

# Meditatio

Newsletter of The  
World Community  
for Christian Meditation



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

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## Resurrection beyond time

Laurence Freeman reflects how Resurrection send us into life in a new way



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## Dear Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

During our WCCM Pilgrimage to Israel last month we visited the city that the gospels call 'Jesus' own city', Capernaum. Born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, once he began his teaching and travelling mission, he moved his base of operation to Capernaum on the north-east shore of the Sea of Galilee. Now it is an archaeological site but then it was an international highway connecting with the wider world. Here, he spoke regularly on the sabbath, called his disciples and healed people. From the fifth century a church existed on the traditional site of Peter's house – perhaps the 1st century house whose foundations we visited and where Jesus came (Mt 8:14) to heal Peter's mother-in-law. Perhaps (many perhapses) it was where Jesus made his home whenever he came back to Capernaum.

Such ideas are probabilities at best. But it is moving as well as enlightening to stand there, realising that it was here (or somewhere very like it) that Jesus of Nazareth was also Jesus of Capernaum, a short distance from the Jordan where he was baptised and from the level field on the mountainside where he gave his great Sermon. It is moving because it brings home to us the historical, human reality of the Word made flesh. (I am writing this on the Feast of the Annunciation). The cosmic Christ was once a local Jesus. It is enlightening because it opens us – or, at least, it made me feel – how the dimensions of time and space we inhabit are only some of the many dimensions that constitute reality. General Relativity says we live in three dimensions of space and one of time. String Theory thinks there may be up to twenty-

six other dimensions. Space and time may be merely 'curled' up, they say, in other dimensions on a sub-atomic scale.

So, (I won't say 'perhaps' any more), once a local always a local. Jesus of Capernaum like each of us, is local and global, historical and timeless. In geography every location on the earth is unique and at the same time similar to all other locations. In physics a point does not

die but continues to grow?

Pilgrimage to our own religious sacred sites and to those of other faiths helps ground us in a spiritual mystery enfolded in time and space. Meditation is the interior aspect of this pilgrimage. It can be practiced within the house of our own faith, alone or with guests. The guests may then invite us to their homes to meditate with them there. By meditating together, we open to the all-



*Inscriptions on a wall at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem*

have dimensional attributes: it is a 'unique location'. I don't understand this, but it can help at least to begin to understand the mystery of Christ. This mystery is the experience of the Resurrection. We need examples, symbols, analogies, sacraments, to help us see that contradictions can co-exist, like the two sides of a coin. We cannot approach any mystery without being confused at first. Remember the first time you meditated and what you thought about it afterwards? If you have lost someone you loved, remember how you became aware that the love did not

inclusive spiritual dimension of reality. We recognise it because it heals divisions and engenders love.

When I was a boy studying history at school, we learned that a clever-sounding way to start an essay was 'XXX was a time of transition'. We were reminded by our teacher that every age is transitional. Nevertheless, today, we are all acutely conscious of being a transitional generation in almost every aspect of life. When we see how rapidly change is happening around us, we call it a 'time of crisis'. Then, interiorly, we can feel at a loss, caught up in its

rush and confusion. Language then falters and fails us. We use extreme terms – crisis, cliff-edge, danger, disaster – for almost everything. The media thrive on the ‘breaking news’ and ‘live feeds’ of extreme events. In such a world, it’s more than ever important to be aware of the multiple dimensions of reality and not identify only with what we can see and touch in our comfort zone. Regardless of religious belief, we need the spiritual dimension that enfolds all dimensions. And this is why a contemplative mind is necessary to survive and navigate modern life. And why, if we are truly concerned for the next generation, we need to make meditation integral to our children’s early formation and education.

Religiously, the crisis is as acute as in all the social and ecological aspects of our world. Religion has largely failed to connect with the spiritual needs of people. Christianity is widely dismissed as a retrosexual morality – attended by the hypocritical embarrassments that carries. A spiritual black hole has opened in our consumer culture and our institutions. Because of all this, the spiritual dimension, that enfolds and connects all dimensions of reality, is often hijacked by reductionistic techniques that soon become new forms of superstition and magic or just more packages in the commercial market-place. The old gods are dying. New gods are ascending and replacing them.

‘gods’ depend on the worship, enduring belief and sacrifices of their devotees. They (and their representatives) get their power from the people. Socrates saw this long ago, when he understood the

meaning of myth and the natural basis of the gods. He paid the price of rejection for telling what he saw. While the old gods are strong, they and their supporters can be brutal. But, when belief and devotion move away from them, the old gods – old religious systems and rituals – weaken. They struggle for numbers. Yet, it is hard to live without gods. There is a non-materialistic side of humanity that demands expression, symbolism and seeks meaning. ‘gods’ help us satisfy this, however superficially - the pantheon of media celebrities, frenetic shopping centres running their devotees into debt they cannot

*A cyclical pilgrimage into  
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opened for humanity...*

afford, the gods of war and misinformation and drugs. The old gods – religious devotion, consecrated life, the mystique of celibacy, the power of priesthood, Sunday worship – find it hard to compete.

Religion and culture are woven together. When one evolves so must the other. Otherwise they split and we feel increasingly disconnected. Of course, we are more than our cultural conditioning. So, the life of spirit still teaches and touches us: when we fall in love, when we fall out of love, when we fall sick, when we briefly enjoy physical perfection, when we give birth, when we sit by a death-bed. But increasingly, daily life, however affluent, looks like a wasteland even to the young who normally

see things with hope and optimism. The dimensions of time and space themselves are filled with stress, psychological suffering and the feeling of entrapment. We can try to escape because there is no lack of escape routes in fantasy, distraction, addiction and other ways of self-harm.

We need another kind of wasteland, a desert, to find our way back to the sense of wonder in the multidimensionality of reality. ‘Oh, what a beautiful world!’ We can then find our unique point of location, where we belong and where we know who we are because we are known. There are no ‘gods’ in the desert, just our own demons and the angels we need.. There is only the God who is and who has no name.

Jesus spent his Lent in the Judean wilderness. He practiced self-restraint and dealt with the demons we all know. He knew the seeds of pride, greed and self-fixation in the human psyche. We should never be complacent about having fully mastered them. It was after his time in the desert of self-preparation that he settled in Capernaum and his voice began to be widely heard. Our own forty days are similar - a time of self-restraint to repair some of our obscured spiritual vision – giving up something and doing something extra. Undertaken seriously, we soon feel how this purifies, focuses, our whole way of seeing and acting.

‘In Lent we are preparing to celebrate Easter.’ This sounds trite, unless we understand what celebration means. It is more than ringing bells, eating chocolate and smiling. It means that the dimension in which the Resurrection of Jesus is experienced is opened wide. We no longer

look at it from the outside. We see ourselves within it as a dimension of Jesus of Capernaum giving us direct access to the hidden dimensions of reality. In a strange way this is so for believers and non-believers. To believe is a wonderful asset. Those who have it like to share with others. But what matters even more than belief, is faith, which is our deepest capacity to relate to reality. We can share the benefits of what we believe with those who don't, provided we can meet in the experience of faith – the experience beyond words and thoughts that we find in meditation.

