

# Meditatio

Newsletter of The  
World Community  
for Christian Meditation



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A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

We celebrated Pentecost a few days ago in the sun-blessed garden of Meditatio House in London. For those used to too many days of cloud and drizzle the sun that really shines on good and bad alike is especially marvelous. By drawing out the colour hidden in the days of monochrome, all of life seems miraculously to break into dance while everything shows its true self. Ordinary but, at the same time, enchanted. The Holy Spirit descended not in tongues of fire – although we all held our little candle-flames at one point to remind ourselves of that – but in the waves of solar energy of a burning June day. Those with shiny heads or red hair dived for the shade, others worked on their tans – many gifts one Spirit, many individuals but ‘one undivided person’ as the Eucharist always teaches us.

The Spirit can do amazing things when she finds willing people – and sometimes even when she can’t. It can turn an hour in a garden breaking the Scriptures and the bread together into a blessing that touches each person uniquely. The Spirit can be religious but it can also and no less pervade what religious people call the profane or the secular aspects of life. If we have properly understood the incarnation, what part of life does not share in the life of the Spirit or is incapable of being restored, renewed, corrected or launched by it? We go our different ways, after such moments, carrying within us – maybe a fading - but still real experience of unity, of the connected oneness which the human person intuitively seeks and cherishes.

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Our lives are spiritual journeys. Whatever values society may put on individual lives, as spiritual processes they are all equal. But a life doesn’t consciously realize what it is until we stop seeing the spiritual journey as merely a part

of our life that competes with other demands. Often we struggle to ‘make time’ for meditation or other elements in our life onto which we put the spiritual label. We even talk about ‘spiritual values’ as if these are essentially different from others. Or we assign particular times or spaces for the “spiritual” and then regularly suspend it when we re-enter the fast flowing stream of activity. This misses the point and also misses a great opportunity to live everything, and always, in the life – that is to say the awareness – of the spirit.

As long as we think of the spiritual only as a peak experience, something extraordinary, rare, precious but usually unattainable we deny life – the suc-

*If we think of the spiritual  
only as a rare,  
peak experience  
we deny real life*

cession of ordinary things – as we actually live it, the possibility of being fully alive. We think of the ordinary – making a living, balancing expenditure and income, dealing with chores, waiting for the plumber – as lacking in something. Maybe we don’t know what the something is – perhaps something enchanting, transcendent, magical, otherworldly. Then it is only too easy to invent a something that substitutes for what we feel is lacking. There are many products and courses on the market today that offer to do that, some harmless, others self-destructive. Anything, from a superficial ‘spirituality’ with an instant feel-good factor but no transformative potential, to substance abuse or the time-wasting addictions of the new digital realm, can be grasped as a substitute. A substitute for what? For what it is that enables us to see that no part of our life – the blessed moments of

intimacy, the knife-edge negotiations of a business deal, the lost hours at an airport, the biorhythms of our bodies – are closed to the spirit.

Perhaps what leads us off track is taking the spatial metaphors – interior and external – too literally. The gospel avoids this by using a word of double meaning to describe the kingdom of heaven – it is both ‘within’ and ‘among’. It is true that the spirit lives in us but no less true that we live in the spirit.

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Pentecost is a dramatic feast. The story it tells would make great television. A group of scared and exhausted individuals who have lost their reason for living gather in a room. A mighty wind blows and the Holy Spirit descends on each person as a tongue of flame. These two symbols illustrate the dual nature of the spirit that transcends duality: as a wind it comes and goes where it chooses. No one can control the wind. Fire, on the other hand, is very spatial – it burns what it touches. After this experience – we don’t know except through these metaphors what it was really like for them or how long it took to manifest – they are changed. New people but the same. Out of a state of isolation and fear they are thrust into a new way of being. They have something to communicate and so passionate is their desire to do so that even the barriers of language and culture cannot restrain them. They have found a reason for living and life overflows with meaning. They are launched into a life of triumphant failure.

We wrestle with meaning all the time. Major life events highlight our need for meaning. In ‘ordinary’ life, the need feels less acute and so we easily shelve it. But when, for example, a tragic and irreplaceable loss happens it causes so much grief that we want to call it cruel - and the meaninglessness

of it is part of its cruelty. In fact it may just, though to us tragically, have happened. No one may be to blame except in the field of cause and effect in which we are all to blame. If I hadn't mis-typed the last word would the chain of events that led to a subsequent but unrelated tragedy been significantly different? A bird taking off from a branch at a particular moment makes the universe a different place. And Jesus thought even birds were significant.

