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Sowing the seed in Myanmar

The World Community was invited by the three archbishops of Myanmar to introduce Christian meditation to the Burmese church. Fr Laurence, Peter Ng, Pauline Peters and James Loh were warmly welcomed in the three cities they visited. Read more on pages 2-5 and 10







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A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

In August I made my first visit to Myanmar – to Rangoon, Mandalay and Taunggyi. With other members of our community I went, at the invitation of the three archbishops of these legendary places, to introduce meditation to the Burmese church. As usual when one goes to teach and if the students are willing, we learned at least as much as we taught.

It was soon apparent that the Burmese groups we met with - students, clergy and religious, parishioners and children were a uniquely receptive audience. I can't think of another place where I have had regularly to ask people to open their eyes after the bell and the reading with which I usually close a meditation session. The 'hunger for deeper prayer' is a phrase - however true - that falls easily from religious lips these days. Everyone nods – wisely or sadly, it's sometime hard to tell. But here the hunger, and the delight in their being shown where to assuage the hunger of their faith, was palpable and, for us, so joyful to be part of.

In Taunggyi the sessions were held in a hall in the Catholic compound where the French gothic cathedral rises – a strange cultural reminder of the past and yet a beloved home to those who worship there. Next to us was an orphanage with what seemed like an uncountable number of happy children teeming in a well-behaved kind of way. When they were brought in to the first session they sat calmly on the floor in front of the clergy. I wondered if they had been brought just to raise numbers or because no one was left to supervise them. How much of the talk on meditation as prayer in our tradition they understood I can't say, but I can guess not much. However, when it came to explaining the practice, the how to meditate itself, I concentrated on them and let the adults listen in. I could tell they were listening. And I saw

that they understood by the way they fell into the right posture and stillness so eagerly; and, what's more, sustained it throughout the meditation. When I had to tell them to open their eyes it was because they were in such a deep state of inner attention. Hearing them say later how it was not always easy to say the mantra but that they enjoyed it, I could see how the Spirit, working as usual on the inside of consciousness, was making experience their teacher.

It might seem condescending to attribute the receptivity to meditation of the Burmese Christians to the simplicity of the people. It is also partly due to

Meditating with children I am convinced how natural meditation is

the omnipresent image in innumerable temples and public spaces of a peaceful figure sitting with eyes closed and back straight in serene contemplation.

Simplicity has many meanings, one of which I'd like to explore in this letter. I don't mean naïve or shallow. I mean rich in potential for expansion of consciousness into the mind of Christ. Part of the reason they enjoyed this kind of simplicity was no doubt because the internet in Myanmar works appallingly slowly and the handheld devices, that keep the rest of us connected in digital addiction and in a state of chronic distraction and anxiety, are luxury items. Those who do have such devices show the first signs of the diseases of technological society and those who did not, looked on them with a certain wistful envy. I am not romanticising the people or the country.

One could hardly do that in a country that has been under the cruel and demeaning oppression of a military regime for sixty years, where there are at least eleven conflicts concerning tribal

groups within the country and where a rabid populist Buddhist monk calls for persecution of the Muslim minority in a society that is 95% Buddhist. (Why did the generals declare Buddhism the state religion?) What this shows is another side of simplicity. It is fragile and vulnerable and easily abused. This is painfully obvious in the case of children but no less for a society in which spiritual - and so humane - values are strongly respected and transmitted from parents to children.

As always when meditating with children – and the childlike – I was convinced how natural meditation is. We are born for this. But it is not only children who reveal this about our nature. Those in great grief can discover and embrace the practice of meditation in the midst of their anguish and despair. Those divided against themselves in depression or addiction can find in it a new hope for wholeness and healing. And those who are homeless, lacking in any kind of social status except that associated with refuse and failure, can regain their sense of dignity and self-worth.

The key words in experiencing this kind of simplicity are *finding* and *discovering*. Remember the simple parable and its inexhaustibly rich layers of meaning:

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who found a treasure buried in a field. He buried it again and for sheer joy went and sold everything he owned and bought the field.

Responding to questions about this teaching some people say, selfrevealingly, that he buried it again so that no one else could find it before they bought the field. Others ponder it more and go deeper.

