

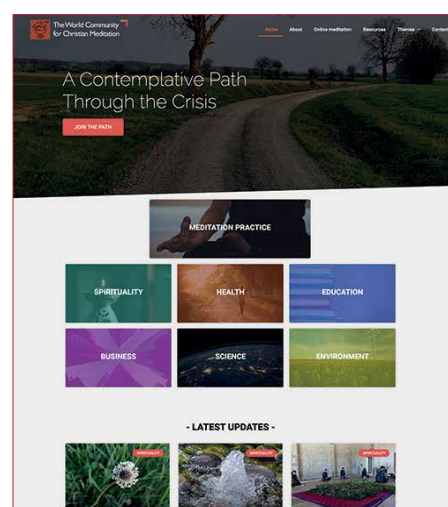


## The Path through the Crisis

Laurence Freeman reflects on the post-Covid-19 world: How can we make a contemplative response to an unknown future?



*After the Night Vigil, the Bonnevaux Community watched the Easter Sun rise. Although the Holy Week Retreat had to be limited to the residents, thousands online from around the world could join in the ceremonies, the contemplative mass and the teachings by Fr Laurence*



### A CONTEMPLATIVE PATH THROUGH THE CRISIS

Our new website combines online events, short videos, talks, interviews, written resources - many ways to strengthen and inspire us to understand the spiritual dimension and its opportunities during these tough times. Join 'The Path' to receive updates on the new resources as they appear: <http://acontemplativepath-wccm.org>

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## Dearest friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

During the First World War the British government was recruiting volunteers for its killing fields in France. They used guilt to coerce them, like the poster of a man with his son on his knee and the boy asking 'what did you do during the war, daddy?' One day, maybe, but without the loaded tone, people will ask us what we did during the first big Shutdown (or maybe it will be 'Shutdowns'), 'what was it really like?... And afterwards, was it hard?' And if a child asks why it was called by CoVid-19 we can say that Co=Corona V=Virus D=disease and 2019 was when it began. But 2020 was when it knocked everyone into the beginning of a new vision of reality. It helped to have a name for it, even if we didn't know much about it or how to cure it. Maybe it will take us decades to see its meaning. 'Well,' we will say wisely, 'it took us all by surprise and it was something of a mystery'.

As to the question, I would answer, 'I was in Bonnevaux, locked up in a beautiful prison with a group of very nice people. We were faithful to our existing daily rhythm of life, of prayer, work and study (including meals and the occasional movie) which our ancestor Benedict designed wisely to take us through both good times and bad times. I stopped travelling except through the internet, which was easier than flying but earned no airmiles. Because of the technology of online meetings, I have been busier than usual working with our amazingly dedicated international team as we try to respond to the spiritual needs of our global community and of those who have met us for the first time through the crisis.

In ten days, we made a new website to help people face new chal-

lenges (*A Spiritual Path through the Crisis*) which is run by some of our younger teachers. We have had many meditation sessions online, dialogues with other faiths, intellectually stimulating teachings by a variety of speakers. And we began streaming contemplative mass on



The beauty of spring at Bonnevaux

Sundays with a large congregation from across the planet, an online yoga class and live meditations in our daily schedule. Through all this interaction with individuals and national communities, we understood better how Bonnevaux is called to be a physical centre of a community that has no walls or borders, no need for visas, and in which even the barriers of language can melt in the experience of deep silence. So, we were contemplative but busy. Benedict said, 'idleness is the enemy of the soul'. We have not been idle but we found ourselves more clearly becoming what we kind of already knew we were: a centre of peace that is here to serve as a centre for peace.

The other question our descendants might ask is about meaning. Many are already impatient to

know what impact it will have in the world. Will it change how we live, work and respect the environment? It is too soon for answers, but from what Bonnevaux has taught me during these months, let me share some early reflections. I start with a thought of Simone Weil that struck

me recently. Every event in life is part of the language with which God speaks to us. All events are signs of God's love. If you drink a glass of water the water is God's 'I love you' to you. If you are two days in a desert and can find nothing to drink, your thirst is God's 'I love you'. As we learn this language at first, we think only some events mean 'I love you', the nice, desirable things that happen. But as we learn the language better, we see that the entire language, every event, means 'I love you'. God has only this one thing to say. God has no way of saying 'I hate you'.

This isn't an easy language to learn. But it could not be simpler. Keeping this in mind, struggling with the strange idea that Covid-19 could be a love message, let's try to reflect on what the message

'I love you' might mean.

## The Noosphere

Do you remember movies of World War Two that show people huddled round a radio listening intensely to the news? That was the early days of instant global communication. Before that, when major events happened, like wars or epidemics, people only really knew what was going on from what they saw in their towns or villages, the soldiers marching past or people dying. How this connected with news from other places was largely up to rumour, magic and imagination.

Life was local, which had advantages but could also be intensely limiting and oppressive. Now, rich and poor alike, we are all global citizens. Yesterday the BBC World Service had a sound clip of one of the million Rohingya refugees incarcerated in camps in Bangladesh. The first cases of the virus had just been discovered; the prospect of infection spreading through the over-crowded camps is horrific. The man spoke in his Burmese Rohingya dialect but the words 'Covid-19' were clearly audible. Evidently, he and we all face the same crisis and we know it and have invented a universal name for it.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuit scientist Teilhard de Chardin and the Russian scientist Vladimir Vernansky, coming with different perspectives, developed the idea of the 'noosphere'. We are so familiar with it in practice today – with 24/7 news, Zoom, Instagram and the worldwide web, that it hardly astonishes us. We live in this cocoon-sphere of consciousness unconsciously. In physical isolation we saw what a lifesaver communication technology was. The 'noosphere' has now become more conscious and

we must reflect on the meaning of a new kind of global communication. The Greek word nous means mind, so the noosphere is a 'sphere of the mind'. The technology behind it may dazzle us or we may get addicted to it, taking our cell phones to bed with us. But this crisis has made us wonder how this new immediacy of communication across space and time-zones affects our way of living together as one huge, multicultural family.

The noosphere has emerged from the biosphere – the physical world we share in which viruses spread. But

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communication*

this new sphere is at a higher level of consciousness. As I am writing this at Bonnevaux I am looking out on the lake watching the ducks and herons. If I were closer, I would see the plump, swift fish. If I moved closer, they would feel the threat instantaneously. They would turn on a sixpence, change direction, take flight, rapidly, obedient to each other and all without anyone bumping into another. How could they do this without possessing a common mind? So why not us too? We are conscious; we have more in common than divides us. We can form a football crowd or a meditation community, pack malls as consumers, get addicted to the same soap operas. We do, however, bump into each other a lot but we can work together on ways to improve this. Is our common mind, our noosphere, evolving?