Lent prepares us to celebrate the Easter mysteries more deeply each year; it is more than a liturgical celebration. It is a cyclical pilgrimage, deeper into the dimension of reality that the Resurrection has opened for humanity across all dimensions, backwards and forwards in time; and in every unique location, the West Bank of the Palestinian territories, and Christchurch, New Zealand, Bonnevaux and your own home town. In the desert we tried to purify the doors of perception. We wanted to be more open to the dimension that enfolds every dimension. Our effort, like our daily meditation, is a sign of good faith relating to what we cannot see or prove or understand. But which we come to know. When we look back over Lent and evaluate what we did or didn't succeed in, we should not evaluate it falsely. It is not about how *perfectly* we kept it but how far we advanced in *self-knowledge*. Perfectionism is a false light manufactured by the ego. Self-knowledge is the light of our spirit illuminating all dimensions of reality.

'Dimensions of reality' sounds very abstract. But they refer to levels of experience. Meditation, as John Main often said, is about experience not theory. Anyone can enter

this experience, even though words fail us when we try to describe the meaning and nature of what we experience. It is the same for the ways we undergo the cycle of death and resurrection in our lives. It is not a dogma but an experience. We know we have experienced resurrection in our lives: when something seems to have died in us and yet, even after what might seem a long three days, life is wondrously renewed and expanded. St Augustine said the Resurrection of Christ is more than a belief. It is the essence of Christian faith. It is our faith. And faith – meditation teaches us each day – is pure experience.

So, how do we *feel* the Resurrection experience?

For sure, not as we feel most other kinds of experience. It is commonly

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dimensions of reality.*

said that millennials prefer experiences to possessions. They are less interested than their parents in buying material things or settling down in stable commitments. They like to go to many places, participate in different kinds of events, do new things and keep their options open. However generally true this is, it is a feature of modern culture. Products are not marketed on the basis of their content or usefulness as much as on the kind of 'experience' they are associated with. Serial experiences like this suit the new gods of our time better than the old gods who expected regularity, observance and fidelity.

The gospel tells us that the Resurrection of Jesus is encountered in the spiritual dimension. Experience in the spiritual dimension is

faith. It is not part of a series of ever new and exciting experiences – but about the deepening of relationship. This kind of experience cannot be bought or traded or even observed and evaluated from outside. It is as much within as without. Through self-knowledge – the kind in which we know ourselves known, – Christ is formed in us. It is not a one-off. It grows. And so, there are temporary and partial ways of experiencing the Risen Christ. If we try to pin him down, he slips away as he did at Emmaus and, definitively, at the Ascension. And yet, after these partial enlightenments, we do not doubt our experience. On the contrary, our faith deepens.

Why should it be like this? We could think that God is playing games with us or 'testing' us. That might be a childlike way of putting it but not so attractive to people today. To understand it, we need to relate to the dimensions of reality we cannot see as clearly as those of time and space. The physicist David Bohm tried to explain how these different dimensions relate by comparing the 'implicate order' and the 'explicate order'. The Implicate order is the deeper reality which *enfolds* all other dimensions. In this order, space and time no longer dominate relationships between things – or people. It is the ground from which reality emerges. The Explicate order is the *unfolding* of this, in the way a digital signal unfolds itself to produce images on a screen.

I once met Bohm while waiting for a yoga class, but I hadn't read him then and we didn't have time anyway and it wasn't the right space. Although he was very interested in meditation, he wasn't religious as far as I know. Maybe his ideas don't help everyone, but they suggest to me a mystical and scientific vision of reality that resonates with

the wisdom of the spiritual traditions. Concerning the Resurrection, it helps us see how the ordinary experience of daily life connects to the experience of that deeper, unfolded dimension in which the Resurrection is fully encountered. There were 'appearances', unfoldings, of the Risen Jesus. Ten are described in the New Testament in a way that is both ordinary and mysterious. These encounters transformed the lives of those touched by them. It seemed to them even more real than the physical kind of encounter bound in time and space. Ever since then, down the centuries, lives have been touched by the Resurrection and take a new direction. Without leaving the ground of daily life, they expand into new dimensions of reality. If this were not so, why would we be celebrating Easter this year?

The Resurrection doesn't make Jesus a god, new or old. His followers are members of a religion bearing his name, but only secondarily. *Primarily*, they are those whose faith in him and union with him is growing continuously. This unfolds – with ups and downs, as in all relationships – and leads us into dimensions of his reality that astonish the mind and break open the heart. As this is what the Resurrection means, the present time of transition is not the end of Christianity, as so often predicted, but another end in the many forms of the 'explicate' Christian order through which it has always evolved and will continue to, until the 'end of time'.

In the desert, at the foot of Mount Sinai, the chosen people panicked and rebelled and chose other gods. They made the golden calf from their trinkets and worshipped it. When Moses returned and saw the shenanigans going on, he smashed the tablets of the Law (it didn't seem the right time to deliver them). He

then smashed the god-statue, ground it into powder and made the people drink it. They re-owned their projections and tasted reality again.

'gods' are projections, splinters of ourselves. That is why they depend on us. We blame them when bad things happen but only dig a deeper hole of unreality and of alienation from our true selves. When we imagine God as a god we do the same. We blame 'Him' for 'allowing' bad things or for 'inflicting' them on us as punishment. The desert and the Resurrection expose the fatal self-

grace that transforms despair into hope, bitterness into love.

Resurrection doesn't make us immortal. We still die. But it changes the way we live and therefore how we approach death. This is faith. As faith deepens, meaning emerges. We recognise the pattern of the Resurrection experienced over and over from childhood to the end. As I finish this letter, I recognise this pattern once again.

Today in London, as the trees are washed in spring green, we are packing up Mediatio House and the community is moving to Bon-



*Meditatio House Community in London packing to move to Bonnevaux*

deception in this kind of religious mentality. Meditation, in Christian faith unites the experience of both the desert and the Resurrection, of Lent and Easter. It opens a new kind of religious consciousness for a humanity come of age.

In silence and stillness, we experience that God is present in our suffering, whatever causes it – whether genes or a deranged gunman. Our compassion for those suffering – as we saw globally after the Christchurch tragedy – is itself a manifestation of the spirit of God. If we are the victim, we are empowered to endure in faith what cannot be changed. And we experience the

nevaux. A leaving and an arriving, a death and resurrection. There is still much to do to complete Bonnevaux; but it's ready enough for us to start to live there and to celebrate the beautiful mystery of our faith. Please keep all that Bonnevaux can be for the world and for our community in your heart this Easter, as we will keep you in ours.