What it suggests to me is the capacity to be taken unawares – to be surprised by a reality of life that we think we have exhausted and finally labelled (and inevitably underestimated). What

happens when you do genuinely let go of false hopes and the memory of disappointments that cling to you like a parasitical plant on a tree, sucking its energy? What does it really mean to refuse to be mastered by illusion any longer, however it may give you solace or temporary relief? Is this what selling everything you own implies - among other things? Getting to the place where this renunciation of falsehood actually becomes truthful is a long journey for most of us. Our illusions are so closely associated with the wounds they were invented and once promised to heal. We make promises to be real that we cannot yet keep and have to learn from repeated failures and from the companions who travel this inner road with us.

But one day, when it finally clicks and we do sell everything we own, all the ersatz treasures, we are surprised that nothing happens. There is no sudden opening of the heavens and a shower of gold doesn't fall into our lap. Free from desire we wonder how desire can be satisfied if it isn't there any more. This is poverty of spirit – a state we find hard to stay in for long without, like the Israelites in the desert, hankering for the goodies we left behind in the land of our slavery. Maybe we reconcile ourselves to a long and lacklustre future. But then we find a treasure that appears from nowhere and must be buried again so that we can't extract it from its source and put it into a numbered account. It takes a while for us to recognise that the treasure is in fact real, so real, in fact, that we think for a time that it must be another illusion. At first we have little capacity for being real. The development of that capacity is the spiritual journey, the meaning of becoming 'realised'. (Paying attention is the best measure of this capacity).

The odd thing is that the treasure

appears when we might seem still to be largely self-involved, self-pitying or self-conscious. We sense we have let go of something but still cling to the feeling of loss. If these states are too strong we won't of course be able to see the treasure even when, it is staring us in the face. But, if poverty of spirit is strong enough even the residual habits of illusion and the impatience of desire will be unable to prevent us from seeing with wonder what has befallen us. Accompanying this discovery Self-knowledge, as the desert tradition teaches us, is more important to our human development than the ability to work miracles. What we know in this form of conscious awareness is not merely information about ourselves, our brains or our psychological patterns, but an experiential insight into our participating in being itself. In this knowledge, the deepest subjective knowledge of which we are capable, we are no longer able to see ourselves as objects. We know everything from within



is a sense of gratitude that will seek out the mysterious and unseen source of the gift received. We have regained our innocence – our mental virginity – and we have become simple again. Unless you become like little children...

Children don't need to be reminded that they are redeemable – just lovable. But as adults we need to be continuously reassured that the worst we can do to others or to ourselves can be reversed, from deep within, by forces of renewal wholly beyond our ken or our control. The meaning of simplicity becomes clearer as we sense the hidden depth of our own being – for which the psalmist once sang with praise and wonder: I thank thee Lord for the wonder of my being.

the great, simultaneously creative and redemptive, self-knowing of God.

We have become simple and whole. This is beyond the imagination to conceive and therefore even for our desire to reach for or our will to strive for. Simplicity is the hardest truth for human beings to perceive. A condition of complete simplicity: but it costs not less than the lot. Our own simplicity then becomes a trapdoor into the abyss of the divine simplicity. Even at this point before we tumble into selftranscendence we can and, at first usually do, pull back. We fear the boundless freedom more than the walls of a prison. After all we can inscribe our misery on the walls and seek thus to be remembered. We have not yet lost our

ego-identity.

Simplicity is greatly assisted by the loss of power or freedom. This is a hard truth that does not justify it being done to us by force or by the cruel and vicious action of others – though it does offer some hope for redemption from situations we can only label as evil. But we are meant to be guided into this seeing, this wisdom, by teachers and guides who have trod the way before us – not by blind, deceiving guides who don't know the kind of harm they are doing. The opposite of simplicity is duplicity.

In other words, we need to be taught to meditate from the beginning of our conscious journey. Then, long before the concepts of simplicity, poverty of spirit have formed, we are learning the habit of sifting thought from experience and illusion from truth. In the process we learn that even though this may be a hard process, we discover joy as a result of it. We are not happy because of what we have acquired but because of what we have let go of. Joy is not a possession to be sought for, but a natural condition that we forget we are already possessed by.