Is the sphere of reason, of conscious mind composed of intricate networks of interpersonal relationships, developing? Is it forming both through the glass of water we drink and the thirst we feel when deprived of it?

The materialist would say all this is simply a product of technology and that mind emerges from complex matter. There is no proof of this, of course, but it is a dogma of modern science. Whatever the cause may be, we are increasingly curious about this new consciousness and its implications. For example, it demands a higher moral responsibility because the risks it poses are as great as the benefits it promises. Fake news can be seeded in it like a virus. Confronted with his wilful stupidity or falsehood, a brazen politician has only to make endless soundbite denials to eventually plant them as a possible truth in the mass mind. This is not the fault of technology. We cannot *blame* technology - or a virus - for causing distress. They are only causes. It is we who misuse good things for bad ends.

The globalising of human consciousness calls for global institutions. Perhaps a logical consequence of the evolving noosphere will be a globally respected moral authority. If so, we will find conflict ahead. Not surprisingly dictators and dishonest leaders with totalitarian tendencies will oppose and undermine such global bodies by reviving outdated but still toxic nationalisms. In a spiritual analogy, it is the ego resisting the Self.

But this is why it is easier now to speak about spiritual consciousness. Survival depends on it. In contrast to the modern dogma of reductionist materialism, a universal wisdom is re-emerging. Rooted in a perennial philosophy it calmly says that mind does

not arise from matter, but that matter is manifested by mind. This is not a philosophical abstraction of no practical value. Fundamental ideas shape the world. It seems, for example, that some leaders, responsible for abolishing environmental controls and restarting the exploitation of non-renewable resources, feel justified by their fundamentalist religious beliefs. They hold extreme biblical views about the seven days of creation and the imminent Armageddon that will precede the Rapture. If an elect group are going to be beamed up soon, what difference does environmental damage make? Or, belief that all human beings do not possess equal, essential value. Some, the more successful, are worth more than others. Rational arguments can then be made for creating collateral damage, sacrificing whoever you feel are less important. It helps to have God on your side in such decisions. Believe in a God who punishes whoever breaks the rules made by His representatives and rewards those who keep them, and religion becomes a tyranny of the self-righteous. The glass of water shows that God loves you and your thirst proves that God hates you.

Covid-19 has shocked us into a new sense of human unity as we watched how a simple, miniscule virus has no favourites and no enemies. Good and bad belong to humans not to events. We have seen how human tragedy can be played for shameful political advantage. Yet we also see a daily outpouring of altruism and tenderness. Both extremes are visible at the click of a mouse. How we interpret it depends on the mind behind the hand controlling the technology. The crisis has shown us we need to fund our healthcare but it also exposes the weakness of our education.

Critical thinking developed by good public education opposes a tyranny that tries to prove that oppression is liberty and black is white.

Technology can assist the development of a global mind and of a more just society. It can also be twisted to block both. But what if the common mind, the unity of human



Contemplative Mass live from Bonnevaux every Sunday. More info here: <http://tiny.cc/liveevents>

consciousness, is on the march and cannot be stopped? What if it manifests at certain stages of evolution, helped but not dependent on technology? An absurd idea to the materialistic mind, but it helps to illustrate the Mind of Christ:

Let this mind be in you as was also in Christ Jesus (*Phil 2:5*)

Now I beseech you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (*1 Cor 1:10*)

The Self is One. Ever still, the Self is. Swifter than thought, swifter than the senses. Though motionless he outruns

all pursuit. Without the Self, never could life exist (*Isha Upanishad*)

To feel that we share in this universal mind, at the deepest level of reality described in these words, it is not necessary to try to know everything, to browse the internet all day, read every article, argue about every

opinion, become a news junkie. It is necessary only to pay attention to one thing totally. Training our potentially infinite capacity for attention forms the contemplative mind in individuals who then come to see how they are equal sharers in the whole of humanity. The contemplative mind is the birth right of all. Meditation is for everyone. The political benefit of this is that contemplatives are not so easily manipulated or misled; knowing what they belong to makes them participate more responsibly in the democratic process.

## The Personal Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis

Many, who did not fall sick or have people who were close to them suffering, will shyly say they enjoyed some aspects of confinement. Even

with anxieties about work or finances, they followed a balanced daily schedule of exercise, reading, meditating, chatting online, doing things they liked at home like baking or painting. They often felt relieved not to be rushing all day, commuting, jumping on and off planes or trains, shopping. Even though they also missed hugs and kisses they benefited by this time of slower living. Others, however, with tendencies to depression or issues like anger or addiction have found it excruciating. It brought the dark side to the fore and subjected them to much suffering. Everyone has learned something more about themselves. Some may even apply the self-knowledge they have gained to rebuild a healthier lifestyle.

Confinement, enforced stability and simplicity, confront us with our capacity to be simply content with what we have. Many political prisoners like Gandhi, Solzhenitsyn and Mandela attest to this. Monastic life builds degrees of solitude into its programme of spiritual development. Spirituality – however one defines it – begins with the often lonely work of accepting what is. Denial, resistance, rage or violence do not change reality to match our preferences. Eventually reality wins. It teaches us and we have to obey what is. Only then can we do good work for others. Until then, our efforts to change things are largely projections of fantasy. And so, at this basic level of accepting life itself as a spiritual journey, the crisis has been an awakening for many. Confinement and loss have been a deeper call to acceptance, self-knowledge and a spirit of service.

The frustration of normal habits and desires led many to realise how to control anger, handle restlessness, acknowledge our addiction to dis-

traction, expose our evasions, self-deceptions and our tendency always to blame others. It has been a desert experience – of more than forty days and is not fully over yet. Perhaps we glimpsed how our hunger for distraction, novelty and stimulation contradicts our innate hunger for God. This is true even if we do not have the word God in our vocabulary of meaning. God is present and we thirst for union with God, named or unnamed, invoked or not. Spiritual hunger is our most intimate longing, the reality check of all the distorted compensatory desires we pursue. It is also the great unifying bond between us all. If beauty, love, compassion, and

### *Accepting our ordinariness and limitations unexpectedly becomes a strength*

justice unite us across all differences, at the heart of them is the thirsty hunger for God. It is the great privilege of the human condition to feel it. If we accept it for what it is, it contains its own fulfilment.

