



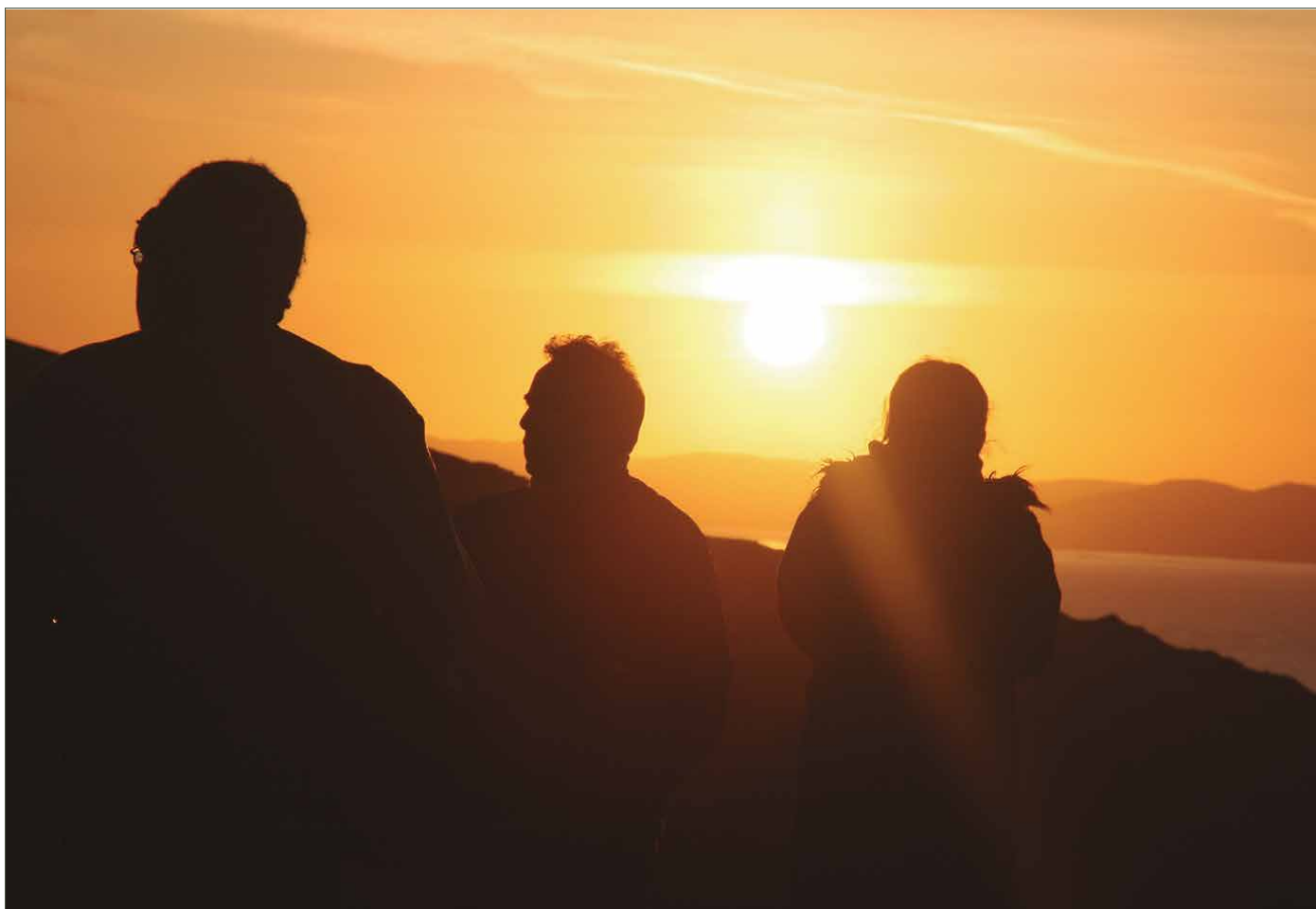
WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

Registered Charity No. 1182213

WCCM: 30 Years of Spreading the Revolutionary Seeds of Meditation

IN THE LIGHT OF THE COMMUNITY ANNIVERSARY, LAURENCE FREEMAN PROPOSES A REFLECTION ON TIME - WHAT PASSES AWAY AND WHAT IS ETERNAL?



Waiting for the Easter Sunrise, a traditional contemplative practice during WCCM retreats throughout the years (Photo by Laurence Freeman)

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Dear Friends

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow (*Heb 13:8*)

The most important thing to recognise in the human condition is the distinction between what passes away and what is eternal. The eternal, the ever-present, remains forever young through the passage of time. The damage that time inflicts can be continuously healed and so even suffering and loss lead into God's boundless wholeness. If we cannot relate to the timeless, the things of time lose their meaning. If we can, then even what dies or is lost is also seen to be precious. We can accept everything, every person that passes away with infinite love and care: indeed with reverence because everything, even what is here today and gone tomorrow like the flowers of the field, manifests God. Everything is sacred. Everything is filled with the glory of God and 'Christ dances in a thousand places'.

As the opening quotation about Christ suggests, *Being* is our source and destination, and both are *now*. It is the touchstone of meaning even in the smallest things; and from it flows hope in darkness and the renewal of life in death. When we are 'in Christ' nothing is meaningless. Nothing is wasted. We are in a 'new creation'. The dark night through which humanity is passing at present is our opportunity to recover at a higher level this ancient faith in Being, in humanity and in our world.

On September 4th the John Main Seminar 2021 – the second one online – will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the WCCM. It is a milestone moment for us all, members and friends worldwide, to celebrate, to ponder its meaning; and to see what has been manifested through the community up to this point. Then to glimpse what is our future direction. During this daylong event we will hear the inspirational uplifting testimonies of some who were eyewitnesses at the beginning

of the community and from younger people who have boarded the train and who will lead in the future. We will see how miraculously a small seed grew into a beautiful tree and put out brave new branches.

We will see how deep, intertwined and alive our roots are and how many new branches of our mission they are producing. Roots are invisible but most are in the topsoil close to us. Connected to the deeper taproot, their aliveness keeps the tree growing. At Bonnevaux we have magnificent trees about 400 years old. The original parts of the Abbaye building are a thousand years old and there is evidence of even earlier habitation in the grounds of this 'good valley'. To know who

*When we are 'in Christ'
nothing is meaningless.
Nothing is wasted*

we are, where we have come from and where we are going means to be aware of our roots. Not just for our community. This is something humanity has to remember about itself at this critical point of evolution. Our little, though global, celebration of the WCCM will contribute something to that greater re-discovery of human meaning and purpose.

*

The community was named late. Its seed lies in the life of John Main, our founder. His roots in the spiritual tradition he transmitted are nourished by the same life-force. It is not cultish therefore to learn from his life and return often to his words: all spiritual traditions see the sacred energy in their founders. For me personally he was my initiation into the person of Christ. Fr John encountered meditation from an Indian monk and made it part of his life in his twenties; he lost it for a decade but, after he began his

practice again in his forties, he became increasingly aware of his mission to teach it. His first step was to start a small meditation community at his home monastery, a prototype for our other communities over the years and finally for Bonnevaux. He gave his first public teaching at the monastery of Thomas Merton who had reawakened popular awareness of the Christian contemplative tradition. While he spent time there in solitude Fr John made his decision to start a new branch of the monastic tree in Montreal specifically devoted to the teaching of meditation. These links show the roots of his own journey through different spheres: the universal tradition, Christian faith and his monastic lineage. Much of his interior life (like that of Jesus' first thirty years) was hidden. When he began to teach openly his life shot forward like a comet. This began in 1975 and flowered over the next amazing seven years until, like Elijah, he was taken away in the whirlwind on December 30th 1982, too early, but certain that what he had planted would continue to grow.

