

# Meditatio

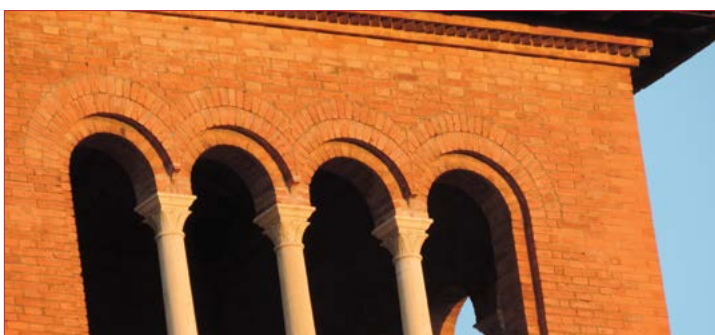
Newsletter of The  
World Community  
for Christian Meditation



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## Meditation in the Monastic Tradition

The *Monastery Without Walls* met the cloistered community for a week of study and practice at San Anselmo, Rome (6-8)



Top: Morning meditative walk. Below: San Anselmo tower and Abbot Primate Notker Wolf

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 Dearest Friends

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

Dearest Friends,

*I have never caused anyone to weep.  
I have never spoken in a haughty voice.  
I have never caused anyone to be angry.  
I have never closed my ears to words of  
justice and truth.*

Where do you think these words come from? A great mahatma of the human race? From one of the world's great scriptures? Do you feel they are spoken in intolerable pride? Do they point to an ideal we would like to believe in but feel is impossible to attain?

Whatever your immediate response to these questions, perhaps the words do capture a great ideal of our relationship to others, more or more probably less, realized in human experience. They evoke an understanding of the right relationships between people that, if ignored, put us at risk of descending into inhumanity, exploitation and cruelty.

As the migrants and their families from war-torn countries are now throwing themselves desperately at the mercy of their neighbours, these words also express a kind of wisdom – not abstract but entirely practical. The Greeks spoke about wisdom in two aspects. There is the wisdom of pure insight, *sophia*, which needs to be embodied in the wisdom of practice, *phronesis*. In the same way St James speaks of charity:

Someone may say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize... that faith without works is useless? (Js 2:18-20)

Faith is shown by active works, practical wisdom. The opening words above come from what we now call

the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," a collection of funerary texts, that was known from the second millennium before Christ, as the "Book of the Coming or Going Forth by Day." They capture not a proud self-righteousness but the truest sense of human judgement and human meaning:

For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. (Mt 23:35-36)

These words are not meant to make us feel judged and condemned by an impossible ideal – a Kafkaesque nightmare where we are innocent but cruelly accused of some transgression that we cannot understand or feel we are responsible for. They point to a truth we should be both conscious and practical about, a truth that, like all truth, emerges from the human experience of effort and failure. They challenge us, like all spiritual practice, not to the feeling of personal success. They prompt us to fidelity, to a faithful return to the lifelong journey of breaking out of the prison of our ego and its web of illusions, into the clear light of the undying day of reality.

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These words do not mean that there could ever not be tears or anger in human relationships, but that we should never intentionally produce them in others. If tears or anger are produced by our own interior process, when, for example, experience makes us painfully aware of our faults and failures, our tears can be purifying and cathartic, a watershed to a new stage of life. Our anger can restore us to a passionate commitment to truth. But

then what do we do? We need ways and means to translate the insight into action, into an enduring attitude of love and compassion through all the phases of our life. This is where a rule of life, a practical daily wisdom, becomes essential.

This summer we held a seminar with the San Anselmo Monastic Institute in Rome on "meditation in the monastic tradition." (The videos of the speakers are now on our YouTube channel.) The seminar was so enriching and fruitful that we are now planning another week next summer focusing on the "new forms of monasticism." The rule of life that shaped and will shape this discussion, of course, was the same one that shaped the monastic rule of the western church.

The Rule of St Benedict is not an official or officious rulebook. It tells us how things *can* be done, not *must* be done. It is filled with *sophia* but expresses itself with *phronesis*. It is best read as a Rule of Exceptions, because for almost every issue Benedict imagines, exceptions are made and the need to bend the Rule without breaking it is generously offered.