The deepest self-knowledge is not psychological awareness of our formative experiences and conditioned patterns of mind. Important though this is, the essential self-knowledge that effects permanent transformation and liberation, is not found in our thoughts, memories or imagination. It arises from a direct encounter with our being, at its source, in utter stillness and silence. This may sound like an experience for the few but it is much closer to us than we think and more universally accessible. Sometimes suffering pushes us into this space when our efforts to find it have

failed. The self-knowledge it brings is the greatest asset we have in our quest to be happy and free. It may come as the glass of water or as the thirst. It simply is. Knowing it once will forever change the way we cope with the swings of fortune that previously controlled and dominated us.

Humans are a mass of paradox. We belong to one human family. What happens anywhere on our home planet influences each of us. But we are also locals embedded in the physical and cultural conditions of our home and immediate companions. We are also solitary in the sense of being unique and unrepeatable. And we are all ordinary, too, however high we have risen or low we have fallen. We all need attention and love, even the hermit. Accepting this paradoxical ordinariness exposes our hidden glory and real value. This is the outcome, the humility of meditation. When they meditate the most intelligent, powerful or famous meet the same challenges as everyone else. Accepting our ordinariness and limitations unexpectedly becomes a strength and source of encouragement. Solitude then expands into communion. Experiencing equality, fraternity and liberty of spirit we begin to function maturely in community.

The crisis of the past months can teach us these essential lessons of life when it is understood as a spiritual journey. In confinement many people decided to learn something new, to restart a long-abandoned task, to be creative. It is vital to develop, until the end, to risk learning new things and change old habits. As we are enduring it now, disruption of life feels cruel. But it may also be a kind teacher and catalyst for change. Hard times have taught many already that they really can change: their sense of self

and their character traits can be repaired. It is never too late to have a conversion of heart. In the most challenging conditions, we are capable of transformation. Brain scientists say that plasticity is with us till the end. If we believe the Christian mystics, it continues even after the end, because in eternity we are transformed 'from glory to glory'. Limitations accepted push back the walls confining us. Weaknesses become sources of strength, of grace from God.

If this is true of us at the personal level, might it not be equally true for our communities, the church, our national and global institutions?

## Serpents and doves

When we pay attention to one thing, other than our self or what concerns our self-interest, we become a foot soldier in the contemplative revolution. All the spiritual teachers of humanity have seen and shown this. But to build a contemplative practice into life means to work continuously, humbly to come to an ever-purer degree of attention. At its fullest, purity of attention is the Mind of Christ.

The trick is not to see this as a heroic task but as a simple and ordinary one. Of course, it has an element of the hero's quest but heroes are never as heroic as they are portrayed and the real heroes know it. To meditate is not to be heroic but to be a disciple. This is a less flattering designation for the ego, so we resist discipleship; but dealing with the resistance leads to self-knowledge which makes us humble and more useful to others. This moment is always a crossroad in our personal journey. It returns periodically. If we make the right turn, we grow beyond anything we can



Online meditation and yoga sessions live from Bonnevaux, more info: <http://tiny.cc/liveevents>

imagine, by becoming the person we exist to become.

Is this also the crossroad where humanity finds itself now? The heroic path – mastering and exploiting the earth till its ecological balance collapses; embracing the hyper-individualism of the warrior pursuing glory and ambition in politics and business even when hiding behind Green camouflage; viewing the poor and powerless as cannon fodder for the march of a jungle deviant of capitalism; fuelling greed (the illusion that we can have everything) with gluttony (the attempt to stuff ourselves with everything); losing faith in the existence of truth because we have sold our soul to falsehood. We have felt this for some time.

We have also felt that a crisis was bound to come one way or another – through a financial collapse, a major environmental tipping point, a political collapse into totalitarianism. This may be only the first of a series of crises that awakens us to the failure of our outdated view of civilisation. But it may also trigger a new vision of reality. Individually we have to surrender egoism, collectively we need to sacrifice nationalism.

Personally, we need to rediscover poverty of spirit. Economically we need to let go of possessiveness and share. Meditation guides us to moderation. Materially, we need to reduce and simplify.

The values of contemplative consciousness and the new world order are aligned.

The more radical the spirit of revolution, the less force it will use. The contemplative revolution uses no force. It does not market itself. Its leaders know they are flawed and admit it. Jesus said that to advance the reign of God people would need to be as cunning as serpents and as simple as doves. It's a hard combination. It seems unlikely to succeed. But then success isn't what it's about. It's a strange goal and a weird time. But stranger things have happened. After all, as I write it is still the Paschal season which recalls a very strange event and time indeed. And Ordinary Time means travelling as if we have arrived.

With much love

Laurence Freeman OSB

Special

Visit and join the Path at [www.acontemplativepath-wccm.org](http://www.acontemplativepath-wccm.org)

## A Contemplative Path Through the Crisis



Since the crisis hit the world the World Community has been approached by many people asking how we can help. We have consulted widely, reflected deeply, and we feel that A Contemplative Path Through the Crisis is a response that meets many needs in different ways. Meditation will not instantly solve all problems. But it changes how we view and deal with the challenges we face. It helps us to 'set our troubled minds at rest' and to find the authentic, interior peace that stabilises us when we are in turmoil.

For many who have a spiritual path and practice, this crisis is a call to deepen it. For those who never had time to

develop a path before, this is the opportunity.

The immediate need is to reduce fear and anxiety and – even in a time of social isolation – to discover a sense of connection with others. The 'Contemplative Path' programme grows from the essential teaching of the community about the daily practice of meditation. For a generation or more we have taught this simple way from the Christian contemplative tradition to people of faith and those who belong to no special tradition.

Building on this practice, the Contemplative Path online programme offers meditation sessions, contemplative eucharists, psychological insights about

how to deal with the feelings stirred up by the crisis, bodywork sessions, teachings and reflections from a range of people who follow a spiritual path while living and working in the world.

Each of us can build an inclusive contemplative response that makes a difference to everyone around us even when we are physically separated. Social distancing can bring us closer together spiritually. But we need to go deeper. To go deeper we need to be still. Meditation does both.

Following such a path also means becoming more other-centred, turned practically towards the relief of others' suffering. This is to be, in a Christlike way, what every contemplative path aims to be: 'medicine, physician and nurse to those in need'.

We need to get through the crisis but also to see the opportunities it offers. With a path, we can better see how to be ready to play our part after the crisis. A contemplative path commits us all not only to survival, but to a better human flourishing.