With much love

*Laurence*

Laurence Freeman OSB

## News

### Meditatio Seminar

# Contemplative Care: Healthcare and Meditation

WCCM New Zealand hosted a two-day seminar at Auckland City Hospital



Contemplative Care: Healthcare and meditation was the theme of the first Meditatio Seminar organised by NZCCM. Held at Auckland City Hospital on 17 and 18 January, 2019, the event was led by Fr Laurence, and included speakers from the fields of mental health, hospice care and general practice. As well as plenary talks there were workshops and panel discussions, interspersed with several short periods of meditation each day.

While the majority of speakers were from the Roman Catholic and Anglican Christian traditions there were also speakers from other spiritual traditions, including Buddhists and people from an indigenous Maori spiritual background. The variety of perspectives from a range of excellent presenters greatly enhanced the seminar. Participants at the seminar included healthcare professionals, clergy and religious,

as well as interested meditators, not only from New Zealand but a number from the meditation communities in Australia and Fiji.

The sessions did not address the complex ethical issues involved in contemporary healthcare services, but rather focused on providing holistic care for the sick or dying person that responded to their needs as a human being with a spiritual nature. In busy healthcare institutions focused on technological therapies, finding silence and time for such a caring approach is challenging. Various speakers talked about how their own spiritual orientation and meditation practice enabled them to be responsive to the individual whom they were caring for in their professional practice.

The seminar was chaired by Dr. John Collins, a nephrologist and Associate Professor at the University of Auckland. "We had 140 people at-

tend the seminar, which is remarkable given mid-January is peak holiday time. Our speakers did justice to the topic of contemplative care and we have received great feedback from the people who attended the event. It exceeded our expectations in many ways," he says. Given the success of this initial seminar, it may be followed in due course by another focussing on a different topic such as the environment. ONLINE: Watch the videos at <http://tiny.cc/CHSemNZ>

### Malaysia: videos of a Seminar on Palliative Care now online



The WCCM Malaysia Community last year held a Meditatio Seminar entitled Compassionate Presence: Interfaith Approaches to Palliative Care, in Petaling Jaya, with 140 participants, many from healthcare professions from across the country. The videos of this seminar are now available.

ONLINE: Watch the videos at [http://tiny.cc/CP\\_Mal18](http://tiny.cc/CP_Mal18)

## News

# Pilgrims' voices from the Holy Land

Laurence Freeman led a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in February (16-23). The theme was "A Contemplative Journey to the Holy Land", with participation by a very international group. Some participants share their experience:

### JM Rebueno, Philippines:

February 20, 2019, I made my declaration of love with the WCCM Oblate Community as an adult who have had a full life running the gamut from innocence to willful disobedience to God's will beyond biting into Eve's apple. I have made a similar declaration half a century ago as a silly adolescent facing possible death under the crushing torrents of an angry waterfall. Then, in the loudest silent cry I ever made, I surrendered the last seconds of my life to Him "Thy will be done!" On hindsight, it was a cry for God's mercy – to forgive me out of His Love for all my silliness. It certainly gave me strength to accept the inevitable. As an adult choosing to love God requires steel courage: to refuse giving in to my needy self yet at the same time to have compassion for the Eve's that muddle my choices and action to love God. This is the constant challenge I am happy to take. I pray that being true to my oblation will give me the inner strength to respond accordingly.

In the subterranean Chapel of the Apostles beneath the Garden of Gethsemane before my abbot Fr. Laurence and the community of oblates and pilgrims participating in the pilgrimage, I made my final oblation. I had twice the blessing to repeat privately my fi-



*JM Rebueno's Final Oblation at the Chapel of the Apostles, Jerusalem*

nal oblation on the rock that received Jesus' sweat of blood as He declared His ultimate expression of Love for the Father with "Thy will be done!"

### Paul Dunn, USA:

It's hard for me to summarize how meaningful this pilgrimage was for me because it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I am an Oblate and couldn't imagine visiting the Holy Land without a Contemplative community to journey with. Fr Laurence far exceeded my hopes for a deeply prayerful and fully alive spiritual experience. We visited practically every holy site mentioned in the four mysteries of the rosary. I will forevermore experience greater meaning while meditating on each decade of the rosary because of this trip. Because I was there. I touched, heard, and saw each holy site and have real personal memories of these sites. Every day we took turns praying morning and evening prayer.

A few peak experiences for me were sailing on the Sea of Galilee, renewing my baptismal vows on the Jordan River, walking the Via Dolorosa,

sa, kissing the spots where Jesus was born and where he died, and praying at the Wailing Wall.

### Lina Lee, Hong Kong

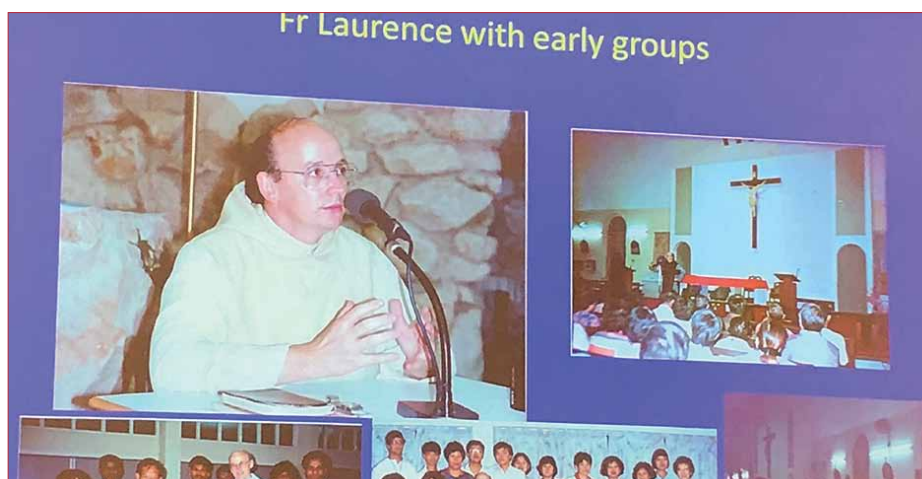
My heart is still overflowing with joy and gratitude. I not only reconnected with Christ at all the biblical holy sites, but we pilgrims from diverse backgrounds and different countries were also united in one heart and one mind walking with Christ and His apostles, experiencing His presence all the more. I came to convey my deep gratitude to the gracious Lord for rescuing my life physically, not knowing that there is so much in store - never had I such contentment from union and solidarity from our pilgrims as one group, one family with every one's faces becoming radiant like angels. Assuredly this will be preciousy cherished and remain a source of enlightenment and strength in the days to come.

**Fr Laurence will lead another pilgrimage to the Holy Land, including other sites not visited this year: 13-20 February 2020**

## News

### WCCM Singapore celebrates its 30th Anniversary

By James Loh



*Presentation remembering the early steps of WCCM Singapore*

On Sunday 20 Jan 2019 WCCM Singapore celebrated its 30th Anniversary. About 100 of our community leaders and friends gathered for lunch at a local swimming club. We invited Fr Laurence and our spiritual director, Fr Eugene Vaz to grace the

happy occasion.

