compostela. Those who wish, can then return to Bonnevaux for additional time sharing in the life of the community, getting to know more fully its mission as a centre of and for peace and for personal and social transformation. For more information contact:

[accueil@bonnevauxwccm.org](mailto:accueil@bonnevauxwccm.org)

Visit: [www.bonnevauxwccm.org](http://www.bonnevauxwccm.org)

## Renovation still in progress



2016 was the year that Bonnevaux found the WCCM. We became its stewards as legal owners in October 2017. 2018 was a year of many small miracles and great transformation. In 2019 the work continues on schedule. The Abbaye (the main house where the resident community and some guests will live) will be finished by April. With a capacity for nearly 200, the Conference Centre (the barn) will follow in June. Fr. Laurence will be resident at Bonnevaux after Easter.

Fundraising is now focused especially on the scheduled completion of the Guesthouse with 25 guest-rooms, bookshop and dining and meeting rooms. We still need your help to achieve this. Every gift - small or large encourages us - and makes a difference. Thank you!

## In Focus

### Sr Denise McMahon, Fiji



I come from a traditional Catholic Australian family with Irish roots. Growing up, the faith was important in my family. I was sent to Catholic schools and taught by the 'Sisters' who were influential in imparting our Christian heritage. I grew up as a child in the 1950s, a time in Australia when there were many refugees arriving from war-torn Europe. Our street was a veritable United Nations and my special friends were the Polish children. The Slavic traditions were particularly enriching and I was fascinated with their customs, religious symbols and celebrations, particularly of Easter and Christmas, which they willingly shared with us.

My novitiate with the Missionary

Sisters of the Society of Mary was on a beautiful property in rural Victoria. It had a magical, rambling garden leading on to rich farm land. The beauty of the environment was food for the soul. In the novitiate, we were taught the Ignatian method of mental prayer which was not easy. After profession and teacher training I was assigned to Bougainville, followed by Vanuatu, and then Fiji where I have been for the last twenty-five years. Although I remained faithful to daily personal prayer I always felt there was something more.

In God's good time I was introduced to Christian Meditation by Fr. Denis Mahony, newly assigned to Suva. Soon after arriving he began teaching meditation with a series of Saturday teachings which a small group, including myself and two other community members were invited to. At the end of the six week course Father encouraged us to begin our own groups which we did. It was an act of faith. We had no idea who, if anyone, would join us. On the first evening, a Peace Corps Volunteer, who had read the notice we had placed in the parish newsletter, arrived. From that time on our

small group grew and was enriched by numerous people, both Fiji residents and people living temporarily in Fiji.

I have had the privilege of being part of the Fiji meditation community since its beginning. One of the most satisfying experiences has been the outreach to the schools. This year our schools' team visited 53 schools, both primary and secondary, urban and rural. Meditation is now part of the daily school practice. We hope to continue to visit these schools each year for as long as we can. We know we are simply sowing seeds but note that children understand intuitively the prayer of silence and stillness and readily enter in to it.

As a missionary, I believe meditation is important in evangelization. The daily practice is a training time in learning to live the spirit of the gospels. At the centre we are one regardless of what faith tradition we belong to. Christian Meditation is one of the greatest graces I have received. Belonging to the meditation communities, both locally and world-wide has enriched my life and I am grateful to God.



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Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org)

Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano

Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 March.

## Resources & Events

### The Meditatio Centre 2019 Programme



The programme of events and activities for 2019 at the Meditatio Centre in London is available online. Download it here: <http://tiny.cc/MedCt19>

### Meditation and the 11th Step in Recovery

The 11th step outreach 'wheel of prayer' picked up speed when the online meditation groups began. These groups allow us to reach and share this way of prayer with other meditators in recovery. The first one began August 2017 in the US and recently a second group was established in New Zealand. Following are our current groups and scheduled programs:

- \* US, Canada, UK and New Zealand have 11th Step groups practicing in the John Main Tradition;
- \* UK offers 11th Step retreats twice a year;
- \* The first Essential Teaching Week-

### Audio & CDs



In these talks, John Main speaks of meditation as a pilgrimage to the centre of our being where the Spirit of God dwells. Listen to or download the tracks: <http://tiny.cc/Med2018D>