The consequences of discovering this treasure are immeasurable. And they are subversive of the way of life and institutional values by which the world is run - and has always been run. A number of our meditators in the business world recently shared their reason for meditating in the Financial Times. The medium in which they were interviewed had to concentrate on the obvious reasons that would occur to people in that world – clarity of judgement, calmness under pressure, and effective leadership. These are real benefits of meditation in a stress-producing culture where success in business often means failure in other more essential areas of our humanity such as health, family values or happiness.

But these benefits do not fully explain why these people meditate. Nor

does it exhaust the consequences of introducing meditation –the quickest way known to Man to separate true from false – into our modern materialistic culture. Let's not pretend that if the same people who consume as economic fodder are those who learn to simplify their desires as human beings, modern economic theory will be challenged at its foundations. A new idea of well-being will emerge to confront the meaning of our shopping malls as our primary way of using our leisure time.

I bought a melon in a London supermarket on my return from Asia. When I ate it I wondered what it was – how unnaturally and prematurely it had been grown, harvested, shipped and placed on the shelf. Deception and disappointment are inherent in the unnatural. 'Organic' labels and green packaging

When we are found by what we are looking for and recognise ourselves in the nameless benefactor

attempt to get round this consumer dissatisfaction but the truth is in the taste. Perhaps the sour melon with the artificially enticing appearance only shows what religious wisdom has long taught: that the two great perverters of the natural that send us into self-exile – are impatience and laziness. Between these extremes, with which any meditator learning the art will quickly become familiar, lies the narrow path.

Seek him in simplicity of heart: he is found by those who do not put him to the test; he shows himself to those who do not distrust him. Selfish intentions divorce from God... Wisdom never makes its way into a crafty soul. (Wis1:1-4). This description of 'holy simplicity' underlies what John Main meant when he said that, in learning to meditate, we need to let go of our demands and expectations. Certainly, in order to move

from the pyscho-physical benefits to the spiritual fruits we first need to let go of seeing the practice merely as a technique.

Naturalness is next to godliness. But when we have strayed from it we need discipline to reconnect us. There is also a holy discipline leading to the holy simplicity which, St Peter Damien says rests solely in God. We find this way of discipline recommended by every current of spiritual wisdom in the human family. It seems we need discipline to recognise grace when it finds us.

And so Jesus parallels another similar but different parable beside that of the man finding the treasure in the field of his ordinary life where it must remain. He adds: The Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he finds one of very great value he sells everything he owns and buys it.' Many of the elements are the same - finding, recognising, selling everything and making it his own. The significant difference is that in this case it is the job of the merchant to look for pearls. He is actively on the lookout and he will be successful if he is disciplined. Buddhists sometimes give thanks for having found a human incarnation; so that's the luck - or the grace - we have all received. But luck is not enough. We have to risk everything.

When we are found by what we are looking for and recognise ourselves in the nameless benefactor, that's when it becomes interesting. Consciousness expands beyond the small screen of self-interest that we have been concentrating on.

This is where 'holy curiosity' stands beside and helps holy simplicity. Some teachers have said that curiosity into the mysteries of God is inappropriate. Mother Julian says we are allowed to know all we need to know for our own good. There was often a distrust of 'stupid curiosity' that could become like the Google search engine – an investigation of boundless information but lacking the discipline and therefore

the grace, of wisdom. This was not a holy but a 'stupid curiosity'. But other voices see curiosity itself as holy because it is an essential component of the journey of human consciousness. It is only natural for us to want to know what where, when and especially why - even when we are exploring the mystery that consumes the curious seeker. The quest for understanding the world in which we find ourselves and for the self-knowledge that gives it meaning is naturally frustrated at what appears to be concealed or inaccessible. It is always the locked door that most exercises our imagination and hope.

Mystical tradition and modern science both respect the virtue and necessity of curiosity. Einstein most famously reflects the mystical perspective shaped by simplicity and wonder at which most great scientists have eventually arrived: "Curiosity (he said) has its own reason for existing. We cannot but be in awe when we contemplate the mystery of eternity and the marvellous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries to comprehend a little of the mystery each day. Never lose holy curiosity.'

A friend of mine recently discussed with me the idea of a 'laboratory of consciousness' that would focus on exploring and understanding the frontiers and nature of consciousness. Meditators would dedicate considerable periods of time to this project.

