



The silence of healing

Laurence Freeman reflects on the many meanings of health and healing



Photo by Laurence Freeman in Bonnevaux

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Leaver Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

I was shown around the emergency department of a busy hospital recently. It happened to be a quiet time but that, they told me, could change very quickly any day of the week. (Mondays and Fridays are usually the busiest). Even in a relatively calm period, the extremes of the human condition were visible: the thin lines of mortality that we constantly move through, happily busy one moment and stricken down the next, the always shaky wire we walk between well-being and pain; and, at the other extreme to the isolation and fear this creates in us, I could see the calmness that compassion needs to grow and to be bestowed, the generosity of spirit that reaches out to suffering without any self-interest or desire for personal advantage. In this season of the year it seemed to me to illustrate redemption in action, the healing of the human through the gift of one's self.

Meditating with the doctors and nurses of this department over a number of weeks, I was able to reflect on some of the many meanings of health and of the dynamics of healing. I'd like to try to connect these meanings to some of the stories of our community that you will find in this issue of the *Meditatio* newsletter.

We often link the words 'good' and 'health'. Both words, however, need to be handled with care. To be called *good* is gratifying. To be called *bad* creates shame (or denial). To be in good health doesn't mean you are a good person. Being in bad health might well lead you to be a better person than you were before. The goodness lived out in the emergency department shone through a powerful and practical altruism. The self-isolating pain and fear in the patients were evident. But they were also touched by an almost painfully acute, healing awareness. It signified our ability to turn from our self towards others, as if this were always the easiest and most natural thing for anyone to do. This con-

nection between pain and altruism (suffering and love) seemed to me to be the main channel of healing and the ambience of caring and attentiveness that pervaded the department. Extreme con-



ditions –and there are few more extreme places than an A&E department - where the tensions of life are held in raw balance, can reveal deep mysteries in very simple ways.

Maybe this other-centredness also exists in the mega-deals of the financial world or in entertainment, or politics or in immigration officials screening refugees. But it is rarely as evident as in those men and women working in constant crisis management in the emergency department of a busy hospital. Their way of responding to a person admitted in desperate need instantly over-rides private tastes, prejudices and self-interest. It is quietly inspirational to behold – quietly, because they are not and do not want to be self-conscious of their being inspiring. Still, experienced emergency clinicians cannot but be awake to the deep level of satisfaction and meaning that their work gives them, even if they are reluctant to talk about it.

But they are no less aware of the risk involved in the work. Over months and years, such levels of continuous self-giving can take more out of you than

you realise. Skills learned over years of training once used with compassionate indifference may now become affected by a looming burnout which leads to a gradual internal shut-down. Automatic

pilot takes over, more and more but the heart becomes separated. I saw a healthy awareness in them about this danger especially in those who are learning to meditate while living on shift work at this cutting edge of critical medicine, where the urgent demands of the human body constantly appeal for care and attention. Their desire to meditate was like anyone else's. Their struggle to develop a good habit of meditating was essentially no different.

'The world is a hospital endowed by the ruined millionaire.' T.S. Eliot's line, like the time I spent with these generous healers, awakened some of the mysteries of the Easter season. Life is the place of healing. We all need healing in different ways and different times, physically, emotionally or spiritually. There is no shame in that, although our need for healing is often felt to be a weakness that we should hide from others, as we hide our private parts while dressing up well. Being seen as 'a picture of health' is gratifying and on meeting someone we often flatter each other, 'Nice to see you, You look so well!'. Then, just in case,

we add 'How are you keeping?' Deeper health and wholeness, however, are not states we can secure as we might build up a retirement fund. Deep health is neither a possession nor the result of chance. It is a gift that flows continuously, through the healing process. It is not held onto because it always prepares for the next stage of our journey.

The hospital of life equally welcomes both healthy and sick. The distinction between these two states of life is not as exclusive as it may seem. How do we know that the doctor who is treating your broken arm hasn't just been diagnosed with a terminal illness? Or, perhaps the shock of that diagnosis will lead to a richer integration of the personality, reconciliation with the broken parts of oneself and an enhanced capacity to love others? The desert monks used the term *apatheia* to describe health of soul, when we flourish as a whole person, whether the body happens to be working well or not.

