



Compassion or indifference?

In this issue we learn from meditators making a compassionate and contemplative response to the refugee crisis and other emergencies (6-8)



A Somali refugee stands inside a tent with her baby in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia.
UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe/ (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

This issue

2 Laurence
Freeman

Metanoia and the kind of
attention that can transform
the world

9 News

Comments from participants
at the Bere Island
Holy Week 2015

11 Infocus

Celina Chan, national coordinator
for China, describes her path into
the community of meditation

Dear Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

In Singapore last month I attended an unusual and inspiring conference. The first Wisdom 2 Conference held in Asia explored unconventional ideas concerning leadership in business and society. There were Google people, business people, entrepreneurs, educators and spiritual teachers – and a full day on the schedule devoted to meditation. The time was uplifting and enriching and it was also joyful to see how the level of hope and energy rose even as we faced the hard facts of our cultural and global crisis. There were no instant solutions offered. But we came to a clearer view on the need for a new and radical simplicity.

It became increasingly clear to us what could be done through a simple, radical change of mind. Metanoia is the contemplative call to action of our time. Temporary change can easily be effected in the short-term: meditators know how they feel and see things differently after meditating and neuroscientists measure transient effects of the practice in individuals or groups. Can we translate this into a sustainable, radical process of re-visioning the way we live and the effect we are having on our common home? Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*, calling for an across the board transformation of consciousness, was issued during the conference. With it grew a sense of something new emerging - an integrated movement of consciousness on a global scale strengthening belief in renewal and the peaceful equilibrium of justice.

I was reminded of the desert father who said to his students: 'the day is coming when the world will go mad. And then when people meet someone sane they will point at him and say 'he is mad: he is not like us.' To challenge the prevailing way of see-

ing the world will be controversial. But there is strength in numbers, coordinated effort and the inspiration of individuals.

I was struck, for example, by the number of young Singaporeans present who approached me to speak about how deeply they had been affected by our film of Mr Lee Kuan Yew speaking about meditation. In their eyes he was a great but remote father

for them too.

*

In between events I have been reading Ian McGilchrist's long but stimulating book on the brain and the possible effect that its bi-hemispherical structure has had on the way we have made our world. The conventional idea that the right and left hemispheres control different approaches to reality – intuitive and



figure who led strongly and showed the personal self-sacrifice of leadership. But only when they heard him speak of meditation, his admission of a personal struggle and his experience of learning (who learns without failure?) did they see his deeper, humbler, human - and for many this even seemed a spiritual - side. Denis, a young government trainee told me no one could have got him to meditate except Mr Lee. As new leadership in business, government and religion is crucial to resolving the global crisis, and as so many leaders in all these fields feel distant or untrusted by those they are meant to serve, perhaps Mr Lee has a personal message

logical respectively – has been revised by recent research but not wholly abandoned. 'There is a world of difference' between them, McGilchrist says. There are many mysteries in our asymmetrical, double-hemisphere human brain. But we do know that both hemispheres are involved in almost all mental processes and, he says, 'certainly in all mental states'.

Several times a second messages are communicated between the hemispheres. Our brain is densely connected with itself. Maybe this produces consciousness and maybe it explains or offers a metaphor for our often conflictual self-absorption. Researchers say that there are more con-

nections within the brain than there are particles in the known universe. In terms of what we can measure, then, on the inside we are bigger than what contains us on the outside.

The two-hemisphere arrangement of our divided brain helps explain the different types of attention we give to things. When we are adding up our income and expenses. When we are deciding where to go on holiday. When we decide who to vote for. When we ponder on who to marry. When we listen to music or read poetry. When we say the mantra.

The kind of attention we give to the world shapes the world we live in. Perhaps it is not wrong to say we make the world or certainly the conditions in which we experience it. Biblically, we are stewards of the world, mystically we are co-creators. The left hemisphere (call it Martha) is ever busy about organization and rationalisation. It creates the necessary detachment we need to make decisions and plan for the future. The distance between your eyes and these words you are reading is detachment. Too much or too little and you will not be able to read. Similarly with relationships. Too close and you smother, too distant and you alienate. The right hemisphere sees things differently, because although difference causes distance and objectification it can also create attraction, eros and the longing for union.

