



Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org

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J O H N M A I N S E M I N A R 2 0 0 8

"Unity: Local and Global"

AUGUST, 15-17 | MAINZ, GERMANY

LED BY CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

Come to this year's enlightening John Main Seminar in the beautiful ancient city of Mainz in Germany. The theme is of universal concern : Unity Local and Global? How do we balance these two aspects in the modern world? How does Christian faith and meditation help? Cardinal Kasper is the principal presenter in this ecumenical exploration. Renowned for the depth and inclusiveness of his vision (and a much discussed candidate for the last papal election) his clarity, good-natured humour and his wisdom about the modern global process will offer unique and profound insights. The Seminar is a chance also to meet meditators from around the world and there is also an optional pilgrimage of local monastic sites. Complete information at <http://www.jms2008.de/> or contact your National Coordinator.

IN FOCUS

When Fr Laurence asked us to act as liaison between the younger meditators and the Australian Community we were both surprised. We have been meditating for many years but our three 20-something children have not shown much interest in this way and we had little sense of a call to work with young people. So, our initial response was self-doubt, but we accepted in faith and have been wonderfully encouraged by the gift of friendship the young people offer, and by our shared commitment to this way of prayer and the fruitfulness of our efforts together.

Over recent years, in consultation with the 'YCM-er's' we have arranged events in Sydney and supported another in the USA. The Australian young meditators took the initiative about 2 years ago to set up a series of weekends away together in Sydney. We regularly visit the group and usually have a meal together afterwards. Recently our conversations have revolved around our participation in World Youth day and from this conversation has come a beautiful short film which will be part of the WYD Christian Meditation Centre programme in Sydney this July and which we are happy to make available to others working with young people. It was made by Claire Morgan who coordinates the group and works as a filmmaker. So many aspects of the Community are being called into play in our preparations for this big week of event: food for the pilgrims, arrangements for Laurence and Giovanni who will both be here for about 8 days, the venue, books, handouts, web presence, publicity and preparation of the contemplative space for the busy young pilgrims, a post-WYD surf club retreat, T-shirts, and prayer stools. All this reminds us of other ways we have been involved in organizing major retreats and the John Main Seminar

in 2001 led by Rowan Williams. We have found amongst the local meditators a rich pool of talent, which they share generously. Busy, but still meditating, we notice an encouraging sense of the spirit acting through us for the benefit of the Community.

Somehow we can raise our heads above the details and see the bigger picture: a daily living out of the miracle of the loaves.

But with World Youth Day, it is difficult to see the exact shape of the Centre. Nevertheless, all the Christian meditators in Sydney are enthusiastic about offering our way of prayer to the young pilgrims from around the world. We will welcome them to our center which has been set up in a Uniting Church in Paddington and hope to help them experience the joy of entering into stillness, inner peace and deeper union with God. We hope that some who taste meditation may continue the practice and even share the experience with others in the future. As Archbishop Oscar Romero said, we are "architects of a future not our own". The excitement surrounding World Youth Day is growing here in Sydney and we invite the whole community of Christian mediators to be with us in mid-July either in body or spirit – or both. We are so blessed that Giovanni will be with us to teach and encourage young mediators to consider the place of the body and posture in Christian contemplative prayer.

Paul and Judi Taylor (palmy@ozemail.com.au)





A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

Dearest friends,

I recently sat down to read a book, took off my ordinary glasses and put on my usual reading glasses. To my surprise I couldn't seem to focus on the page and concluded that the ageing process was catching up with me. I experimented with the focal length by moving the book nearer and further away but my vision remained blurred. Then I put on more light and, when that didn't work either, decided to clean the lenses. I cleaned one but when I moved to the other I discovered it wasn't there. It took me a few hours to track down the lens that had slipped out of its frame. By nature lenses are transparent and are meant to be looked through rather than at.