The symptoms of health and the symptoms of sickness are very different. Order, harmony, peace of mind, flexibility, spontaneity, attractive beauty (on the one hand) and chaos, violence, aggressivity, imbalance and natural revulsion (on the other). Yet, the worst can be transposed into the best. It begins with acceptance. This first step may be the hardest to take. The worst news naturally creates the temptation to deny what we don't like. We see this demonstrated in political press conferences and interviews every day. They remind me of the time when as a young teenager I was smoking secretly, against my mother's orders. One night in my room, feeling safe to rebel, I lit up and then heard steps coming upstairs. I quickly extinguished the cigarette but could not hide the clouds of evidence swirling around the room. When she entered, my mother confronted me and to her anger and maybe amusement and to my self-humiliation at being so ridiculous, I de-

nied it. Denial gets stronger the longer it is practiced. Ultimately it can become self-convincing and we end by believing the fake news we are producing. The first step is to be honest with ourselves and others.

After acceptance comes adaptation. Later in this issue you will read of a meditator in Hong Kong who struggled with bureaucracy to bring meditation into prisons. The biggest resistance she faced was the institutional conviction that meditation would not work for prisoners. It was too 'advanced' for them. She persevered and eventually succeeded. Being incarcerated and dehumanised

Learning to meditate becomes a deep healing of the shame of the past and a reintegration of the divided self

can provoke huge denial and angry desperation but also, with time and help, acceptance leads to self-adjustment. Then, learning to meditate becomes a deep healing of the shame of the past and a reintegration of the divided self. After seeing yourself as a reject, you find a new self-respect in self-knowledge and wisdom. Because it thinks of prison as punishment and only formally as rehabilitation, the penal system rarely notices the kind of personal transformation that changes prisoners for good.

The better a healer knows the nature of the sickness the better she can heal. The story of the Passion that we read in Holy Week illustrates how Jesus was immersed in all the sicknesses of humanity that we can imagine, from physical pain to emotional rejection and an ontological dark night. Isaiah foretold this in his image of the suffering servant as a wounded healer:

And yet ours were the sufferings

he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. But we, we thought of him as someone punished, struck by God, and brought low. Yet he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed. (Is 43:4-5)

Sickness and misfortune often awakens a sense of guilt or blame whether it is we or others who suffer. God, the ego believes, rewards the good and afflicts the bad. The ego is ever sensitive to its reputation. The fact of healing, however, exposes this fallacy. Wounds can heal, sickness can bring deeper health than we have ever known before, and being crushed can evolve into being raised up higher and healthier than we could have imagined. Even more, suffering can be redemptive.

In Greek mythology the first thing to exist, without any parental source, was Chaos. It was the void, the nothingness from which everything, even the gods, emerge. It is the underworld of darkness and mud. The word means *gap* or *chasm* because it is the *space between* heaven and earth. Myth needs to be understood psychologically. When sickness overwhelms us mentally or physically we descend into inner chaos. A chasm of separation opens between us as we were, and us as we are. We cannot relate to anyone or anything as we did before. We don't like chaos and we are often ready to make false compromises, to deny the self-evident, to isolate ourselves from others to keep ourselves from falling into the abyss.

Denying suffering or loss, however, means denying our need for healing. At an increasing cost to our well-being and sanity, we keep up appearances, as if nothing has happened. My parents' generation were resilient and self-reliant in ways their offspring might well envy; but they also often hid their feelings and refused to ask for help when they needed it most. Their survival mechanisms were

shaped by the most violent century of human history, but repression is itself a violence against oneself. Today repression is even easier. Virtual reality is at our fingertips. The click of a mouse, or swallowing a pill transports us into another world where we feel for a time that we are in control and that we choose whatever we like to make us feel better.

Technology often seems suspicious to the spiritually-minded. Science and the gadgets of technology are often employed in the service of the narcissistic ego. Eventually, however, the unreal undergoes an unavoidable death and the repression and self-delusion, the false appearances, collapse. I am quite tempted by gadgets; but I used to feel there was an opposition between technology and the divine which made it easier for people in a techno-culture to fall into chaos. Community, I believed, could only be experienced in person, with physical presence. The church says you can't make a sacramental confession online. My experience of online meditation groups began to change this oversimplification. I first meditated online with a dying person, too sick to leave home, and I knew we were connected spiritually as well as digitally. Today with my fellow directors in the community we begin all meetings with meditation.