There is paradox involved in these different forms of attention. The ways our state of mind changes the world we make and inhabit is obvious from daily experience. We don't need brain experts to tell us this although they can help us be aware of it and see its effects that it has on the world and ourselves. It is expressed at a very

deep level of insight in the farewell discourses of the Gospel of John. Jesus is acutely aware of the dividedness, the fragile humanity and egotism of those he still calls friends. He knows he will be betrayed. But he also sees (because at this level 'praying for' is seeing) the radical and unbreakable oneness he enjoys with them and with all. For him, this vision of unity, that transcends the duality of the brain's normal kind of attention, originates in the experience of oneness he

The kind of attention we give to the world shapes the world we live in

has with the 'Father', the ground and source of being itself. In his words describing this he brings human religious consciousness to a new peak of vision.

*

What is our own way of dealing with this ping-pong duality of states of mind and relating it with the transcendent vision of unity that we are also capable of and feel endlessly drawn to? How does a meditation practice in daily life help us?

Life is basically dualistic. We organize and take on things in a binary mode at personal and political levels. The digital world of our phones and computers merely reflects this. On this left hand side, however, our way of seeing the world – of giving it only this kind of attention – produces endless conflict. Conflicts thrive on further and further division. They get a high from splintering internal conflicts and divisions. Simple solutions eventually break down into endless complexities and those advocating them often make the situation worse

by refusing to admit their mistakes. We can see the tragic nature of this in many fields of life today like finance, medicine and education – but also in the politics of the Middle East, especially in those societies 'rescued for democracy' where it is now impossible for the western mind even to understand, let alone resolve them.

'The time will come when the world will go mad'. In this sense of imbalance and dysfunction it has always been mad, since Cain slew Abel. But there are degrees of madness and the danger stakes rise with the increasingly integrated systems of the modern world. Terrorism shows how a few can control the many. But terrorism is not the greatest danger the world faces.

It is the level of agitation, distraction, abstraction, alienation and isolation that are the byproducts of our techno-economic progress. The modern western mind (this is not a geographical term any more) has become feverish. There is too much to process. Too much information. Too many meetings. Too many objectives and targets. Too little time to reflect. Too many episodes to watch. The near farce of the euro-crisis in recent months illustrates this, to the amusement of those distant from it but to the great suffering and shame of many Greeks. The Greek-German standoff nicely mirrors the two hemispheres of the brain – two ways of looking at the same situation – and the mental and social chaos that ensues when they fail to communicate and collaborate. We make the world by the type of attention we give.

From the news it is easy to see the dilemma and anger of the politicians, trying their best for the whole picture but constantly watching their backs

at home and eventually trapped by the small, egocentric perspective. By contrast, it is often the leaders in the public institutions involved in the negotiations who evoke the state of patience, calm, resilience and confidence that is the best way of making decisions that make sense and last. Often it is they who seem to have the right kind of detachment, the greater balance.

The arenas of politics and public discourse today are, of course, frenetic and more chaotic even than appearances suggest. They give little if any of the rationally necessary detachment and time needed for clarity and calm which all kinds of crisis demand. This is not surprising in a culture where China regards screen addiction among children a clinical disorder and has established rehabilitation centres where they are treated for months at a time. The American Academy of Pediatrics says that the average 8 to 10 year old spends eight hours a day absorbed in different media. Distraction not terrorism is the greatest threat to civilization.

The problem is compounded because the worse it gets the less we recognize it. And those who have gone mad then regard the sane (or less mad) as deranged. We have access to unlimited information and so we need a search-engine to use it. We can do virtually what we like and so we need values to know what we really want and need. We create time-saving, distance-shrinking devices that imprison and addict us and so we need to make and protect our necessary time off-line in the here and now.