The book I was eventually able to read better was Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, a multi-disciplinary and magisterial study of the process of secularization in the modern world. Taylor, who opened the John Main Seminar last year (and whose talk there will be published together with the other contributors later this year), sees many elements making up this process. He says it is not just the diminishing of church practice or the separation between religion and public life. In many ways, he says, the secular spirit is the result of intrinsic elements in religion itself – such as the affirmation of the ordinary in Christian life, the sense that the human person is meant to flourish even in this life. That can lead to the sense that God is just an optional extra in the belief system – and even one that is more trouble than it's worth when you see how divisive the idea of God can become for religious people.

"I have come that you many have life, life in all its fullness', as Jesus said and as John Main often quoted in his teaching on the practice, the daily practice, of meditation. But Taylor also examines the 'disenchantment' of the modern world, the loss of a sense of sacredness and transcendence as well as the failure of churches to remain centered in these essential religious values as their histories became mired in power politics and institutional hierarchy.

As I read these ideas, with both lenses now firmly inserted in my glasses, I thought that perhaps this was a factor in our modern dilemma: the fact that one of the lenses of our religious way of seeing, an essential aspect of all human perception and well-being, has long slipped out without our being aware of it. We can forget what clarity looks like.

No wonder religion lost its focus when the contemplative dimension was lost. The recovery of this depth dimension of Christianity is important therefore not only for religion but also for the world that it is supposed to be serving and teaching.

One result of this diminished sacredness is the way our sense of time has contracted. Time now is measured in money-terms; the minutes and hours of each day often feel locked into a merely functional and economic zone of life. Our ancestors also went to work and made money but their experience of time was constantly penetrated, interwoven with the secular. Feasts, holy days and liturgical cycles occurred throughout the year and provided diversity and depth as the statutory vacations and organized entertainment of the industrial age fail to. Today the economy has become the ever-measurable test of human values and quality of life as well as the lifeblood of politicians and the headline news.

For religious people of course there is still some survival of sacred time and seasons. We have, for example, just re-entered 'ordinary time' after the long Lent and Easter seasons. If you go to church or read the daily office this is a major change of tone and theme but it is a private matter or one that you share with some of your fellow believers. For me it is always a relief to get the post-Easter readings from the Apocalypse over with. One of the things I look forward to hearing in heaven is why Revelation rather than, say the Gospel of Thomas, got into the canon. But even what you don't personally like or understand helps shape the framework of life and to make meaning for you.

Lectio, the spiritual reading of scripture on a daily basis, helps to offset the excessive secularization of time. To spend even a short time in 'sacred reading' every day makes a big difference simply because it is not the same as reading the news or email or even literature. Moving to the Book of Job, as the monastic breviary does at the beginning of 'ordinary time', highlights levels of meaning that are hidden in day to day losses and disappointments. These often bring ultimate questions, however briefly, to the forefront of our minds as we reflect on the good or bad things that happen to us in the short or medium term. We may feel fortunate as we think of the beginning of Job that whatever goes wrong for us at least we haven't lost everything in a single day, family, home and fortune, as Job did when his faith was tested. But then as you reflect on his fate you cannot help but recall the millions of Chinese and Burmese villagers who have in fact been, and are being, subjected to the plagues of Job and whose anguish and struggle for survival do not allow them our luxury of time for lectio. Yet they too must at times reflect on the meaning of life and the suffering of loss as they wait for relief to arrive or huddle in tents protecting

their surviving children. Seeing that time is more than what can be charged for frees up space for compassion and empathy.

Events shape our lives, even distant events whose memory has become hazy. But habits of mind we have formed and find hard to change also create interior postures that then become the cause of secondary or referred pain. As their body ages, most people unconsciously develop sitting positions or standing and walking postures that attempt to compensate for things that have gone wrong with the body – personal defects that you learn to live with (a shorter leg or weak back), accidents that have left their mark, the effects of youthful athletic prowess, or a touch of rheumatism. The ways we adjust weight or pressure to make these conditions ‘better’ can themselves be ‘bad’ things for us that make things ‘worse’. We speak of a ‘bad’ back but do not mean it is an immoral or sinful back any more than we mean that a bad carpenter is necessarily a wicked person. Yet when we speak about the effects of addiction, spiritual laziness, evasion of reality and truth, turning away from those in need, we use these same terms with a strong self-accusatory meaning – or apply them in this way to others.