As a scientist and a spiritual person he seeks a language and methodology that is not materialistic but would be recognised as rigorous and serious by other scientists. I don't understand clearly how this would be achieved. How does one make the subjective objectively verifiable? But it is a timely quest to reconnect these two ways of knowledge in a single understanding of consciousness. To achieve this, the scientific mind would need at least to be open to the idea of a non-materialistic

explanation of consciousness. This, almost by itself, would open the way for a new set of values by which other institutions in society could operate.

We so often lose wisdom to become merely clever. Wisdom is that elusive way of seeing and understanding that is easily found among the simple and poor but is frequently lacking among the sophisticated and the powerful. The railway schedules and efficient bureaucracies that fed the death factories of the Third Reich. The brilliance of physicists that produced Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The algorithms that led to the financial crisis from which we

I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever and for revealing them to mere children. (Mt 11:25)

are still recovering.

Without a balance between simplicity and wonder and curiosity and cleverness, consciousness fails to develop to that degree of humility where we learn from our mistakes. We are then condemned to repeat them by the shallowness of the ego.

There is no balance without an integration of opposites.

An example of this – and of the difference between clever and wise - is an eleventh century text (*Dominus Vobiscum*) in which the big question is whether a hermit saying mass alone in his cell should say 'the Lord be with you'. Someone to whom the hermit's life itself seems absurd might say that that is just the kind of silly question with which they have to occupy their time. Who cares and what difference does it make? But exploring the question with curiosity can help us discover the existence of the greatest simple

mystery of Christian faith – the mystical body of Christ that we are, and in which our minds expand beyond the ego to the wisdom of the Spirit of God. So, yes, the questioner replied it *is* sensible even for the solitary hermit to say 'with you'. He is not saying it irrationally to the walls but symbolising to himself and others the reality of a presence that surpasses ordinary sense perception.

Maybe this seems only to concern medieval mystics or professional contemplatives today. But consider the community of meditators around the world that the children, laity and clergy of Myanmar were invited to join when we introduced them to meditation in their own tradition of faith.

Many of you reading this letter will have meditated alone this morning or will meditate alone this evening. But were you alone during this time when you allow the mind to descend into the heart? As the pressures of time evaporate in the present moment of contemplation, we can recognise and rejoice in the existence of a connectedness, a oneness that only wisdom can see.

Wisdom can accomplish everything. She deploys her strength from one end of the earth to the other, ordering all things for good (Wis 7:27,8:1).

Such wisdom is not for the individual alone. As the Book of Wisdom also says, the hope for our world consists in increasing the number of people who can be called wise simply because, at some authentic level, they have discovered the treasure buried in their heart and sold everything for the pearl beyond price that they did not give up looking for.

With much love

Rausens.

Online groups: meditation without borders

Learn how to be part of an opportunity that is attracting more and more participants: online meditation groups. It is not a substitute for the ordinary weekly group; but isolated or housebound meditators the online group is a godsend to remind them they always meditate in a community

"All you need is a few people someplace in the world who want to meditate together"



By Roger Sessions (roger@objectwatch.com)

Uh oh. I overslept. My 6:00 AM meditation group meets in ten minutes. And the rest of the group is in Houston while I am in Mexico City. And, to top it off, I am the group leader. Now what? No problem. I roll out of bed and turn on my computer. While it boots up I throw cold water on my face. I get comfortable, bring up Google Hangouts, and there is my group. From bed to group in under three minutes.

I am taking advantage of a new kind of meditation group: Online WCCM Meditation Groups. These groups are just like regular meditation groups with one exception. We don't meet in a physical location; we meet online through Google+ Hangouts. We can see and hear each other. We just can't touch each other, at least, physically.

WCCM already has four online groups in the United States. The flex-

ibility of the approach lends itself to new types of groups. All you need is a few people someplace in the world who want to meditate together at an agreed upon time. You can build a group around a common interest, such as a young people's group or a recovery group.

Nina Davey, a new online meditator describes her online group time like this: "It is a time of recognizing the Christ presence in each person in our group through the sense of belonging, connectedness and coming home."

What do you need to participate in an online group?

- A computer
- An internet connection
- A built in camera and microphone
- A reasonably up to date browser

In fact, you don't even need a computer. Most smart phones (including iPhone and Android) have apps that will allow you to participate.