The Rule, what Benedict calls a "little rule for beginners," describes in about 13,000 words a path to follow through life-whether that life is lived in a monastery with walls or without walls. In our frenetic and disordered world today, many people seeking meaning, companionship and inner balance have found in the Rule a humane and humanising friend and guide. In many of the situations and challenges of life that the Rule imagines, the wisdom of those Egyptian words and above all of those words of Jesus is found shining. Benedict imagines a moderate path through life, not moderate in the sense of lukewarm or

a compromise on essential values, but moderate in the sense of the Buddha's "middle way" or the "narrow path" that Jesus says leads to life.

It steers a course between rigid institutionalism, which dehumanises people, and an anarchy of chaos in which, differently but to no less degree, our humanity is destroyed. Benedict knew that the narrow path that opens up into an infinite expansion of life, the 'indescribable sweetness

They should also aim to be as ecologically responsible and self-sustaining as possible. St Benedict would have wholeheartedly agreed with Lao Tsu that there is no worse calamity than the unrestrained increase of needs.

In his management of time Benedict shows how this narrow path of love – tense but not stressful, attentive not distracting – can be realistically followed. He outlines a contemplative lifestyle, which does not mean

goal, as in the Egyptian desert, is to pray without ceasing and to allow the prayer of the spirit to well up unself-consciously from the deep centre of our heart, irrigating all the fields of our life.

\*

This formula of life St Benedict offered had an immense impact on western civilisation, on education, governance and culture, even as it developed amid the social chaos and moral confusion of the Dark Ages. Like all great and lasting influences it was not grandiose and proud but grounded and down to earth. An essential and, in its way, radical, element of this influence was Benedict's insistence that each monk should be able to read and should read. Individually they should read the scriptures and collectively they would sing them: *lectio divina*, spiritual reading in one's own solitude and time, and *opus dei*, common worship together. Benedict saw the powerful connection between public worship and personal prayer, in particular the prayer of the heart.

He says that nothing should be put before the times of common prayer. In our oblate community in London the activities of the house are suspended during the times of liturgy and meditation that, in our community, we combine. Benedict devotes twelve chapters of the Rule to the Divine Office or *opus dei*, describing a precise and detailed allocation of psalms, hymns and canticles. But having done so he allows the community to decide how it should be done according to their circumstances.

I remembered this on my visit to Taizé this summer. The community of brothers was founded seventy-five years ago by Frere Roger as a place of



of love," as he calls it, needs attention. Because we are inescapably relational at all levels and in all circumstances, we need a high degree of attention – prayerfulness – to remain conscious and compassionate.

Benedict knows that for community to work and be sustainable there must be leadership of a high order, but that obedience must be both vertical and horizontal. We cannot escape from the demands of our relational nature merely by obeying the boss or the rules. His communities were and still are essentially self-governing.

hours spent praying in a church building, but a harmonious balance of the different needs and expressions of our complex humanity. Physical, intellectual and spiritual: these three dimensions cannot be separated but nor should they be confused. This holistic spirituality is caught in the motto "ora et labora," pray and work, two activities inextricably linked. Work is a form of prayer, a lab-oratory of a life centred in God, and prayer itself a form of work. Such a life is intended to produce men and women (and even children) free from distraction. The

lived unity to heal the wounds of war and division. It has developed an exceptionally simple and powerful liturgy composed of now famous short mantra-like chants, brief scripture reading and a prolonged period of silence within the prayer session. It is all done very reverently and contains the essential elements of all prayer – music, word, ritual and silence. But it is adapted to the culture and conditions of the large numbers of young people who come to Taize every year to pray, worship, and seek God in themselves and in their relationships with others.

Benedict, in another quite different age, prescribed that all 150 psalms be recited each week. Modern needs and circumstances call for a greater integration of silence and the contemplative dimension of prayer. St Basil, Benedict's counterpart in the Eastern church, referred to the *opus dei* not only in terms of prayer times but of the whole of monastic life. Both believed that the life could only be lived well where there was eagerness for the work of God, a passion for the work of seeking God. Benedict saw that the presence of God is everywhere, in the fields, in the chapel, in the refectory, in bed, but he also saw that we need distinct moments throughout the varied flow of day and night to pause and be re-membered. The Desert Fathers saw psalmody, the chanting of the psalms, as a means of maintaining mindfulness, keeping the mind in the heart, what we would call staying in a state of prayerfulness.