These are the ‘bad’ things of ordinary life that cause us pain and trouble. In many ways a bad back and a bad temperament have a lot in common. They are not best dealt with by punishment. Once they have been properly faced and diagnosed both need tender care and loving attention. They are not things we have deliberately cultivated but they are the result of bad inner or outer postures that have developed unconsciously over time and need correction. Like those negative states of mind that the Desert teachers called the ‘principal faults’ and which came to be known as the ‘seven deadly sins’, they can be named and explained. But then they need to be dealt with. They exist no less in a secular world than in a religious society though they may be named and understood differently and their treatment approached with a different set of tools. Pride (the cult of celebrity), lust (the sex industry), gluttony (bad eating habits), greed (the bad habits of the financial world that are causing our economic woes at present), anger (our proclivity to violence), sadness (the depression and stress that characterize our culture) are ‘bad’ things we all encounter in daily life. Bad for us and bad for those we have to live with.

But they need treatment rather than punishment. For this reason the early teachers of Christianity used images of therapy and healing rather than judgment and punishment to describe the way that Christ, ‘the divine physician and all-healing medicine of humanity’ makes us better – as Clement of Alexandria described him. We are always in search of quick cures even if they serve only to mask the symptoms (and take the pain away) rather than get to the root cause of the trouble. The spiritual therapy of prayer has immediate effects but it still takes time to restore us to full health. In fact if we persevere with the

treatment for the full course we will find ourselves in better health than we knew before. Holiness grows on us.

Our secularity can thus help re-awaken us to the true meaning of some of the traditional understanding of prayer. Firstly, that it needs to be practiced within the daily round of ordinary time, not just in the margins of the working day. The twice-daily times of meditation become, for modern secular people, a spiritual ritual that frames and deepens ‘life-time’. It is a small enough exercise and consecration of time. Yet like the exercise a physiotherapist would give you to correct the effects of unconscious bad posture, it soon makes a big difference.

The Dalai Lama says that he knows it will not solve the ecological crisis but he nevertheless practices energy-economies like turning off lights and taking showers rather than baths. Small things practiced by many people do make a big difference. So the daily meditation practiced by many people today changes the world as a whole for the better because many of these bad habits that are causing us pain have now progressed and developed on the collective, not just the individual, level.

Prayer is personal not just individualistic. That means it is more than revolving around the egocentric concerns of our lives. It is about breaking out of that orbit and making the true and universal centre of reality the conscious hub of our personal universe. Prayer

then takes on an increasingly universalist significance as our own worries and troubles are re-configured in a network of relationships held together by compassion and wisdom, the very forces of the soul that lift us out of the basement of the ego to the roof of the soul where we can see the stars.

Then the ‘ordinary’ ceases to be equated with the boring or the ‘been there, seen that’ jadedness of so much secularized time. Meditation is one of the powerful personal practices of healthy living that restores to us that quality of a child we so admire and wonder at, the child’s capacity for discovery and surprise. We come to be able to love and relish the ordinary rather than trying to escape it into something more stimulating or ‘new’.

There is nothing so repetitious as the ‘novelty’ of modern consumerism, nothing more wonderfully renewing than reconnecting with the beauty and meaning of our ordinary environment. To love the simple and immediate manifestations of what is present to us awakens depth and meaning, a sacramental dimension of life in which everything is significant and related. This dimension then provides us with resources to deal with life’s losses and hardships as no external means can.

In the same way it alerts us to the presence of real happiness and to its underlying nature which

“I HAVE COME
THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE,
LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS.”



saves us from doing what we so often do, looking back afterwards and feeling that we missed the gift of the moment at the instant of its coming.

Big change happens as a result of many small shifts of posture and perception. There is both a naturalness and ordinariness to this process and a hiddenness to it. Like the seed that germinates in the ground – ‘how we do not know’, as Jesus said – the ordinary, daily times of meditation lead to radical changes in our way of living and seeing. The missing lens of our perceiving is found and re-inserted and – gradually but surely – the billions of synapses that make up our being-in-the-world and with others, more numerous they say than the stars, are changed into new patterns. Thus the kingdom of God is discovered.