Struggling with the quest for meaning in painful happenings is endless. (We worry less about the meaning of nice things, just glad that they happen). In the desperate attempt to make meaning - because the void of meaninglessness is ultimately worse even than the pain of tragic loss - it is tempting to construct false meaning by blaming someone or blaming ourselves for not being perfect enough to have prevented it. It takes time, a period of whirling in the void of the meaningless, to realise what meaning actually is. Wouldn't it be nice if it were an answer or an explanation? How easy it would be if there were a formula of words or beliefs that applied in all circumstances and resolved all human dilemmas. But, as we well know, when we are thrust into the void often the first thing to deconstruct and fly apart are our beliefs and explanations. We may still hold on to them but they lose their hold on us.

Meaning happens like the descent of the tongues of flame or the arrival from nowhere of a mighty wind that blows everything around in apparent chaos, re-arranging all the furniture of life. It happens, in fact, not as a result of intellectual endeavour or even through emotional work, important as these aspects of ourselves are to our sense of balance and harmony. Meaning happens when we become conscious of connections that before we had not

realized were there.

This is why the Spirit is such an elusive and slippery force. We would like to grab and bottle it. Religions often try to do this in their beliefs and rituals. It is not that these religious forms cannot convey and become a space for the Spirit to work as in our hour in the garden. But the 'sacred' is no more a container of the Spirit than the 'worldly'. The incarnation of the divine embodies this; and the fact that Jesus was not born into the priestly caste illustrates it. The Spirit blows where it wills, Jesus said, and you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. What a challenge the Spirit presents, then, to the human ego that likes to feel protected and in control? And so, the Spirit always has the upper hand and we cannot 'receive' or experience the Spirit without ourselves becoming spiritual.

All this talk of the spiritual - does it mean anything of relevance to the beleaguered chair of a bank, the exhausted director of a centre for the homeless, the homeless man in a shop doorway or a mother up all night nursing her sick child, the nurse at the end of her shift or a doctor struggling with the choices she faces to cure or relieve suffering? If it is not relevant to them - to all of us in whatever way of work we make the connections that give meaning - then the 'spiritual dimension' of life is itself meaningless and no real meaning exists. We can all just go home - except without meaning we have no home to go to.

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We cannot know what we do not care about. Even if we notice something but don't care, we don't truly know it. I watched the other day (from the other side of the street I should add) as a woman struggling with too many shopping bags dropped an item from one of them and looked bewildered

what to do next. Should she try to put all the bags down to pick up what had fallen? How would she get them all back up again from the ground? It was clearly a complex situation and a difficult choice. Fortunately a good Samaritan noticed and cared. He ran up and rescued the item that had fallen out and put it carefully into one of the bags. This would have seemed intrusive in other circumstances but it would have been counter-intuitive and rather silly simply to hand it to someone whose hands were already full. In needy circumstances we are brought closer to each other and the usual rules of distance can be suspended. Human need redraws the boundaries of human relationships. If we, or governments, don't see this we are blind.

The woman with the bags offered profuse thanks but wisely did not offer to shake hands. The Samaritan smiled and disappeared, as good Samaritans are supposed to do. But they had connected. They were no longer strangers. Though they did not know anything about each other they did - in an essential way and however fleetingly (but what is not fleetingly?) - know each other. If there had been a connection it was because the Samaritan noticed what had happened, saw the woman's dilemma and cared enough, altruistically and spontaneously, simply to help another person in need. There was no time for calculation or any sense of obligation or of doing a good deed. The Spirit, that is always around when connections are made, must have been gratified and then blown somewhere else.

It was all about clear awareness, healthy enough to be able to respond to something outside one's own immediate needs and preoccupations. A surprising proportion of people might look and observe and yet feel no impetus to move and help. But it is such

an instinctive thing to help someone in need that our normal consciousness would be badly awry if we did not respond. Such an experience of awareness followed through into an action raises awareness to a higher degree. We become more conscious, though this is not the same as becoming more self-conscious or self-analytical. I hope the good Samaritan, in this not so dramatic story, has not spent as much time analyzing it as I have. If, however, he just moved on with his life I think that he would know of a greater potential to experience a connection, to live meaningfully. This space was created when he took the attention off himself and gave it, actively, to someone in need. In that connection, meaning was known and he would have come closer to seeing that the meaning of awareness is love.