A real and holy connection exists between people who in any way meditate together. Perhaps this is because the spirit is not trapped inside the body like a ghost; the body is in the spirit. When Jesus appeared to his disciples who were immersed in the chaos of his death and thought they were seeing a ghost, he showed them he was at least as real to them as he was before. He is wholly physical, eating and touching with them. But only when the eye of their spirit is open, can they recognize him in this form. Meditating in an online group (a growing phenomenon described in this newsletter) is different from being in the same room. (You can, for example, mute the sound so that you can't hear other

people coughing.) But the presence is still real. The Spirit that unites flows among you; and *koinonia*, the communion of the good, is a felt reality.

The mosque in Victoria, Texas, burned down a few hours after the first order banning entry to the US from seven Muslim-majority countries. The local Jews immediately invited their Muslim neighbours, now bereft of a place of worship, to worship in their synagogue. The Jews said there were more Muslims than Jews in the town so they wanted to share the sacred space. The Muslims warmly accepted. They must have been healthy communities to begin with but the deep and inclusive *koinonia* they now shared made them healthier and happier.

Koinonia is the lived experience of community. The digital generation, nourished on the milk of technology from infancy, often uses it to create false intimacy in an alternative reality. But they long for *koinonia*. FaceBook friendships may offer some relief from the loneliness of the digital space they inhabit; but, like all false consolation, it lets them down and betrays their deeper selves.

Koinonia is the healthy experience of a community that has a strong enough identity to be hospitable to others and not define itself by what it excludes. The first task is to build that healthy community. Our Chinese meditators helped to do this recently by introducing meditation in the Catholic seminary in Beijing, where daily groups have now formed. Living and studying or working together, even worshipping together, is not enough to release *koinonia*. It needs collective interiority: honesty and a deep enough silence to meet in the place of truth with others. All relationships are subtly transformed by this silent truthfulness. Wonderfully, friendship is then seen to be the natural default of human relationship. Seeing this, the experience of even a very small community reaches beyond itself to touch the great, living network of relationships that, to our eye of faith, is the Body of Christ.

Recently a small group of meditators, who will help form the first residential community at Bonnevaux, visited our new WCCM home and international retreat centre. After the visit, we meditated in a little chapel next to the main house, which we hope to move into in the summer. The vision is strong, the world community is enthused - and the challenge to make it into a physical reality is very big. It will be realized through the combined dedication of resident and non-resident community members. After we meditated, I felt no essential difference between the local and the global community. In the Spirit, *koinonia* is one and the same.

Chaos is always threatening to overwhelm human existence, to suck hope out of us. The chasm of our mortality and the pains of loss and separation constantly destabilise the security we need in order to grow. Life is a busy hospital. We have to ensure that whoever we meet or work with, in this place of healing, finds a welcome. For St Benedict every guest must be made to feel as if he or she is Christ. In the community, those most in need, the sick, the young, the old and the stranger arriving at midnight are not regarded as burdens or expenses but revered.

This is how Chaos is turned into Cosmos. Through the power of *koinonia*, order and harmony transform chaos. Spirit once hovered over the formless face of the deep, devoid of light. It brought into existence the colourful variety of creation. So, too, our own spirit can face the chaos within ourselves and make of it a new creation. In this fresh world, we meet again those who have died and, as it at first seems to us, returned to chaos. Their form which we loved dissolved and they seemed to float away into the great forgetfulness. *Koinonia*, however, proves to be an unbreakable bond reaching beyond the chaos of separation. We know them no longer 'after the manner of the flesh,' as St Paul says of the risen Christ. But the enduring friendship which flows both ways grows more not less real with

time. This is why we remember with love in this issue some of the members of our community who have recently died.

The chaos that medical caregivers might experience as burnout or a couple in turmoil as a marriage failure, is a reality to be reckoned with. Like corruption in the body politic, it should not be denied nor its power to wreak destruction underestimated. It can be confronted and healing can ensue through a hope born of *koinonia*. This is an emergency need of our digital and divided age. Through their faith in the risen Jesus, Christians understand that while we can build organisations with individual members and social networks; but we cannot form community merely as individuals. Perhaps in only one person at first, like John Main, there needs to be an interior dynamic of self-transcendence to begin the process of making communion incarnate as community. Cosmically, this one person is the risen Christ.