Evagrius thought that psalmody was a way of healing the "passions" or disorders of the mind. Undistracted psalmody was seen as a form of therapy, part of the toolkit of "Christ the all-healing word and divine physician," because of the way in which the music and the meaning of the words combined. The psalms contained all feelings – even the ones we shrink

from admitting to ourselves. They were not mechanical repetitions and so the desert monks observed a period of silence after each psalm. But as monasticism became socially successful and gave way to institutionalism, the hours spent in chant greatly increased. The laboratory became a factory and the periods of contemplative silence shrank almost to nothing.

\*

Periods of renewal have always

even beyond the animal world, into the kingdom of technology for this satisfaction. Most people now spend six times more time with their smart phones and tablets than on their laptops or computers. Increasingly they expect and desire their apps to be their friends. They expect their apps to communicate directly with them, telling them when to do what. No wonder it is so hard to get people to turn off their mobile phones in con-



tried to redress the precarious balance of this formula, or lifestyle that is intended to rebalance our lives. But in our day we come to these practices of prayer with a degree of distraction and severity of addiction that the monks of the past could not have imagined.

We have all met people whose attachment to their pets seems at times to verge on becoming a substitute for human relationships. Perhaps animals were given so that humans would not be so lonely in this world. But the need for connection and communication, so deeply written in our hearts, can only be fulfilled by the human. Increasingly, however, we look today

cert halls or meditation rooms!

How can we keep – even re-discover – the necessary balance? This should be a priority of modern education, as it succumbs to technology and commercialism, just as monasticism once surrendered to institutionalism. Our humanity depends upon our being balanced.

As the world is changing so rapidly, so must monastic wisdom. It must re-discover itself in new forms if it is to remain a living formula. ("Formula" was the Latin word Cassian used to describe the mantra, the "single verse.")

Perhaps a key to this challenge is found in Benedict's insistence that we learn how to read. "Read" is an old

Anglo-Saxon word that meant advise, explain, interpret and (even) guess. This suggests that reading is more than deciphering marks on a page or compiling bits of data. We read a person. We read a dream. We read the riddles of our lives. In this sense we could say that we not only "say our mantra," we "read" it. This experience of reading is very different from the "read only" kind of document we find in our digital world, something fixed, impenetrable, unchangeable and one-way.

To read in Benedict's sense is to enter into a two-way relationship and communication. It even becomes three-way when the source of the Word within the words is felt and becomes conscious.

Then I will know fully even as I am fully known. (1 Cor13:12)

Normally we read to get information and to be in the know, but St Paul says this kind of knowledge will eventually vanish because it is partial. It will vanish, he says "when wholeness comes." We read in order to learn something. But to learn anything truly, to grow and mature, we have to leave something behind. We resist this. We want to acquire without obeying the necessity for dispossession. But to become fully alive we have to let go of what we know, to know what we don't know and venture into the unknown. No new continents would have been discovered unless the explorers had lost sight of their home shores.

Benedict and the monastic teachers of wisdom understood that this process is nurtured by the way we read scripture. Especially this means the way we allow ourselves to be *read* by scripture. We are not only trying to extract meaning from the text we read, to understand it. We allow it stand under us, to support us and bring meaning to life in us. Then, even as we read, we are read; and it is this inter-relational experience of reading

that brings us to wholeness. Reading of this kind leads into the reciprocity of love. It introduces us to an experience of the Word that heals, comforts and renews. Like love, reading the scriptures always feels both familiar and fresh. The times we spend with Scripture, reading and being read, will inevitably lead us into the deeper levels of prayer, into silence. And thence into the experience of contemplative simplicity of union where we have lost ourselves and yet have never been more truly ourselves.