Order a copy of the CD:  
<http://tiny.cc/CentreBeing>

### Retreats & Seminars



#### Holy Week Retreat (April 14-21)

led by Laurence Freeman OSB.  
Bonnevaux, Marçay, France. Contact:  
[easter2019@bonnevauxwccm.org](mailto:easter2019@bonnevauxwccm.org)

#### Monte Oliveto Retreat:

**Who do You Say I Am?** (June 1-8)  
led by Laurence Freeman OSB and  
Giovanni Felicioni  
Siena, Italy. Contact:  
[monteoliveto@wccm.org](mailto:monteoliveto@wccm.org)



**John Main Seminar 2019:  
A Contemplative Christianity  
for our Time (August 5-11)**  
led by Rev. Dr. Sarah Bachelard  
Vancouver, Canada. More infor-  
mation: <http://jms2019.org/>

**To order:** contact the resource centre nearest to you. Our centres are listed below

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## Meditatio Event – *Contemplation AND Action*



by Paul Taylor

**In early November 2018 the NSW Committee organised a MEDITATIO event to explore “contemplation AND action”. The two main speakers were Jarrod McKenna, a well known social activist and social change educator and Donna Mulhearn who is a Christian Meditator who has herself been involved in many social actions over the years including being part of the Human Shield in the war in Iraq.**

The venue was the Pitt St, Uniting Church the perfect place for such an event in view of this Church’s long standing commitment to social action.

As well as the two speakers in the morning there was an afternoon panel session which involved four guests, Jon Owen who was recently appointed pastor of the Wayside Chapel, Susan Connolly a Sister of St. Joseph who has been a great

supporter of the East Timorese, Jon O’Brien who has been among other things a member of the Social Justice Forum of the Uniting Church and finally Ceane Towers, a Wiradjuri woman who works and lives in Aboriginal Communities and specialises in individual and family support.

The aims of our day were to explore:

- How contemplative prayer can awaken a stronger commitment to social justice and action.
- what contemplative activism looks like
- what spiritual practices can nourish us and help avoid burn out which seems to be a very common problem with those who are activists.
- the integration of contemplation and action so as to help us be better people who will contribute to a better world.

After meditating together, and for some from activist backgrounds this was a first time experience of going within, we were treated to an extraordinary talk by Jarrod McKenna who combined the passion of a Pentecostal who simply loves Jesus and wants to see a world transformed by that love with the sense of depth which arises out of his contemplative prayer practice. Jarrod informed us he is a practitioner of the Jesus Prayer. He held us spell bound as he moved about with frequent references to the Bible and how Jesus directs us toward greater engagement. He said at one point that maybe we Contemplatives need a bit of warming up and maybe he is right and maybe he was just the person to do this warming.



After morning tea Donna, who describes herself as a Pilgrim Storyteller, told us her story and what a story it is. From her days as a Evangelical/ Fundamentalist who discovered Christian Meditation in a monastery while travelling in Ireland to her being part of many peaceful social actions to her now running a retreat centre in the Blue Mountains, this was a story that stirred, I am sure, all the hearts of us who were there. Although Donna has been

*continued page 14*

## Living Waters Centre Meditation Group – Newcastle (NSW)

**Living Waters grew from a desire that Sister Carmel Moore had to “devote serious time to discerning a call within a call through listening more deeply within myself.”**

Sister Carmel introduced the people of Newcastle to Christian Meditation more than twenty years ago and by the time she moved to Living Waters sixteen years ago there were three meditation groups meeting weekly. There are seven experienced leaders who are on a roster to lead these meditation groups which means leaders don't feel that all responsibility falls on them every week.

Another eight groups have grown from Living Waters which meet in other parts of the Greater Newcastle Area. There are also Introductory Courses run from the centre. The Benedictine Book club also began here. Sister Carmel estimates many hundreds of people have visited the centre over the last sixteen years. A wonderful community of meditators has grown in this peaceful and spirit filled place.

A long term meditator Elisabeth Pattison says, “One of the many things I like about Living Waters Meditation is that people of any religion – or none – are welcome. I am a member of Merewether Anglican Church and feel completely at home at Living Waters. In short, I feel my life and that of many others, has been enriched by



L to R: Anne Cuskelly (Newcastle area coordinator), Lynne Steele, Sr Carmel Moore, Gail Doolan

my attendance at Living Waters.”