When people in this state start to meditate – and today we all start in some degree of damaged capacity for attention – they often are looking for quick and measurable results. This is how medication is supposed to work, so why not the scientifically endorsed ‘tool’ of meditation? This very attitude

however limits the type of attention that you can give within meditation; and so the results, though visible will remain limited. At least it’s a start. With practice, supported in community, the quality of attention and the attitude behind it will evolve. Rather than looking for something to happen you realize that it is the way of looking, the kind of seeing and knowing, that is really changing. With this, the world we live in also begins to change.

Metanoia works.

*

St Paul wrote once of a particular experience in which he entered the ‘third heaven’. In his cosmology the first heaven was the sky we see above us, the second was the habitat of the higher order of beings and the third was the dwelling-place of God. He does not use the pronoun “I” in describing this moment that he says is anyway ineffable. Experiences of total attention or pure prayer dissolve the ego-identity and abolish the distance

*With practice,
supported in community,
the quality of attention
and the attitude behind it
will evolve*

between ‘God’ and ‘me’. Yet paradoxically the source of this experience is love and the persons involved remain distinct without being separated. This seems to be what the great doctrine of the Trinity is suggesting along with the teaching that we are capable and called to share fully in its fullness. Even Paul spoke of this as an exceptional event. Meditation becomes part of ordinary life for different reasons. The type of experience it unfolds is not so separate and identifiable as St Paul’s rapture.

I was speaking recently to a suc-

cessful, highly disciplined individual who can run a marathon and manage a complex institution. This person told me meditation made a massive difference to the way she lives and sees the world. But she doesn’t do it daily. I asked her if you can train for a marathon and do all the rest why can’t you meditate daily. She smiled and said from the heart ‘but meditation is so hard’. I felt oddly pleased she had said this in the way she did, as it showed how well she understood it. And there are indeed easier ways to lower your blood-pressure – including marathon training. But there is more to it than that. Because there is life as a whole – right and left brain and mind and beyond...

It is a narrow and difficult road that leads to life. The Greek word for ‘narrow’ is ‘stenos’. It also means ‘small’ which is perhaps less intimidating for those of us coming from the broad and wayward path that leads to perdition. The word for ‘difficult’ may also be better understood by knowing it is also used to describe the pressing of grapes in the making of wine.

The work of meditation that turns the wheel of metanoia, that changes the way we pay attention to the world and, as a result, changes the world, is a small and rendering process. Simone Weil says that prayer consists of attention and that attention ‘consists in suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by’ what we are paying attention to. The mantra is a small thing and saying it squeezes out all that is redundant, unnecessary, wasteful or in any way obstructive. It purifies the heart and clarifies the mind. It occupies both hemispheres of the brain. It therefore allows us at some point to take the attention wholly off ourselves and to move towards the experience, the vision of unity which is knowledge of spirit, wisdom which

is married to compassion and transcends all duality.

*

The Cloud of Unknowing insists on the practical usefulness of meditation in all dimensions of consciousness. It improves your complexion and personality and even mysteriously helps those in other spheres of existence. The cultural turning point will come, however, when we cease to think of meditation merely in terms of 'self-improvement' (where book-sellers

sisters who are our selves, in order to gain what we want short-term or even just to remain in power.

The untruthfulness of language and the massaging of statistics often conceal the collateral damage caused by such egotism. How many today, especially the most vulnerable and suffering, are successfully excluded from justice by corporate language and economic concepts? But, in the vision of unity, when can any military or political aim justify the degradation

gic and the compassion awakened by meeting one individual in pain or the orphaned children of even one village is displaced by concepts.

Scientists discuss whether the edge of the universe is 13 or 48 billion light years away. The question doesn't even touch us. As we live daily life, run for the train in the morning, browse the internet or sit in the dentist's waiting room, differences on this scale seem meaningless. It is the immediate and the personal that opens our heart. And what is more immediate and personal than meditation?

In time of crisis we often feel helpless. We act irrationally or go into denial. It is easy to put on the ring of Gyges, a king who found a ring that made the wearer invisible. He was then able to do some pretty bad things without being observed. Plato deals with this story as a moral question: would we all do bad things if no one saw we were doing them? His conclusion was that the good person is not enslaved by their desires and so would not perform bad deeds even if they were able to get away with them.