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Let's say the source of awareness is love and that this is illustrated through ordinary daily events when, in small acts of kindness, we experience our connection with others. We see and show that we are aware because we are loving. ("The unloving know nothing of God.") This is a way of understanding what the Holy Spirit is and what she does.

Consciousness is evolutionary. That means that we become more conscious through the course of life and also that we have an increasing degree of input into how conscious we become. Getting this is important when we consider teaching meditation to children. People used to say – they say it less I think today because of the evidence to the contrary – that "children are not ready for meditation". This view is usually pronounced by those who 'do not have the time to meditate' and so know little if anything about it except what they have heard or read. As with music, which we don't have a useful opinion about till we have heard it, so with meditation we have to experience

it before we begin to understand it.

Because consciousness evolves so meditation, whose primary product is greater awareness, higher consciousness, assists the continuous process of evolution at every stage. We don't expect a child or ourselves to become enlightened saints immediately or even in the near future just because we have made meditation part of our lives. But when meditation is integrated into daily life we notice that it makes us more ready to notice a person in need and, as awareness grows, we must become more ready to reach out to them. Eventually we become aware that the source and self-expression of consciousness is love.

Meditation itself, of course, doesn't solve all the world's problems or instantly reveal the meaning of a tragic

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personal loss. But it is a powerful and universal catalyst to the evolution of consciousness that makes the obvious and usually simple solution blindingly clear. And it reveals meaning because it leads us inevitably, experientially, into the conscious truth of the connections in which we live and move and have our being.

Western culture is approaching this simple truth again after having lost it for many generations. The 'mindfulness movement', for example, and many other 'secular' movements of consciousness are to be applauded for helping this recovery. Those of us in the Church should be grateful and no doubt we also feel impatient with the slow uptake of religious institutions to what is happening spiritually in the world. Perhaps we are too interested in eternity and not enough in the present

moment.

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But there is a lot more that needs to come, if our world is to be saved in time from its own greed, distraction and self-interested cleverness. There is more to understand about consciousness itself. It is not only noticing the item that falls out of the shopping bag and savouring the moment. It is about spontaneously and altruistically picking it up - and then moving on, expecting and demanding nothing in return. This happens, consciousness moves into a higher level, when we take the attention off ourselves and turn it towards another. We can - and no doubt need to be - more self-aware. Our addiction to virtual reality and entanglement in distraction reduces our self-awareness and our awareness of what is going on around us. But beyond self-awareness is experiencing connection with consciousness itself and knowing it to be love. 'Love is my meaning' God told Mother Julian.

This is how meditation transforms us. Transformation is not the same as mere change. Change comes and goes, like headaches. As the labels on the pills say, if the symptoms don't go away, see a doctor. We can reduce the distractibility and the fallout from dipping levels of awareness. But to change the pattern permanently and resolve the issues for an enduring good, we need commitment to a transformative practice. We need to engage and collaborate with the process of transformation which, whether we know it or not, is at the core of life. We are born to be transformed.

Reason or the ego, self-awareness alone, cannot do this. Being self-aware at some point demands self-transcendence. If you don't know what this means, try to say the mantra for thirty seconds and let go of your thoughts or feelings. All thoughts return eventually (and usually instantly) to ourselves be-



cause that is where they are generated. Lay aside 'your' thoughts and 'your' feelings and you leave self behind. In doing this, however imperfectly, we become an actively conscious part of the evolving process of our existence and the 'Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness' whenever we make a mess of it.

The Spirit is a friend, a counselor and teacher and she takes our part, though without deception, even when we are in the wrong. Everything, in fact, that we would hope a wise, loving friend to

revolutionary truth somehow became buried in the intellectual competition to prove the existence of God and to show that my proof, my God, was superior to yours. Kierkegaard said that the more we refine our proofs for God the less convincing they are.

What convinces, of course, is to see that – and how - we are changing.

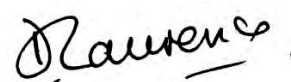
From the contemplative perspective of religion – which needs always to struggle to remain central within religious institutions – the most important

We are not enlightened in isolation. The idea that we could be is the very thing that blocks the light, shields us from the transforming wind and stops us being singed by the fire of love. For the Christian this is the meaning of Christ as Body. It is a central and profound idea. The institutional aspect of the churches barely, if ever, acknowledges it, except conceptually, despite abundant evidence supporting the truth it unveils in personal experience and communities.