On the day after the funeral at Mount Saviour Monastery where Fr John is buried, we left by car before sunrise. As often happens after the catharsis of a funeral, we were upbeat. The impact of absence was waiting to strike later. We began to doubt the direction we were heading in when we noticed the rising sun in front of us and remembered we should be travelling west. It's always hard to admit mistakes, but eventually we turned around: the first of many necessary changes of direction in the years ahead. The community at that time, the seed of the WCCM, was new and fragile. His successor was immature and had many weaknesses. Yet these and other imperfections proved to be exactly how the power of God operated. Over the next nine years this local community of meditators, monks and oblates became the root of an emerging global family of Christian

meditators, weekly groups and national communities. The transition from local to global was to prove painful. Representatives from around the world met at New Harmony in September 1991 for the John Main Seminar led by Bede Griffiths who spoke on John Main's vision of community (later published as *The New Creation in Christ*). It was the Pentecost of the WCCM.

Fr Bede was a powerful support and loving friend in the years after Fr John's death.

cloister to rescue a world adrift: new wine skins were needed for the new wine that would flow from a vine rooted in the eternal and the universal.

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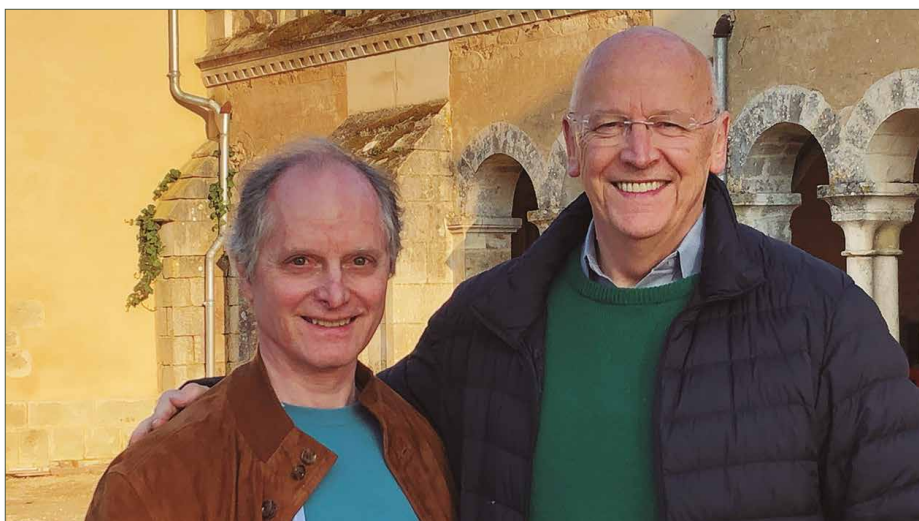
Loss brings suffering and death, the ultimate loss, is inseparable from life. Without them it would be impossible to discover life's meaning. As we review the past thirty years, preparing to look ahead, we remember innumerable teachers

was said to be the 'seed of the Church'.

Modern people thirst for meaning in life. Yet meaning is not a same day delivery, it emerges. Even if we can't express it well in thought or words we can feel and recognise it. The insights that come and the risks we take because of this emerging spirit of wisdom prove themselves over time by their fruits. To experience it we need personal connection and commitment. Without these personal insertion points with the tree and its roots, experience becomes meaningless, lacking the blood of life and the fire of love. It becomes absurdly fleeting, like the photos posted on Instagram which disappear after they have been viewed once. We have many ideas and opinions but not a living connection with the purpose of the plan we are living. Reason itself degrades in this absurdity and we miss the delight – both blissful and acute - of finding the mystery of our own destiny.

In modern culture life is being rapidly drained of ultimate meaning and purpose. In desperation many seek it in self-destructive ways. Lacking the personal connection that can come only from personal commitment they sink into alienation and isolation: relationships as consumer items, culture as entertainment, education as qualifications for employment, politics as soap opera. Because he could see these signs of the times forty years ago, John Main also saw the value of meditation for a world disconnected from its roots. His wisdom rose from his rootedness in Christ and his tradition. He saw that in a secularised and superficial world the self-inflicted wounds of humanity were multiplying exponentially. Healing, the primary care of the patient, lies in the experience that meditation opens to everyone who practices it.

He knew that meditation was not a quick-fix but that it was the simplest place to start. Raimon Panikkar said of John Main that 'he possessed the genius



Jay Stewart and Laurence Freeman at Bonnevaux

He recognised in John Main the prophetic spirit that had earlier called him into a daring new venture when he replanted his roots in India. He said of Fr John: 'in my experience (he) is the best spiritual guide in the church today' because of how he was restoring meditation to the heart of Christian life while also building a bridge of mystical unity between faiths and cultures. As monks, both Fr Bede and Fr John were trained in an ancient Christian monastic culture. Both initiated new, adapted forms of the tradition in a rapidly altering world and in a church that, despite its own attempts at self-reform, was failing to provide the spiritual wisdom society thirsted for. As monastic contemplatives, indeed mystics, they were united to Christ as their vine and had the prophetic vision to see that this wisdom was pushing out of the

and many who helped form the community we are today. Each one obeying their unique call, they helped transmit the gift Fr John had left to future generations. Many in the community today did not know these early teachers in person but their witness and influence helped form us. It is right to name them as part of our story and we plan to do this in a special place in Bonnevaux. They are many but I think now especially of Doreen Romandini, Eileen Byrne, Eileen O'Hea, Patricia Ng and most recently, Jay Stewart who had a teaching gift I had hoped would flourish longer with us but who left early. I see them as witnesses in the transmission of the wisdom of meditation that is the work of the WCCM. 'Witness' literally translates the Greek word for 'martyr'. In the early days of Christianity, the death of martyrs

of simplicity'. If you want to understand what this means, well, first meditate and then read *Word into Silence*. In his first book he delivered a manifesto of contemplative consciousness for our time, showing the three-way link between the essential experience of meditation, the essence of Christian faith and the critical emergency of our times.

There is nothing essentially new or modern about the Christian context of meditation. Its aim is to turn to our own nature with total concentration, to experience our creation first-hand and, above all, to turn and experience the living Spirit of God in our hearts. The life of that Spirit is eternal and indestructible and in this sense the truths that make the Christian context of meditation are always new and permanently modern. (p.5)...

This both expresses the 'essential teaching' of our community and connects it to the perennial philosophy of humanity. Meaning is connection and the conscious experience of this truth through participation and discovering our purpose in life in the ground of being. Whatever happens we will exist for a time, living or partly living. But we only flourish if we have found meaning in a personal connection with being. This connection is made deep in the field of silence and becomes the energy that drives the birth, growth and evolution of every new branch.

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The root of the word 'meaning' leads us back to the origin of consciousness itself. It is related to 'mind, memory, contemplation, being attentive and careful'. It *signifies* something because if we are connected we see everything as a sign. Our world hungers for meaning and purpose in order to unify and to correct the wrong direction we are taking. But the oldest sense of 'meaning' is an *act of memory*. We have forgotten ourselves. As a result we have become dis-membered.