The atmosphere was edifying. We could all feel the positive energy and vibes of a community that has come this far. The journey came its many ups and downs and challenges like every growing community. Through

the support of the global community led by Fr Laurence, Peter's leadership and guidance and the many contributions from all our dedicated members, we have indeed crafted a contemplative identity for ourselves.

At the gathering we reminisce the past 30 years with a power point presentation of the activities of the 30 over groups that we have in Singapore. Fr Laurence also gave each attendee a copy of his book "Good Work" to commemorate all the good works done by the community.

The gathering ended with a presentation of Bonnevaux, our global community future home.

WCCM Singapore has plenty to be grateful for and we look forward to the many opportunities available for us to be of service to the church and the larger human society we are part of.

### Wisdom Workshop in Scotland



Laurence Freeman spoke on the theme "Sources of Wisdom" in a day workshop in Edinburgh. The event organized by the Edinburgh International Centre for Spirituality and Peace took place at the George Young Hall, LifeCare Edinburgh on 9th February.

### Group leaders' meeting in Germany

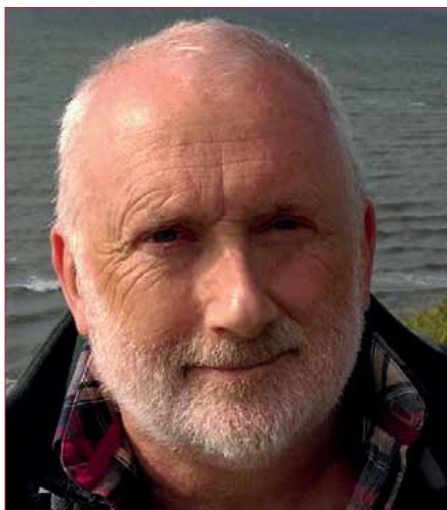


In Germany, the first group leader's meeting took place in Paderborn, at 'Haus Maria Immaculata' on the first weekend of February. Some of us met for the first time and we shared meditations, reflections, discussions, walks and a beautiful mass at the Michaelskloster (St. Michael's Monastery), home to our Sr. Theresia and Sr. Gabriele. To get to know each other was the primary cause for this weekend, as well as discerning the future shape of the German, Austrian and Swiss collaboration. **(Susanna Melzer, German National Coordinator)**



## Interview

### Jim Green: "There is a hidden invitation within the incapacitating experience of depression and anxiety"



**Why did you decide to write a book on meditation and depression? What was the intention? Why this title?**

**Jim:** The idea for the book had been around for some time. A few years ago I wrote a small booklet, *Meditation & Mental Health*, which proved very popular. Laurence Freeman also mentioned to me just how many people he was meeting who wanted to talk to him about meditation and depression. It seemed clear that something more detailed was needed to support people dealing with these dif-

ficult issues. Hence the current book. Its title – *Giving Up Without Giving Up* – reflects something central to the way in which we might respond to frightening (sometimes seemingly unbearable) times in our lives. There is a hidden invitation within the incapacitating experience of depression or anxiety. We are invited to find a way of letting go of old, unhelpful strategies and ways of thinking about ourselves; but without giving up completely on the possibility of new growth and a deeper understanding of who we really are.

It seems to me that meditation is a very helpful vehicle for doing just that. In the practice, we explicitly set out to disengage from the exhausting and punishing agenda of the ego, while remaining open to – what? There are many ways to describe it: presence, grace, healing, love. Beyond description, the best way is to sit and be open to the experience, without capturing and labelling it.

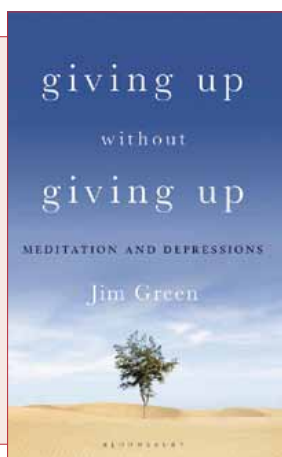
The sub-title, *Meditation and Depressions* is in the plural (*depressions*, not *depression*) because I wanted to gently challenge the readiness with which we use that word. Depression

has become almost a cultural and di-agnostic cliché. Every experience of anguish, terror, grief, loss of vitality and purpose is unique and needs to be attended to as such. Every era and every culture has its different ways of describing and responding to these experiences. I wanted to honour the richness and the healing potential within that insight.

**What did the process of writing this book teach you, or change in you?**

**Jim:** It reminded me that there are no easy solutions; that meditation is not a 'cure' for what we call depression; that there is much unavoidable pain that we must face and go through in this life. But I also had my faith strengthened that the practice of meditation (and the friendship of meditators) can sustain us as we patiently learn to heal. It can help us to respond with our whole being to Goethe's wonderfully challenging words:

*And so long as you haven't experienced  
This: to die and so to grow,  
You are only a troubled guest  
on the dark earth.*



## Giving Up Without Giving Up

Meditation and Depressions

By Jim Green

More information and order online: <http://tiny.cc/GvUpJG>

"If it is true that all human griefs have their roots in our inability to sit quietly in our own company for five minutes, this spare, candid and calm introduction to meditative practice will be a life-saving gift for many living in or on the edge of the darkness that regularly overtakes us in this uncontrollable world." – Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury.

## News

# Seven new things to know about Bonnevaux as the residential community begins

## 1 - Renovation still in progress



Thanks to the generosity of our global community, Bonnevaux is already a reality, with the opening of the Abbaye at Easter and of the Conference Centre in July. Our main emphasis now is the Guesthouse due for completion at the end of the year. Please visit the Bonnevaux website to see how you can contribute.

## 4 - Young Adults Retreat



This retreat will combine meditation, bodywork, work on the land, scripture and sharing. It will focus on the theme of *Living Different* (July 24-31). The retreat has two parts: days at Bonnevaux sharing in the life of the community and some days walking the Camino to Santiago de Compostela, (July 31 - August 4). For more information and registration visit <http://tiny.cc/BnvxYAR>

## 2 - Blessing and other events in 2019



The Blessing of Phase One of the Bonnevaux renovation (The Abbaye and the Conference Centre) by Monsignor Pascal Wintzer (photo), Archbishop of Poitiers, on June 15th 2019. You can check all other important events here:

<http://tiny.cc/savdtBnvx>

## 5 - A Tree for your Trip

A new initiative was launched to fund the plantation of an orchard at Bonnevaux, and to offset the carbon emissions of visitors trips. They will use old varieties and permaculture principles for the orchard. More info: <http://tiny.cc/treetrip>

## 6 - Visitors and Volunteers

If you have interest in visiting Bonnevaux or want to spend some time as a volunteer contact Andrew Cresswell via email: [contact@bonnevauxwccm.org](mailto:contact@bonnevauxwccm.org)

## 3 - Meditatio House Community moves to Bonnevaux



The small oblate Community that was living at the Meditatio House in London moved to Bonnevaux. This included Fr Laurence - our director is now officially a Bonnevaux resident!