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The monastic wisdom sees reading, *lectio*, of this kind as healing a most important part of our humanity: our energy-level, our passion and determination, the very human spiritedness that our techno-scientific false "friends" drain out of us. We need *thumos*, as the Greeks called it, to feel the anger and passionate responsiveness that we should feel in face of the humanitarian crises around us, like the migrant emergency. The opposite of *thumos*, which is an engaged and warm-hearted connectedness and commitment, is indifference.

The key is what are we indifferent to? If we are to rediscover human values and reclaim moral vitality, we need to develop indifference towards things like money, fame and success, the false "possessions" of the ego. If we fail, we will fall into the deeper and darker indifference that we see growing in the atomised individuals of our addictive technology. This indifference soon becomes moral coldness and inhumanity towards the needs and affliction of others. It allows horror and holocaust.

To put ourselves, as a matter of daily discipline, in the space of reading and being read, is to be led naturally into the contemplative experience of loving and being loved, of recognizing and being recognized. This

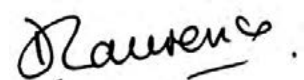
reciprocity is what heals our spirit and restores our energy toward and for others, because it arises from such a deep centre of selflessness.

So the Word is not just a linguistic unit, a mark on a page. It is an event, a movement of divine love, reaching us through all the veils that otherwise numb our humanity. Divine presence cracks like lightning across the dimensions of time and space, such as we glimpse in those gospel moments when Jesus gazed into the heart of a person and changed them and the course of their life.

The Letter to the Hebrews (4:12) says that the Word of God is alive and active. It is sharper than a two-edged sword. This seems like a disturbing image when we think of a weapon, but it is a tool. It slips through the confusions and ambiguities of our mind, penetrating to the core of truth that reconnects us to our humanity and makes wholeness and community possible. Benedict, whose mind was permeated with scripture, was aware of this effect of the Word. And so he urges us to learn the art of reading so that we can be read, so that we can discover and rediscover our personal meaning and common humanity.

Like nothing else, the Rule shows the connection and continuity between *lectio* and *meditatio* and, what is always the grace or pure gift of *contemplatio*. These three dimensions of prayer are nourished by a life centred in the prayerful seeking of God. This three-fold experience may take a little time away from our smartphone and tablets, but it has the power to rebalance our personal lives and our dangerously off-balanced world.

With much love,



Laurence Freeman OSB

Special

## Meditation in the Monastic Tradition: Week of Study and Practice

Two meditators and teachers at the course describe their experience at San Anselmo, this summer



### “This week brought WCCM into living connection with cloistered monastic life”

By Rev. Sarah Bachelard\*

Rome in high summer is hot, sunny and full of tourists. It's not usually the recommended time to visit this beautiful and chaotic city, yet here we were; about fifty meditators from the World Community gathered for a week of study and practice at the Monastic Institute of San Anselmo. Ours was a calmer, cooler and more cloistered Roman experience, though we still found time to go out in search of gelato, to eat in piazzas tucked behind ancient monuments, and marvel at the layers of history so plainly visible in the buildings, ruins and archaeological sites throughout the city.

Our gathering aimed to extend our knowledge of the place of medita-

tion in the monastic tradition, as well as to deepen our personal practice. We heard talks on the life and prayer of Henri le Saux, Thomas Merton and John Main; we reflected on classic monastic teaching on prayer from John Cassian, the Cloud of Unknowing and the hesychast tradition; we explored other dimensions of contemplative practice such as the relationship between meditation and asceticism, and meditation and the imagination; and we considered the shape of contemplative renewal in the church, the world, and the university.

A significant and important feature of the week was our integration into the life of the monastic community of

San Anselmo. The monks hospitably invited us to share in their rhythm of prayer and life – the liturgical hours, meals in the refectory, conversation in the cloister. By participating in this life shaped by the Benedictine rule, we tasted how meditation practice is deepened when it connects to a whole way of life oriented to prayer. At the same time, and encouragingly, Father Bernard Sawicki commented on the significance for his monastic community of our witness to the possibility of committed contemplative practice in non-monastic settings.

As ever, at a WCCM gathering, all that we experienced was enhanced by the delight of being together, meeting meditators from around the world, sharing our journeys and our struggles. As well as the keynote presentations, the times of meditation and liturgical prayer, we had opportunities to discuss questions and issues in small groups, and this deepened our sense of being a community within the community of San Anselmo.