There are different kinds of invisibility, however. The cloak of invisibility we throw over the street beggar or the boat refugees or the damaging of the minds of the young. There is also the ring we put on our own finger to pretend we aren't there and aren't responsible. The only good kind of invisibility – when the left hand doesn't know what the right is doing – is when the ego has shrunk and only then can what we do, think and feel become pure. Then we pray purely without self-absorption. Only then can we see what is real.

With much love

Laurence

Laurence Freeman OSB



Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran, UNAMID (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

place it) and understand it in terms of a great and general change of mind.

In this issue of *Meditatio* there are stories concerning the relationship between meditators and those tragic members of our suffering human family that we call refugees – parents and children fleeing their homes because of mindless violence in search of some measure of the safety and security all of us need and seek.

The statistics are: sixty million refugees or displaced persons in the world as a result of war and conflict. Half of them are children. Hearing this we can hardly not feel how it exposes a most tragic absurdity in the modern world and throughout history. We destroy ourselves, our brothers and

of the rights and dignity of others, especially the innocent? In such suffering mere humanity demands that, at the very least, the aims being pursued should be suspended and the suffering eased.

*

In this humanitarian crisis, we are all tinged by the shame of the actual guilt of a few. A family is compromised by the action of any one of its members. We are not all to blame but we carry collective responsibility.

Inaction happens often because statistics overwhelm the imagination. The idea of millions of individuals suffering shifts us from one hemisphere of the brain to another. We become more abstract, detached and strate-

Special

Compassion for the urgent call of the refugees

The refugee crisis is not a new issue but it is more and more frequently in the news today: in Europe, in Asia, Oceania and many parts of the world. What role can meditation play to help with this problem? Read here some reflections:



Children in Dakhla Refugee Camp. UN Photo/Evan Schneider (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Contemplation and the journey of seeking asylum: a worker's perspective

By Leesle Wegner*

Many readers will share concern for the millions of people around the world displaced by war and conflict. With this in mind, I would like to offer some personal reflections on how my work with people seeking asylum has been shaped by Christian meditation.

My journey began fifteen years ago when I had the opportunity to volunteer with a church based organisation supporting asylum seekers from East Timor. Their stories had a significant impact on me and I soon realised that to undertake this kind of work long term would require a deep level of inner resources and wisdom. This is

what led me to discover the Christian contemplative tradition.

My work has continued in a professional capacity and I am currently employed as a counsellor and advocate with an organisation that assists asylum seekers and refugees who are survivors of torture and trauma. The most difficult aspect of this work is journeying with asylum seekers. The process of determining their claims is long and arduous. People live with acute levels of uncertainty, while at the same time dealing with the impact of prior experiences of torture and trauma. Their temporary status

excludes them from many government funded services and they are regularly exposed to media sound bites from politicians which unambiguously communicate that they are not wanted here.

In the context of what often seems like unending systemic injustice and oppression, I struggle with my own sense of powerlessness. When I meet with people sometimes I feel that my professional skills and knowledge are of little relevance and the only useful thing I can do is be fully present and fully human and allow the integrity of this position to bring some kind of transformation, however short lived or limited it may be.

I meditate together with a friend once per week who happens to do this same work. In the silence, we know that the burden of our work is shared; that we are not in this alone. We are reminded too of the fullness of life: that although it encompasses great suffering there is also much beauty to be found.

Silence softens my heart and helps me resist the propensity towards self-protection and resignation. It gives me the will and courage to maintain a commitment to the compassionate and dignified treatment of each individual even when I know that the outcome of their journey in my country may not be what I hope for.

* Leesle is based in Melbourne and works in a organisation that supports asylum seekers and refugees

The spirit in our heart, the spirit that we open to in meditation, is the Spirit of compassion, of gentleness, of forgiveness, of total acceptance, the Spirit of love. (John Main)

Special

Finding Refuge

Inge Relph*



As children, we would play a game asking 'what would you save if your house was on fire?' Answers would range from the sensible to the sentimental but I can never recall anyone saying they just wanted to save their life and that of their family.