## 7 - New website & other ways to stay informed

The Bonnevaux website will be re-launched soon. We will keep the same address:

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

To follow the latest on Bonnevaux you can also check our social networks:

[facebook.com/bonnevauxwccm](https://facebook.com/bonnevauxwccm)

[instagram.com/bonnevauxwccm](https://instagram.com/bonnevauxwccm)

You can also subscribe to The World Community Monthly news here: <http://tiny.cc/WCNews>

## In Focus

# Taynã Malaspina, Brazil



I was born into a Catholic family and studied part of my childhood in a Catholic college. Around the age of 23, I had a crisis with the Catholic Church. I found some people in the community incoherent and I felt distant from God. There was a relationship, but not an authentic communion. Besides, I missed a more contemplative dimension in my spiritual life. It was during this period that I began the search for meditation and found it in Buddhism. I practiced Buddhism for two years and in that period I was delighted with meditative practice. I thought the concept of Bodhisattva wonderful, attaining enlightenment to help others and free beings

from suffering. But something was still missing. Buddhist philosophy was very rich, but there was no such thing as Christ, and the spiritual vision was a little far from what I believed. Then I found Christian Meditation and from that began one of the richest periods of my spiritual journey.

I can say that until then I had a conceptual vision of God, through what I had learned from books, catechesis and other forms of knowledge. As I learned from Fr Laurence, I was prepared to answer the first question Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" But I was not prepared to answer the second question: "And who do you say that I am?" However, through Christian meditation, I have approached the experience of God, and it is only through experience that we can at least try to answer that second question. The conceptual sense of God has been replaced by communion with God. Communion and unity with God lead us to see life differently and to live out of our essence. The present moment is flooded with meaning and we transcend our ego to move toward the other.

Thus, I came to live the original meaning of the word religion (Religare) linked to our reconnection with God and our essence. I was able to transcend a dogmatic view of an ingrained system of beliefs. Once, they asked Carl Jung if he believed in God and he replied, "No, I know God." Believing depends on belief, knowing depends on experience.

On the one hand, we have Karl Marx saying that religion is the opium of the people and Freud classifying it as a neurosis. On the other hand, we have John Main and Laurence Freeman, saying that religion leads us to a new unity and to what we are called to be. We have the Dalai Lama saying that the true religion is one that makes us a better person. And Rumi, an Islamic mystic who says: My religion is to be alive in love. Everyone may be correct, depending on how we relate to religion. Only experience can help us understand these interpretations.

Christian meditation brought a huge gift to me: the experience of God. And when we are touched by this experience, the feeling of being at home comes along and all other searches become secondary.



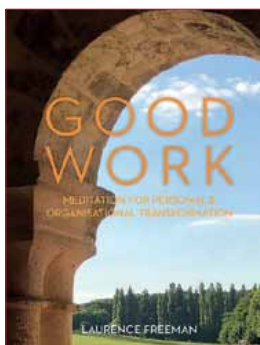
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Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano  
**Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 June.**

## Resources & Events

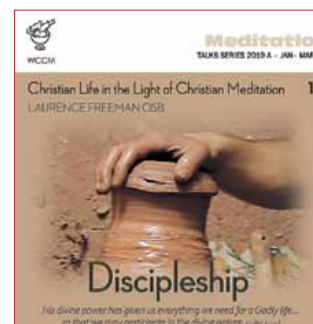
### Books



Laurence Freeman defines good work as 'work that brings out the best in the people who do it, and brings enduring benefit to those who are influenced by it'. This book is

about how meditation helps to make work good work, while transforming the workplace environment through more humanly rich and enjoyable encounters. The emphasis throughout is on practice rather than theory. The language is inclusively secular. The approach is wisdom-based rather than a merely physical or psychological one. The spark for this book came from a series of talks Laurence Freeman gave to the staff at DP Architects, Singapore in 2017, where they now continue to meditate every morning before work begins. You can order the book online here: <http://tiny.cc/GWwK>

### Audio & CDs



The latest Meditatio CD Series. Listen to or download the tracks: <http://tiny.cc/Med2019A>  
Order a copy of the CD: <http://tiny.cc/Discipleship1>

## John Main Seminar 2019: Exploring the meaning of a Contemplative Christianity today

**The churches are almost empty or sold, as if they've reached their tipping point, and from the pulpits, god slid out.**

Lisa Jacobson,  
*'There Are Stones That Sing'*

*And it's not only the pervasive secularism of Western culture that's at issue here. Many of us who meditate also find our old ways of participating in the Christian tradition coming under strain. As we grow in contemplative consciousness and leave behind tribal and dualistic forms of religion, we can struggle with how*

*to believe and belong. In this Seminar, I hope we might begin to explore the meaning and embodiment of a contemplative Christianity for our time. What is it in the Christian tradition, the practise of Christian faith, that remains a necessary gift for a world in crisis? How do we articulate, share and embody this gift? As we move to Bonnevaux and as our outreach to the secular world continues to grow, it seems an important moment to reflect on the significance of being a World Community for Christian Meditation. I hope many can join us. (Sarah Bachelard)*



**John Main Seminar 2019: A Contemplative Christianity for our Time (August 5-11)**  
led by Rev. Dr. Sarah Bachelard  
Pre-Seminar Silent Retreat - **Sources of Wisdom** led by Laurence Freeman  
Vancouver, Canada.  
Visit: <http://jms2019.org/>

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## Meditation at *Joseph's Corner*



by **Clara Rizzi**

Coordinator WCCM Australia (Vic)

**Joseph's Corner was established as a not-for-profit charitable organisation in response to the community's need for free counselling and support for families and friends of those living with alcohol or drug addiction.**

Sr Jeanne Dwyer RSJ, oversees the daily running of all operations and services of the organisation, including the volunteers, counsellors and administration staff.

The head office is located in Yarraville. Two other centres have

opened one at Hoppers Crossing and another at Laverton.<sup>1</sup>

In October 2016, I offered five sessions of Meditation to clients and friends of *Joseph's Corner* at the Williamstown Community Centre. The introduction for each session included some of the following: creating mandalas, tracing a finger labyrinth, gentle exercise, music, mindful breathing and walking all leading into silent meditation.

The discussions were centred on the universal practice of meditation, benefits and fruits, choosing a mantra, dealing with distractions and integrating meditation into daily life. Participants worked in pairs and as a whole group.