The WCCM has become part of a global process of re-membering that Jesus said the Spirit would guide: *the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I said to you. (Jn 14:26)*.

What do the past thirty years of the WCCM mean? It emerges when we see the community as part of something greater than itself. Our life within community is always greater than our individual selves. It is part, and we are all part, of a great work: the Christ-healing of the forces of division and forgetfulness that lead to inhumanity and a terrible loss of

The WCCM believes in meditation as a simple way to wholeness, healing and peace

love. Our personal concerns are never insignificant. But in the community, mystically part of the Body of Christ, the greater meaning connects us to something, a reality, a presence through which we come to know ourselves differently. Meditation is the start of a revolution. The community it creates keeps the revolution spreading. Every social revolution promises greater happiness and justice but only this kind, the conversion of heart, delivers its promise, a fulfilment beyond anything we can imagine, in a way we can't predict and through a transformation beyond illusion into our true self. This is the extraordinary meaning of meditation.

The WCCM is not selling meditation as a product. Nor does it need to compete with other communities or traditions. It believes in meditation as a simple way to wholeness, healing and peace: a way to live more humanely. Redemptive meaning is found in the eternal, daily cycle of seeking and finding God, being changed and thereby changing our little bit of the world. Meditators put this into practice by actively installing a daily practice of

nonaction. We define a 'member' simply as someone 'who meditates in this tradition'. There is no membership fee except this. Personal growth in the fruits of meditation is the real profit margin. It brings us all, rich and poor, high and low, young and old, into a place of meaning, of deep connection and transformative commitment where we find we simply want to share it with others.

Meditation energises a life that becomes ever fresher, younger: something new and demanding but wonderful even as we grow older. Each of us has an inner call that we cannot reject without running away from ourselves. When we begin to answer this call, it feels as if we are in control. We may even feel heroic or generous. Over time we come to see that we are merely disciples: *When you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'*" (Lk 17:10)

Serving the whole that we are part of makes us humbler and more free. It is a way of leaving the partial self behind, no longer orbiting around old self-referencing systems. Meditation creates and sustains community because communion with others is part of this path. The life of a community is different from marriage but can be as rich and mysterious. It is as difficult and rewarding as all human relationships and so only deep solitude can support it. Community does not only mean living under the same roof. It means learning together in the discipline of love what life means.

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Looking back. Looking into what is happening now. Then we can look into the future. Where will the WCCM be in thirty years from now? It is easier to say where I (or you) will be then! Looking ahead in a faith built and renewed in continuous re-commitment becomes an act of hope; so in hope we look ahead. This is not like an institution making projections. With a contemplative consciousness we see what we can see and accept

what we can't and avoid fantasising about the unknown. To live wisely, hopefully with uncertainty.

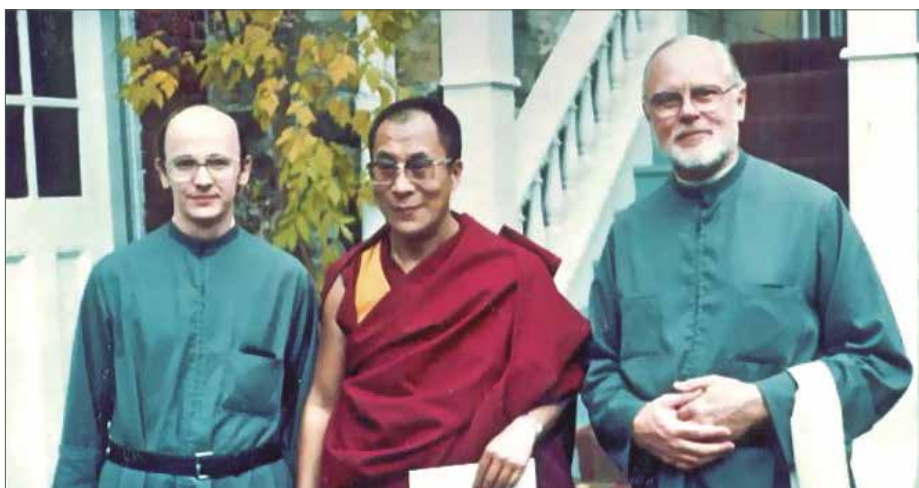
Shortly before he died, I asked Fr John what I should do? At that instant I was probably more concerned about his absence and about myself than the future of the community; but I would have welcomed clear instructions or predictions to ease the uncertainty looming in the coming catastrophe which would upset all our plans. He thought for a while and then with a strong look said, 'you will do what you have to do'. It did not give instant relief. Now I see what a liberating empow-

and we have Bonnevaux. It is a network in which different generations can mingle and collaborate. The wisdom of age and prudence and the wisdom of youth and impatience teach each other. Our teachers understand that, without hiding our roots or diluting the teaching, we can transmit the gift of meditation to the most needy, using appropriate language for each group as Paul the Hebrew once did in Athens. Bonnevaux already promises to be a multifaceted centre of a diverse community embodying the 'essential teaching' in its daily practice and becoming a place for nurturing teachers and future leaders and for

the sense of wholeness and sense of the sacred which bestows wisdom. Does it seem like a crazy world when you hear the news? The fool has said in his heart there is no God (Ps 14:1)

This is why I am proposing to our Guiding Board that we adopt for this anniversary year the theme of 'Unified Consciousness'. If some say, 'what on earth does that mean?', it will still have worked. Meditators, however, will intuit from their daily practice of oneing that this consciousness is already happening globally. To acknowledge this releases the hormone of hope: that we can and will change direction. Our community is part of this necessary hope. If it is beautiful, a small part manifests the whole. In this work numbers matter less than purity of heart.

In New Harmony in 1991 meditators gathered from around the world to name and give structure to the community that meditation was already forming. We felt part of a tradition that John Main had passed on. Like him, we had to be true to it and develop it further. Every new transmission of wisdom is a creative revolution. Each of us is involved in handing on this torch of contemplation which spreads the light of wisdom in the world. Looking back, we may see and miss the leaves that have fallen from this tree. It would be foolish to try to stick them back on. Seeing them fall makes us more conscious of the miracle of the eternal cycle of life and the tender love that sustains it.



Laurence Freeman, The Dalai Lama and John Main in Montreal, 1980

erment it was. It reflected another saying: *Do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. (Mt 6:34)*. We need to plan, pay insurance premiums, fundraise, care for people and things and do budgets. But, knowing we are part of a tradition flowing through time, an integral part of a whole, we won't be anxious about the future. Anxiety robs us of the gift of peace.

The community is at a very different place than in 1982 or 1991. We have strong, flexible structures for guiding the community inspired by the Rule of St Benedict: the Guiding Board, Executive Group, Trustees, Medio Media, directors for different areas, protocols for national communities, a growing Oblate community, programs for formation of leaders and teachers, an Academy in the making:

welcoming all seekers and pilgrims. They are reliable forms which will ensure succession in all kinds of community leadership including mine. Yet all forms change. Together we can change wisely.

In another sense we are in exactly the same place as we were thirty years ago. As always, there is uncertainty and new projects, like Bonnevaux and the Academy involve risk. The pandemic taught us to adapt promptly to change so we can continue to share the pearl of great price in new ways. Of course, we have changed in thirty years but it is the same tree. We can see better that all meditators have a call to contribute to the crisis of humanity of which Covid is only a part. As John Main, with other prophetic voices taught, the crisis at root is our accelerating loss of

They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream... like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in due season (Ps 1:1-3)

Happy birthday. Come to the party on September 4th!