Welcome to A Contemplative Path.

Laurence Freeman OSB

## The impact in Bonnevaux



Because of the pandemic crisis, retreats between June and August will be offered in an online version. From September we will aim to offer in-person retreats at Bonnevaux. You will find further information at [bonnevauxwccm.org](http://bonnevauxwccm.org). In self-isolation the resident community continued the routine of work and prayer. Bonnevaux is a key part of the new programme A Contemplative Path Through the Crisis. The first online event was The Inter-Contemplative Dialogues (see page 9). The Holy Week retreat was also an opportunity for the global community to feel connected to Bonnevaux - with live mass and recorded talks by Fr. Laurence. The Bonnevaux website provides information on how you can join live transmissions for Sunday Mass, Yoga class and Online Meditation every week. The crisis paused the renovation work, but the good news is that the Barn (the Conference Centre) is ready and in use for meditation, mass and other celebrations.

## Special

# In response to the crisis, technology is helping communities to support their the practice with the feeling of connection

## Vibrant initiatives in Latin America

Besides the surge in regular online groups, we have been offering several live-stream events. In mid-March we launched a series of weekly contemplative masses in Spanish.

Another initiative we have recently launched is a series of live-stream sessions called "today we meditate with". The format consists of short interviews hosted by Elba. In the live clips we interview a member of our community, give pointers on how to meditate, and then meditate for 20 minutes. New or current meditators can join

us for the interview and the meditation session via Facebook Live or watch at a later time.

What came out of the latter initiative was an extension of meditation with children. Enrique, his wife Paty (WCCM Mexico), and Elba will be offering a live webinar series, streaming through Facebook, on Christian meditation with children. The format consists of simple talks and a five-minute meditation to help parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents during these trying times. **(By Elba Rodríguez)**



## Sergio Peixoto, Brazil: "I hope everyone takes this opportunity"



Some people asked me if we could go online after our group was suspended because of the pandemic crisis. I explored various means and finally decided to try live streaming via Youtube. Unlike Facebook and Instagram, I didn't need an account to join. The feedback is good so far, and we are exploring continuing an on-line group even after the crisis. It will not replace the actual group, but will offer an alternative for those who

cannot physically meet together. Crisis asks for change and people are looking for solutions. Some, of course, want to keep expanding, achieving and competing; they still want to "come in first" and not lose the competition. But mediation offers us another way to grow: the way of "not doing", of stillness and silence. I hope everyone takes the opportunity the crisis offers to seek true change within. **(By Sergio Peixoto)**

## Hong Kong: online meeting in Cantonese and English

Ever since the beginning of February, when Hong Kong people were aware of how contagious the Coronavirus was, it was clear that meeting weekly for meditation had to cease. Instead, we migrated online, to one Hong Kong-wide online meditation meeting. Now we have refined our presentation. It has become

bilingual, Cantonese and English, with each week's meeting involving members from various groups serving as the host and readers for the teaching and the Gospel of that day. We aim to have every one of our 14 groups represented as we continue, promoting a distinct feeling of community. In our meeting in

26 Mar we had 51 participants, a few of whom were invitees new to meditation. With confinement, people with time on their hands will likely turn to spiritual matters, and online meditation is an excellent way to introduce them to this type of prayer. **(By Vivian Lee)**



Special

## Teaching meditation to Children and Young People during the Crisis

To reduce stress and loneliness when Young People are isolated at home or in schools only open to the children of key workers, meditation offers an inclusive and immediate solace and inspiration. From our work worldwide we know for certain that children can meditate, that they love it and ask for it. In collaboration with The Catholic Children's Society in the UK, the WCCM is introducing meditation into Primary and Secondary schools. We encourage you to share these videos with children, parents, grandparents and teachers



at home during this time of crisis. More info here: <https://rebrand.ly/medchcv19>

## Ukraine: a time to go deeper into the silence



These are strange and surprising times. Pandemic crisis has a special character - it brings silence to our cities, whether we like it or not. Here in Ukraine we understand that we are not ready to face this challenge, either internally or externally. Therefore, so many people now suffer from the effects of this disease, fear of illness and loss and the loneliness of quarantine. But for our local meditation community, this time has become an oppor-

tunity to go deeper into the silence. Now we can do it together online, forgetting about the distances between our local groups located in so many different cities. We have launched three weekly online groups, and we continue to translate the Fr. Laurence's Lenten reflections. Each time we meet in the Zoom chatroom, we recall that our meditation is part of our community's web of silence. We just want to thank every community meditator for our common presence. We hope that our local community will benefit from this time, using it as a free space where we will learn just to be. After the epidemic is over, we look forward to being with one another again, so we could see in our meditation and in each other the Word which has become Flesh. (By Albert Zakharov)

## Inter-Contemplative Dialogues

The first event of "A Contemplative Path" programme was a webinar, from 21st to 28th of March, with Alan Wallace and Eva Natanya (speaking from USA) and Laurence Freeman (from Bonnevaux). The five talks were webcast live and you can watch them here:

<https://rebrand.ly/ctdialg>



*In times of crises like this, which humanity has been facing for as long as there's been humanity, it's a time when the outer pursuit of happiness, everything outer, the sources, my problems and my happiness, are outside. (...)When things are going well, then the outside looks like a good bet. You don't need to have much of an inner life because outside it's just going fine. But then when something like this has happened and, of course, we've had so many of these sort of things—wars, pandemics, economic meltdowns and so forth... then suddenly that outer pursuit looks very very precarious. (Alan Wallace)*

Special

## Far from home, Emily found community support online

This meditator from USA was part of the Young Adult Retreat at Bonnevaux in 2019 and got stuck in Peru during the pandemic crisis.



In 2019, Emily Waters-Leiga was part of the first Young Adult Retreat in Bonnevaux. She also did the five-day walk in the French part of the Camino to Compostela. This year her life took another unexpected direction: she was in Argentina to study Spanish when the pandemic crisis worsened. On her way back to the USA she got stuck in Peru. She replied to some questions before finally getting back home, middle of April.

**How are you keeping the balance during this time in Peru?**

The main way I'm coping with the

situation is by trying to remember the bigger picture- that fighting this pandemic is much bigger than any one of us. Even everyone who is fortunate enough to be healthy is experiencing some type of loss or hard times right now. I try to keep in mind that all the sacrifices being made, including me staying here in Peru, are for the greater good. I have meditated several times, and every day, have taken time away from my phone and the news to just sit in the sun and journal, or just sit and think. This has been incredibly helpful.