This week of study and practice brought members of WCCM's 'monastery without walls' into living connection with cloistered monastic life, in ways that enriched both communities. The forging of these deeper bonds seems important if, as we believe, contemplative practice and spirituality is key to the renewal of Christian life and mission. And how could anywhere be more fitting for such an important collaboration than Rome!

*\* Sarah is an Anglican priest and theologian, and a member of WCCM, who leads a new kind of church community in Canberra, Australia.*

Special

## The spark of pure prayer

By Stefan Reynolds \*



Over 50 people who practice and teach meditation in the Christian tradition, from 15 nations, gathered at the International College of San Anselmo on the Aventine hill in Rome. San Anselmo, named after the 11th Century monk and Archbishop of Canterbury, is the seat of the Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Federation (which includes all monks under the Rule of St Benedict except the Cistercians or Trappists). The abbey (known as the Primatial Abbey of the Order of St Benedict) and college were built around 1900. The complex is the campus of the Pontifical University of San Anselmo. It was the Monastic Institute within the Theology faculty together with The World Community for Christian Meditation and its Oblate community, hosted this week of prayer and reflection. The theme was relevant to

both: to monasteries in their need to recover a practice of meditation and contemplative prayer, and to the world community of meditators who could benefit from the experience and commitment of those who live within monasteries. The idea of the monastic Oblate has been increasingly recognised and explored as the natural bridge between those living in monasteries with and without walls. San Anselmo in initiating and hosting the International Oblate Congress over the last decade has done much to raise this awareness. The other bridge - because of its roots in tradition but its availability to all - is the practice of meditation.

The idea of a 'Retreat Conference' suited San Anselmo as a place of study and prayer. San Anselmo is a hub of Benedictine life but also a university open to lay involvement. In this there

was already common ground with The World Community for Christian Meditation, which is inspired by the Benedictine tradition and open to all people who genuinely seek God in simple and sincere prayer. The program for each day included four meditation sessions, Midday Office, Vespers and meals with the monks, a daily Eucharist, participation in groups for sharing, and the input of two or three talks. The Retreat Conference was opened by the Abbott Primate, Notker Wolf OSB, who said how important he felt this meeting would be 1) in reminding monasteries of their root in the desert tradition of pure prayer and 2) in helping individual meditators to find something of the support monasteries can give to their practice. Other speakers during the week included Revd Dr Sarah Bachelard, Laurence Freeman OSB and Joseph Wong (from the Camaldolese Benedictine Order) as well as a series of lay speakers who had studied aspects of monasticism in relation to meditation. The head of the Monastic Institute at San Anselmo, Bernard Sawiki OSB, chaired a plenary session on the last day, which opened to a sharing from many of the participants.

Tradition, Father Laurence said, is "a dynamic transmission process" and Abbott Notker shared his conviction that monasteries always need to adapt and change in response to the calling of the Holy Spirit. "Monasteries," he said, "should never become old wine skins but should always be renewing themselves in conversion of life so as




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The monastic teaching and tradition of prayer tells us in every generation, all Christians, not just monks, that our prayer is our declaration of poverty, our experience of poverty. (John Main)

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## Special



to receive the new wine of the Spirit and to pass it on." The new wine of meditation could help in the contemplative renewal of monasteries. The witness of monasteries likewise could perhaps provide new wineskins that may be hospitable and encouraging to meditation practice. New wine, even more than old wine because of its headiness, needs a container, but it needs to be one that is flexible rather than rigid. It was generally felt that St Benedict's Rule provides something of a model for this: "a rule of exceptions to the rule," as Father Laurence put it. Sarah Bachelard reflected that the way we pray is the way we live. Accepting that is not really we who are praying but the Spirit who is praying within us opens us to the humility and other-centredness which makes a contemplative Church a loving and hospitable community. Monastic life well lived and meditation practiced and shared

are both leavens of renewal in open-heartedness within the Church. The group discussions were an important part of the Retreat Conference. As in meditation there is a 'work' of saying the mantra so in this Conference there were no passive spectators. In fact everyone had their own experience to share. The wonderful meals served by the monks with such generosity made a convivial atmosphere where sharing soon became friendship. The location of San Anselmo - on the Aventine hill ("the most romantic place in Rome") - made evening walks after the heat of the day a refreshing Compline to each day's conference. Rome has been called 'the eternal city' but it is actually quite easy to rise above the cityscape on one of its seven hills and feel one is lifted above even the beauties of man made architecture. On the Aventine hill there are lofty pine trees with trunks that seem to dance upwards to

an umbrella of green, there are cypress trees which seem to hold their darkness even in the brightest sun, there are old Churches (open till late) where silence rests like a full wine.