Online groups have a number of benefits. Here is my Top Ten List:

- 10. No sharing of the church nursery.
- 9. No need to rush around finding chairs.
 - 8. No parking hassles.
- 7. You can meditate at times that would be inconvenient for a physical group.
- 6. You can meditate with your group even while traveling.
- 5. You can meditate with people all over the world.
- 4. It's so easy, you can meditate with several groups a week. (Most of us do.)
- 3. It's free! (We use Google+ Hangouts, available to all at no cost.)
- 2. Even if you live in DimeBox, Texas, you have a meditation group as close as your computer.

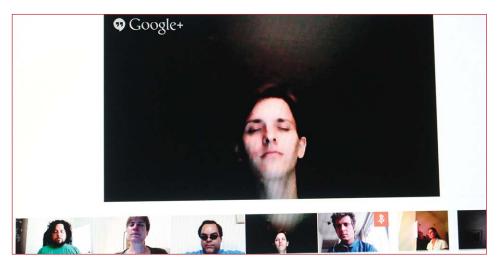
And the #1 benefit of on-line meditation: You get to see everybody's cats. (For some reason, cats love online meditation.)

Would you like to learn more or join an online group?

Contact Roger Sessions (roger@ objectwatch.com) or Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org)

A different kind of presence

By Leonardo Corrêa



I started an international online meditation group inspired by the experience in the United States. The first session was on 7th June and since then we have been meditating once a week. The group is quite steady, five people on average, and we have welcomed participants from Brazil, Argentina, Canada, US, UK, Italy, Poland

and Germany.

As times goes by, we lose a little bit of the strangeness of being together but physically apart. This does not matter anymore. The important thing is the purpose of gathering together: meditation. The process is as simple as possible: we do a reading (by John Main or Laurence Freeman), meditate,

share comments and do a short final prayer. That is it.

I can say that it is working well: we really feel like a group, and we feel present for each other. It is not the same as being in a regular group, but it provides a different kind of presence. Of course sometimes we have technical issues, some microphone is not working, or the internet connection goes down. But in general I feel this a practice that will grow, thanks to modern technology.

If you think that we should soon use "wearable devices", like Google Glass, it is not too much to think we will experience even more of that sense of presence. The possibility of meetings in virtual environments, but with real people and shared purpose will more and more become part of our lives. And our community will become even more global, while keeping the simplicity of meditation practice.

"It is incredibly supportive and humbling experience meet people living in different time zones"

By Karolina Oracz, from Poland, living in the UK

I work full time and live in a remote area. The only Christian meditation groups in my geographical area take place during working hours; therefore, I can never join them. I feel very blessed to be part of the online meditation group.

It is incredibly supportive and humbling experience to be able to meet people living in different time zones, all over the world, wanting to meet once a week to meditate together. Although I do not have a comparison with a regular group that meets face to face, I know that I greatly benefit from meeting with my group on-line. I am still a beginner to meditating and

I struggle with the discipline of meditating on my own regularly twice a day. Knowing that there is a group I meet once weekly, not only helps me to meditate at least that once, but also helps me to stay motivated throughout the week. Being able to share thoughts about meditation and about the teaching with others as well as hear the thoughts and struggles of other people is very helpful. It helps me to open my eyes and ears to things about Christianity and meditation that perhaps I did not notice before, or understood differently. In the past few years I have moved several times. Having an on-line group gives an amazing sense of true community without borders, and changing the city where I live no longer matters. Although we do not meet outside of the meditation hour, we hold each other in our minds and week by week, through sharing our experiences and thoughts we get to know each other better each week.

For those who travel a lot, or who do not have an opportunity to meet face to face due to time or location, on-line group is not necessarily a lesser option. I really feel that being part of my on-line meditation group is deepening my meditation practice.



Meditatio

Meditatio Forum on Justice and Meditation in Prisons



A Judge and an ex-prisoner, Richard Cogswell and James Bishop at the Seminar on Justice

The Meditatio Forum on Justice and Meditation in Prisons took place at the Meditatio Centre in London on 9th -10th July. The discussion on the first day was focussed on Justice ("How can we be just in all we do?). The speaker were: Baroness Helena Kennedy, Richard Cogswell (judge), Sean Hagan (General Counsel of the IMF) and Lord Andrew Phillips.