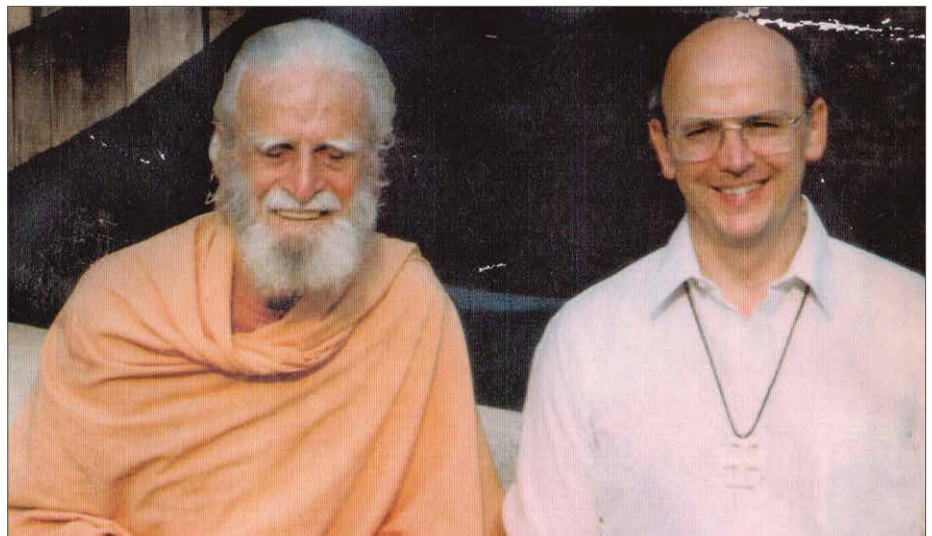
With much love

JMS 2021

Community of Love - Celebrating 30 Years of the founding of WCCM

AN ONLINE JMS UNITING THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY ACROSS THE TIME ZONES ON THE 4TH OF SEPTEMBER

This year's online John Main Seminar will be an overview of the life and development of the Community since it was named at New Harmony in 1991. The real founding had begun long before this in the personal journey of John Main. And it is an ongoing process: a community now present in more than a hundred countries and in 67 National Communities. We will hear testimonies and personal experiences of meditators who form a generational bridge covering these years. As we better understand ourselves shaped by the Spirit we also see how it empowers us to plant seeds of contemplation in our troubled world. Our multi-cultural celebration will be both joyful and reflective, looking back so that we can look forward. It will spotlight the teaching gifts of younger meditators and celebrate the ripening commitment of WCCM teachers who have



Bede Griffiths (who led the JMS in 1991) with Laurence Freeman

taught among us for years. This collaboration of the generations will show how the essential teaching of the WCCM has opened new channels between the community and the world and continues to do so. The day will be a rich mosaic includ-

ing a teaching by Fr Laurence on the 'WCCM and the New Christianity', short talks, meeting with meditators from around the world in small groups, a video on the history of WCCM, celebrations in art, music, poetry – and, of course, meditation together.

Past, future & the joy of living in the present moment

Personal testimonies of young and older members of the Community:

Pascale Callec (France): meditation and the environment;

Kath Houston (Australia): National Communities, emerging trends and patterns;

Magda Jass (Canada): the early days of WCCM and the importance of Community;

Enrique Lavin (Mexico): teaching meditation to children in rural areas;

Taynã Malaspina (Brazil): John Main's theology and its connection with young

people in search of meaning;

Martin Malina (Canada): the enriching challenge of being a national coordinator;

Jonathan Maresca (USA): how his stay at Bonnevaux, the community and the contemplative life has shaped his life so far;

Sr Denise McMahon (Fiji): meditation and the call to be a missionary;

Peter Ng (Singapore): how it was in New Harmony (1991) and the growth since then;

Nick Scrimenti (USA): his research on

John Main and his experience with meditation at the John Main Center;

Vladimír Volráb (Czech Republic): his research on John Main and the setting up of the WCCM Academy;

Josie von Zitzewitz (UK): how John Main's teaching influenced her life as a WCCM Oblate.

JMS 2021 ONLINE: 4TH SEPTEMBER

MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION:

[HTTP://TINY.CC/JMS2021](http://tiny.cc/jms2021)

News

International Oblate Retreat: love growing in diversity

BY EILEEN DUTT, INTERNATIONAL OBLATE COORDINATOR

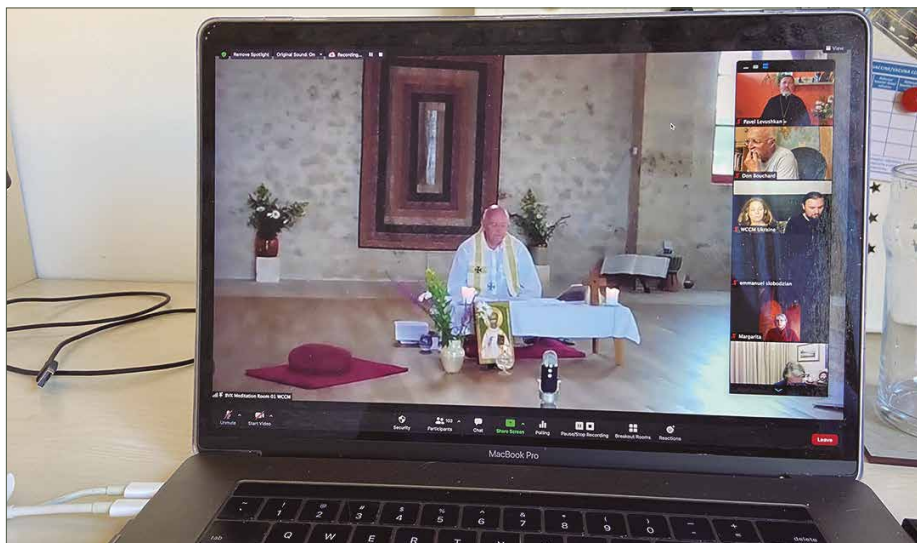
“...’Be still and know that I am God’ is not an escape from the problems of the world. But it is the answer to the problems of the world...The stillness is greater than the turmoil, greater than the violence, greater than the hatred... And nothing describes more directly our meditation and the needs of the world.”

Fr. Laurence

The 24 hour meditation, held on July 8th, prior to the International Oblate Retreat, was a warm, all inclusive event. Our aim was to let our light be seen and our silence be heard-with over 1800 participants we believe we succeeded!

The International Oblate Retreat, held July 9th-11th was our first online gathering with Oblates and friends around the world. As always when Oblates meet, the Spirit presides. The growth of our global community, which had become so evident during the pandemic, manifested itself in the number of Ceremonies -12 at each stage.