Readings were taken from John Main OSB, Lawrence Freeman OSB, Dalai Lama and other spiritual writings suggested by the participants who were from various religious affiliations or none and from diverse cultural backgrounds. Brief

summary notes were provided after each sessions as well as a cuppa. Upon the conclusion of the sessions two of the participants joined the WCCM Australia (Vic) group in Yarraville and are still committed meditators of that group.

During 2017 and 2018 Introductory Sessions were offered at the Laverton centre and will be offered again in May 2019.

In these sessions participants were invited to discuss in pairs, and share with the group. There emerged a deep realisation that we were all joined in the circle of life, with our own layers of joy and pain in our shared humanity. The participants engaged in all the activities with enthusiasm and were surprised at their own stillness during the periods of meditation despite distractions. We commenced with ten minute meditations and extended the time to twenty minutes during the final session.

### The following is a summary of comments by the participants over the past three years.

#### What do you hope for?

*A recharge.  
To try meditation.  
Peace.  
A good night's sleep.  
Learn more about meditation.  
Be silent, centered.  
Learn to pay attention, focus.  
Confirm what I'm doing.  
Relaxation.  
Not be so anxious, stop worrying.  
Experience some tranquillity.  
Listen to others.  
Practice meditation.  
Be clearer in my life.*

#### Did you find the sessions helpful?

*I was inspired to try.  
Loved tracing the labyrinth  
as a preparation for meditation.  
Great to be presented with diverse  
methods of meditation  
e.g. walking, sitting, labyrinth.  
The material, notes and quotes  
were interesting and inspiring.  
The music helped me to relax.  
It made me think and rest.  
The discussions in pairs were good.  
The group discussions were  
interesting.  
Great group dynamics.  
At times I felt serene, peaceful and  
with God.*

*It was a reminder, a new look at  
my own practice.  
It was a peaceful time. I felt in  
harmony at times.  
Helped me to stop being always  
busy and became aware of the  
chatter in my mind.  
It was easier to meditate in a group.  
It was a time for me.  
The commitment of coming to the  
sessions flowed onto the  
commitment to meditation.  
Appreciated exploring what  
meditation might offer and if  
offers plenty.*

*continued page 16*

# The Meditation Community

## Christ's freedom through truth and love

by Eileen Dunicliff

**I understood from an early age that God was something 'other,' much greater than any human and I really wanted to know him. It just seemed that if He was real it should be possible to know Him.**

Things I learned at school gave hints but it was mixed in with stuff that seemed irrelevant. Our beautiful neo-gothic church with its glorious stained glass and altar full of marble angels presented a view of heaven like fairyland. I loved it as I loved fairy tales and legends but I was growing up in wartime Britain and it was a bit unreal.

At high school religion consisted of a lot of rote learning mixed with devotional piety which embarrassed me. I joined Young Christian Students and was attracted to its outlook based on everyday life; the gospels became truly meaningful. I had often wondered what contemplative orders actually did. My first glimpse came when we had a retreat at school. The leader was a priest who I think had only recently taken up meditation as an experiment. He had us all lying on the floor in the gym to meditate. However at the same time I was reading Thomas Merton amongst other books and I kept coming across footnotes referring to '*The Cloud of Unknowing* – out of print'. It was a long time before I found that wonderful book and knew at once that it was written for me. I tried to keep on meditating but I was young and life got in the way.

I came to Australia shortly after David and I were married. We spent a few very happy years in Sydney but David changed his job and we were on our way to Melbourne. Eventually we attended a church in Montmorency. Here we made friends easily and quickly became involved in church life. A friend crashed her car



Eileen Dunicliff.

and I offered to take her shopping. To my surprise she refused but said that she needed someone to take her to her meditation group. Of course I took her and joining in I found it wonderful. Listening to John Main's gentle voice I knew that I really had come home. I'm particularly grateful to John Main because he saw that

***"Meditation is about a relationship with God, isn't it?"***

meditation was an experiential practice for ordinary lay Christians. I continued with the practice because God is, and my relationship with God is paramount in my life. Meditation is about a relationship with God, isn't it?

In 1994 I attended the John Main seminar in London with Fr Laurence and the Dalai Lama. It really opened my mind to Buddhist thought and I enjoyed talking with the Buddhists

I met there, finding them sincere, open, generous and caring. Upon returning to Melbourne I was invited to talk to some meditators about the seminar.

1995 after 10 years in Australia the Christian Meditation Network became the Australian Christian Meditation Community and a Committee was formed in each state. To my amazement I was asked to be the Victorian co-ordinator. Now I am the most disorganised person I know. I am not proud of the fact and I felt bad as it was something I really wanted to do. However Mary Broderick offered to be secretary and I was encouraged to take on the role. The next few years proved to be the richest ones of my life, though not always easy. We tried to encourage a true community life moving our meetings into new areas to spread the word and encourage new people to join. When Fr Laurence came we advertised widely.

Once when Fr Laurence was coming I picked up some posters from the printer only to find my notes had been misread. Under Fr Laurence's photograph were the words Fr Laurence *Freedom*. I thought it appropriate, for Christ promises freedom through truth and love and the meditation community is our support on the way.

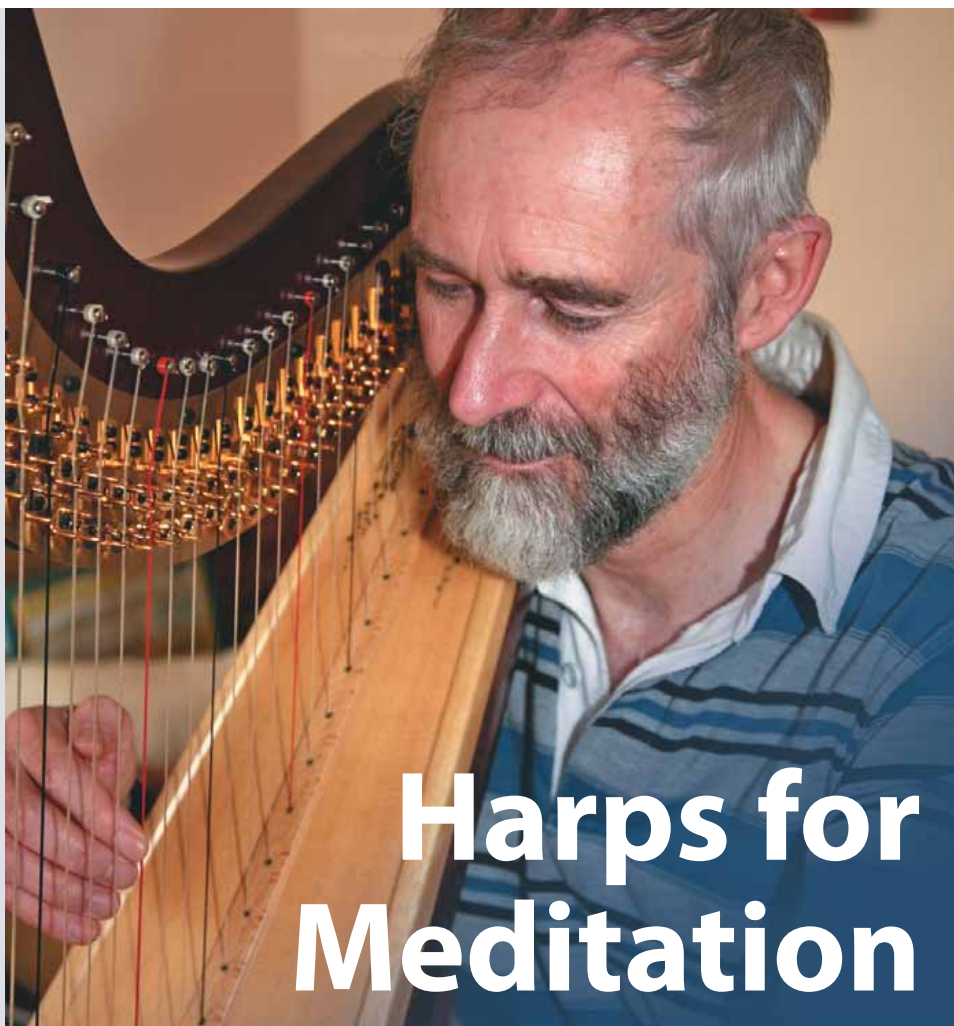
So, years later, I carry on meditating. We have a little group at my church in Bendigo and we have a small regional group which is a lovely support. I have lived long enough to see a great decline in churches and I am sad about that, but in the meditation community I see the leading edge of the wing of the Holy Spirit bringing about a new purer Christianity based on truth which can be painful and love which is healing.