Another long time meditator, Gail Doolan, wrote the following:

“All are welcome, and silence is encouraged after meditation to maintain the peace gained through the practice. Living Waters is unique in all that it offers in meeting the growing need for sacred spaces offering peace and sanctuary. Sr Carmel is an inspiration in her openness and generosity of spirit, welcoming people of any faith background.”

We are very fortunate to have access to the old chapel next door to Living Waters to host our teaching mornings three times a year. The

mornings commence and end with meditation with a break for morning tea. The format varies between a group leader presenting a talk or separating into small groups for sharing. The topics we have covered include: *John Main, Cassian, Cloud of Unknowing, Martha and Mary, Contemplative Reading, Basics of Meditation, Meister Eckart, Fruits of Meditation and Finding Oneself*. An average of thirty people attend these sessions including the group leaders from the Newcastle area. As someone commented at our latest morning “it has become a joyous gathering.” There is a wonderful feeling of community and meeting of like minds.

### Meditatio Event – *Contemplation AND Action* – continued from page 13

involved in such major actions as being in Iraq during the war she was keen to emphasise that social action involved the whole range of human actions that show concern for others. Things as simple as, but as important as, caring for elderly parents or sick grandchildren.

After listening to our two

speakers in the morning we were perfectly prepared for all that our afternoon panelists had to offer. The panelists had such fascinating and diverse stories but they all shared a deep commitment to their own spiritual growth as the basis for their deep love and commitment to the causes they are involved in.

So needless to say the day was a great success and yet the topic needs further exploration. It is a great topic too because it seems to attract younger people who are naturally socially engaged and many of whom have had no previous connection with meditation.

## Mary Sattin: Group Leader St James' Anglican Church Sydney

### Mary Sattin is one of the Christian Meditation group leaders at St James' Anglican Church in the City.

Last year, Christian Meditation Coordinator at St James' Richard Cogswell, (Richard is also Chair of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) Guiding Board and WCCM Regional Coordinator for Oceania), visited the Solomon Islands and met Mary's brother with whom he talked about establishing Christian meditation there. However, shortly after Mary's brother died, and when Mary went to the Solomons to help with his funeral and affairs, another brother died – she lost two in six days. The meditation project stalled.

Richard encouraged Mary to follow it up. She visited her late brother's house: all of the resources for setting up meditation were there (such as books); her next step was to approach the right people to lead and maintain it. She visited the Vicar General of the Diocese of Central Melanesia, Bishop John Kuper, who was in charge of the Christian mission of the Anglican Church there, and assured him that Christian Meditation was not a new 'church' but that it was another form of prayer. The Vicar General was convinced and encouraged Mary to 'go for it'!

Mary was invited to some parish churches, the leaders of the Mothers' Union and the Sisters of both Anglican and Catholic Churches, to talk about Christian Meditation. But what Mary discovered was that once something like meditation was established, it only 'lived' for the time a particular Sister or leader was there. Once the Sisters or leaders are moved on, meditation stops.

The Sisters approached Mary for help on ways to sustain meditation. Mary suggested training a group of about 3 or 4 people that are all present at the meditation sessions this approach ensures there would always be more than one leader, and as a leader moves on, a new one is brought in and trained by the remaining leader/s.

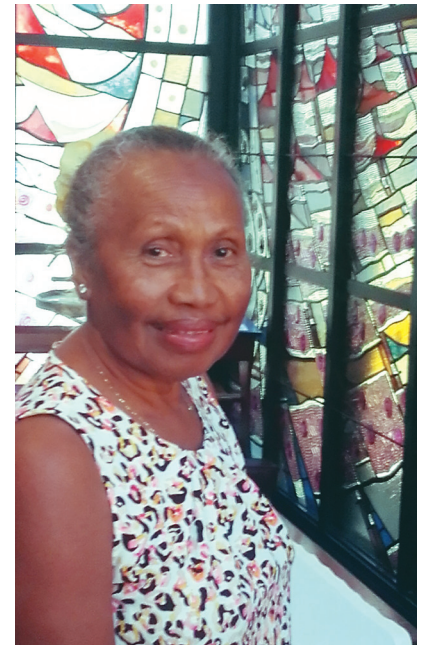
The latest report from the area Mary visited in the Solomons is that groups have been formed and are introducing Christian Meditation to families.