In the intervening years, my work has led to many encounters with refugees, who through war, persecution, or hunger have had to flee their homes and are overwhelmingly grateful just to be alive. Many, through no fault of their own, have been displaced multiple times and find themselves in soulless, overcrowded camps with little or no work to occupy traumatized minds or means to earn a living. Women and children are especially vulnerable, often having lost their partners and breadwinners to war or persecution as with the recent Yazidi massacres by ISIL in Iraq.

The incidence of trafficking increases dramatically when people are so vulnerable and the 'honour sale' of young girls as brides as a protection

from rape in camps is well documented.

People have always been on the move but globally we are facing displacement on an unprecedented scale. Intra-state conflicts are on the rise as is persecution for reasons of faith. Of an estimated 50m people who have fled their homes, 38 m are internally displaced. Daily our TV in Europe pictures the harrowing journeys of the 90000 refugees and migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean so far this year, more than 2000 of whom have drowned in the attempt. Similar is happening in Asia and the exodus from Iraq continues unabated. This influx destabilises neighbouring countries, already weakened by the global financial crisis and fuels resentment and often leading to further conflict.

**I cannot be indifferent
to the suffering of others
because there is
ultimately no 'other'**

Technically under the UN conventions, people facing persecution have a legal right to seek asylum. The scale of population displacement, estimated by the UN to further increase by 50m by 2020 from environmental causes such as food shortages, flooding and desertification, requires us to look beyond the law.

Faced with so much suffering that we feel impotent to affect, it is tempting to ignore it, to switch channels physically and metaphorically, to fall into what Pope Francis recently called; "the globalisation of indifference"

Our meditation teaches us another way. We come to understand in the si-

lence, the spirit within is recognisable as the same spirit within each and every one. It is a community of spirit that connects us as a global family and therefore I cannot be indifferent to the suffering of others because there is ultimately no 'other'.

It is challenging and necessary work to confront our own prejudices around the 'other' if we are to be harmonious societies that can cope with the migrations of the future.

Our oneness within needs to find expression of oneness without.

Compassion is the antidote. The 'Golden Rule' found in most traditions including Christianity (Matthew 7: 12) can be expressed in metaphysical and in practical ways. In Rome, for example, the church St Pauls within the Walls, (worth Googling) provides refugees with the support and help of a loving Community. We too can live this Rule by practical actions, perhaps raising our awareness of others plight, lobbying government to just action or donating time, clothing or money to one of the excellent aid agencies such as the Women' Refugee Commission or UNICEF.

Gratitude is a compatriot of compassion I've found. Tonight as we tuck into our warm beds, in the safety of our homes, let us remember with thankful hearts that it is grace and pure gift that gives us this good fortune.

Inge has had various roles within the Community ranging from being a Trustee of WCCM and Medio Media. Her day-job is in peacebuilding and development most recently as senior policy advisor to The Elders and currently in Haiti.

Special

“Meditation leads to a stronger recognition of the humanity of others, regardless of their religion or nationality”

By Donna Mulhearn



Donna with an Iraqi family in a refugee camp in Baghdad in 2004

Amid the increasingly polarised debate on the world refugee crisis, I always try to remember what lies at the heart of it: human beings risking a perilous journey motivated by hope for a new life of safety, peace and dignity.

The number of refugees worldwide now exceeds 50 million for the first time since World War II.

I had always assumed the collective international shame following the fate of the 1939 “Voyage of the Damned” meant we would never again see a boatload of desperate people seeking safety from persecution refused. The plight of the 937 Jews fleeing Nazi Germany on the St Luis, turned away from various ports, eventually led to the creation of the Refugee Convention which enshrined seeking asylum as a basic human right.

But recent events such as 7000 starving refugees from Burma and Bangladesh stranded on boats being

turned away by three countries, Australia’s “turn back the boats” policy and an increase in anti-refugee sentiment in Europe, make me wonder if we have already forgotten the lessons of St Luis.