"In meditation I'm not only aware of my weakness as a human being but also of another dimension. This is an experience not just an insight. For a few minutes, or seconds in meditation, I experience a different perspective." (Richard Cogswell)

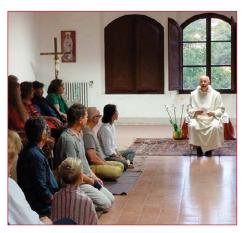
On the second day, the Forum focussed on Meditation in Prisons, with talks by James Bishop (ex-prisoner, author of the book "A Way in the Wilderness"), Sam Settle (Director of The Prison Phoenix Trust), Allison Waterhouse (Methodist Minister) and Lord Paul Myners.

"When I started to meditate I began to see the problems I had in my past. But I also saw the reasons and their sources and that was very good. I soon discovered that although I had been in prison just for a short time (about a year at that point), I actually had been in prison for all of my life. I was in a self made prison. The good news was that meditation bring us closer to the source of our being, that can help us overcome these problems." (James Bishop)

Save the dates: 26 & 27 May 2014 - A Meditatio Inter-faith Seminar in London

It would be good to have an email discussion with others in the community who are interested in inter-faith dialogue and can share their experience. If you would like to be part of a Focus Group to help plan this event please contact briji.waterfield@gmail.com

Monte Oliveto Retreat: The Cave of the Heart



The Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, in Italy, again hosted the international Christian Meditation retreat, from 22nd to 29 June. On this year's theme, "The Cave of the Heart", Fr. Laurence Freeman explored the meaning of the heart and the springs of hope, faith and love that are hidden there:

"Caves can become a mixed symbol, both of fear and darkness. But also a place where we need to go. And want to go. And that is what underlies the idea of a retreat as well. We go to a silent retreat in order to explore the cave of the heart", said Laurence at the beginning of the retreat.

The retreat this year had participants from 15 countries. Like Gary Coyte from Melbourne, Australia: "Meeting with people from different parts of the world was very enriching. I am always amazed during seven-day retreats, the strength of the group, with many cultures, many faiths. And the fact that there are many faiths gives me encouragement, in a sense that Christian Meditation binds different faiths and cultures together".

ONLINE: all the videos of the talks are available in our Meditatio Store (www.meditatiostore.com)

Regional meetings in Poland and Belgium



Europe hosted in July two of the six regional meetings of national coordinators that are scheduled this year to discuss the way forward, priorities and plans for the community worldwide. The East European Meeting took place from 5th to 6th July, in Szczecin, with participants from Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Lithuania and Belgium. The North European

Meeting was held at St Sixtus Abbey, Belgium with participants from Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, South Africa and UK.

" It is a very hopeful sign meeting people from all the European countries with the same purpose of sharing the experience with other people, not only in Christian Circles, but also with the secular World" said Jose Pype, coordinator for Belgium and also for North Europe.

New National Coordinators

Four national communities changed national coordinators recently: Gilda Monteiro took over from Cristina Sousa in Portugal, Eric Clotuche from Dominique Lablanche in France and Tone Mjavatn from Åse Markussen in Norway. Cristiane Floyd took over in Germany, from Mathias Beisswenger

Fr. Laurence visits Brazil



Fr. Laurence visited Brazil from 13th to 17th July. In São Paulo, he gave two talks at Saint Benedict Monastery and visited people in poor areas of the city, together with Roldano Giuntoli (National Coordinator for Brazil) and Taynã Bonifácio (Regional Coordinator for São Paulo). In Rio, the main intention was to lend support to a

project at Rocinha, the largest "favela" in Brazil. Alessandro Akil (new Regional Coordinator for Rio) is leading this work. Fr. Laurence gave a talk on the theme "Peace in the Hearts, Peace on the Streets" for the Rocinha community.

ONLINE: You can watch videos and see photos of Fr.Laurence in Brazil at www.wccm.org

French National Conference in Lyon



The French National Conference, held in Lyon, at the end of July was attended by Fr. Laurence and the main speaker, Dr Michel Maxime Egger from Geneva. Both spoke on the theme of "Recovering our unity with the Earth". More than 150 meditators

attended from France, Switzerland and Belgium. At this event, Dominique Lablanche, National Coordinator since 2002, handed over the role to Eric Clotuche.