The opportunity to gather together and listen as Fr. Laurence talked us through the Benedictine guiding pre-



Receiving new Oblates during the online retreat

cepts of Obedience, Stability and Conversion was invigorating and most welcome. The way in which he covered the three touched the hearts of us all. In a world of babble and polarized opinions, we were reminded how important it is for us to learn to remain simple, silent, and in stillness so as to listen deeply, with attention, to the events around us, to the interactions of and with people, and to our own experiences and emotions in order to know and

understand ourselves and the world in which we live better. Above all, we were reminded of the importance of our commitment to being a community of love in which we, not only walk the same path with the other, but do so gently and lovingly so as to draw the other “into the light of true being” as John Main said. The retreat has given us a chance to appreciate the constant growth in diversity and conversion of our own community.

Bonnevaux Retreat Centre: blessing planned for April 2022

Bonnevaux is adapting to a new phase regarding COVID. The Community is open now to the public for short and long stays, following a protocol. The Retreat Centre will open for some test events in November. A formal blessing is planned for March/April 2022. You can follow updates and check new events by visiting bonnevauxwccm.org.



Leadership

Angelene Chan, on the new book “Contemplative Leaders”: reflections invite us to dig deeper

BY ANGELENE CHAN



The idea for the Bonnevaux Business Meditation Group (BBMG) was mooted by Fr Laurence and Peter Ng in late April, early May of 2020 when COVID-19 raged across many parts of the world, and the number of infections rose globally at an alarming rate. People were dealing with many fears under lockdown: feeling isolated or displaced, worried about catching the virus, concerned for their separated family members, and anxious about financial hardship.

Because the BBMG was started to help business and working people respond to the crisis in a contemplative way, the word “business” was originally included in its name. The word “business” also indicated that the group is not intended to be an exclusively Christian group, although it is led by Fr Laurence, a Catholic priest.

It is a secular meditation group where people of any or no spiritual tradition are welcomed. Some members are not in business, but are teachers, professionals who work for non-profit organizations, policy makers, etc., and the word “business” was eventually dropped from the name to make it even more inclusive. The group now known as the Bonnevaux Meditation Group (BMG), met online for the first time on May 15, 2020, and has continued to meet once a week for about 45 minutes. Meetings start with a talk by Fr Laurence, group members, or invited speakers, and end with a 20-minute silent meditation.

The BMG’s aim is to help its members begin and sustain a daily meditation practice. Meditating as a group encourages members to remain with the practice. The temptation to quit can be strong, especially for new meditators. The BMG is there every week for members to support each other.

For me, a book form is still a very effective medium to share knowledge. By publishing “Contemplative Leaders” we hope to reach outside our group and encourage more people to take up meditation or be more regular in their practice. We hope that working people who may not be familiar with meditation will obtain a better understanding of what meditation is through our personal stories and reflections. We hope they will find the experiences of other working professionals relatable and be encouraged to join our practice.

The reflections are testimonies of

meditation as an effective way to overcome life’s challenges. When we read or hear about other people’s experiences, we learn more about ourselves. Through our own thoughts and our own responses to their sharing, we are invited to dig deeper. Ultimately we hope the reflections will inspire desire or resolve for inner change in the readers.

Contemplative Leaders

CONTEMPLATIVE LEADERS
Personal Reflections by Members of the Bonnevaux Business Meditation Group

Introduction by
LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB

Personal Reflections by Members of the Bonnevaux Meditation Group (BMG)

ORDER HERE:
<https://mediomedia.com/>

Environment

Contemplation and the Fires of Climate Crisis

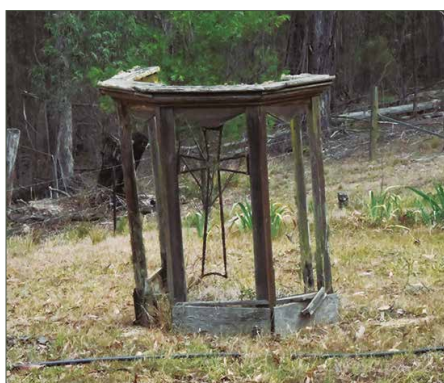
REFLECTIONS AFTER LIVING THROUGH THE DEVASTATING FIRES IN AUSTRALIA, 2020

BY LINDA CHAPMAN

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

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



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

tables. As a community we need to do the same. Anger, channelled 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 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.

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.

COP26 & WCCM

Glasgow is preparing to host the vital COP26 Climate Change Conference from the 31st of October to the 12th of November. Postponed from last year because of COVID, it is now even more urgent that the international delegates negotiate with their focus on the needs of the whole world, and take fully into account those communities already suffering. All information about WCCM events before and during the conference will be provided, including online meditations and talks. To learn details on how you can get involved and to get updates, visit : <http://tiny.cc/evmwccm>

News

More Research on John Main and Christian Meditation

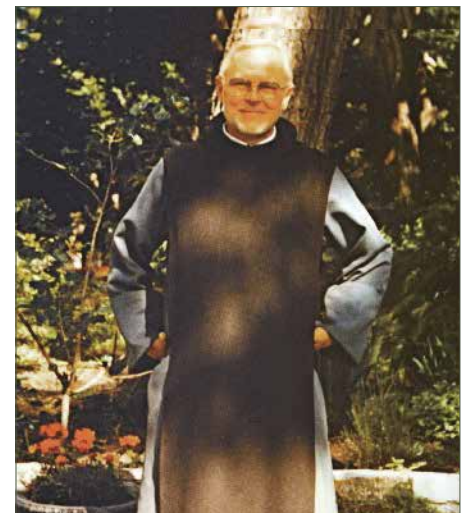
AS A CONTINUATION OF OUR SERIES, WE LOOK IN THIS ISSUE AT THE WORKS OF CARLOS (FROM SPAIN) AND THOMAS (FROM GERMANY)

A Moral Theology PhD on John Main

BY CARLOS MIRAMONTES, SPAIN

Currently I am conducting my Moral Theology PhD research on John Main's life, experience, insights and theology. Moral Theology is now less conceived as a reflection on what to do, and more as a reflection on the structure of Christian life itself, its fundamentals, processes, and how to structure it looking at its integral realization. In the course of my research I have come to believe that the essence of John Main's insight is that the Christian life based on meditation, that is, meditation interpreted in daily life, in the end brings people to live authentically. As John Main says in the last chapter of

Moment of Christ, giving ourselves totally in meditation, losing ourselves in doing that, handing over all our thoughts, preoccupations, plans, and even memories in meditation, can lead us to direct contact with the interior silence that we can "touch." We come in contact with our very being, in which "we are, move and exist," as Saint Paul would say. John Main's texts contain much more material to research, extract and develop, including his views on man, on God, on the world, on the essence of religion and also on morality. There is so much work yet for me to do!



The influence and effect of Christian Meditation in leadership of organizations and companies

BY THOMAS ZIMMERMANN, GERMANY

The many challenges of the current time, interconnected with the increasing disintegration of religion, family and value systems within our modern society, have caused me to become interested in finding an approach to reevaluate our decision-making process based on common deep-rooted beliefs. Hence, I see it as crucial to create new reference points in our fast-paced modern life.

In my work I will research the influence of Christian Meditation on current and potential leaders in organizations and companies. My main focus will be on leaders and entrepreneurs connected to the WCCM who have had relevant leadership experience in their professions.

Based on personal positive experiences, I plan to address the effects of meditation on the professional everyday lives of leaders and document its relevance on a scientific level. I would also like to highlight the added value of meditation to economic undertakings and, thus, establish a future-oriented leadership model.

In this context, I intend to conduct an explorative analysis by interviewing entrepreneurs as well as managers, who integrate meditation into their daily lives.