My advice to meditators is hang in there, God is always with us. If we give Him attention He guides our lives.

## MEDITATING OUTDOORS

*I find shade  
In the green  
And the air  
Of the garden,  
Where a statue  
Half-hidden  
Serene and still  
Meditates too,  
Then eyes closed  
The birdsong  
Does not distract  
But comments on  
The gift of life,  
Repeating calls  
Like a mantra.*

**Christopher Clarke**  
January 2019



# Harps for Meditation

**by Christopher Clarke**

**What to play on a harp, for people seeking silence, is the kind of paradox I delight in.**

I have on invitation played before and after meditation sessions, while people are arriving and settling, and then leaving. I have done so over the last year at two silent retreats, and sometimes for weekly meditation groups. I have used a small Celtic harp, and a larger concert harp. The harp has a pure, original sound, to which people seem to relate.

Before I started myself to meditate, playing harp had been my equivalent practice, in which the music becomes the mantra. For me, it remains effective in stilling the mind and body.

As with meditation, the body is seated, upright, and comfortable. The harp is then tilted back to rest lightly against the right shoulder.

For mental preparation, I absorb the present circumstances of

people, setting and purpose, and then music reflecting that emerges through improvisation. It is not active composition, but rather letting go and allowing the music to emerge.

It seems to come from the same still centre we approach in meditation. I feel like the imperfect instrument for its passage to the light.

The music unfolds easily, following familiar pathways. It has a shape, finding a theme and then returning to it in different ways. This cyclical nature also suggests meditation.

It comes out slowish, often minor or in a mode (scales evoking mood). It is to provide background, to enable listeners to prepare for meditation, so it should lead them there, not distract them from it. If the music is meditative, and from that source, it will do this.

We often play recorded music before or after meditation, usually slowish, repetitive, often choral.

It is pleasant and comfortable to emerge to after meditation, though not usually individually expressive.

In my early teens I sang Gregorian chant, in its solemnity, scales and motifs. In my later teens I absorbed Indian classical music on the sitar, that also has a meditative purpose, and is initially slow and explorative, and cyclical, but also individually expressive of mood. Elements of both are in what comes through me as music for this purpose.

So what connection does music have with the pursuit of silence? In an Irish pub, if someone starts singing, all conversation stops.

And our brother the Sufi mystic and poet Rumi wrote:

*Today, amazed and bewildered  
I have shut the door on thought  
and turned to music.  
There are a hundred ways  
to kneel and pray  
At the altar of the Beloved.*

## Going Within to Be Still Silent Retreat – Douglas Park (NSW)

by Anne-Marie Bell

**St Mary's Towers, situated in rural Douglas Park NSW, was the venue for the recent Silent Retreat of the WCCM Australia (ACT).**

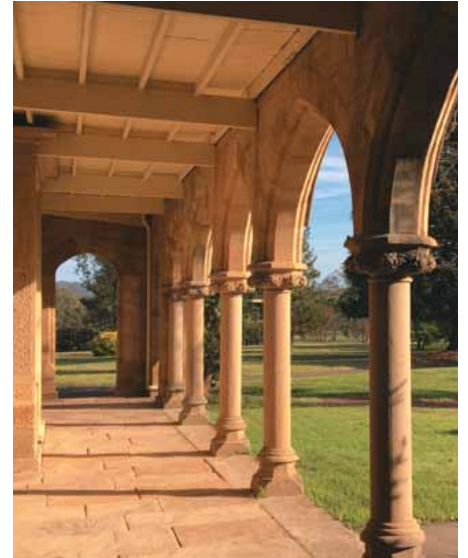
Twenty-five of us met there on a sunny Friday afternoon and after our intro we settled into our comfortable accommodation and then morphed into a small temporary community, intent on experiencing the Silence, from Friday evening after sharing and discussion, to Sunday after lunch.

Meditations, DVDs, a presentation by Fr Michael Fallon and many readings were alternated with quiet

times to reflect and explore our surroundings. The centrally located "Heart Room", adorned with candles and flowers, was supplemented by several other quiet spaces. And little

***"A small temporary community, intent on experiencing the Silence..."***

gems like the sandstone Jenkins chapel and the garden labyrinth were waiting to be discovered. Even though we did observe the silence, we still managed to have



*The Silent Retreat participants: all like-minded souls.*

some connection with our fellow meditators, sensing on some level that we were all like-minded souls. The harpist among us kindly treated us to soothing sounds to illicit the right mood. We walked mindfully, we ate mindfully in the refectory and shared many a quiet mindful cuppa in the busy drinks-kitchen in the foyer. Saturday evening's night prayer was candle-lit and dedicated to all our individual intentions. We revisited essential teachings on meditation from John Main, Laurence Freeman and many others.

By Sunday afternoon we all returned to our normal lives, calmer and more centred than before. It was good to go within and Be Still. Many thanks Rod & Susan!