Chaos engenders fear. We feel it strongly in the political and social spheres today. But it can be defused and transformed into *koinonia*. Webs of healing, mutual support, teaching, inspiration and sheer celebration, the elaboration of projects of shared vision and the articulation of new ideas to connect rather than polarise: these are the tools and life-expression of community. Through them we both embrace our own need for healing and bring succour to others.

Never before have we needed so much to see community as a contemplative life emerging from the work of deep silence. True personal transformation must be the goal, not merely constructing a bolt hole from the surrounding chaos. Such a community will often appear weaker than it really is. It will be strong by being honestly vulnerable. Its fragility will be its flexibility and its power to adapt. In a chaotic world such local communities of cosmos are essential. They may not be great institutions or basilicas of power but they need to be places of rhythm and welcoming, silence

and truthful dialogue. A contemplative community is not a protest group; but it is radical and it speaks truth to power.

In the poverty of silence, surrounded by the laughter and freedom of fearless people, a great, creative listening can



happen. A community, sitting together, hearing each other cough or fidget, or meeting online, listens to a call that the media cannot hear. In restaurants and elevators, on customer service lines and in airports the fear of silence is reflected in the rising volume of muzak, advertising and trivial talk. They mask the symptoms of chaos but do not deal with the problem. Like all forms of distraction, one of the major causes of chaos today, they cover up rather than heal.

John Main said that 'in meditation we are crossing over the threshold from background noise into silence'. Silence is necessary for the human spirit to flourish. It may seem nonsense to many but there is no greater need in the modern world than for people, young and old, religious and secularized, rich and poor, to recover the experience of silence. This insight underpinned John Main's dedication to teaching people how they can learn to meditate. We all need help and community; but we all have to learn to meditate in our own experience. Silence reconnects us to our own self-healing

source. It restores truth to how we communicate and it builds a *koinonia* community that transcends the fear of death and chaos. 'Meditation is the way to silence'.

John Main's had the genius of simplicity. It took form in his teaching on

the mantra. It is more than a technique to calm the mind, though this is a welcome benefit of its discipline. Saying it changes us:

You become aware that you are on the threshold of silence. For many, this is a critical moment because you are leaving the familiar world of your sounds, ideas, thoughts and words. You are crossing over into silence; and you don't know what's in store for you. That's why it is so useful to meditate in a group.. in a tradition that says, "don't be afraid." The purpose of meditation is to be in the presence of love, that, as Jesus tells us, casts out all fear.

Why be afraid of this silence, if it is there, here, within us? We only need to enter it to become the healing silence.

Laurence

Laurence Freeman OSB

News

The growth of online meditation groups USA: five years since the first online group

By Roger Sessions



Community of Love sharing silence also in the digital world

Almost five years ago we started our first online WCCM group. We now have 15 groups meeting six days a week completely online with more than 100 people registered for using the online WCCM chapel. As a retrospective, I would like to share some reactions from those who participate.

Online meditating has been such a positive experience that I have already shared it with oblates. I particularly encourage those living in countries where our numbers are small to consider joining me and the other oblates online. **(Eileen Dutt, International Oblate Coordinator)**

Words can never express the blessing that the online community has been to me. During a very difficult period, with no groups in my country, I was guided to a loving online community. A subsequent relocation of 4,500 miles led not only to the retention but to the deepening of the relationship with my

community of love. **(Robert Lalor, Jamaica/UK)**

It is like being in a family where we can share our thoughts and feelings and relationship with God in a most loving way. Most of all we share the beautiful silence as we meditate together. **(Ann Hughes, UK)**

I have realized through the online community that it makes no difference whether the group is seated in the same room, or on three different continents, that divine communication happens just the same, and the community that is created is the same. **(Kevin Callahan, USA)**

I had a longing to connect with a wider WCCM community of oblates and meditators and was encouraged to join the online groups. The experience has been expansive and enriching. **(Elba Rodríguez, Colombia)**

I was skeptical when I was first asked to take part in an experimental online group. But I discovered friendship,

community, love, what Fr Laurence calls "the sacramental use of the Internet." For WCCM Oblates, the added opportunity to share how we live the Rule of Benedict. **(Mary Robison, USA Oblate Coordinator)**

Our hope is to have online meditation sessions 24/7 in several languages. If you would like to join us, drop me a note and I'll help you get started. I'm Roger Sessions (roger.sessions@gmail.com).