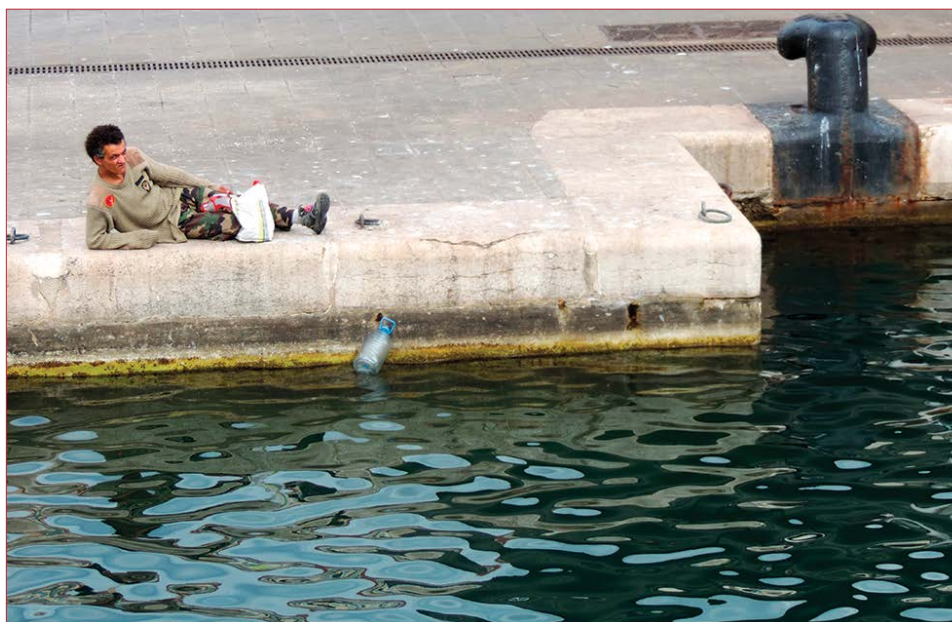
One of these proofs is how contemplative experience makes us more aware and responsive to each other – creating community rather than just a group of self-helpers. Another is that, as the transformation of consciousness evolves with the help of the Spirit who often seems to hide behind the events that she works through, we rejoice in the discovered capacity to take the attention off ourselves. (As this makes us more attractive to others - there is nothing less attractive than egotism - there is a certain, hopefully unconscious, self-interest in this).

I was looking for a good film to watch on a long plane trip recently. I failed to find one but noticed how many of the resumes describe a science-fiction plot in which characters discover or receive super-human powers. What might this suggest about our cultural sense of self? A hope for human evolution or a sense of loss arising from our neglect of the powers we already are gifted with. Maybe that is what the Spirit (and meditation) does – transform us by helping us be aware of who we truly are.

With much love



Laurence Freeman OSB



be. This is a way of describing the experience we have when we emerge from the abyss of the meaningless and enter into a more awakened field of connection. The Spirit also renews and recharges the exhausted batteries of life. We know that it is the Spirit, not our own devices, because renewal by ourselves peters out quickly but the direct action of the Spirit is sustainable transformation.

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Because of this, the experience of God is much more widespread than religious people usually allow. The early Christians were big enough to recognize this when they said that whoever loves knows God and whoever doesn't love doesn't know God. This simple,

thing is not what we believe but how we believe. In this perspective truth is not an achievement or a formula but an unveiling. The Greek word for truth is 'aletheia' and it means just this – a drawing back of the veil. Truth dawns on us. The veil of the night of ignorance and illusion is lifted. This image is helpful because it points to an experience that is integral to the evolution of consciousness. But it needs to be qualified. It is not just one veil that is removed but a whole series of them for as long as it takes for the ultimate transcendence of self to happen and our homecoming to be completed.

Intrinsically personal as this is, it is more than an individual experience.

## News

## Interview with Catherine Charrière, Director of Liaison for National Communities



### ***What kind of feelings/expectations are you having in the beginning of this new role?***

One of my first wishes is to be able to connect with each national coordinator so as to find out more about the specific situation in her/his national community.

One aspect of my role is to liaise between the National Coordinators and both the Guiding Board and the International Office team. However I hope it will also be possible to reinforce the bonds among the different national communities.

Our community is large and this is too much work for one person, so I do count on the help of a team. I strongly believe in teamwork and I am curious, enthusiastic and eager to learn from others.

### ***WCCM is growing, the World is getting more and more connected... how do you see the future of our Community in this context?***

In this hyperconnected world, where it is easy to become dispersed and complex, the challenge for our community is to stay rooted in the simplicity of the teaching.