Taking meditation to San Anselmo might be like taking coal to Newcastle. However, as Abbott Notker said, monasteries need to be reminded of their contemplative tradition. Like in a marriage the couple need to remember and revisit the love that brought them together even as their lives get busier in looking after children. So in monasteries Abbott Notker said activities have to be rediscovered as fruits of contemplative love. One thing is for certain, Newcastle can teach those who dig for coal in their own lives a little bit about the long art of mining. Benedictine monasticism should be able to teach something about prayer. It may seem (in what may be a materialistic age) that fuel for the Spirit is getting sparse. However, San Anselmo continues to show there is a rich seam in monastic life. It only needs the spark of pure prayer to set that monastic seam alight again and make it a resource for the world. The World Community for Christian Meditation may have its part to play in bringing meditation back into the monastic tradition today.

\* Stefan is a WCCM Oblate whose doctoral studies were in english mysticism and whose book on contemporary spirituality will be appearing shortly

*"In the center of Benedictine life, accepted renewal from Desert Fathers to John Main"* (Xiao Xiao, from China)

*"Awakened. Ironically intense studies, tight schedules, fellowship, plus several periods of meditation and Eucharist could be blended so well in this Rome*

*Monastic experience as a lone traveller. In this balanced spirit, upon my return, I joined a fitness class to go in line with my meditations. Alleluia!"* (Lina, from Hong Kong)

*"I loved the diversity of the speakers and participants, the prayers and*

*meals with the monastic community in an environment where prayer and study are central".* (Henriette, from Holland)

**ONLINE: Watch all talks from this seminar at <http://tiny.cc/sanselmo>**



## News

# Soil, Silence & Service - A new way

By Ben Bowmaker



"Sickness comes when people draw away from nature. The severity of the disease is directly proportional to the degree of separation." These are the words of Masanobu Fukuoka from his book, *The One Straw Revolution*. In it, he describes how the loss of traditional farming methods to the American model of economic industrial development has led to a total abandonment of the rich heritage of working closely and simply with the land. He feels that the healing of the land and purification of the human spirit are one and the same process.

Soil, Silence and Service is a community social enterprise project committed to reducing society's dividedness and personal disconnectedness. The once-a-month weekend program, held at Turvey Abbey in Bedfordshire, is exploring how a

deeper engagement with the land, with sustainable and biodiverse farming/gardening practices and listening, (as St. Benedict says, listening with the ear of our hearts) can lead all of us toward a more healthy, balanced and rewarding life. Christian meditation is practiced morning and evening, along with daily discussions and reflections based on texts ranging from wisdom writings to environmental studies, to conversations on global economic systems and the relevance of E.F. Schumacher in the 21st century. The rest of the day is spent gardening, exploring methods of sustainable food production, or countryside craft making, while time is also set aside for silence and rest.

In 1976, the American economist, Victor Lebow, wrote, "Capitalism is showing signs that it can no longer

generate the social morale so essential to continued existence."

Contemplative gardening and farming practice is one side of the project. However, Soil, Silence and Service is also about finding a fundamentally new way to re-connect a divided world. If the earth is experienced as a sanctuary, not a commodity, then our sense of place, identity and sacred belonging can deepen and be transformative. As Pope Francis said in his recent encyclical, "Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God."

## More information

Please contact Benedict at [benedictbowmaker@gmail.com](mailto:benedictbowmaker@gmail.com) or visit the facebook page here: <http://tiny.cc/soilsilenserv>

The next Soil, Silence and Service weekend will be held from the 9th – 11th October at Turvey Abbey.