ONLINE: You can see photos of this event at www.wccm.org



Myanmar: a warm welcome to Christian Meditation



Fr Laurence visited Myanmar in August with Peter Ng (National Coordina-

tor Singapore) James Loh ,and Pauline Peters (Director of National Liaison). It was a 10 day trip and they were moved and inspired by the response that greeted them in all their sessions. In Yangon, Mandalay and Taunggyi their teaching of Christian meditation has left seeds which the Burmese church is now eager to help to grow.

"It was amazing, the little children came and, when Fr. Laurence introduced them to meditation, they just sat there and meditated for about eight minutes. And when the chime rang they stayed deep in meditation", said Pauline.

"The Burmese people are naturally contemplative. The burmese people are hungry for meditation and I think this is a very important work for our community to share it with them" commented Peter NG.

ONLINE: See slideshows with images and comments at www.wccm.org

Kim Nataraja leads a retreat in Germany



By Jean Dorband-Penderock

In what turned out to be the hottest weekend in an unusually hot July, 22 meditators from all parts of Germany and from German-speaking Switzerland met in Würzburg for three days of spiritual inspiration and renewal, both individually and as a group. The WCCM Seminar was led by Kim Nataraja, Director of the WCCM School of Meditation. Kim's fluency in German plus her well-organized presentation enabled us to follow easily her four lectures on the topic "The Art of Remaining Free". She laid the groundwork by referencing recent neurophysiological research that suggests that meditation may be crucial for optimal brain functioning (The Blissful Brain by Dr. Shanida Nataraja

presents an extensive treatment of this issue.) Then she delved into the roots of our Christian meditation tradition, beginning with the Apostles, the early church in Alexandria, and the Nicene Creed and its influence on the burgeoning Christian faith. In particular the so-called Desert Tradition (consisting of both Fathers and Mothers, as Kim emphatcally pointed out) and the teachings of Evagrius of Pontus and John Cassian were later to influence John Main's own teachings on prayer.

The historical outline Kim gave us awakened our desire to know more about the Christian meditation tradition and we were delighted that Kim expressed a willingness to continue this topic at our next annual seminar in 2014. In the meantime, the book organised by her *Journey to the Heart* is on the market for those who want to pursue the topic of "Christian contemplation through the centuries" during the long winter months.

In addition to Kim's lectures and the follow-up question-and-answer period, the weekend included meditations, contemplative walking and two sessions of yoga. On Saturday evening Franciscan priest and retired missionary Father Franz Ernst celebrated the Eucharist with us, accompanied by songs from Taizé led by a spontaneous "choir" of meditators. The silence during the seminar, broken only by the optional time of quiet conversation during meals, the beauty of the setting on the grounds of the historic Oberzell Convent overlooking the Main River and the Würzburg vineyards, and the friendly and harmonious group of participants alladded to the special atmosphere of this weekend.

Before we departed for our respective homes, we sat down together once again to discuss how we could give a new impetus to our WCCM group as the representative of the entire German-speaking area of Europe. To this end, we elected Christiane Floyd the new National Coordinator and brainstormed ways to strengthen our organisational network and to make the teachings of John Main more well-known to a German-speaking audience.



By Alessandro Akil, Brazil

How did you start to meditate?



How did you start to meditate?

This question helped me to stop and look back, and review my path, remember my first encounter with the practice and with very important people who never left my life.

The first important person was Genil Castro. Genil was my John the Baptist 'who pointed Jesus to me... 'I already knew Jesus, but this "new one" I didn't have to reach; I just had to follow him. Genil invited me to take part in a silent retreat in Brasilia led by Dom Laurence in 1999. There I met this very special man: Father

Laurence. From the first time we talked I thought of him as a friend; a friendship that goes beyond just getting to know each other. During the retreat he asked us three questions: Who is God? Who is Jesus? And who is the Holy Spirit? But before answering we had to be quiet. I didn't get the answer but I could appreciate the question in greater depth. Due to my personality I didn't immediately begin meditating, instead I began reading ... I bought all the books available. Listening with my heart to these questions was a healing and painful process, particularly because I had just left the seminary and the church I used to attend.