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Of course as with any journey, any process of growth, there are stages. And many ways of describing the changes. St John of the Cross honestly describes the progress through the night of the senses in which we are detached from the sensory satisfactions of devotional prayer (the nice glow of self-approval and feeling of success) to, at least for some, the darker night of the spirit where we are blinded by the light and feel an inexplicable and at times unendurable sense of absence and self-alienation. The Desert Fathers and Mothers spoke, more gently, of the cycle of growth that takes us through enthusiasm, into *acedia* (the cooling of the first fervour, discouragement and a sense of regression), *apatheia* (health of soul and integration) and on to a wider expansion into *agape* (the boundless love that is God).

Meister Eckhart compares the training and education of the spirit to six grades. In the first we live according to received ideas of goodness, so we remain dependent and imitative. Then we begin to seek instruction and wisdom in direct experience. The child-soul ‘crawls out of its mother’s lap and smiles at its heavenly father.’ It then separates from the mother, chooses to be rooted in God and naturally turns from what is unlike God. So, it keeps growing, suffers gladly without complaint

and learns to handle temptation, the allure of illusion. In acquiring the ‘true riches of wisdom’ it finds itself at peace with itself and with the world. Finally it is transformed into the divine nature and ‘enters eternal life’.

Jesus is not so systematic. But the Beatitudes, the foundations of true happiness, describe aspects of spiritual growth which accompany the gradual, ordinary progressive awakening of the mind and heart to its own source and goal. Poverty of spirit and purity of heart, in particular, become ordinary but continually transformative ways of being and seeing. Eckhart describes poverty in radical terms. We are not poor, he says, as long as we desire to do God’s will because there is still an ego wishing something even if it a good thing. Only when the poverty or inner spaciousness is so complete that only God is (‘I live no longer but Christ lives in me’) can God fully manifest in the emptiness. Day by day this poverty deepens as we learn, through fidelity to the practice, to let go because we must let go and letting go is good - not because of what we hope to get in return.

Some years ago I was talking with a man who wanted to make a material donation to a good cause. As he discussed the terms I saw him begin to writhe under the pressure he was feeling. More and more conditions were being added until I finally put him out of his misery by suggesting he return to the matter later. He looked so relieved. Many of us can give but few can really let go, give without conditions or expectations of any reward.

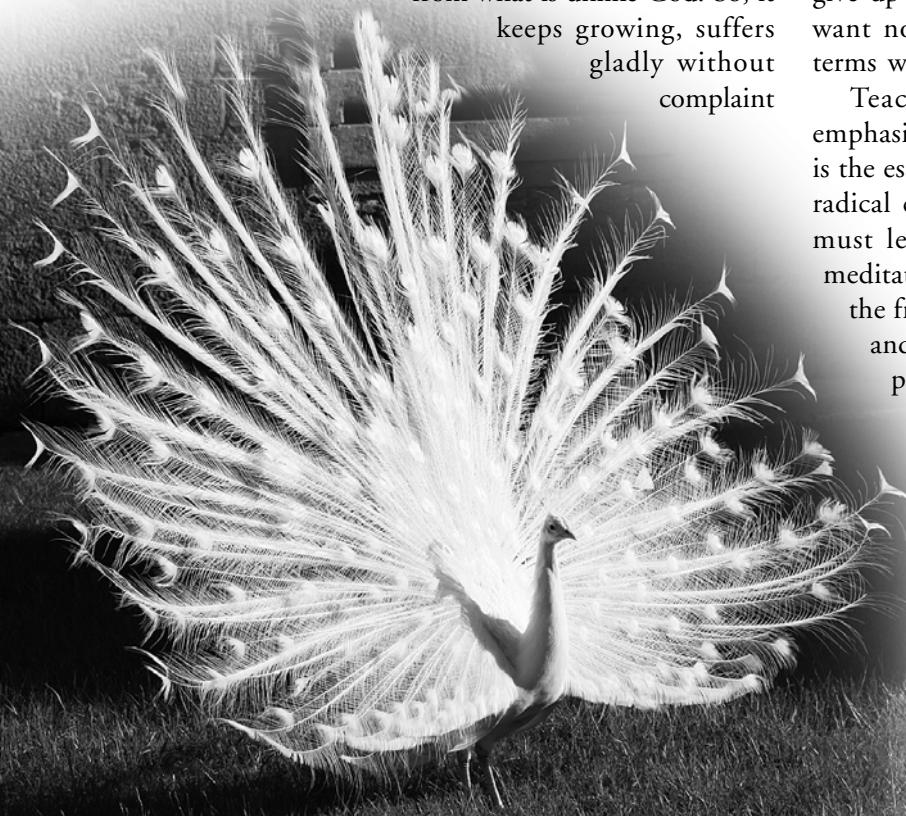
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As John Main understood, this poverty of spirit is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, though one that we have to learn to receive. The ‘poverty of the mantra’ edges us little by little, day by day, towards this state of soul. It is not, as the word ‘poverty’ might suggest, a negative state of deprivation but a creative state of infinite potential. Eckhart in his provocative way and using the paradoxical language of the mystic says that in giving up everything we even give up the god of our imagination. In negative terms we want nothing, know nothing, have nothing. In positive terms we are in the Kingdom.