I have been in touch with several people whom I was with on the Camino. Recently I participated in our Zoom catch up + meditation session, and a few of them have reached out to me individually to check in about how I am doing. They are such an amazing and supportive group of people.

**What are you learning from this personal experience?**

It's always been valuable to me to try to not take things in life for granted, but never in my life have I been

confronted with just how much can be taken away seemingly overnight. One of the hardest things I dealt with in Peru was not knowing if I would continue to have a place to stay. Having a place to stay was something I've always taken for granted, and now this experience has made me so appreciative of it. I hope that this time of uncertainty and loss ignites immense gratitude for the things in our lives that we all took for granted before. I also hope people are amazed at just how small our world really is. Everyone in the world is dealing with varying amounts of social restrictions and isolation, and most people are experiencing some type of anxiety or loneliness. When I participated in the video chat with people from the Camino, we were all in different countries, but experiencing the same thing. It's really uniting to think about how we are all in this together. I hope that moving forward we can continue this sense of unity to tackle other global crises, including climate change.

**ONLINE:** Visit Emily's blog here: <https://emilyabroad.home.blog>

## Brijji Waterfield, Director of Meditatio



Brijji was appointed as the new Director of Meditatio in March 2020. She is no stranger in the Community as she retired as Director of Special Projects in 2018 but has come back to this new role. Brijji was part of the initial team that launched Meditatio in 2010 and looks forward to taking meditation out into the secular world especially in the fields of Business, Education, Health, Religion and Spirituality, Science

and Social Justice. She will be working closely with The Meditatio Council whose members are professionals in these fields and with the national communities. She is still enjoying the joys of semi-retirement - walking with her dog, gardening, cooking, partying with friends and re-discovering her home country, India. She hopes to resume some of these social pleasures once the virus has abated!

# In Focus

## Angelene Chan, Singapore



*At River Jordan in February 2020 where I renewed my baptismal vows with Fr Laurence*

There is nothing like a crisis to put your spiritual practice to the test. In these last few weeks, as the world fights tooth and nail to contain a virus outbreak of a scale that has never been experienced in our lifetime, I find myself having to make many swift decisions amid uncertainties; decisions that will have far-reaching effects on the profitability of the group of companies I am entrusted with, and more importantly, on the wellbeing and livelihood of its 1200 employees. I constantly second guess myself: Am I doing enough? Am I doing too much? It is stressful, to say the least.

It is in these days that I came to realise how precious my meditation practice is to me. Twice a day, I am able to pause, shut out the noise and bad news, and withdraw inward. Meditation opens the pressure relief valve of my brain to release the steam, this is the best way I can describe one of the most tangible benefits of meditation. Because the pressure builds up over the course of the day, I find that the second sitting in the evening has become indispensable.

I am a beginner. My practice began in earnest only in 2016 after I attended a leadership course conducted by Father Laurence in Singapore. In January that same year, I was appointed the CEO of a large company. There were a lot of expectations, not least from myself, to do well. Besides the financial side of business, I want to make my colleagues happy and our company the best place to work in. Listening to Fr Laurence convinced me that contemplative leadership is the way to achieve the goals I have set for myself.

The profession I am in, architecture, is a highly demanding and competitive one that requires in-

tense creative energy and mental endurance. The work life of an architect is very hectic and it is very easy to burn out if we are not careful. Meditation started out as a way for me to find balance and clarity. By God's blessings, quite early on in my practice, I discovered an infinitely profound reward – personal communion with God that is deeper than what I had previously experienced.

Using meditation as prayer and as a way to deepen my Catholic identity was not my motivation when I started. But I find that the practice has deepened my faith, and my faith is the inspiration for me to persist in the practice. This became clear when I joined Fr Laurence's Holy Land tour in February. In tracing the steps of Christ, praying and breaking bread with my fellow pilgrims, the shared practice of meditation took us deeper into an inward journey that we were all undertaking. When we looked into each other's eyes, sometimes through tears, we witnessed the Divine in each other and in the physical world around us. Through meditation, we acquired the inner silence to experience God. It is His gift to us.



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Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano  
**Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 20 June.**

## Resources & Events

### Online retreat



Given that most of our communication and exploration is - for the moment - online, what better time to take part in an online retreat? **Sources of Wisdom, with Laurence Freeman** is structured into one-and-a-half hour sessions: meditation, video of a talk, followed by a time for personal reflection.

Enroll now: <https://rebrand.ly/sowsdm>

### Books

#### Frankie The Still Fox

by Ernie Christie & Mary Hosking

More info: <https://rebrand.ly/fkfox>

When you turn the pages of this book you will learn how to become still and silent. Even when the world around you is so noisy and busy and distracted, you, like Frankie, can choose another way of being and learn to be attentive. This is a book for young ones to discover meditation and make friends with Frankie along the way.

### Audio & CDs



The latest Meditatio CD Series. Listen to or download the tracks: <http://tiny.cc/Med2020A>  
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### Meditatio Series goes digital only

The distribution of the Meditatio Talks series in physical CDs will be discontinued starting from the 2020-B Apr-Jun issue. Postal services worldwide have been disrupted or even suspended in some countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A set of talks will continue to be released every quarter. The audio tracks and their corresponding transcripts will be available from this link <http://tiny.cc/MeditatioCDs> and soon also on the WCCM app. A simple step by step guide on how to access that talks will be made available on the WCCM website. It will be possible to listen to the talks from a computer or mobile device and also to download the talks for listening to offline.

### WCCM retreats and events affected by the pandemic crisis

The Monte Oliveto Retreat in July cannot take place but in 2021 the dates are June 26- July 3 (Registration fees may be transferred to next year). For more information contact [monteoliveto@wccm.org](mailto:monteoliveto@wccm.org).

We will soon be announcing a weeklong Bonnevaux online retreat to replace this year's Monte Oliveto Retreat.