ONLINE: See a list of online groups at http://tiny.cc/wccm_onlgrp

Hong Kong: a silent connection to the world

By Joseph Pang

On every Wednesday at 9:00pm Hong Kong time, meditators from Ireland, USA, Canada, Hong Kong, and Philippines come to the online meeting and meditate. The group was established shortly after the 2013 John Main Seminar in Hong Kong. We come from different cultures and backgrounds, but this fact doesn't give us any impediment in our communication. In fact this leads us to respect each other. Also such differences allow us to see meditation and our spiritual journey through different angles. I always learn a lot from them.

I have been meditating for four years now. As a leader of this group, I always feel indebted to them. They have supported me since the beginning. They let me experience the meaning of the "Community of love." To my belief, this love propels me to go for the WCCM Benedictine oblation.

News

Bonnevaux

Looking at our New Centre

Meditators representing the new core community visit Bonnevaux



"It was a grey day in early February when I visited Bonnevaux for the second time. We imagined the future visitors gathering between the main house and the guesthouse and the barn. We discussed having the dining room in the restored stables with the cobbled floor, and the horse boxes with dining tables to create a sense of closeness and community. On warm days we will be able to eat

outside. The beautiful barn will become a flexible space, a wonderful conference and meditation area. With our architects, who are donating their time and talent to the project, we will make space for offices and later small cells, again bringing together solitude and community. Inside the main house where the community will move in a few months, we ended the visit in the dining room, where the owner

had kindly made a friendly with wood from the property. We sat in a wide circle around the table, said our opening prayer and meditated for the first time together in Bonnevaux. Laurence invited each of us to make a prayer from the heart after meditation, and we listened to a wonderful expression of our oneness and diversity." (Henriette Hollaar)

"It was exciting to be with the first potential members of the community at Bonnevaux. It felt like one minute we were looking at properties and listening to see if the Spirit was advocating for this project and the next minute a property has been found and people were incarnating it. To be together meditating at the property, sharing meals, discussing the plans, talking things through and laughing a lot. Such joy and presence." (Giovanni Felicioni)

ONLINE: Visit the Bonnevaux website www.bonnevauxwccm.org

A Meditation Centre for the Caribbean



In December 2016, the Cluny Sisters offered the meditation Community in Trinidad a rent-free room to be used for its mission. Situated on

the grounds of the Convent in the midst of the busy Port of Spain area, it is ideally placed near banks, insurance companies, schools and lawyers'

offices. Also on the property is a "Tea House" serving daily meals. A survey was done and many welcomed the opportunity to have this "oasis" in the city. We started lunch time meditation sessions and in the evening, a six-week introductory course. The area will also allow space for a small bookshop, a place for our leadership meetings, and a space for quiet time. We can only give thanks for this unexpected and meaningful gift- the Spirit continues to be so present. (Sr Ruth Montrichard)

(...) only in abandonment to an infinite depth of silence that we can be revealed to the source of our spirit in which multiplicity and division disappear. (John Main)

News

Promoting Health and Wellbeing through Meditation in a hospital Emergency Department

Pádraic Dunne, Senior Research Fellow, Trinity College Dublin

Health care practitioner burnout can have a significant negative impact on the quality of healthcare provided to patients, in terms of increased medical errors and decreased patient satisfaction. As a result, there is a need for an effective stress-reducing intervention, such as meditation. Health care for providers and patients alike has become about “doing” and “fixing” rather than “being”. This ethos of “doing” has eroded self-compassion, compassion for the patient and attentiveness in health care provision. We believe the answer is to move toward an ethos of “being”, whereby the health care worker actively lives and works in a space of compassionate yet detached, present-focused awareness.

We have recently started a randomised control trial of mantra meditation using 60 participants from Ireland’s largest emergency department at St. James’s Hospital Dublin. This project

will be the world’s first to examine the role of meditation to improve the psychological and physiological wellbeing of health care professionals working in an emergency department setting. In addition to conventional psychological and qualitative assessments, we will also use state of the art technology to examine the impact of meditation on brain function and anatomy, the immune system and genetic control of inflammation.

Sustaining a daily meditation practice can become an issue in studies such as this. Therefore, we have developed a bespoke mobile application that contains a meditation timer and lessons relevant to the mantra meditation programme. This application will not only remind practitioners to meditate daily but will also measure heart rate variability during practice, via a wearable Fitbit device. It is our hope that this technology will promote adherence

to daily meditation practice.