I will examine personal experiences and the associated effects on individual leadership behavior, the associated

perception as well as the influence on employees. I will also work out possible integration approaches in the various fields of action of organizational practice. Concluding, I shall exhibit how meditation, reintegration of values and beliefs as well as personal reflection within an organizational body can lead to a process of social transformation—all of these outcomes starting with the individual and arising from the strength of introspection/ meditation.

NEXT ISSUE:

We will highlight the research by Vladimír Volráb, from Czech Republic

In Focus

Carina Conte, Uruguay



Growing up in Uruguay, my early encounters with the divine were evidenced by my grandmother's loving devotion, and the deep silence I encountered on my occasional visits to church. It was a time when rituals and moral precepts were the dominant tone of most of the voices that spoke of God, and this focus pushed me away from religion as a teenager and a young adult. My career path took me quickly to executive positions in marketing and management, and these professional responsibilities, combined with raising children, became a heavy burden to bear. By 35 I was overworked, stressed, and out of balance. My stress level brought

on physical discomfort; the need for change was evident.

Help came in the form of Martín, a wonderful Yoga instructor. He introduced me and my husband to yoga, taught us meditation, and walked us through the sacred teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism. As we went deeper, I found it difficult to integrate the experience of meditation and the teachings; I was confused and yearning for more. Reading the Bible as part of the meditation practice was the next step, and the presence of Christ soon began to take root in our hearts.

One day, as I was seeking deeper insights into Christianity and meditation, a Google search finally connected the dots: there was a Benedictine monk who taught Christian Meditation, and he was leading a retreat in Córdoba, quite close to Montevideo! We went off to the retreat with our friend Philippe Sauval and his wife. Our 2011 journey was truly a one-way trip. Listening to Fr. Laurence was for us like putting the pieces of a puzzle together.

Philippe became WCCM National Coordinator in Uruguay, where there was only an incipient community. I began teaching children to meditate in our local parish, an amazing gift of

love. My husband and I and several friends each started meditation groups for adults, where we discovered the grace of spiritual friendship and community. Sharing the path of Christian meditation with my husband, Pablo, has been a revelation of unity in Christ that brought new depth and perspective to our life together.

As for work stress, I can't say I never experienced it again after beginning to meditate, but the permanent burden and the illusion of control I felt disappeared. Compassion and hope became faithful companions, turning around my leadership style from controlling and demanding to delegating and nurturing growth. Meditation has also fostered creativity, inspiring in me a new way of expressing the spiritual growth experience through icons and other paintings. It also led to further personal development through the study of coaching as a way of helping others in their own growth paths.

At the beginning of this year I was asked to take on the National Coordination of WCCM for Uruguay, a challenge that honours me and fills me with joy. I trust God will continue to grace our community with his love and patience to lead us in his path.



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Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org)
Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano
Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 September.

Resources & Events

New Meditatio Centre Website

The Meditatio Centre London recently relaunched its website with a new design and features. Visit here: <http://meditatiocentre.london.org>

Video

JMS 2020 talks available for Supporting Members

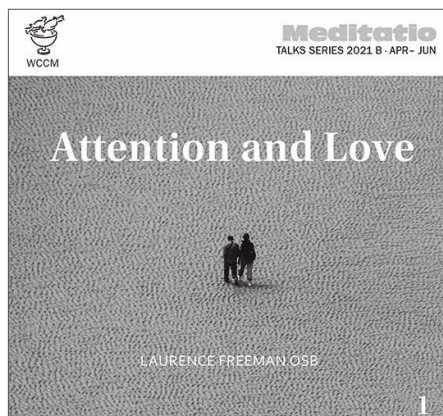


The sessions of the John Main Seminar 2020 with the theme "One Heart, One Hope - Indigenous Wisdom and the Future of Humanity" are now included in the Supporting Member area. The recordings are available in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Alex Zatyrcza (photo) was the keynote speaker. Supporting Members receive unlimited access to our growing library of online courses, recorded retreats and seminars. For more information visit <http://tiny.cc/bsmwccm>

Audio

Meditatio Talks Series 2021 B Apr-Jun

These talks reflect on the meaning of attention because attention is at the centre of human meaning, Laurence Freeman says. In moments of crisis, as during the present pandemic, what really matters is our encounter with love through the attention we receive. Meditation is a way of exercising our muscle of attention. Download & listen online: <http://tiny.cc/medt21b>



WCCM online events

Series in Progress:

- * Health Series: next sessions on Love, the Universal Healer and The Harmonies of a Healthy Life
- * Speaker Series: next sessions with Bela Hatvany and David Lorimer
- * Talks for Younger Adults with Laurence Freeman
- * National Communities online retreats led by Laurence Freeman

14-16 OCT

Beyond Words, Beyond Dualities
- online retreat led by Liz Watson

MORE INFO & REGISTRATION:
visit <http://wccm.org>

Bonnevaux events

These are in-person retreats hosted in a test-phase, before the opening of the Retreat Centre

10-13 NOV

Seeing with the Heart, a retreat led by Cynthia Bourgeault

29 NOV-5 DEC

Saving Time - Advent Retreat led by Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni

MORE INFO & REGISTRATION:
visit <http://bonnevauxwccm.org>

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VISIT WCCM's ONLINE STORE: <https://mediomedia.com>





Caring for our common home; 2021 ... a critical year for contemplative action

by Janet O'Sullivan

Many leading scientists and global leaders are saying we need urgent action to address climate change. This year, the global leaders are meeting in Glasgow in November (COP26), an event critical for changing awareness and for governments to commit to promised actions made 5 years ago but only partially acted upon.

This is a time to reflect on why and how a contemplative voice can add a deeper dimension to the many voices approaching the climate crisis. Meditation gives us a deeper, broader view, a deeper experience of who we truly are, not limited to our individual identity but a connected cell in a living, breathing universe.

The symbolism of our two doves logo indicates the need for both contemplation and action ... attention to our inner and outer ecology – that we cannot change the world without first transforming ourselves as Father Laurence has said many times.

In recent months WCCM Australia has offered several Zoom events and many meditators have participated in linking with actions and raising awareness of the urgency to change our way of relating to our common home.

NSW recently offered an Earth Day Zoom event, *Contemplative responses to Climate Change*, and in Victoria, a Zoom event was led by Deborah Guess *Attention and the Ecological Crisis* (the



“We cannot change the world without first transforming ourselves.”



content can be found on the *Living Waters* blog on our website or <https://www.thelivingwater.com.au/blog/the-ecological-crisis-a-wicked-problem-requiring-some-ancient-wisdom>

We have also made steps in linking with other faith based organisations taking part in public actions to raise awareness of the need for urgent action. The current pandemic is giving us many useful lessons of our interconnectivity; a taste of a simpler life, which can reduce the stresses our wasteful lifestyle and over consumption have on the earth's physical and energetic systems.

What is becoming evident also is the power of united faith-based groups in joining together and sharing of our

Continued over page

“This year we are called to reflect and to become contemplative activists ...”

deepest values in a multi faith context. In the UK members of WCCM are linking with diverse faith-based environmental groups to raise awareness of the spiritual dimension of the crisis leading up to COP26.