I also wonder if our response depends on who it is seeking safety. Are we willing to accept some, but not others?

A contemplative consciousness challenges the “us and them” mentality promoted by some political leaders, groups and media.

We are reminded Jesus did not draw lines of division, he broke them.

In my experience, meditation leads to a deeper awareness of our own humanity and so a stronger recognition of the humanity of others, regardless of their religion or nationality. This connection results in increased empathy and compassion when we see our fellow human beings suffer, prompting action in the shape of solidarity, care, service and advocacy. It’s hard to ignore someone once we have acknowledged

their humanity and connection to us. They are no longer the ‘other’.

My practice of meditation is a vital support for my work in peace and human rights. It helps me act from a place of love, re-energise and do the inner work of absorbing pain and transforming it, in order to avoid passing it on.

In my work in Iraq, Palestine and Australia I’ve observed the terrible impact trauma from past events has on refugees as well as anxiety about what the future will hold. As I’ve shared times of meditation with refugees it was always appreciated as a welcome reprieve from constant thoughts of survival and fear of being returned to danger. It enabled attention to something else and provided an inner place of calm and hope.

Pope Francis encourages a ‘culture of encounter’ – encountering Christ in the refugee and the marginalised. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me...” Meditation opens us more to the possibility of encounter.

In the current refugee ‘debate’ it seems there are two frameworks: fear and love. Greater co-operation between states, focus on what compels people to flee their homeland and more humane and dignified welcome of the stranger reflect a culture of respectful encounter. Meditation is the practice of staying human and helps us encounter all others with love.

** Sydney-based peace activist Donna Mulhearn is a former journalist and political adviser.*

News

USA

John Main Center works with DC Refugee Center and Harvard

The John Main Center at Georgetown University led a six-week meditation and leadership course with staff at the DC Refugee Center in the beginning of 2015. After that it established a meditation group for all staff in the office. Twice a month, the JMC presents to the refugees and asylees training on how to meditate. This is part of the employment program and the instructor is John P. Hogan - a retired director of the US Peace Corps

and who knew about John Main during his time at the Catholic University of America.

The DC Refugee Center is the only service provider for refugees in Washington and is in the process of gearing up to serve more clients. This will mean a potential increase in our program numbers in the coming months. The response has been overwhelmingly positive among staff and clients.

Out of the work with the DC Refugee Center, the JMC started to develop a program with Harvard University. The two institutions are preparing the Summit on Leadership: Advancing the Art and Science of Refugee Care. Learning the role of meditation, reflection and self-care in leadership are part of the objectives of this event. The summit would most likely take place in Spring 2016 at Harvard University.

Ireland

Bere Island Holy Week Retreat 2015



In early April, we held the Holy Week Retreat 2015 on Bere Island, with participants from Ireland, England, Scotland, Spain, Denmark, Holland, Poland, USA, Australia, China, South Africa, Argentina and Brazil. Here are comments from two of the participants:

One of the greatest things about this retreat is just being here on this island, it is so amazing! This island feels different in some way, and just being here, with new friends I have made, is for me pretty spiritual. It is really great to meet so many people from all around the

world, who also meditate and are part of this community. I am at Georgetown University where there is the John Main Meditation Center, which has a great community of meditators. But I did not really know about the world-wide community of Christian meditation. That was a wonderful part of this retreat. (Peter Armstrong, USA)

I came to this retreat really not knowing what it was going to be like. I have not done meditation before. I was just looking for an idea of God, to be honest. And I came here. The most influential thing for me was listening to Fr. Laurence's talks because some of the things he has been saying are so much "in tune" with a lot of mystic writing that I have been reading. Learning about meditation is really changing the way I think about and go about things. It's just amazing. It's pretty hard not feeling spiritual in a place like this. (Eoin Bentick, England)

ONLINE: Watch all the talks from the Bere Island Holy Week Retreat here: http://tiny.cc/bere2015_videos

USA

Charles Taylor and Peter Smith at Georgetown

The philosopher Charles Taylor spoke at Georgetown University in April on "Meditation and the Lives of Faith Today", at an event co-sponsored by the John Main Center, Berkley Center and Library Associates. Charles Taylor is one of the world's leading scholars on the connection between meditation and faith in modern society. He also is a meditator and led the John Main Seminar in 1988.