On a related matter, Mary met with Sr Doreen, a senior Anglican Sister in Malaita, the largest island in the Solomons. Whilst speaking with Mary about meditation, Sr Doreen told her about plans for a Care Centre for abused children. Most of the children are abused at home, but because the villages are so small and close knit, they have nowhere else to go. The children grow up and many perpetuate the cycle by abusing their own children. Sr Doreen hopes that by providing a safe place for these children, the cycle can be broken. Mary would like Christian Meditation to be taught to these children too, as it would be a useful tool in dealing with the trauma of abuse.

Mary and Sr Doreen acknowledge establishing the

centre is an enormous undertaking, but they are confident that there are people who are willing to help.

Currently, Mary is working on setting up an association so funds can be raised for the Care Centre.



*Adapted from an article published in St James' Parish Connections December 2018/January 2019.*

## MEDITATION

*I roll my shoulders and breathe. In. Out.  
Feet flat on the ground, I close my eyes.  
The Tibetan bell resonates with my soul.  
In. Out. MARANATHA*

*Feet flat on the ground, visions form before my eyes.  
I see my roots extend into God's earth.  
I taste earth on my lips.*

*I see myself seated below the tree of life.  
My feet merge with the tree's roots.  
My lap becomes a bench, moulded into the tree.  
I feel comfort, peace.*

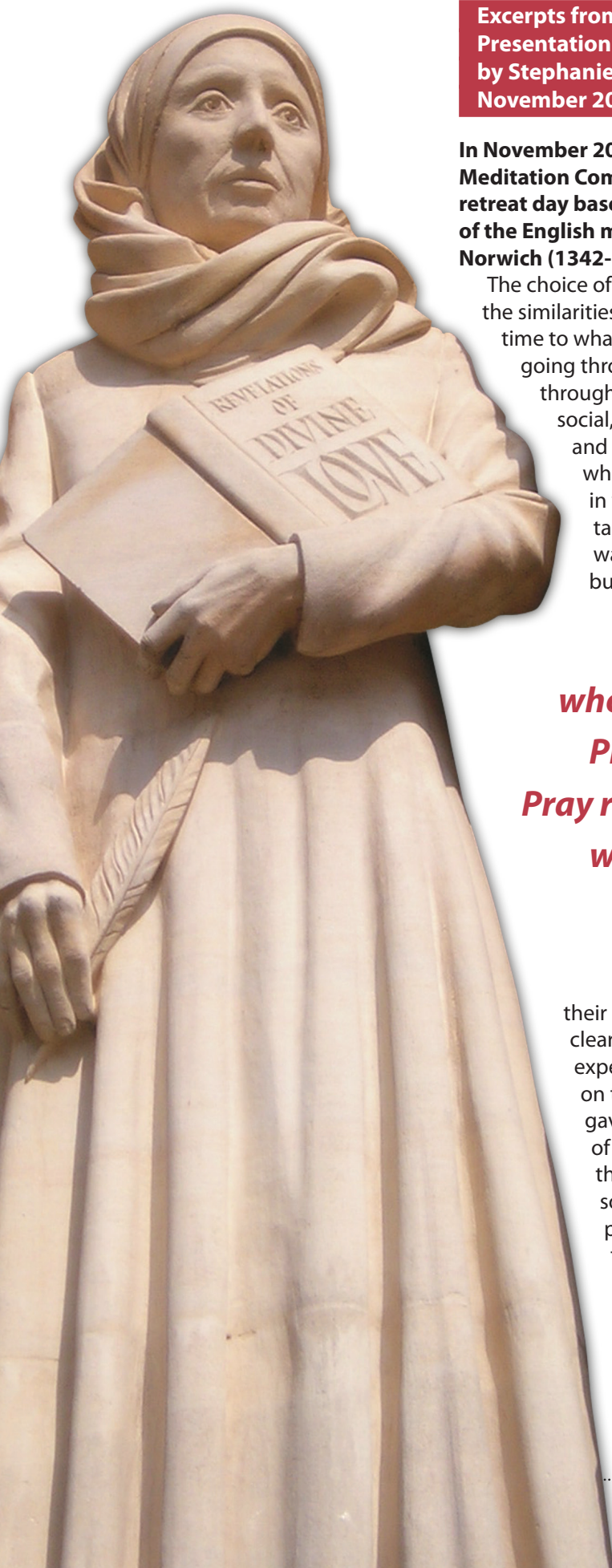
*Another time I hear Silence,  
A warm darkness envelopes me,  
Comforting me, holding me close.  
Ma. In. Ra. Out. Na. In. Tha. Out.*