The John Main Seminar 2020, in October, in Mexico, was also affected and it will be hosted as an online event. The theme will be the same "One Heart, One Hope - Indigenous Wisdom and the Future of Humanity", as well as the speakers. The keynote speaker is Fr Alex Zatyryka SJ. All new details and registration information will be available soon at the JMS website: [www.johnmainseminar.org](http://www.johnmainseminar.org)

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## Meditation and the Fire of Climate Crisis

by Linda Chapman

**The thing about an actual crisis, an immediate one, is that when it comes barging in through the front door, theories go flying out the back door.**

The seemingly slow unwinding of the 'climate crisis' sped up on New Year's Eve 2019 here on the south coast of NSW. That we had had some time to prepare was a mercy for us. Others had no such grace. The creeping, leaping fires that began in September had until now appeared only on the screen and in the smoke that crept in and stayed. It was also there in the charred remains of trees washed up on the tide line. Then suddenly it was here. The thing about an immediate crisis is that singleness of mind comes not as a choice but as necessity. There is an unwanted imperative to act without distraction, with clear, purposeful attention; no egoic pattern of thought can survive. The fire is not an audience for self reference. The 'firey' (volunteer fire fighter) in the face of flames has one purpose, one thought, and one action. The resident leaving home to escape the flames is as singular in intent. The 84-year-old woman I encountered at the aged care facility told me she had literally gone out the front door as the flames came in the back door. She had the presence of mind to pick up her handbag on the way but no time for anything else. Now, she sat with us as we shared communion, in tears, still in shock. I've not yet heard the details of 'Joan's' escape who, at 104 years old, and still attending our choir, lost her home and everything in it. She is one of so many we know.

The phone call that tells one to leave now as one's life is at risk has



*Remains of the Cadgee church pulpit, and after the fire the metal cross seared on the earth.*

***“Joan’... who, at 104 years old, and still attending our choir, lost her home and everything in it.”***

a galvanising power that leaves the mind strangely free to attend to only the most essential thoughts. The immediacy of a crisis that is suddenly upon one distils thought and action. And of course, adrenalin provides the necessary spurt of energy to act. What happens over time as 'the crisis' recedes and then returns is a diminishment of energy. Fatigue has been a common state for most in our community over the last months. And

in those hours and days as we prepare for the next fire front, or during it, there is much waiting and not knowing. Or compulsive needing to know; a kind of welding to 'Fires Near Me' or the radio, if they are working. And of course as time goes by and we have accumulated more stories of people narrowly escaping, of homes lost; as we move through charcoaled forests whose silence speaks of death, so our minds fill with these images that fuel anxiety, grief and deep anger.

How are we to live in this broken world? I hesitate to suggest that this fire crisis could have a purifying, simplifying effect if we are awake to

*continued over page*

it. I hesitate because I in no way want nature to be paying this price of our possible awakening. She does not deserve this. On the other hand, if we are not to wake up because of this calamitous crisis then the cost will be very much higher.

In our meditation practice we choose the one thing necessary. We bring our attention to the mantra whenever it wanders. In the stillness of sitting our body leads our mind to settle. Thought and action meet through purposeful attending. We don't, can't, coerce stillness, simplicity, silence to come; however we can allow for these. When a crisis comes the mind is honed and anchored. The image of Jesus in the boat might be instructive. It's as though we have a container, open to all the elements, yet a space in which to settle in a storm.

Between days of more imminent threat there are days that are relatively smoke free and safe. Time to relax a little; to ease into the ocean who no matter how much we sin against her does not refuse us entry. As I float, I notice a lady-bug being carried by the current. She is upside down. I scoop her up and carry her onto dry land. Every life, every insect is now so much more precious after losing so much. To float in the ocean is luxurious and a salve. The mind cannot stay on high alert for too long, needing space to wander a little, time for diffuse attention.

Reflecting on living through these days of fire, I'm conscious that the practice of meditation integrated



*The fire burnt to the beach. Blackened vegetation on the dunes.*

into daily life has proven to be significant at such a time. And, just as the fire threats grow and recede so our thoughts become insistent and demanding or spacious and quiet in turn as we practice meditation. Like

***“Meditation is not a theory or an idea. It’s a practice that, when lived, enables us in times of ease as well as times of crisis.”***

the southerly that came the day fire was closest to our home, and cleared the sky within minutes, so we may suddenly find a clear space open

within. We can neither control the wind nor the Spirit. Meditation is not a theory or an idea. It's a practice that, when lived, enables us in times of ease as well as times of crisis.

The practice of meditation is a grounding and stabilising influence. At times of acute crisis it can enable some equilibrium. It must never become a soporific. The bushfire crisis in Australia, or as one journalist has called it the pyro-hydro-climate crisis, is an international catastrophe. Many are extremely angry and despair of any possibility of the kind of immediate policy our government needs to enact to reduce carbon emissions. Anger can energise action. Jesus response to the injustice and exploitation of the Temple moneychangers led to his turning of their tables. As a community we need to do the same. Anger, channeled as deep and persistent conviction and action, is an appropriate response to present conditions. A contemplative response is measured and spiritually intelligent but no less insistent than any form of activist protest. The times in which we are living demand radical action. Come what may though, if we lose our capacity for love, then we forfeit our Christian vocation and identity. We can only live in this broken world as truly human beings when we act with truthful and courageous love for the common good. Contemplative



*The southerly that saved us parting the smoke as it hit.*

*continued over page*

consciousness is clear-sighted, compassionate and wise. In a country such as ours, where the politics of coal and climate has been so polarised and toxic, the discipline of contemplative practice seems vitally important. The bitterness of activists is easily understood. Yet we must 'maintain the rage' in a way that subverts the old adversarial system. We must dive deeper and return to our 'adversaries' not hatred but intelligent, insistent and compassionate action. The daily practice of meditation is like a filter through which we can allow our own toxic thoughts and feelings to become transformed into energy for that action.

\*\*\*\*\*

I saw a black swan last night. Just one. I hadn't seen any round here for many weeks. They have for long been for me a reminder of the rhythm of days. I love their flight and their presence signifies a graciousness that is so often missing in a world dominated by human avarice. And as I remember that lone swan, I recall the black swan theory.

"The phrase *black swan* derives from a Latin expression; its oldest known occurrence is from the 2nd-century Roman poet Juvenal's characterization of something being "*rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cygno*" ("a rare bird in the lands and very much like a black swan"). When the phrase was coined, the black swan was presumed not to exist. The importance of the metaphor lies in its analogy to the fragility of any system of thought. A set of conclusions is potentially undone once any of its fundamental postulates is disproved. In this case, the observation of a single black swan would be the undoing of the logic of any system of thought, as well as any reasoning that followed from that underlying logic."