Teaching in the same tradition, John Main often emphasizes the transcendence of self-consciousness which is the essence of poverty of spirit and which fulfils the most radical call of Jesus to discipleship. ‘Whoever follows me must leave self behind’, he said. The daily practice of meditation makes this invitation a practical way of life as the fruits of the practice begin to appear in our character and relationships and in the changing patterns of our perception.

This state of poverty is often compared to the desert – a place of simplicity, purity and immediacy where we more easily encounter ourselves and the true God who is the source of our selfhood. But meditation teaches us that the desert, like the Kingdom, is not a place or even a particular form of life, but an experience, a state of consciousness. We are the desert we enter. The Kingdom we are journeying to is within us.

As poverty expands our potential, it also



develops that purity of heart which is reflected in the qualities of daily life. Poverty of spirit simplifies and transforms the multiplicity of desires that quickly clog and complicate ordinary time. With a regular practice of meditation, we find that we do not need so much ego-stimulation, so much distraction, so much window-shopping or living on credit. There are other ways of spending our time which do not demand so much complicated preparation or waste of resources. You do not need to watch so much television or turn on the radio each time you get in the car.

One morning recently an eight-year-old boy, who is meditating regularly in his class, got into the car with his father on the way to school. As usual his father automatically turned on the radio and was surprised when his son asked if he would turn it off, 'because I want to meditate'. The effects of meditation seem to become visible very quickly in the life of children. Teachers and parents notice the benefits in them personally and often, as a group, 'they are kinder to each other', as more than one teacher has remarked. Perhaps for older beginners it takes a little longer to notice how the fruits of the spirit are appearing in ordinary life. We tend to look for big changes quickly but when we notice the small incremental changes in daily habits and values we become aware of the deep and enduring nature of the process unfolding in us. In a culture so focused on control and planning it is hard for us to be aware of the naturalness and ordinariness of real growth. But as John Main put it,

The meaning of life is to see God with absolute clarity. The vision of God is not the result of moral striving or an ambitious pursuit of holiness. It is a pure gift of God. Forget about your own holiness and simply be open to the presence of God in our midst (*Door to Silence*).

A 'pure gift' has no negotiable value. It is just an abstraction or a dream in the terms of the egotistical outlook on reality. But this outlook is transformed by the daily practice of the radical poverty of spirit concentrated in the work of the mantra. Religious experience is lifted to a nondual level, which means we are less likely to look at God and more capable of seeing God. We see because God sees us and draws us into the divine self-knowledge that is the life and gift of the Spirit that has flooded ordinary time after the extraordinary season of Easter. This leads to and is reflected in a profound and permanent change in the way we live and relate to people and understand the meaning of our daily decisions. In so much of modern consciousness the role of the inner 'witness' or observer of all that is happening to us can be very exaggerated. It is a level of awareness that has benefits but also that needs to be transcended. But of course we don't become less self-conscious and more God-conscious by thinking about ourselves more. We know ourselves by forgetting ourselves. We know God by knowing ourselves to be known.