We are very aware that scientific evaluation might be viewed as counterintuitive to the central tenets of mantra meditation; after all, meditation is about gentle disengagement from evaluation and thought, in order to rest in a state of “being”. Nevertheless, we hope to use the scientific data gathered from this study to validate mantra meditation in the eyes of those within the scientific and medical communities. This is important if meditation is to have an significant role to play in promoting and sustaining the psychological and physiological health of both health care practitioners and patients alike.

This study represents a collaboration between the World Community for Christian Meditation, Trinity College Dublin, the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, the Health Service Executive of Ireland and St. James’s Hospital, Dublin.

China: Christian Meditation Retreat at Hebei Seminary

On February 16-19, Fr. Tommy Murphy SSC, spiritual director of WCCM HK, Br. William (OFM), Celina Chan Coordinator of WCCM China and Augustine Xiao Xiao gathered in Hebei Seminary, to lead a Meditation Retreat attended by 100 seminarians and 20 sisters. The retreat’s theme was “Developing the Contemplative Dimension in the Christian Life,” and it highlighted the beginning of the new school year. The participants

learned about contemplation and the scriptures, the history of Christian Meditation and the WCCM Community.

By the end of the retreat, the practice of meditation had been established at the seminary for the new school year and about 20 participants had formed meditation groups. The event was an example of real teamwork between the WCCM Communities of China and Hong Kong.

First ETW in Czech Republic



The community from the Czech Republic has held its first Essential Teaching Weekend. Thirty participants from around the country enjoyed a very cold but inspiring weekend in an old Capuchin monastery in beginning of January. (Vladimir Volrab)

News

From dream to reality: meditation in a Hong Kong prison



Stanley is one of the six maximum security facilities in Hong Kong

Catherine Cheung started to meditate some years ago in Hong Kong. Two months after she began, she had a dream where an old "Lord of the Rings

like" man, told her that she should teach meditation at Stanley Prison, a maximum security facility located near where she lives. She tried, unsuccess-

fully, to contact the prison for six months. She finally got in touch with a priest who used to visit prisoners there regularly, but the people in charge thought that teaching meditation to the prisoners would be too much for them: "This is not for the prisoners; it is too advanced for them," they told her.

Catherine was persistent and went for another try. She met a nun who suggested that she visit a prisoner, Paul, who was sentenced to life and had been recently baptized. She started to visit him every month. Paul now meditates and is already sharing the gift with others in Stanley.

ONLINE: interview with Catherine at http://tiny.cc/interv_HK

Paul: "The twice a day meditation has become the anchor of my life"

This is from a letter from Paul to Catherine:

I am very glad that I learnt about Christian Meditation from you and started this spiritual practice. With no on-site guidance from an instructor and with only one meditation book, I started my Christian Meditation practice, doing it twice a day with discipline. Christian meditation looks simple but it is really not easy. Often, I could not focus as I was supposed to. Sometimes I felt like dreaming or floating on my thoughts. These experience tempted me to starting thinking of giving it up. I think of this over and over again, as I encourage myself to persevere, to be still and silent.

I have now been practicing for 3 to 4 months. It is very strange how things have changed. The tendency to not focus or fall into dreams, no longer happens. Now the routine of meditating

twice a day, has become the anchor of my life. I understand more about Christian meditation: it is not me who is praying, it is Jesus praying in me.

In the prison, there is much gossip every day, which creates disturbances for me. Very often I am frustrated and troubled. In the past, I could not let go and this troubled feeling would exist for 2 - 3 days. Recently, I have a different experience. After practicing Christian meditation, the earlier troubled feelings are gone. I can now let go of my troubled feelings completely. I am not sure if this is related to my meditation practice, but I can assure one thing, Christian meditation is related to patience. I still remembered that I was

tempted to give up this practice, but I comforted myself that I was new to it and I have just begun learning it, so I should have more patience. Now, I don't know where the practice will lead me or whether I will make any

progress, but from these very short few months, I gained a peaceful feeling and I believed that it is the fruit of the Christian Meditation practice. I have to work

I gained a peaceful feeling and I believe it is the fruit of Christian Meditation

harder, be more patient and persistent, and hope that the Holy Spirit will guide me to receive more grace, so that I can have the courage to walk my way forward in big steps.

May God's peace be in your heart always.