Technology, when used with wisdom, moderation and discipline, becomes a useful tool to keep the message alive.

I believe the future of the WCCM lies in our ability to keep a sense of community both through the use of technology and personal contact with people. In this regard, each meditator, each meditation group (even the smallest one), each national community needs to feel the support and the

encouragement from the larger community so as to be able to persevere in the practice of meditation.

### ***Can you send a message to the national co-ordinators?***

I would like to thank you all for your commitment and the work you are doing for the community. Even though this role can sometimes be frustrating and difficult, it does bring wonderful moments of joy and is a great way to deepen one's faith and trust in God. I would like to assure you of the gratitude, support and help of the International community.

I would like to invite you to keep in touch. Do not hesitate to let us know what is happening in your country.

I look forward to seeing you at the International Coordinators' meeting (9-11 October 2015). This will be an opportunity to meet with other National Coordinators and people from the International Office and to receive precious information about the community.

### **Other changes at the Guiding Board**

Liz King retired as a member of the Board and her contribution especially in relation to China was warmly acknowledged. Leonardo Corrêa (Brasil), Jose Maria Chaher (Argentina) and Richard Cogswell (Australia) were welcomed as new members.

*"Meditation is the way of expansion because it is the way of selfless attention to the other; it is the way of loss of self because our attention is wholly absorbed in Christ. It is in this absorption that we leave behind all limitation." John Main*



# Bere Island Retreat: "Nothing is irredeemable"

By May Ngo, a PhD student in anthropology



**"There is no loss in life that does not lead to some finding"**

*Laurence Freeman*

Unusual for me, I had no expectations coming to the retreat. The only thing I wondered, as we took the ferry across to the island, was that as someone who prefers to be rather solitary, how I would cope with being with a group of people for a week. There would be no escape.

I remember sitting in the first morning talk, not knowing much about Laurence or the Community and curi-

ous about what would happen. What I was not prepared for was how the first talk would hit me, and the one after that and after that. It was like a series of blows. It woke me up.

The symbol of the cross resonated with me all week long. The cross as the way through darkness into life. An encouragement to stay with the void, with suffering, with the dark parts of ourselves. The cross as a way to stop passing on our brokenness to others. The way of the cross for our wounded world.

What we know on some level but

perhaps deny because it demands so much of us - that it's all about love. Not a wishy washy kind of love, but a Love that demands everything. We live a life of being Judas in small (and sometimes big) ways if we can't recognize this. But also taking heart that grace and sin are intertwined. The hills, the sea, the new lambs all reflected back this message.

The island in its silence and enduring beauty was able to hold me during the retreat. The meditations as a group helped to deepen the experience of meditation (as I am sorely finding out trying to meditate on my own in my regular life), and the sense of togetherness and friendliness of the group, did not take away from the recognition that each of us were in our own process.

I will never forget waiting for the sun to rise over the hill on Easter Sunday. The waiting...and when it came, it took my breath away. Here indeed was new life. Nothing is irredeemable was the Easter message I received. I don't know if I fully have 'faith' in it yet, or if I can even walk that path. But it was the message I needed to hear.

## Leading from Within



Laurence Freeman, Chade-Meng Tan and Bertrand Bouhour

On the 24th April, the Meditatio event "Leading from Within" brought together two speakers in London: Chade-Meng Tan, Google's Head of Personal Growth, and author of the

book *Search Inside Yourself*, and Laurence Freeman OSB.

## National Coordinator in Chile is mourned



Maria Rosa Gonzalez (the first, standing, on the left), National Coordinator for Chile, passed away at the end of May, after a long illness. The Community holds her and her family in its heart at this moment and feels deep gratitude for all she did for the sharing of Christian Meditation. May she rest in peace.

Read a message about Maria Rosa by Magdalena Puebla, former Coordinator for Argentina and a close friend of Maria: <http://tiny.cc/mariachile>

## News

### United States



Fr. Laurence had a short tour in the United States, between 12th and 21st May. He gave talks in Los Angeles and led a retreat in San Damiano, California. After that, he led a mini-retreat in New Jersey and finished the tour with a talk at Church of the Heavenly Rest, New York.

### France



Fr. Laurence visited Marseilles on 26th and 27th May. He gave a talk at St Joseph church, met with French leaders and celebrated Mass at Abbaye of Saint Victor, founded by John Cassian. You can watch a short video of Fr. Laurence at Saint Victor, speaking on John Cassian here: <http://tiny.cc/cassian>

### Canada



The tour in Canada started with a retreat St. Paul University, in Ottawa, from 30th May to 1st June (photo). The theme was "The Big Choice: distraction or attention". After that, Laurence led day-retreats in Toronto and Montreal, ending the tour on 4th June.