### Meditation at Joseph's Corner – continued from page 13

**What would you now say about meditation?**

*It is peaceful, it's drawing me in.  
Helps me to be focused.  
When there is something stressful in my life I say the mantra and the situation is not as stressful as I had imagined.  
I sleep better.*

*It's time out and allows for a calmer perspective.  
I'm less frantic.  
Meditation is teaching me to let go of wanting to control everything.  
Harmony within comes through.  
Helps me to be patient with myself and others.*

*Makes me rest. Allows for a calmer perspective. and... Something I have been looking for is a connection with my Creator, perhaps I need to stop grasping for it, stop putting in so much effort, on the train I felt a sense of peace as a gift.*

Footnote: 1. Accessed 12/03/2019 <http://www.josephscorner.org.au/>



## A Time to Recalibrate Silent Retreat – Douglas Park (NSW)

### Anonymous

**Making an annual retreat, especially towards year's end, recalibrates me and enables me to move less hurriedly through life as a mother of three school-aged children.**

Some of the treasures the 2018 Douglas Park retreat held for me include the following.

- On the second day of the retreat I walked silently and mindfully the 40 minutes or so to the Nepean River on this 500 hectare property. I thought I took in so much of the surrounding beauty as I walked, yet only on the way back did I notice any of the six different varieties of wildflowers, tiny but abundant, along the path. There is perhaps no limit to the depths of openness to God that we can go.
- After more than twenty years of meditation talks and readings, Fr Michael Fallon's talk on the spirituality of St Theresa of Avila still gave me new perspectives to



***"There is perhaps no limit to the depths of openness to God that we can go."***

ponder. He talked of emptying a space within to enable Christ to love from that space. This insight helps when struggling to love those in our life whom we find more challenging to love.

- Though not overweight, the provision of only modest amounts of (simple, delicious) food enabled me to see that I can be more mindful of the quantities of food I eat. Sarah Bachelard speaks of "enoughness". I want to apply some discipline to the consumption of the abundant food I have available to me in everyday life.
- An increased resolve to confine smart phone use to limited pockets of times each day. Less phone means more soul and more relationship, it seems to me.
- Gratitude to the current and past custodians of the Douglas Park estate who have probably resisted financial temptation to sell this land so close to the property development hunger of Sydney, and who have chosen instead to keep this land for agricultural and sacred purposes.

I am grateful that as a result of the retreat, I start the Christmas season feeling more recalibrated towards the sacred.



The World Community  
for Christian Meditation  
Australia

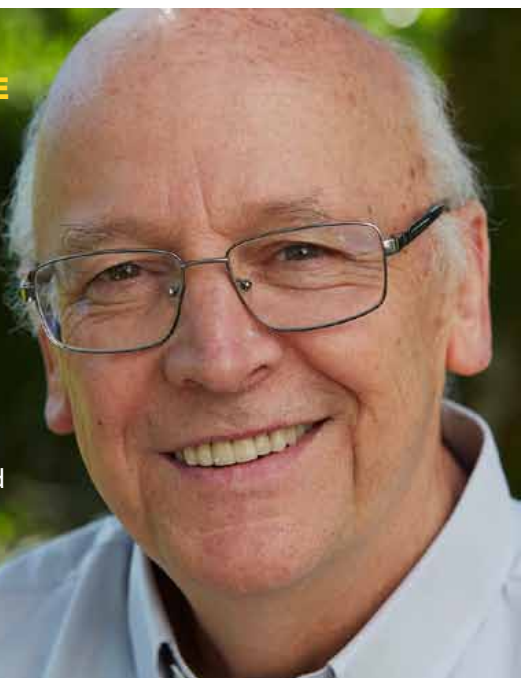
**NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
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### Laurence Freeman OSB

***"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)



## Turned Around By Silence

by Kevin Walsh

**A few wonderful books introduce us to the late Fr John Main's thinking on contemplative prayer. They result from talks he gave to meditation groups, first in London and other places in the British Isles, then later in Montreal. Many of us will know him from those. But I was also lucky enough to have crossed his very path – in Ireland in the 1950s before he became a Benedictine priest, and at a time which, I know now, happened to be a crucial moment for him.**

I myself then was barely thirty: a young and inexperienced priest, destined to work in Sydney. At that point I was still learning how to do it. I'd been sent to St Patrick's College, Maynooth, to get a degree in theology. Then I went to Rome

for a year, and when I met John Main I was back at Maynooth teaching. He came out there, if I remember rightly, to the professors' rather posh dining-room and had a meal with us.

One of the teachers at St Patrick's was a close friend of Frank Duff, the saintly layman who had started the Legion of Mary. It was through him that I had become chaplain to a Legion of Mary group in Dublin that must then have been attracting a little bit of attention. Its male members were from Trinity, and the women were from the College of Art.

***“Our part is simply to be ‘sufficiently still, sufficiently silent to allow the consciousness of Jesus, His Spirit within us, to expand and push back the frontiers of our limitations, to reveal to us that we are in God!’”***

But at that time, the Archbishop of Dublin, a conservative man, was very strongly of the opinion that there should be no Catholics in Trinity at all. Which is probably why the president of the group was a Rhodesian and I, as an Australian, had got the job of looking after it. The president was a wonderful Catholic. He had been to a Benedictine school in England and, precisely at this moment, happened to be learning International Law from John Main. Which is how I came to meet the man who wrote the books. He at that time, I've learnt from his biographies, was then living with family and, either before I met him or very soon afterwards, had been affected deeply by a death that occurred and caused him to reassess his priorities in a drastic way.

After I had come home, John Main joined the Benedictines himself in London, at Ealing Abbey. And the rest, as they say, “is history”!

In *Letters from the Heart*, he writes about our needing to wait on God, and how we do it. This has to be a moment of “simple openness” and “pure patience”, he says. What happens is that the “little ego that keeps us self-centred fades away in the nothing it came from and our spirit, centred in Christ, flows into the plenitude of God as its beginning and its end, its alpha and omega.” So, this is not exactly a turning on our part at all: it's more an “opening-up to what already is”. We realise that God himself is already there. He is with us in Christ. He is truly Emmanuel, “God with us”. Our part is simply to be “sufficiently still, sufficiently silent to allow the consciousness of Jesus, His Spirit within us, to expand and push back the frontiers of our limitations, to reveal to us that we are in God”. In this sense, one could say it is the silence itself that turns us, and puts us where we want to be.

See John Main, ed. Paul T Harris, *Silence and Stillness in Every Season*, p. 27.

Kevin Walsh

# 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.

## National Appeal

**I highly commend the National Appeal to you.**

The gift of meditation that we receive is a precious gift to share with others. The National Appeal assists in a practical way to live out our commitment to the community and ensure the growth of Christian Meditation in Australia from the weekly meditation group and into the wider community.

Fr John Main would often say that Meditation builds community and that *"the Monastic tradition does not come alive until it is regenerated in the communication of a personal encounter. This encounter must be fully personal, fully conscious."*

May your personal support of this National Appeal be a way of sharing the gift.

With deep gratitude and appreciation,

**Mirella Pace**

National Coordinator

The World Community for Christian Meditation Australia





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## Meditation with Children and Young People

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Ivan Smith



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