The secret of all this is a mystery lying open to all and in full view. It is simply to come down to a single point of

calm, focused attention. If there is any condition attached it is simply this, that we are wholehearted about it.

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A meditation retreat is a good way to re-centre oneself in the regular practice in daily life. You take a weekend or a week (maybe soon it will be possible to make longer retreats in the community). Life becomes suddenly much more ordinary as the need to rush or solve problems drops away. Old habits of mind die hard, of course, and silence and the approach of stillness can make us uneasy. During a meditation retreat recently someone announced, whether defiantly or naively I'm not sure, that the afternoon silence had proven too much and they had slipped out to a nearby gym in town. But others on the retreat had learned to face down this natural restlessness and had found that, when faced, it can subside and a great calm, the peace of infinite potential and pure gift, can then be tasted.

Developing the taste for reality at this level requires a mixture, unique in measure for each person, of faith and grace. Faith is perseverance in a relationship. It expresses and intensifies love because relationship is about attention. So, sustaining attention

through good and bad times is the secret of achieving the union that the heart craves. Grace mysteriously precedes, accompanies and fulfils faith. Therefore, as John Main encouragingly said, all we have to do is to begin.

Most people continually imagine how their lives could be better, with more happiness, less fear, more fulfillment, less insecurity, a bigger house, a smaller house, marriage or the single life. Yet when the opportunity for a real change for the better presents itself we frequently postpone or opt for a long diversion. In meditation we pass from imagined to actual change, from dreaming of the extraordinary to penetrating the depths of what is here and now day by day. As I said at the beginning of this ordinary-time letter, our way of experiencing and interpreting time itself underlies our spiritual journey. In the flatland of secular time waiting is a pain, an inconvenience and frustration. Modified by sacred time, though, we see that the real pain arises not from waiting, which is a means of making real, but from postponement or the avoidance of reality. There are no shortcuts, no cheap grace. But there is a direct path and happiness is to be on it.

With much love,



Laurence Freeman OSB

"THE MEANING OF LIFE
IS TO SEE GOD
WITH ABSOLUTE CLARITY."

NEWS FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY

The following is a small representation of the life of the Community. For weekly news and more information visit the Community web page: www.wccm.org

MEDITATION CENTRE AT WORLD YOUTH DAY



At the invitation of Cardinal George Pell and the Archdiocese of Sydney, The World Community for Christian Meditation has been invited to open and manage a Christian Meditation centre for the many young pilgrims who are coming to deepen their faith and pray with faith-sharers from around the world and with the Pope at the Mass that is the culmination of their pilgrimage. For information about the WYD -WCCM Centre or to make a reservation for a group of pilgrims to visit and meet Fr Laurence, Giovanni Felicioni and the young Australian meditators, contact : www.christianmeditationaustralia.org/wyd.html

VENEZUELA: GROWTH OF THE GROUPS AND NEW GUIDING BOARD MEMBER



Left to right: Translator, Francisco Wulff; Fr Laurence and Antonio Sosa, WCCM Coordinator for Venezuela.)

Fr Laurence visited Venezuela for the first time in February 2008. He visited three cities and spoke to a wide range of audiences. Antonio J. Sosa, Coordinator for Venezuela and organizer of Fr Laurence's recent tour to Caracas, has joined the WCCM Guiding Board and attended his first board meeting in London in March. Antonio expressed to the other Board members how honoured he was by this invitation and how he felt more committed than ever to develop the World Community in Venezuela. Antonio is a meditator who first learned meditation in a Caracas Zen Group. He holds an MSc in Economics from LSE in

London, and is a Corporate Vice President of CAF. After Fr Laurence's visit, people from Caracas, Maracay and Valencia became interested to learn to meditate and have been forming weekly meditation groups. Antonio is inviting five leaders to form a WCCM-Venezuela Sponsors Group which will later become the Venezuela National Council. Some of the first weekly meditation groups are forming spontaneously in Caracas (El Cafetal, La Lagunita e ITER) and Valencia. Venezuela Medita, an intranet of the 700 attendees of Fr Laurence's conferences, was created to keep the community in touch, facilitating weekly groups developing in neighbouring areas and sending them reading material and announcements of up-coming events.