ONLINE: You can watch the video of this talk here: http://tiny.cc/charles_taylor

Dr. Peter J. Smith (Dean-UNSW Medical School and President-Medical Dean of Australia and New Zealand) delivered a lecture on Contemplative Medicine, as part of the Meditatio outreach on meditation and health, on 16th April at Georgetown University in Washington DC. The program was co-hosted by Georgetown Well-ness. ONLINE: You can watch the lecture here: <http://tiny.cc/petersmith>.

News

Malaysia

Called to be Co-pilgrims: Nur Damai WCCM (Malaysia) Interfaith Workshop

By Niloufer Harben



About 80 people gathered at Pure Life Society, Puchong, Malaysia, to explore the theme "Called to be Co-Pilgrims" at a two-day interfaith workshop organized by Nur Damai and WCCM (Malaysia) on May 30 and 31. Half the participants were Christians and the other half a mixture of Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs, representing the profile of religions in the country.

The workshop was led by Fr Sebastian Painadath SJ, an exceptionally gifted spiritual teacher from India. Through rich input sessions, he made a clear distinction between spirituality and religion and traced phases of the inner journey viewed through the poetic lenses of a range of faith traditions. The implications of key lines of

spiritual convergence were considered at depth. With great clarity, honesty and wisdom, he also looked at the role of the prophet and the mystic and the negative and positive aspects of religious evolution. This provided a solid framework for individual reflection and lively group discussion.

Each day began in silence which was only broken at lunch time. Meditation was woven into the day and these sessions included music and readings from diverse religious sources. As a participant commented during the closing session, the workshop offered a valuable opportunity for people of different faiths to come together as a community and contemplate a common vision, desperately needed in this country.

Europe

Laurence Freeman tour in North Europe



In May, Fr. Laurence visited Ukraine, Finland, Norway, Denmark (photo) and Ireland. He spoke on Christian Meditation: Peace beyond Divisions, at the Ukrainian Catholic University, in Lviv, and shared these words: "Since I was here last year, you, as a country and as a people, have experienced much suffering. I just would like to reassure you that your country is very much in the prayers of many people, especially in our community around the world. And I hope what we can share today in our faith in the risen Christ will help to bring some healing."

ONLINE: You can watch the video of this talk here: http://tiny.cc/Ukraine_video

UK

The Guiding Board Meeting

The Guiding Board Meeting was held following the Bere Island retreat in the town of Woking in England. The Board is comprised of meditators representing and serving the worldwide Community and gives direction on matters of broad concern within the community. Richard Cogswell, from Australia, was appointed the new chair, taking over from Roger Layet of the UK.

In Focus

Celina Chan, National Coordinator for China



I am a very restless person. In the first part of my life, I have been multi-tasking especially after I got married raising three kids. It is a necessity as well as part of who I am. I am always on the look-out for the next big thing that will get me excited. Therefore I have been changing jobs and careers many times, starting as a teacher, then media sales, account servicing manager, journalist, sales manager, recruiter and now currently, financial planner and education consultant.

Even in the schools I attended in China, Hong Kong and UK., it seemed I was always looking for something and was never satisfied.

Then came the big bang and I was in a family crisis seven years ago. It seems that the things I treasured most, namely family and career were gone forever. I was at a loss. I started to go to morning mass nearly every day. It was during one of those morn-

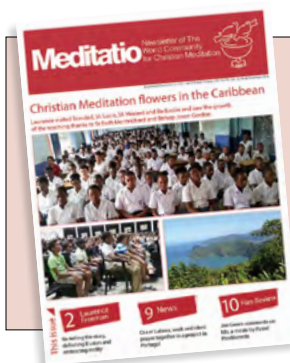
The fact that I have no expectations from it allows me to remain calm and peaceful despite all the hustles and bustles in life.

ings that I came across a green booklet in the church published in memory of a Maryknoll Father (Fr Sean Burke) who was the spiritual director of the meditation groups in HK and had just passed away. Going through the booklet, reading the thoughts of both Fr. Burke and other meditators, I was for the first time at peace with myself. I had the urge to start this simple practice of meditation immediately.