### In the news

The newspaper Financial Times published an interview with Fr. Laurence in the beginning of June. In this article, he spoke mainly on the meditation course for business students at Georgetown University. You can read the interview at [http://tiny.cc/meditation\\_FT](http://tiny.cc/meditation_FT)

### Worldwide Community Events Calendar

The World Community for Christian Meditation now publishes all (public) events organized by the national communities via the Community calendar at [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org). If you organize a Christian Meditation seminar, retreat, workshop etc,

please tell us and contact Catherine Charrière (Director of Liaison for National Communities) via [catherine@wccm.org](mailto:catherine@wccm.org) and we will publish it. You can view the Community calendar with events from all over the world at [http://tiny.cc/wccm\\_calendar](http://tiny.cc/wccm_calendar)

### Germany

By Hiltraud Kumar (Germany)



From 30th May to 1st June WCCM Germany held its annual retreat in

the conference centre owned by Franciscan sisters in Zell am Main, in Bavaria. The grounds of this monastery are vast and beautifully kept with impressive plant and flower beds, which helped me with relaxing into a contemplative environment. Stefan Reynolds, whose speciality is medieval mysticism, gave an introduction to John Main and then lectured on the relation between Christian Meditation, Meister Eckhart and the 'Cloud of Unknowing'. He delivered his talks

mostly in English and Christiane Floyd (National Coordinator for Germany) translated into German.

The days were structured with meditation sessions, contemplative walking and yoga, led by Dorothee Treml. Pater Franz Kowol, one of the participants, celebrated the Eucharist for us on the evening of Saturday. There were several newcomers, new acquaintances were made, and I am already looking forward to next year's retreat.



## News

# A promising spring in Madrid

By John Siska (Spain)



Isabel Carretero and John Siska

In January, the WCCM in Spain organized a retreat in Manresa led by both Fr. Melloni SJ and Fr. Laurence. The thrust was the interior journey through contemplative prayer. The retreat offered us the opportunity to meet Fr. Laurence personally and to network with others on the same journey as ours. I had been keen for some time on joining a WCCM meditation group but had found none in Madrid.

Isabel Carretero was deeply impressed by Fr. Laurence and started meditating in the tradition John Main

passed on. The retreat allowed us to connect again with our deep Christian heritage and background. Fr. Laurence triggered a deep search within in addressing the question Jesus posed to his disciples: "Who do you say I am?"

In Manresa we met two members of a Madrid group who had started meditating in the tradition of Fr. Jalics SJ. We attended their group for several weeks but soon decided that we really wanted to engage with the WCCM. We felt very close to its approach and to Fr. Laurence's charisma. And so, both of us got started. We soon settled on our readings and meditation. We also realized, however, that our practice was a gift we could not keep only to ourselves: We had to share it.

In May, with the support of Marco (the National Coordinator for Spain),

we organized a half day introduction to Christian Meditation. About 20 attendees appreciated the opportunity to learn about our practice and inquired about joining our group. On the back of the strong interest, Isabel and I launched two weeks ago the six week Introduction to Christian Meditation. We kicked off with a group of 13. In the last meeting, we had three newcomers. It seems to us that the WCCM offers a very powerful and appealing message by bringing together a contemplative approach to our spiritual journey with our Christian roots in a very credible, transparent, and structured setting. Today, Isabel and I are not really concerned about how we grow the group but rather how we do our best and constructively support all those who may reach out to our community in Madrid as it becomes better known.

# Singapore Community supports teaching in Myanmar

By James Loh (Singapore)



Fr Marco Tin Win invited me to help him in a meditation retreat from 12th April to 17th April 2014. I visited Mandalay to assist Fr Marco at the Church of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Chantargone, Mandalay.

My job was to connect them to our

global community through our practices, teachings and culture. I was part of a four-member retreat team comprising Fr Marco, Sister Kathleen Geaney (Columban Sister) and Sister Carlita (Burmese sister).

Fr Marco tasked me to speak on the tradition of the prayer word Maranatha, as he and the majority of the retreatants are more conversant with the breathing method.