That black swans were once thought not to exist did not negate their reality. Our thinking was simply our thinking. Human assumptions about the natural world do not make those assumptions true. Our hubris, our worldview, based as it is on a story of superiority and separation, lies at the base of our destruction of life on this planet. And our thinking, our thoughts, do not necessarily

*continued over page*

## Bushfire Lament

*Facing life after the fires  
We are gathered  
To grieve some things  
To celebrate other things  
To claim our ground in a new way  
To support each other  
And to be part of the creation  
of the future*

*But we are sad, O God.*

*We grieve for the loss of human  
life, of homes, animals, plants  
and trees, and the scarring of the  
earth. We are saddened for the  
original custodians of the land,  
the First Peoples of Australia,  
and the poor and marginalized  
disproportionately affected  
by the fires.*

*Turn our sadness into  
compassion.*

*We are fearful, O God.*

*We feel helpless and small and  
we don't know when it will end*

*Turn our fear into hope.*

*We are angry, O God.*

*And looking for someone to  
blame, be it those in leadership,  
or ourselves for the way we have  
mistreated the earth.*

*Turn our anger into resolve.  
And our shame into healing*

*We are grateful, O God.*

*We are thankful for the  
firefighters who work tirelessly  
to protect people, animals and  
the land, for the volunteers and  
those who donate time, money,  
supplies and their homes to assist  
those in need; for stories of love  
and kindness that spark hope.*

*Turn our gratitude into action.*

*Fill us with compassion and  
mercy to stand with our sisters  
and brothers affected by the fires.  
Give us strength to join in their  
suffering and bear witness to  
their pain.*

*Bring gentle, fresh air to drive  
away the smoke and ashen skies.  
Breathe new life into us, inspire us  
with love to care for one another  
and the earth.*

*Come, Holy Spirit,  
as a refreshing rain.*

*Heal the parched land, nourish  
our souls, and renew the earth.  
Come, Holy Spirit, with the  
peace of a dove.*

*Calm our anxieties and fear. Lead  
us from the temptation to blame  
one another and become divided.*

*Come as a balm, Holy Spirit.  
Anoint and soothe the wounds  
of the victims, seen and unseen.  
May we be balm to one another.*

*Be our Advocate, Holy Spirit.*

*Listen to our inward groaning  
and give us words to speak in  
places of power. Speak through  
us that we may be prophets of  
love and truth; that we may  
speak hope in times of despair.*

*Heal the land. Heal our hearts.  
Make us new again.*

*In silence we pray in our hearts  
Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus*

Words: Donna Mulhearn, Peter Bierer and Dorothy McRae McMahon

## Meditation and the Fire of Climate Crisis – continued from page 15

constitute reality. In meditation we learn that we are not our thoughts. We learn, or realize, that truth lies beneath our superficial thinking, beyond our ideas, concepts, theories.

\*\*\*\*\*

Just now, walking on the beach, a large hawk approached. It flew low towards me and came to within about five meters; so close I could see the detail of her wings. I thought that perhaps she had come so close because lack of food had made her bold. Or perhaps, so my projection went, she was in disdain of any human life and was not bothering to keep a distance. We have taken up too much space and wildlife are pushed to the edge. Now we have destroyed her forest in the carbon fuelled tempest. Only a few moments later I saw an eagle approaching and again this magnificent bird came close. I saw that she had a creature in her talons; its small body gripped and suspended as she flew back to her eyrie. I was struck with a sense of awe at the nature of wild life. I felt for the little creature plucked up to be eaten.

I was sad for it. Yet this is the nature of wild Life. Only human beings can afford sentimentality. I watched with deep respect as the eagle and her prey flew away.

***“Our practice of meditation is a pathway to restoring our conscious connection with that nature that we are part of and cannot live without.”***

Human life is beyond domesticated. For the most part we have forgotten our own wildness. We have become half-witted. That’s to say, we seem to be in the process of severing the connection with the ‘wild’ side of our mind, our right brain, the deep mind where silence is encountered. To remember who we are is to restore our primal connection with wilderness, without and within. If it is true to say that our primordial habitat is Silence, then our practice of meditation is a

pathway to restoring our conscious connection with that nature that we are part of and cannot live without.

The fires are almost all out now. A sign near the church in Moruya that for many weeks had read Road Closed due to Fires was overnight changed to Road Closed due to Floods. The rain when it came fell in great volumes. Rivers and ocean turned brown and littered with branches of fire scorched trees and ash. The beaches continue to be tide marked with the burnt forests washing up on shore. We would be foolish to think that the climate crisis has also receded. The image of the cross burnt into the ground after the fire swept though is a haunting reminder that the earth is being crucified. We must keep our attention on what needs to be done. The old Anzac refrain keeps coming to mind, *Lest we forget*.

*Linda is rector of the Anglican Parish of Moruya and Open Sanctuary Tilba Tilba. Other information and links relating to meditation and the environment, along with another article by Linda can be found at [wccmaustralia.org.au](http://wccmaustralia.org.au)*

## Stillness, Silence... a narrow path

by Joan Armitage

*The Australian Christian Meditation Community (ACT) facilitated a Silent Retreat on 8-10 November 2019 at St Mary's Towers, Douglas Park, NSW.*

### **Saturday Evening reflection after night meditation**

Two thirds the way through Stillness, Silence, each walking a narrow path.

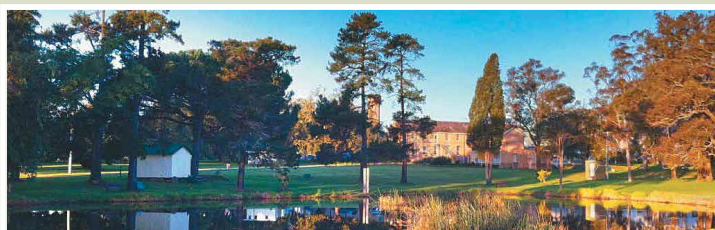
One third of the way to go, just as important as the narrow path we have already travelled, in stillness, in silence.

John Main reminds us in *Word into Silence*:

“The all important aim in Christian Meditation is to allow God’s mysterious silence and presence within us to become more and more not only a reality, but the reality in our lives; to let it become that reality which gives meaning and shape and purpose to everything we do; to everything we are”.

Laurence [Freeman] speaks of silence being “sacred”.

When together we are co-joining in the “sacred” – a gift we give freely to each other.



### **We pray Lord this prayer for the evening, the night and the morrow.**

*Dear Lord,*

*We give you thanks for the gift of this restful place, and the time we have together in stillness and silence while travelling a narrow path in companionship and love.*

*We thank you for our companions on the way.*

*May we have the courage to rest on the shoulder of Christ as we lay down to rest and sleep.*

*May our hearts and minds through the power of the Holy Spirit be wide open to the love of God within:*

*And may we awake slowly in the morning, praying into the gaze of Christ, making ready for the stillness and silence of the sacred travelling on our own narrow path in silent companionship.*

*We ask this in the name of Christ. Amen*





February: Our first Community day in St Peter's Hall.