Meditatio Centre will be hosting a talk and workshop based on the Soil, Silence and Service project on the 12th November. Anyone interested in engaging in the project or finding out more should come along.

## News

### Italy

## Monte Oliveto Retreat: Love and the Gift of Failure



From the 20th to 27th June the traditional annual retreat led by Fr. Laurence was held at the Abbazia of Monte Oliveto, in Siena, Italy. The theme this year was "Love and the Gift of Failure." You can read below for a comment from Maria Tan, from Singapore, about the retreat:

*Since I was young I have dreamed of being a monk, living in a monastery, high up in the mountains. This was the closest I have gotten to that dream in my life so far. I am very attracted to nature. The terrain was very different from where I come from... this was the first time I have seen a real cypress tree! The monks and their chants... all these things I had in that dream.*

*After the first few days, I was disturbed. I have done silent retreats many times and I was able to be silent. But not this time. So I was wondering: What is going on? One morning I was drinking my coffee, and there were some tourists moving around. And*

*I felt a sense of silence in the middle of the noise from the tourists. Then I realized: it's OK, whether it is noisy or silent or whether or not there are distractions. If I am just able to be there, it is OK. Because God is in the whisper, in the breeze... but God is also in the noisy restaurant, the noisy city. That was a big realization for me, a great insight. I thank God for that experience, for the feeling of failure, because I could go into the silence and suddenly my mind was opened to understand that it is OK.*

You can watch to all talks or download the audio files from the talks here: <http://tiny.cc/videosMO2015>

### Ireland

## Bere Island Music & Silence Festival - II Edition

*By Michael Rathbone*

We had lovely weather again for the Bere Island festival of Music & Silence. People came to meditate, listen to music, perform, dance and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. The pubs were full for the evening concerts, and we ate delicious local food at the restaurant. Musicians from near and far came to play, sing and teach, as well as to meditate.

Marie Louise, one of the musicians and also an oblate of the community said, "It was so nice to join the festival - I enjoyed it very, very much. I think besides normal retreats this was a very important way of sharing and creating community. Pub, church and nature".



People were so kind and very open and receptive. It gave a good insight into different cultures - especially the Irish of course. There was a very loving atmosphere and I think I learned to listen to life at a deeper level in various ways - so thank you very much - it is a great gift to take home.

## Retreats & Events

July 15th to 19th, Fr. Laurence visited Venezuela where he gave several talks, led the National Retreat, and met with the Fe y Alegria schools, which are especially designed to give the best education to the poorest children.

In August he went with oblates from Meditatio House to visit the Taizé Community in France and celebrate its 75th anniversary. They were invited to give a workshop on Meditation in Christian Prayer to a large and responsive group of young visitors.

September 3rd to 5th, Fr. Laurence led a National Retreat in Besançon, France. After that (11th-13th) he took part in a conference and led a National Retreat in Hong Kong, with the theme 'Reading the Scriptures with the Eye of the Heart'.

## In Focus

# May Ngo, from Australia

I feel like I have moved in and out of meditation for most of my adult life, in my typical meandering non-committal way. For a while I practiced meditation within the context of Buddhism, before falling out of it all together, and then gradually coming back to it within the context of Christian meditation.

There are people that we meet or events that happen in our lives which do not leave us the same again; there is forever a 'before' and 'after'. Encountering the Christian mystic, labour activist and philosopher Simone Weil was one of those moments for me. She drew me closer into Christianity, made me want to dig a little deeper to find out what it was that inspired and drove such a brilliant, exceptional person. Previously, I had very little interest in Christianity because the contact I had with it seemed to be all about joining the club of the Saved; it did not speak to me at all. But through Simone Weil I discovered that Christianity was a treasure trove of images, parables and teachings that was not only focused on our relationship with God, but also our relationship with the world. Her writings resonate with me, touch me to the core. She is my finger pointing to the moon.

But it was not until after several years later that events led me to connect with the WCCM community, and I discovered Christian meditation for the first time. Discovering it was like a shock, a wake up call, and a homecoming. If Simone Weil and the Gospels are the theory, then meditation is the practice. Part of my Christian meditation journey was living at Meditatio House for three months. The time at Meditatio House was another one of those defining moments in my life. I learnt many things during my stay there including the importance of discipline, of making an effort and not always doing what I wanted to do, that is, displacing the self from the centre. So, waking up every day for 7am meditation even when I didn't want to, or sitting at the table for lunch with someone even though they had just attacked me. It gave me the capacity and desire to have a daily meditation practice which does require discipline, effort and sometimes not doing what we'd rather be doing. I also came to see why meditation is necessary in my life.