Paul

News

In Loving Memory

Enrique Pavan, Argentina

We are very sad to share that Enrique Pavan's sudden passing on 28 January, has left us all in shock and grief. He is greatly missed. Enrique was a kind man, with few but precise words. A committed and hardworking Community member, during his term as National Coordinator, he introduced the practice of meditation at schools, hospitals, and in the Argentina business sector and greatly strengthened the overall presence of our community through meditation groups at parishes and homes.

Although he has left us suddenly, we all feel at the same time he is still with us, inspiring and guiding us. Let us also keep María Laura, his wife, his daughters and all his family and loved ones in our hearts and prayers. **(José Maria Chaher, Guiding Board Member)**

John Moederle, Switzerland

John was not only a friend and a collaborator of Fr. Laurence but also his official – and greatly appreciated – translator during events in France and Switzerland. His contagious enthusiasm for John Main's teachings led him to start the first meditation group in Switzerland and to be its first National Coordinator. He and his wife Debbie have led groups in Geneva for many years.

John's unexpected death has profoundly affected us. He was a man of deep faith and sincere humanity, a pilgrimage companion and friend, and an example for many of us through his presence, simplicity and clarity of speech.

Let's keep John, Debbie, their family and loved ones in our heart and prayers. May the Peace of God fill their hearts with abundance. Farewell John! May you

soul rest in peace. You will stay in our hearts and memories.

(Catherine Charrière, Swiss National Coordinator)

John Cotling, UK

John, a longtime meditator and pioneer group leader, who turned his home into a Christian Meditation Centre, died of a heart attack on February 19 in Manchester. Laurence Freeman in his book: "A Short Span of Days" says: "At death's door only one person can go through at a time, but it makes a great difference to know that on this side of the door there is a loving presence to accompany you for the presence that welcomes you on the other side." That "loving presence" was John's wife Sheila who accompanied John in his last days with support, affection, and love.

John was a great inspiration to me because of his pioneering work in starting the first lay Christian Meditation group in the UK in 1977. Thanks, John, for your perseverance, faithfulness and fidelity to the teaching. **(Paul Harris is a Patron of the WCCM, former Canadian Christian Meditation coordinator)**

Sr. Evelyn McDevitt, N. Ireland

In the late 1990's, Sr. Evelyn invited Margaret Collier and myself to run the School for Teachers of Christian Meditation in Belfast. This was a programme to help people develop a greater understanding of meditation and to pass it on to others who were interested. In 2004, she was part of the first Executive Group for Christian Meditation in Ireland. Evelyn also represented the Community in Northern Ireland.

In 2007 she was in Aras an Uachtairín when we met President Mary McAleese

to celebrate John Main's anniversary. The President greeted all of us wholesomely, but she had a special chat with Evelyn – a fellow Northerner and also one who had contributed greatly to the Christian Meditation Community in Ireland.

(Fergal McLoughlin, former National Coordinator for Ireland)

New Zealand Silent Retreat

Every two years the New Zealand community organises a nation silent retreat at the University of Waikato in Hamilton. This year it was led by Rev. Sarah Bachelard, from Australia.

Sarah's theme was 'Contemplation, Faith and the Active Life'. In her four talks she invited us to explore how meditation relates to and transforms our ac-



tions, and how contemplative communities of faith might contribute life and healing in our troubled times. Sarah explored in depth contemplation, discernment, action and intercession. Her talks were engaging and accessible and gave rise to a great many questions. In all, we had three question and answer sessions in which Sarah amazed us with her ability to explore topics. (Vincent Maire).

ONLINE: Listen to the talks at <http://tiny.cc/NZ2017>

In Focus

Mary Meyer, from Paraguay



My journey with Christian Meditation has led to many gradual, but constant changes in my life. The two most incredible ones have to do with “time and space.”

Time: The first time I heard Father Laurence talk about Christian Meditation I honestly thought to myself, “How could anyone ever find 30 minutes, twice a day to meditate?” My life was so overwhelmingly busy between family, work, studies, and responsibilities that I couldn’t imagine finding time. Yet I left that first retreat convinced that I would serve WCCM from that day forward. There were no doubts in my mind that this was my calling. Father Laurence had said time would work itself out and,

sure enough, it did. Somehow all my tasks simply began to rearrange themselves on my list of priorities and I found myself meditating and teaching others to meditate as the main tasks of my day. Painlessly, tasks were left behind and others simplified. It was as if once I had put myself at His service, God took over my time management issues.