## We have a New Home

by Mary Hartwig,  
State Coordinator of Victoria

**WCCM Australia (Victoria) has been using different venues across Melbourne to hold Community and Quiet Days, committee meetings and Oblate Cell days and had been searching for some years for a permanent place to centre all our activities.**

In 2019 Roland Ashby, who is one of our 'elders', spent time at Bonnevaux with his wife and on returning to Melbourne Roland, who has been meditating for nearly 20 years and is a Benedictine Oblate, felt moved to discuss a vision he had for a centre. He initially had some discussion with Rev Dr Hugh Kempster the priest at St Peter's Anglican Church Eastern Hill, where Roland is a parishioner. As a result of this initial discussion Roland put together a discussion paper "Proposal for a meditation and transformation centre in Melbourne" which he sent to Mirella Pace who is the National Coordinator of Christian Meditation Australia, myself as Victorian Coordinator and Rev Hugh Kempster.

In his discussion paper Roland suggested that the proposed meditation and transformation centre would aim to nurture a "contemplative wisdom and consciousness" to provide a more loving, forgiving and life – giving creativity which would "offer a more hopeful future" than the division,

hate, consumerism and greed in our current society.

At the beginning of December 2019, Fr Hugh, Mirella, Roland and I met at St Peter's Vicarage to discuss Roland's proposal. St Peter's is situated in Eastern Hill which is on the periphery of Melbourne CBD and is very accessible via public transport, either train or tram.

Rev Hugh was very enthusiastic for us to find a home at St Peter's and to work in partnership with WCCM Australia (Victoria). It was decided at this meeting that the centre would be established in stages. We would hold our Community and Quiet Days in St Peter's Hall and our committee meetings in the Hughes Room commencing in February. Roland was very keen to commence meditation

groups in early March 2020 in the Lazarus Chapel to coincide with the beginning of Lent and to have the meditation at times that may attract people working in the area. We also discussed holding six-week Introductory Courses to meditation and *Lectio Divina*.

When the meditation times and practices are established it is hoped that the WCCM's *Roots of Christian Mysticism* course could also be offered.

One of the elements which attracted us to St Peter's besides its position is the activities that already exist there. The Lazarus Centre for the Homeless, that is jointly run with Anglicare, offers breakfast every morning and an AA group also meets one evening a week. "The centre would also seek to embody the love of Christ through offering hospitality, fellowship and pastoral support to all".

St Peter's also provides the chaplaincy service for RMIT and it is hoped that in the future the centre will offer meditation to the students.

### Community Day

On Saturday 15 February we held our first Community day in St Peter's Hall. The day was attended by about 70 people and the feedback on the venue was mainly positive although we did have some difficulty with the urn.

Our presenter for the day was Rev Susanna Pain who is a long-time



The Revd Susanna Pain at the February Community Day.

*continued over page*

## We have a New Home – continued from page 17

meditator, interplay facilitator, spiritual director and retreat leader. Susanna is the dean of St Paul's Cathedral in Sale, Gippsland. As well as expanding on her theme of *Ritual and the Art of Listening* she told us that during the bushfires they meditated every morning. They also held a vigil at the clocktower which is in the centre of the business area of Sale. Many people from the fire affected areas were evacuated to Sale and some joined this vigil. Susanna taught us a song by Linda Allen that they sang at the vigil.

*We have been burnt*

*Burnt by the fire*

*And we are ashes, ashes and smoke*

*But we will rise higher and higher*

*On the wings of compassion, justice and hope.*

This was very much in keeping with our vision to be more involved with the community where they are at and also

to take some action to join with people in a constructive way. In the future it is hoped that we would link with other organisations such as ARRCC, of which WCCM is already a member, to offer support and be involved in some of their activities.

### Meditation @the Hill

On Sunday 23 February Meditation @the Hill was launched. The meditation times are Tuesday at 6pm, Wednesday at 12.15pm and Friday at 1pm and will commence 3 March. Lectio Divina will commence at the Vicarage on Wednesday 4 March at 2.30pm and will be co-facilitated by Fr Hugh.

Our hope is that not only parishioners but people working in or visiting the city, the homeless and students will join us for meditation and other activities. We shall be advertising by distributing brochures, placing a sandwich board outside the church and on the church and WCCM web sites.

## 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*





*The meditation booth – a place of stillness despite the close proximity to the festival mainstage!*

## WCCM at Catholic Youth Festival

By Eddie O'Connor  
from WCCM New Zealand

**In December 2019, Perth was host to the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF).**

The festival attracts around 6,000 young people from around Australia and includes a vast array of speakers, musicians, workshops, and promotions from Catholic organisations. I was invited to assist the Australian Community for Christian Meditation, who were promoting their work and hoping to encourage a few young Catholics to invest in a meditation practice.

The trip was both surprising and rewarding. A big surprise was the frenetic energy that vibrated through the festival over all three days. I've been to rock concerts with a more subdued atmosphere! Our little booth was situated fairly close to a stage where bands were playing much of the day, which certainly created a challenging environment to meditate in. I was fascinated by how ancient Christian practices were framed in this uniquely modern environment. For example, the Jesuits had created an iPad game called 'which saint are you?' I couldn't help but wonder what St Ignatius would have made of it!

The rewards came in the form

of so many young people looking for some silence and finding it at our meditation booth. We were offering a brief introduction and 8-10 minute meditation at the start of every hour. Some sessions we would have 2 or 3 people join us, sometimes groups of 10-15. Interestingly, there were many times where it would look like nobody was going to join us, but as the minute hand struck 12 a group would arrive and take a seat.

The level of noise and distraction ended up being a very useful teaching tool. Even amidst the pumping bass and sound of screaming teenagers, we were finding that people were finding a place of stillness during the

meditation. At the end of each session I would point out that the noisy environment was an exaggerated version of everyday life; we are constantly bombarded by distractions, not only from the world around us but within our own minds. This really seemed to hit home with many of them. Having such a prominent example of distraction was so illustrative it made me wonder if we should try giving introductions with a stereo playing loud music!

Helping WCCM Australia with their work in Perth was a real highlight on my meditation journey so far. A big thanks to the rest of the team for their encouragement and support.



*The team at the meditation booth.*



www.wccmaustralia.org.au

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