And what does Christian meditation specifically teach me? Of course, it sometimes gives me moments of real peace, unity, that I rarely feel out-



*Simone Weil*

side of meditation. But it has given me so much more. I've learnt that even during 'bad' meditations where I am completely distracted, I must continue. When I feel impatient and lazy, continue. In the middle of heartbreak, continue. In other words, it has taught me that the only thing that matters in meditation, as in life, is faithfulness. Faithful to a presence that for the most part feels absent and invisible, but is always there. Faithful to the people that I love. And having faith that I am being led, one day at a time, one breath at a time.



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E-mail: [welcome@wccm.org](mailto:welcome@wccm.org)

Editor: Leonardo Corrêa  
([leonardo@wccm.org](mailto:leonardo@wccm.org))

Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano

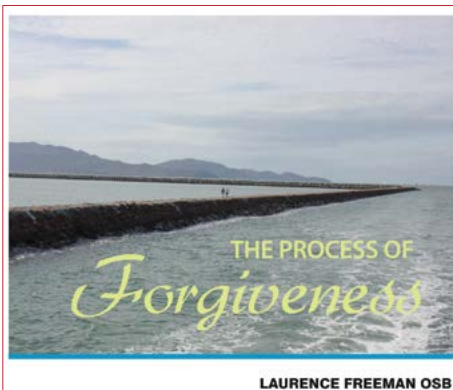
**Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter?**

**Our next deadline is November 20th**

## Resources

### CDs

#### The Process of Forgiveness Laurence Freeman OSB



Forgiveness is not a heroic act of moral superiority directed at a culprit. It is a subtle inward process of healing for the victim, a letting go of the bitterness that hurt can create. On its own, a hurt ego cannot let go. Letting go is an outcome of the deep work of prayer. Meditation is that work. It is a spiritual discipline that takes us beyond the ego into our deepest centre, where God's love touches and transforms.

### Meditatio CDs

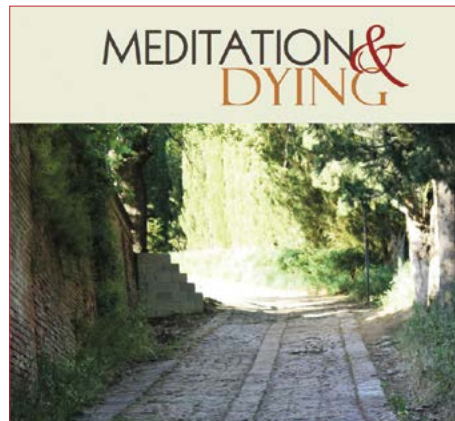
Do you know you can now download the audio files from all the quarterly Meditatio CDs and the transcripts?

Click here:

<http://tiny.cc/meditatioCDs>

### Books

#### Meditation & Dying By Anne McDonnell



Meditation & Dying is a personal reflection by Anne McDonnell who is a teacher in The WCCM. With deep, moving insight she speaks from personal experience of terminal illness and of her discoveries about the meaning and fullness of life that have come through it.

Buy from Meditatio Store:

[http://tiny.cc/med\\_dying](http://tiny.cc/med_dying)

### Blogs

Four meditators from Sydney, Australia, have created a blog to share their journey along the "Camino Primitivo de Santiago."

Visit here:

<https://medium.com/the-silent-path>

### Audio & Video

New talks are now available through our website ([wccm.org](http://wccm.org)):

#### Monte Oliveto Retreat 2015

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### 2016 Calendar



"Connection," with photography by Laurence Freeman and words by John Main

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CANADA: [www.wccm-canada.ca](http://www.wccm-canada.ca)  
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AUSTRALIA:  
[jpanetta@ausgrid.com.au](mailto:jpanetta@ausgrid.com.au)  
Tel: +61 2 9482 3468