The day begins at 5:45 am with meditation, talks, sharing, periods of silence and simple meals. A typical day averaged 4 to 5 periods of meditation. Each day ended at 8:15 pm with night

prayers and meditation. They had very good seating postures and most of them sat on the floor. There were about 60 participants, the majority of whom were women.

Fr Marco's talks often made reference to the books, "Your Daily Practice", and "The Hunger for Depth and Meaning". I spoke on the mantra, living in the present moment, symbols of meditation, and leaving self behind. On the last day I suggested they form weekly groups so that the momentum of the retreat can continue. Twelve leaders and assistant leaders were chosen and 6 weekly groups were formed.

## Torreón, Mexico: Finding community through silence



Enrique Lavin (Coordinator for Mexico) received an email some time ago regarding Meditation with Children. A friend in the city of Torreón was asking for some guidance so they organized a Workshop Retreat. As it turned out, it was a beautiful experience, and Enrique also found a prayer community that gathered to read John Main's writings and meditate together. This is the story of that Community, as told by Oscar Talamás:

Some eighteen years ago, my wife said, "The children are accepted at the Saturday afternoon Catechesis of the Good Shepherd!", "Good", I replied, "that will be good, I hope we can take turns taking them".

"You don't understand", she said, "it's a 'we' thing. We have to take them".

So we entered into the Mustard Seed Community in September 1996. During the weekly meeting the children were taken in a separate group, and the adults gathered to discuss different subjects. Soon we began to experience the impulse to deepen our faith, to form community. We realized how little we knew about the Gospel. Soon we realized the need to read the Old Testament too. We did this for 4 or 5 years and we began to understand the context of Jesus' life. Then we decided to include in our week the words of the first reading as well as the Gospel.

As you can imagine it's not easy to 'walk the talk' in the radical way Jesus did. That made us reflect how Jesus and his followers being men and women like us were able to do it. We thought that knowing deeply the life of these men and women would help. We started searching and it became vital for us. How did they do it?

We couldn't find what had transformed them, what had given them this incredible force. It seemed that there was nothing in common between these men and women of God; and yet it became evident to our eyes that a Light shone inside them. This same Light that is inside all of us. We slowly began to recognize that the Prayer of Silence and Listening (contemplative prayer or meditation) is the pearl of great value. This is clearly the origin of the force within Jesus of Nazareth and his followers. We had found that even in diversity there is unity, not only inside Christianity, but also in all religions.

Since then, in 2002, we have recommended that each of our members pray in this way at home, every day, from 30 minutes to one hour daily, after reading the first reading and the Gospel. On Saturdays, we start with the first reading and the Gospel, then we comment on our experience of putting it into practice in our daily life. Then we sit still and meditate for 30 minutes. We sit still, focusing our attention on a sacred word or short phrase

which we repeat throughout the whole prayer period. When there are distractions, we simply return to our word and let go of our thoughts.

This way of prayer has taught us that prayer is God's action and it's for each of us to simply let ourselves be transformed. We understood that the deep sense of understanding biblical writing is only achieved by the person that practices daily periods of silent prayer. We have experienced that this way of prayer transforms us from sons of God to Son of God. That it is conducive to purity of heart, to experience, and in a mysterious way to union with God. The experience of that prayer is continuous, without beginning or end.

We understood that prayer has a universal effect, fears diminish or disappear, solitude and life's apparent lack of purpose do too. The deepest communication between human beings is not through words but through this experience, when the ego simply disappears and everything is unified. We also learnt that to come close to poetry, music, painting, art and beauty, man and the universe, it's a must to have listened to silence. That silence which is born from the best of human beings, and from Love; and so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. (1 Jn 4,16)

In January of 2011 we came across John Main's book "Word into Silence" and we were amazed at the similarities between John Main's way of prayer and the form the Spirit had led us to. In September 2011, we officially started our group with the name 'Comunidad de Oracion de Silencio y Escucha' - Community of Silence and Listening Prayer - with twelve adult collaborators and two young people. Right now we meet once a week to pray together; some 30 to 40 people. We usually do so after reading something from John Main, with whom we feel a deep and profound resonance.

And here we are, with a deep wish to follow Our Lord, Jesus.

## In Focus

Rachel Sharpe, UK

*On day one of a mindfulness course in January 2012, I wasn't aware of the journey I'd begun*



Leading up to this point, life was good but hectic. I was balancing a demanding career, my second Master's degree, regular social events and it was becoming a bit much. In a search to find a panacea for my increasingly stressful existence, I signed up for a mindfulness course.