*Antonio Juan Sosa, National Coordinator
(asosa@CAF.com)*

WCCM HAITI PILGRIMAGE

DECEMBER 5-12 2008

LED BY LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB:

Meeting the poor in the 'poverty of meditation'

The World Community for Christian Meditation, in cooperation with the Saint Boniface Haiti Foundation, is arranging this pilgrimage to Haiti in which we will deepen our sense of the connection between contemplation and compassion. The trip includes Port au Prince, Les Cayes, and Fond des Blanc. The Program includes daily meditation, talks by Laurence Freeman, discussion and sharing, as well as visits to places where orphans, the sick and dying are cared for. The cost will be approximately US\$500 which includes room, board and transportation while in Haiti. Each traveler will need to arrange for, and pay for, their own travel to and from Port au Prince, Haiti. Passports are required and may take 3-6 months to be processed. Those who are not American citizens need to check with their country's consulate to see if a visa is required. See the WCCM webpage or contact:

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CHRISTIAN MEDITATION AS AN 11TH STEP PRACTICE

"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God – as we understood Him – praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." (Step Eleven of the 12 Step program of recovery suggested for problem drinkers by Alcoholics Anonymous.)

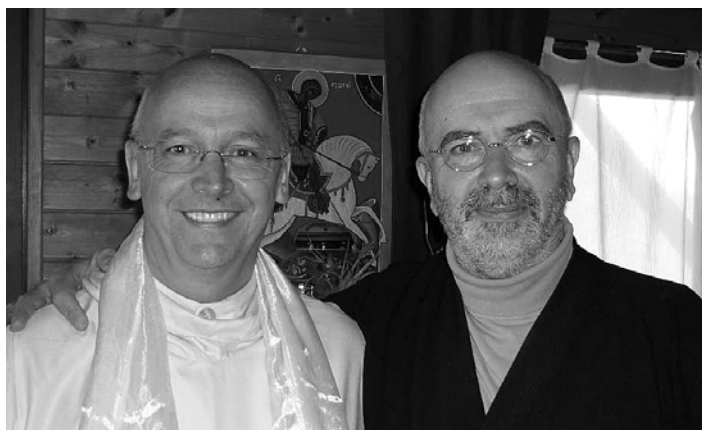
Members of 12 Step programs of recovery and other mediators met at the retreat centre at Cockfoster in London, April 11-13. The retreat/workshop was convened by Linda K. with her friend Sister Elizabeth, who are WCCM meditators in Florida, USA. The aim was to share

our experience, our strengths and hopes and to plan the way ahead for the growing numbers of 12 Step fellowship members who also practise Christian meditation. Fr Laurence Freeman, who had hoped to be with us, sent an email message while en route to Australia. The weekend included talks, discussions, five meditation sessions and an open AA meeting led by AA and Al-Anon speakers. Our mission statement reads: "We are a group of men and women from 12 Step programs following the teaching of John Main and The World Community for Christian Meditation. We are not a replacement for any 12 Step program, but we are here to share the ancient path of contemplative prayer as a way to practise the 11th Step. We are available for those looking to deepen their faith and to support those already practising Christian meditation." Linda K. said people who accessed the 11th Step page on the WCCM website often asked to be put in touch with an 11th Step meditation group. However, while we have no such groups at the present, we are here to carry the message through workshops, retreats and days of reflection. We would urge leaders of WCCM groups to encourage members who belong to 12 Step fellowships to find out more by contacting us via our website: webmaster@christianmeditation11step.org.