*Visions of maypole bedecked with multi-coloured ribbons.  
People of all colours and nations moving.  
Dancing all the while holding onto the ribbons.  
Weaving a beautiful, everchanging pattern.*

*MARANATHA. In. Out.  
Silence. Stillness. Peace.  
The Tibetan Bell softly rings  
I open my eyes. Your peace returns with me.*

*Elaine Abery*

# “Revelations of Divine Love”



Excerpts from a Retreat Day  
Presentation  
by Stephanie Woods,  
November 2018

**In November 2018 the WA Christian Meditation Community had a retreat day based on the teachings of the English mystic, Julian of Norwich (1342-1416?).**

The choice of Julian was based on the similarities that existed in her time to what we find ourselves going through now. She lived through a time of great social, political, economic and cultural upheaval: when a paradigm shift in world view was taking place. The old ways were collapsing, but what was to take

**“Pray  
wholeheartedly.  
Pray rejoicing.  
Pray rightfully and  
with confident  
trust.”**

their place was not clear – much as we are experiencing today, but on the positive side, this gave her some degree of freedom to “do theology” differently so she was able to put her revelations to great use for her “fellow Christians”.

Could we find some inspiration in her revelations that may help us today?

Some excerpts from her book,  
*Revelations of Divine Love*

## **On a Maternal Deity**

In the middle ages most women had no public role. The female realm was in the home. A.C. Spearing indicates that the fourteenth century home was “*the place of direct and intimate relations among human beings: the place where children were born, fed and taught the mother tongue, the place of nourishment and sleep, where bodies met bodies for comfort, affection and procreation.*” Dealing Dying and death at home too.

As Julian matured from visionary to theologian, she had great difficulty seeing the ‘fatherly’ side of God, which in the medieval period made fatherhood synonymous with power, control, anger and punishment. In contrast, she considered,

*“God is goodness that cannot get angry ... God gave birth to creation, like a mother giving birth, and this will be matched by an equally motherly deed at the end of the world, though we don’t know what it will be, but it will make “all things well”. (Hence she ‘saw’ Hell but no one in it.) The mother may suffer the child to fall sometimes, and to be hurt in diverse manners for its own profit, but she may never suffer that any manner of peril come to the child for love.” (Hebrew Scriptures... YHWH’s loving – kindness = ‘hesed’ = maternal love for child).*

One of more startling ideas in Julian’s book is *Jesus as mother*, who gives “birth” by water and blood at the crucifixion (our redemption or rebirth) and feeds us in the Eucharist (feeding us with his body). These are compelling images in Julian’s writing.

*“So our life is grounded in our true mother Jesus, in his own foreseeing wisdom since before time began, with the great power of the father and the supreme goodness of the Holy Ghost. And in taking on our*



# by Julian of Norwich

human nature he gave us life, in his blessed death on the cross he gave us birth into life everlasting; and from that time, and now, and for ever until Judgment Day, he feeds and fosters us, just as the great supreme kind nature of motherhood and the natural needs of childhood demand.” (63 LT)

“And I understood that in this life no one grows beyond childhood, in febleness and inadequacy of body and mind, until the time when our gracious Mother has brought us into his Father’s bliss. And then we shall really understand what he means when he says, “All shall be well, and you shall see for yourself that all manner of things shall be well.” (63 LT)

Julian’s concept of God as “mother”... her view is also acknowledged in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood which emphasises God’s immanence; the intimacy of Creator and creature.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 239).

Julian’s concept of God as mother “challenges the whole juridical (relating



to the law) interpretation of salvation which has appeared in the West – looking upon the human relationship to God in impersonal, legalistic terms of justice, righteousness, repentance and so on, and points to an older tradition of the soft but personal relationship of a mother for her children, or a lover for his beloved.” Christopher Romans, University of Alabama

### On prayer and contemplation

Walter Hilton, a contemporary of Julian’s writing to an anchoress (like Julian) said ...