Space: I’ve come to believe that we tend to react because we don’t take a step back. We don’t give ourselves the space needed to listen and be present to others. I cannot claim that now I always listen with my heart. No, I am afraid I am still me, impatient and with too many things on my mind. But Christian Meditation has made me more available to the Lord. It has given me the space needed to be receptive to the messages God is constantly sending. This morning, for instance, I was running late and I felt impatient with the driver in front of me who kept stopping at every corner as if unsure of what he wanted to do. Thoroughly irritated, I thought to myself sarcastically, “Hurry up! Or are

you just learning to drive?” Before the thought had actually finished forming in my mind, my eldest grandson popped into my head. He is, in fact, just beginning to drive and he would probably be stopping at every corner, just like the driver in front of me was doing. And I saw my brother who is currently visiting the city and wouldn’t know which street to turn at...and just like that, all the impatience, all the irritation was gone. A warm compassionate calm filled my heart. I was instantly filled with

All my tasks simply began to rearrange themselves on my list of priorities and I found myself meditating and teaching others

gratitude that the Lord keeps taking the time to try to teach me and that once more I had just been touched by His grace. I guess that is how

I would describe my journey — constantly being touched by His grace in the most everyday circumstances. Whenever an unkind, impatient, or unnecessary thought, word or action begins to take form in me, He sends a message. He makes it personal and wipes it clean — makes me clean. Christian Meditation gives me the time and space I need to hear God and see the Other.



Meditatio Newsletter is published four times a year by the International Office of The World Community for Christian Meditation, St Marks, Myddelton Square London EC1R 1XX, London, UK.
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Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is **10 June**.

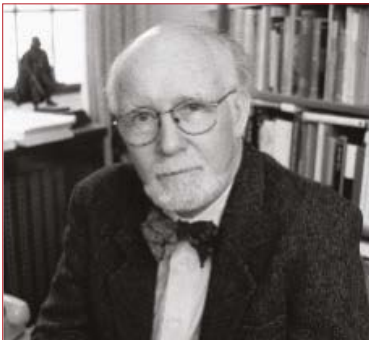
Events & Resources

Come to the John Main Seminar 2017

Praying with the Masters Today, presented by Bernard McGinn

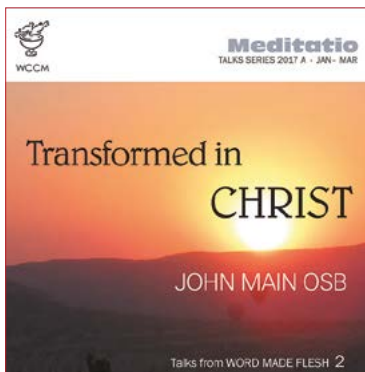
10-13 August, Houston, USA

7-10 August, Pre-Seminar led by Laurence Freeman OSB



The Seminar will explore the development of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition from the early to the contemporary mystics. For more information and registration visit: http://tiny.cc/JMS2017_RG

Meditatio Talks Series



24 June - 1 July, Siena, Italy Monte Oliveto Retreat: Silence

Led by Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni



A thirst for silence characterises our unsilent culture of over-stimulation and continuous mental talk-show chatter. In a post-truth world where we believe less and less, silence performs a healing and restorative role - it restores meaning to words and ritual and reassures us that truth is really real. More info: monteoliveto@wccm.org

Transformed in Christ John Main OSB

In these talks John Main explains meditation as a way of Christian faith. Like trust which opens us to the presence of Christ in our heart. These talks are selections from Word Made Flesh, published on CD and in print under the same title. You can listen online or download here: http://tiny.cc/med_2017a

Meditatio Centre 2017 Programme

The Meditatio Centre in London offers a programme of activities with regular meditation times, exhibitions, workshops and a lot more. Check the programme here: <http://tiny.cc/medcentre2017>

More dates & events:



8-25 July
Pilgrimage to Kashmir & Ladakh, India
More info:
http://tiny.cc/wccm_india2017

15-22 September
Health & Meditation Retreat
Contact: theresawccm@gmail.com

22-24 September:
Bere Island Music Festival
Contact: theresawccm@gmail.com

1-8 October:
Fara Sabina School Retreat, led by Laurence Freeman
Contact: som@wccm.org

To order: contact the resource centre nearest to you. Our centres are listed below

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