John M., of Geneva, agreed to produce a pamphlet giving advice to anyone planning to hold an 11th Step meditation retreat. George Z. of Canada has taken on the job of webmaster of the 11th Step page on the WCCM website. We agreed to hold a retreat for 11th Step meditators at Cockfosters from April 24-26, 2009, at which Fr Laurence will be invited to speak. It will be facilitated by Tilde C., of Denmark, Noel B. and Sr Catherine.

For details, contact *Tilde* (tilde@post4.tele.dk)

FRANCE



Fr Laurence with Lama Denys Rinpoché

In May, we were happy to welcome Fr Laurence for his regular visit to France. We drove him to Karma Ling, a Tibetan Buddhist centre near Chambéry where he met Lama Denys Rinpoché whom he is to have a dialogue with next September 5th-7th on the topic "Love and Absolute: contemplation at the heart of the way, how to understand the unity and diversity of the spiritual traditions". The atmosphere was very warm and friendly. We attended the colourful Tibetan meditations. Then we went to a retreat

weekend at the former Carthusian monastery of Pierre Chatel, between Lyon and Geneva. The site is magical, high up on a hill accessed by a twisting road with panoramic views of a river and mountains, and graced with a flock of white peacocks! Fr Laurence talked (in English, very well translated into French by John Moederle) about "Losing and Finding, the dynamic of all growth" to eighty mindful people, many of them coming from neighboring Geneva and farther-away Belgium. On Saturday evening, Mass on the grass in the middle of the huge cloister in the warm spring breeze and accompanied by the flying and screeching peacocks, will stay in all our memories. Many of the group leaders present agreed to take part in a national committee which will soon be formalised. I'm very glad and grateful for these developments happening at the right time... Providence's time.

Dominique Lablanche, National Coordinator
(dlablanche@noos.fr)

PORTUGAL:

PORTUGUESE WCCM NEWSLETTER AND MORE

"Notícias de Portugal" is the newly-born Portuguese newsletter. Nr.1 was published recently and is being enthusiastically acknowledged as an important means of spreading the teaching of Christian meditation, inside and outside the community, and as a way to implement not only cohesion among the community members but inspiration and encouragement in their practice as well. The Community in Portugal joined with Buddhists, Bahai's and Hare Krishnas and other Christians for their third Inter-religious meeting for meditation. The Bahai's community hosted this time. The readings were from the teachings of John Main and the Buddhist tradition. In addition, a young girl sang beautifully a prayer from the Bahai's faith. About 45 of us sat together in silence for 25 minutes, open to the presence of the sacred. It is gratifying to feel that we may be all in tune together and that our differences don't matter, as long as our hearts are joined in peace.

Maria Cristina Guedes de Sousa;
National Coordinator, Portugal (mcristinags@netcabo.pt)
Site: <http://meditacaocrista.weebly.com/index.html>

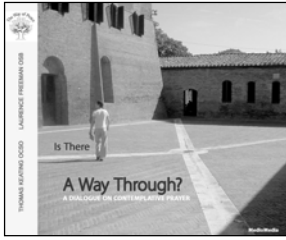
CANADA MEDITATION AMBASSADOR IN THE CARIBBEAN

Michel Legault, former National Coordinator in Canada (legault.smeltzer@videotron.ca), recently returned from a 15-day visit to the Caribbean where he gave a number of introductory talks on meditation, met with established meditation groups and assisted in setting up new weekly groups in Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and Curaçao. Please visit our "News" Web page for a full account of Michel's visit.

For other news of the Community which space prevents us from putting here please visit the news on wccm.org and the national WebPages linked to it.



Christian Meditation Bookstore - NEW ITEMS!



IS THERE A WAY THROUGH?
A Dialogue on Contemplative Prayer
Laurence Freeman OSB and

Thomas Keating OCSO

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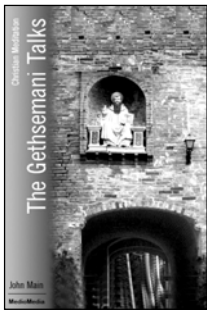
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Words by John Main....

The path of meditation is the path of faith and the sacrament of faith is our silence. The door to silence is the mantra.

(Monastery Without Walls)

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