In March we participated in a global event *Sacred People, Sacred Earth*, organised by GreenFaith, a global alliance of environmental faith based organisations of which the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change is a member – some participating with their parishes; some individuals



<https://www.arrcc.org.au/arrcc-news>

participating with ARRCC – such as a small group of our meditators joining a public meditation opposite Parliament House in Sydney. Other meditators have taken part in regular actions such as displaying protest banners in Canberra.

This year we are called to reflect and

to become contemplative activists, to encourage more awareness of changes we can, (and need to make) to protect our common home and it's creatures and to create a more equitable, sustainable world whilst protecting and being present to it's wonder and beauty.



Meditatio Seminar

by WCCM Australia



Invites you to join our online seminar

Health and Wholeness:

Healing Ourselves and Healing the Earth

Saturday 25 Sept 2021

10am to 4pm AEST

Laurence Freeman OSB will lead us in meditation and talk about *The Power of Pure Attention* and *Information Alone is Not Enough*.

Dr Barry White will share with us how we can, and need to, place a contemplative practice at the centre, allowing us to live a life where being is primary to doing.

Dr Peter Smith will give us his insights into his personal experience of how meditation helped him cope with trauma following an accident.

Janet O'Sullivan will reflect on the interconnectedness of human and environmental health.

Register by 22 Sept: joanmmckeegan@outlook.com

A suggested donation of \$10 for the National Community and The WCCM Bonnevaux Program.

Account details:

NAB - Australian Christian Meditation Community

BSB: 083-166 A/c No: 868170813

Reference: HW and your full name.

wccmaustralia.org.au

COVID lockdown and a meditation group journey

by Lydia Dyhin
Templestowe, Victoria

None of us worldwide could have anticipated the impact of the emergence of COVID in our world, least of all on our Christian Meditation groups. We were all so used to coming together weekly to meditate without any real restrictions, fostering spiritual, emotional and social contact.

As COVID cases grew, we went into a very restricted lockdown, most of us seemed to go into some sort of shocked daze. The emotional fallout was immense where support and contact seemed to be replaced by isolation, fear of catching the virus, loneliness for some overwhelmed at the severity of the case numbers and a sense of helplessness. Time seemed to stop and there was a palpable sense of grief for what we thought we had lost. How were we to continue to meditate together, stay safe, connected, supported and nurtured?

After several rapid short trainings by/on Zoom, I felt skilled enough, as group

leader, to at least assist others in finding a way to follow the links and prompts. The lack of IT skills sent many of us into a state of panic. To learn something new at this stage, seemed daunting yet we supported each other with patience, kindness, encouragement, resolve and gratitude. Our aim was to be able to continue to hold our regular sessions, even if it were via a screen. What struck me was that there was little hesitation or resistance. With much perseverance, we held our first online Zoom meditation session and it was a huge relief for all of us who attended.

Our weekly meetings have continued regularly and over the past few months, we also welcomed new participants who were not able to attend face to face groups. Online provided an opportunity to be more inclusive, was also often convenient, travel-time saving and kept us safe! Despite some IT hiccups along the way, our group managed to offer support tips for each other, much to my delight.

Another development has been to be

able to take advantage of a wide range of online WCCM website resources such as inspirational talks and video Lectio by Father Laurence and others. With Zoom screen sharing, these are treats that allow us to move inward in our journey and they are listened to/watched with focus and stillness.

Almost weekly, we express enormous gratitude to be able to continue our group practice as well as maintain that thread of community that supports us all to deal with all the issues that COVID has thrown at us. This sense of community has been strengthened and transformed throughout all these challenges. The commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of the group has forged resilience, creativity and courage. We have in fact gained more than lost in this new environment and do not feel helpless now. New insights have been gleaned that there is in fact no separation between us and this COVID world of uncertainty. We can gain inner strength, clarity and a sense of oneness in the Silence and Stillness of Divine Presence.



The National Appeal

The National Appeal invites us to think carefully about giving back to our community here in Australia for the gift we have been given, the gift of Christian Meditation.

Your donations help us to continue to share our tradition with the wider community in many ways and support the large number of groups meeting every week across Australia.

I know the past 18 months have been difficult for our community we have experienced uncertainty and stay at home restrictions.

But it has been a blessing as well many have learnt new skills, including using our Zoom account for many events, meaning community members have

been able to join an online group for meditation as well as state, territory and national gatherings no matter where they live in Australia.

This gift of meditation we have received is priceless and it is our wish to continue to share it.

"The Peace, the stillness, the harmony that we experience in meditation becomes the basis for all our action."
John Main OSB

I would encourage you to support the community by giving to our National Appeal.

With my love and grateful thanks,

Jan Wylie
National Coordinator



Donations by Credit Card

Go to our website – wccmaustralia.org.au

Click on Support Us then National Appeal



For EFT payments

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A thank you celebration for Rod and Susan Page

by Vikki McDonough

On the 13 March the members of the ACT, Queanbeyan and South Coast meditation communities gathered in the church hall in Yarralumla to say a big thank you to Rod and Susan Page who have been State Coordinators for the past 12 years. It was lovely to have Penny Sturrock, Ruth Fowler and Heather Olley also join us for some time via Zoom.

The tables were decorated with candles and flowers, people brought food to share, Chris Clarke played his magnificent harp and Susan's son, daughter, their partners and children also came along to celebrate with us.

Here are just some of the words that were shared:

Rod and Susan have been tireless in their activities ranging from organising Father Laurence's visits to Canberra, annual retreats, essential teaching weekends, learn to meditate courses, as well as active participation in a wider range of initiatives such as Concerned Catholics, the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change and the Interfaith Forum, including submissions and articles to the Plenary Conference and publications including the Australian Catholic Weekly. They really embody the Christian spirit and see Christ in

everyone they meet. Thank you.

Antonia Lehn

Rod and Susan, may I take this opportunity to thank you for looking after our spiritual needs in the past and into the future via marvelous regular meditations. And how well you organised during lockdown on Zoom. That was pretty special. Rod and Susan, you have been untiring and so very generous for so many, many years and I applaud your decision but will miss you greatly when you step down, however we know we will see you often and continue to enjoy your guidance and experience.

Lynn Bliss

The thing that has struck me most about the way Rod and Susan have led the ACT meditation community over these many years is the spirit in which they've approached things - always spacious, seemingly unhurried, with deep humility and generous hospitality. As Joan Armitage said, 'they are a shining example of the fruits of meditation', and I really think that's true. They have created many opportunities for people to be involved, but there's never been a sense of pushiness or anxiety; rather a deep trust in the unfolding of things at their own time and pace. Neil and I have also been very grateful for Rod and Susan's encouragement and enthusiasm

for Benedictus, and the way our ministry has been complemented by and allowed to complement the work of the WCCM in Canberra. Rod and Susan – you have carried the wisdom of this way of prayer, this way of being in community, so faithfully and lovingly - thank you so much for all you've done and all you are. You have blessed us greatly. With love and blessing.

Sarah Bachelard and Neil Miller

Rod and Susan, you both have done an amazing job as Coordinators for the ACT Christian Meditation groups over many years, and in your support for my program in running meditation sessions at the ACT prison. Thank you both very much. We now have a substantial Christian Meditation CD library at the prison and we run up to four meditation sessions there most Fridays. Every blessing to you both for the future.

Noel Bentley

Rod and Susan, so many thanks for always being so welcoming to me and my on and off again attendance and involvement in the Meditation Community and group. I have always been so grateful for you both.