Sometime later, I saw in the local Catholic newspaper that the global spiritual director of the WCCM, Fr Laurence, was coming to HK to share his teachings at the university from which I graduated. So I went and had my first experience of group meditation in a lecture hall. I was surprised that this could be done without any major disruptions. Eventually I joined one of the meditation groups in Hong Kong.

Meditation as a form of prayer from day one fits me like a glove. This does not mean I have no distractions. But I find it so natural and everything should be as it is. I am able to practise it twice a day most of the time. It has easily integrated into my life. The fact that I have no expectations from it allows me to remain calm and peaceful despite all the hustles and bustles in life. I have begun to be more focused on appreciating the things surrounding me instead of looking out for something else. Gradually I am travelling inside me and there I found what I have been looking for. God is no longer somewhere else. He is always there. I have finally come home.

God, I am here. Just take me by the hand and lead me to where you want me to be.



Meditatio Newsletter is published four times a year by the International Office of The World Community for Christian Meditation, 32 Hamilton Road, London W5 2EH, UK. Tel: +44 208 579 4466
E-mail: welcome@wccm.org

Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org)
Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano
Proofreading: Carla Cooper and Susan Spence
Coordinator, International Office: Amanda Croucher (Amanda@wccm.org)

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

Resources

Audio

Jean Vanier and Laurence Freeman led retreat together again

For the second time, John Vanier of L'Arche and Laurence Freeman came together in Trosly, France for a retreat called "Entering into Silent Prayer." Held between June 3 and June 7, the audio of the talks from this retreat are available here: http://tiny.cc/slt_prayer

CDs

The Prayer that Jesus Taught Vol 1 – 4 (new edition) GERRY PIERSE CSsR



The Lord's Prayer reminds us of our relationship to God as his children. Yet we struggle with our sense of

unworthiness, believing the Father's love must be earned. Fr Gerry Pierson teaches Christian meditation as a way to savour God's unconditional love. His clarity and conviction, engaging stories, sense of humour, and down-to-earth approach make his teaching powerfully effective.

Meditatio Seminar

Meditation, Technoscience, and Humanity
30 October 2015
Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain



This seminar focuses on what experiential wisdom practices such as meditation can offer to practitioners in science and technology to ensure that human quality shines through scientific research and technological development, and that the fruits of science and technology become a true witness of human well-being and of great respect for all life forms and the environment. More information at http://tiny.cc/med_barcelona

Retreats



WCCM International School Retreat

December 6-13, 2015
San Damiano Retreat Center,
California, USA

A 'School Retreat' is a more intensive retreat and provides a rare opportunity to benefit from the sustained silence and stillness of meditation over an extended period. It is the fifth stage of the WCCM School of Meditation; most participants have a regular meditation practice and are familiar with the Essential Teaching of the Community. To apply for one of the limited places please send a few brief details about why you would like to attend, together with some details about yourself and your involvement with WCCM to Patrick King patrickking50@gmail.com

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

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



UK and Europe
www.goodnewsbooks.net
email: orders@goodnewsbooks.net
Tel: +44 (0) 1582 571011

USA: www.contemplative-life.org
contemplativewisdom2@gmail.com
Tel: +1-520-882-0290

CANADA: www.wccm-canada.ca
email: christianmeditation@bellnet.ca
Tel: +1-514-485-7928

ASIA
email: enquiries@mediomedia.com
Tel: +65 6469 7671

NEW ZEALAND:
www.christiansupplies.co.nz
email: order@pleroma.org.nz
Tel: 0508 988 988
(Within NZ Only)

AUSTRALIA:
jpanetta@ausgrid.com.au
Tel: +61 2 9482 3468