Initially, I was rather underwhelmed. The teacher took us through techniques, enabling us to pay attention. The language she used seemed rather vague, the techniques too simple and I wasn't that interested in acknowledging my chaotic mind and rapid heartbeat – didn't she realise I had come to distance myself from these?

A couple of weeks later, I remember brushing my teeth and, rather than leaving water running, I turned the tap off. When I was in the supermarket, I bought

less than usual. While on the phone, I was listening to the other person rather than doing other jobs too. It was as if I'd been wearing dark glasses and they'd fallen off. With my fresh eyes, everything seemed illuminated. This was inextricably linked to a greater awareness of God, who seemed present in everything. As the weeks progressed, it seemed to me that what I was learning only made sense in a spiritual light.

After the course finished, I decided to investigate the Christian position on meditation.

My pre-conceptions, having had limited contact with the Church, were that neither would sit well together but personal experience indicated otherwise. Googling 'Christian meditation' led me to a WCCM young meditators' retreat. In December 2012, I was part of a pilgrimage to India.

This led me to my work today – the Director of Development for WCCM. My focus is to develop relationships with people who share and wish to participate in WCCM's vision. Every gift of prayer, time, talents or financial resources gets converted into the many ways that we, as a community, share the precious gift of meditation.

The course I attended promoted the benefits of meditation but, in my experience, the fruits which manifest when you practice meditation in a spiritual context generate infinitely greater value. After an eight-week course, it would have been very easy for me to stop meditating. However, being part of a community has enabled me to sustain my practice over the long term whilst also developing

deep friendships.

When I visited India in 2012, I raised money for a school in a Kolkata slum. Being able to fund their school meals for over a year gave me, my family and friends an opportunity to directly help people living in extremely difficult circumstances and we were very grateful for this. However, the impact of the donation felt limited because, if the school could not raise funds for a second year, it would need to close. The wonderful thing about the gift we freely pass on is that the essential teaching remains with a person for their lifetime, whatever their circumstances, and goes to the very root of the world's many social problems.

'I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else' – CS Lewis

This quote perfectly captures my experience of the past two years. Being able to see more clearly isn't always pleasant – I've never been more aware of my faults and failings. But, with the grace of God, I don't feel these uncomfortable aspects are for me alone to resolve – I know that a much greater power is at work in my heart. I am extremely fortunate to have encountered Christian meditation at a relatively young age and am excited about life, now that it's firmly rooted in what matters most. What's more, I feel privileged to be spending my time working to help others receive this life-changing gift.

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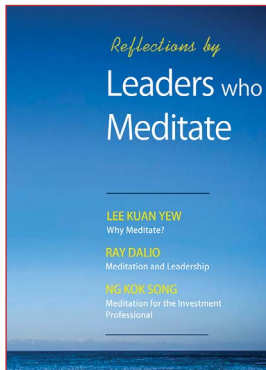
Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is September 5th



## New Resources

### DVDs

#### Reflections by leaders who meditate



In this Medio Media DVD three leaders reflect personally on their practice of meditation and leadership: Lee Kuan Yew (Founding Prime Minister, Republic of Singapore), Ray Dalio (Founder, Chairman, and Chief Investment Officer, Bridgewater Associates) and Ng Kok Song (Adviser and Chair of Global Investments, GIC).

More information:  
[www.meditatiostore.com](http://www.meditatiostore.com)

### Videos

#### The Eight Big Problems of Life

The series of talks The Eight Big Problems of Life, by Laurence Freeman, has been held at Meditatio Centre, in London, since March. The fourth one will be on "Vanity and Pride", on 26th November. These talks were live streamed and you can watch the first three here: <http://tiny.cc/8bigproblems>

### Bere Island Festival of Music & Silence



Thurs 28th – Sun 31st August 2014  
 Bere Island, County Cork, Ireland  
 Morning & evening music and meditation! Guided walks  
 Irish & Ceili Dance workshops  
 Talks & discussions  
 Evening dance & concerts  
 Local fresh food & drink  
 For enquiries please contact Theresa:  
[hobbstl@gmail.com](mailto:hobbstl@gmail.com)

### John Main Seminar 2015 - New Zealand



January 15-18 – Hamilton, New Zealand  
 Spirituality and Religion in a Secular Age  
 Speaker: David Tacey, Professor of Literature at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.  
 Pre-Seminar retreat led by Laurence Freeman OSB and post-seminar Pilgrimage  
 Info and bookings:  
[www.johnmainseminar2015.com](http://www.johnmainseminar2015.com)

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