The next silent retreat was held in Rio de Janeiro one year later in 2000. I went with Genil, and once again I felt that there was "a long and winding road" ahead of me, but I was on the journey home...

However it wasn't long before I felt as though, again, I was on my own with no direction home. My wounds didn't let up just because I was meditating. But drinking heavily and using drugs paved my way with smooth velvet. Before I killed myself I decided to spend a sabbatical year in the United States with my family (my brother and my mother live there). Three years later I was back in

Brazil. I came to Rio de Janeiro to get married. I met Father Laurence once again in Rio, this time with my wife. After this meeting I felt I was ready to get more involved with the Community. I started to translate the Lent Reflections. As a volunteer I also translated the Essential teachings. In 2008 I was on another retreat and the person who was doing the consecutive interpreting had a back problem, so they asked me to take over the job. Of course I didn't feel comfortable doing it but serving the community was already in my heart.

Another land mark in my journey was going to London to spend three months deepening my practice and getting to know the community more. But much more than that happened. I underwent a treatment of my heart and soul. I'm pretty sure that a healing process started in the Meditatio house and four blessed people took my hand and stood by me during the 'dark night of my soul'. Mike, Henriette, Cristiana and Father Laurence. Their love lit my way; their love was the love of Christ made flesh...

My stay at Meditatio House also gave me the Rule of Saint Benedict and led me to my novitiate as an Oblate of the community, reminding me daily, of my commitment to meditation.



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E-mail: welcome@wccm.org

Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org) Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano International Coordinator: Pauline Peters

International Coordinator: Pauline Pete (paulinepeters2@amail.com)

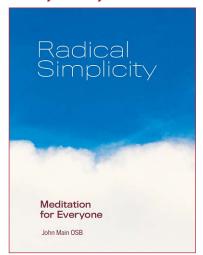
Coordinator, International Office: Jeroen Koppert (jeroen@wccm.org)

Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is December 5th

New Resources

Books

Radical Simplicity: Meditation for Everyone by John Main



John Main had the spiritual genius of simplicity. And so, his teaching on meditation, born from the Christian tradition, is universal. This collection of his practical wisdom is especially intended for a secular readership.

Price: £6 (£10.50 Book & CD)

Meditation & Addiction

This booklet is a guide for those who are interested in the role that meditation can play in helping people recover from all kinds of addictions. It provides information and encouragement for those – and their supporters – who want to reclaim their freedom through the daily exercise of this practical spiritual discipline.

PRICE: US\$ 3.20

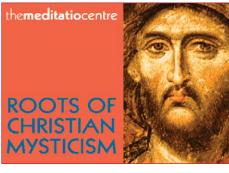
Meditation & Interfaith Dialogue

In this book, Laurence Freeman, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, describes a contemporary way forward for those committed to friendship among religious traditions: a new kind of dialogue nourished equally by silence and by words.

PRICE: US\$ 3.00

Videos

Roots of Christian Mysticism

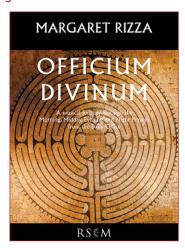


Three sessions of the course now being held at the Meditatio Centre, in London, are now available in video format: Jesus – A Teacher of Contemplation by Laurence Freeman OSB; The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition – Irenaeus of Lyons by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware; and Dionysius and Medieval Victorine Spirituality by Dr Peter Tyler.

PRICE: US\$ 5 each session

Music

Officium Divinum: A musical journey through the Daily Office Margaret Rizza



Officium Divinum is the latest major work by Margaret Rizza, just published by The Royal School of Church Music. As well as the music book, a stunning recording by the Convivium Singers, conducted by Eamonn Dougan, is also now available. This new volume of sixteen choral pieces by Margaret Rizza follows the journey of daily prayer from awakening at the break of day to the eyelids closing at the end of the day. Most have organ and/or instrumental accompaniment and are generally scored flexibly for modest forces, accessible to parish choirs as well as larger churches and cathedrals.

PRICE:

CD-£10.00-BOOK AND CD-£20.00

To order: Please contact your resource center or supplier for the price in your local currency

VISIT THE CHRISTIAN MEDITATION PAGE AT AMAZON: http://astore.amazon.com/w0575-20



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