“Physical enclosure does not produce holiness all by itself. Singleness of heart, being completely attentive and available to God is the aim of all Christians.”

And is that not a principle of Christian meditation? Julian said...

“Pray wholeheartedly. Pray rejoicing. Pray rightfully and with confident trust. Pilgrims must seek and see and trust, and seeking is as good as seeing, and as we seek diligently, wait steadfastly we will grow in wholehearted confident trust.”

Again, this is the Christian mediation journey.

In clarifying how prayer emanated, Julian explained that God is the agent of prayer; so, accordingly, a person should be *passive* (peaceful) and *docile* (able to be taught) to the action of God. Julian goes onto say,

“...by many secret touchings measured out to us as we can bear it, God will not overwhelm us... but he expands our capacity to cope.”

This is what happens in our meditation.



The World Community  
for Christian Meditation  
Australia

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
MELBOURNE  
11 & 12 Oct 2019

## Laurence Freeman OSB

### “Being Unity in a Divided World”

As the world seems to fracture and resort to violence as a way to resolve problems, the contemplative dimension of the church – and all religions – has never been more urgently needed. Community and solitude both nurture this dimension that offers the best hope we have to survive and flourish. The mystical tradition illuminates the discoveries of science and gives depth to the idea of progress. How does the ‘ordinary meditator’ – as we all are – serve this saving and healing work?

More details to follow in 2019 at [www.wccmaustralia.org.au](http://www.wccmaustralia.org.au)  
Enquiries: Mirella Pace 0408 470 114, [mirellapace49@gmail.com](mailto:mirellapace49@gmail.com)



# How to Meditate

Open to all ways of wisdom but drawing directly from the early Christian teaching John Main summarised the practice in this simple way:



Sit down. Sit still with your back straight. Close your eyes lightly.

Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word – a prayer word or mantra. We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word *Maranatha*. Say it as four equal syllables. Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently, gently, faithfully and above all – simply. The essence of meditation is simplicity. Stay with the same word during the whole meditation and from day to day. Don't visualise but listen to the word as you say it. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images and other words. Don't fight your distractions but let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively and returning to it immediately that you realise you have stopped saying or it or when your attention is wandering.

Meditate each morning and evening for between 20 and 30 minutes.



## Meditation and Environment... Blog

**A recent WCCM Guiding Board Meeting discussed "the need to raise the consciousness of the environment and sustainability in all activities and events of WCCM."**

As a Christian ecumenical community, with interfaith outreach, we have an opportunity to offer a contemplative view to the conversation around environmental issues and approaches to contemplative action. Our resources from recent events, and other articles relating to meditation and environment, are available at:

<https://meditationenvironment.blogspot.com/>

We would welcome your contributions.  
Janet O'Sullivan ([janetos239@gmail.com](mailto:janetos239@gmail.com))



# Bonnevaux



## *The Vision*

***Meditation is a way of PEACE and a way to PEACE – John Main OSB***

***Bonnevaux will be a sanctuary of PEACE for PEACE – Laurence Freeman OSB***

To support this vision, the completion of the conference centre and the main house by Easter 2019 and the ongoing renovation and restoration of our International Home, I am asking you to consider giving a donation. There are two ways you can do this.

Tom Abraham, a community member from the USA, is suggesting a regular monthly payment to support the Bonnevaux vision saying some may find this way of giving easier. I have included a flyer in the newsletter with more details.

Or if you wish to give a one off donation please go to our national website [wccmaustralia.org.au](http://wccmaustralia.org.au) click on the Bonnevaux page and then go to donate. This money will be gathered here in Australia then sent on to the international office as your donations to Bonnevaux.

***My thanks to those who have already given so generously to support Bonnevaux.***

For more information and updates on Bonnevaux go to the Bonnevaux page on our website [wccmaustralia.org.au](http://wccmaustralia.org.au) or contact me at [janwylie@tpg.com.au](mailto:janwylie@tpg.com.au)

***Jan Wylie***  
*Bonnevaux National Ambassador*





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| NSW        | Lillian Leigh  |
| Queensland | Andrea Randall |
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## School of Meditation

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## Meditation with Children and Young People

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