Anna Pembroke

Rod and Susan, it was in 2013, when we were posted to Canberra, that I started attending Christian Meditation that you led. I have been exposed to

Christian Meditation many years prior but did not take up the practice until joining your group. I believe I was ready to receive the gift of this practice and have started, in earnest, since then. You have modelled for me the gentle, free and Spirit-filled way of leading our sessions here in Mintaro. You both have been truly encouraging and supportive of the ministry at St Peter's Healing Place which is girded by the practice of Christian Meditation. Providing Zoom meditation sessions during lockdown was another source of encouragement and support for our sometimes weary souls. Thank you for your leadership, your friendship and the gentle way you have prodded Joe and I along this path. The practice of Christian Meditation has been a life-line and a continued source of nourishment for our spiritual life.

*May the Lord bless you and keep you
May the Lord make His face
to shine upon you
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up
His countenance upon you
And give you PEACE!
(Numbers 6:24-26)*

Jean and Joe Johns



Rod and Susan's decision to step down from their role as co ordinators was facilitated by the prayerful, generous offer of Joan Armitage to take on this position. Joan will continue to work with the core group, of which Rod and Susan remain a part, to nurture and share the gift of meditation in our community. We are blessed!

For me, in this moment, the words of John Main say it all ... so I'm reading from the February 2 entry in our beloved *Silence and Stillness*:

"What I think we have to understand is this: a tradition does not and cannot survive either merely by being talked about or by being written down. A tradition survives and grows only because men and women can be found who will enter the experience of the tradition. In other words, we not only inherit a tradition, but we have to re-create the tradition in every generation, and we re-create by discovering it from our own experience and at that moment of discovery, the tradition lives. It is a living tradition, and living, it possesses power. It becomes a living flame that has the power to enlighten, to guide and to warm.

Susan, Rod – you ARE our living flame. You have re-created the tradition in our generation for so many of us, you have enlightened, guided and warmed all of us here today and so many others over the years, in your sharing of the gift of meditation.

Heather Olley

My Meditation Journey

by Marie Stripp

Meditation first became important to me after reading an article in *The Age* by Sally White. It made the point that meditation made a difference to our relationship with others. That we become more inclusive with a broader outlook.

I joined a group in Melbourne but when I moved to Bairnsdale I had no connection with such a group but found a discussion group where we discussed the books we read and our understanding of them. We were a small group and it was suggested we speak a little on what we would like to see the group practice. I mentioned meditation and others were also interested so we met weekly. An interchurch meeting was advertised to be held at the Roman Catholic church. It was well attended and three groups

were started one at St Mary's, one at the Uniting church and one at St John's Anglican church.

This was twenty years ago and the group at the Uniting church and St John's still operate and also a group at St Peters in Paynesville. At St John's the numbers fluctuate as people come and go. Some say it is the focal point of their week. The church building is accessible in site and facilities. Seekers are welcome who drift in off the street and sometimes they sit on the floor. Opportunity to share before the silence begins is valued as also the prayer candles nearby. There is a rapport that builds between group members that is valued. People seem to become more mellow. Meditation groups are visually inclusive of ways of thought. At St John's the group comprises members of the Uniting church, Anglicans, we did have some Quakers and there are those of no particular faith.

The road of meditation is not easy. The first shock comes when we realise how undisciplined the mind is. How it refuses to do the bidding of our will. Once we make the commitment to meditate regularly it becomes part of our lives. In Lawrence Freeman's little book on meditation he says to be humble, patient, faithful and keep our sense of humour. Don't make a dark night out of every cloud but don't underestimate the perseverance you will need and the grace you will be given.

John Main wrote that we all need meditation because we live in a world that is really in danger of losing its sanity. The meditation we practice is not about getting into altered states of consciousness or seeing and experiencing anything out of the ordinary. It is about entering more fully with the ordinary and discovering the wonder of it.

The Sacred Space Aesthetic

by Geraldene Ford

The Sacred Space is where we each meet Jesus. Meditating alone, we meet Jesus in our hearts. Meditating together, we create the sacred space between and around us, our hearts go out to our confreres, our friends, our fellow meditators, our hearts bring us as one to the Lord.

“For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18.20)

Our preparation of a gathering space should therefore be appropriate and in keeping with the beauty of the sacred space into which we invite Our Lord.

Depending on the resources available to a group, it might be nice to lay a cloth reserved for the purpose on a centrally placed table or stool. If available, fresh flowers would be a lovely complement. A candle would add a sense of occasion and signify not only the Light of the World (William Holman Hunt, 1853), but also illumination. A fourth element to consider might be an image of Jesus.

The reverence with which we assemble and prepare our sacred spaces prepares our hearts and reflects our deep respect for one another and for ourselves. What each one brings to the sacred space is not limited. We bring our hearts, we bring our minds/consciousness, we bring the gift of love for one another. In that sacred space we meet the Eternal Presence.



by Susan Page

Setting up the sacred space sets the tone of the meditation. It can be as simple or elaborate as you choose.

Consider using; floor space, small table cloth, fabric, fresh flowers, a bowl of water with floating candles or petals, an icon or image of Christ, fragrance from a candle, oil burner or incense, a chime, meditation bowl or the WCCM timer App. Music can be added to fill the space and calm our senses in preparation for our meditation practice. The WCCM two-doves image represents action in contemplation.

On arrival a poster might be displayed for example ‘WELCOME please enter quietly for meditation’. A welcoming gesture from the group leader is always appreciated. An offering basket for Bonnevaux or WCCM Friends should be placed away from the sacred space, near the entrance welcome sign, maybe with a flower or candle.

Each meditator may be invited to introduce themselves with Christian name only, when seated. People should be reminded to silence their phones before the session commences. Signage for the mantra, MA-RA-NA-THA...Come Lord, can be placed near people who are new or visiting, as a helpful prompt.

A brief talk or reading on the practice of meditation from for example, John Main in *Stillness & Silence in Every Season*, or Laurence Freeman from *Daily Wisdom* available on the WCCM website, is then followed by a period of meditation.

The time of stillness and silence is commenced and concluded by the gentle ringing of chimes.





by Joan Armitage and
Winifred Lamb

Just as the aesthetic space sets the tone for meditation, so silence, stillness and simplicity readies us for the moment in which we begin to meditate together.

This is why we are cultivating the understanding in our group to enter in silence, leaving for those who wish it the sharing and conversation until after the time of meditation.

As people enter they are greeted by a quiet salutation and directed to the COVID app to record their presence. Music is playing quietly. The chairs are arranged in a circle with the sacred table in the centre, the room is a pleasant temperature. It is time to sit in silence in preparation for our mediation time.

Silence, stillness and simplicity and the practice of restraint from chatting as we enter the space of meeting are postures of reverence. They are also postures of faith that are particularly precious on those occasions when we are feeling the weight of life. As Lawrence puts it, silence is 'based upon faith that God knows what we need, even before we do. Certainly before we ask.' It means letting go of thoughts. Stillness means letting go of desire. Simplicity means letting go of self-analysis. These are postures of faith, expectancy and hope.

As John Main put it, 'the conviction we must come to in our meditation, ... [is] that the darkness cannot quench the light.' (*Way of Unknowing: Expanding Spiritual Horizons through Meditation.*)

Mar-ra-na-tha ... Come Lord Jesus.

“Aesthetic space, ... silence, stillness and simplicity readies us for the moment in which we begin to meditate.”





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