



## Feast of Peace and Unity

Blessing of Phase 1 of renovation of Bonnevaux was an illustration of the vision of life at the WCCM new home



*Mgr Pascal Wintzer blessing Bonnevaux (top) and the music concert with the choir*

### New Podcast **Contemplative Revolution**



## CONTEMPLATIVE REVOLUTION

WCCM PODCAST

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## Dear Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

If you look at one of the photos of the beautiful blessing of Bonnevaux last month you will see the large group of community, friends and neighbours packed into the long cloister. They were listening to one of our principal speakers of the day speaking about the vision of this new centre of peace that is to become no less a centre for peace. Those in the front row are looking up at a single point immediately above the speaker's head. Not in inspiration, though, as much as in fear. The speaker had been placed immediately under a nest of swallows in the vaulted ceiling where some newly fledged arrivals were being cared for by their parents. They were showing activity during the talk and those of us in the front began to fear that the birds above the speaker might decide to drop down a message or two of their own.

They did not. And so this part of the benediction of Bonnevaux passed smoothly to the next. But if the embarrassing event had happened what would have been lost? Would it have spoiled everything or just shown us that the best prepared plans remain vulnerable to the unexpected? It helped us in that moment, however, to remember what blessing means. Blessing does not come down from above as much as it is transmitted from one to another by our genuine presence to each other and our collective faith in the project. We are blessed through our friendship and hope to realise what Bonnevaux can become. The best benedictions are horizontal. If a message from the bird-nest had fallen it would not have spoiled the blessing. But we would have been reminded of how the human entwines with the natural world and our well-made plans with the randomness of the universe. We would have smiled because it would have

told us that mistakes, failure and accidents are all eventually part of the single great blessing that is life.

Shortly before the blessing of the first phase of our renovation of Bonnevaux, the Guiding Board had decided on 'Contemplative Christianity' as the WCCM theme for the coming year. We felt that this to be an important reminder, not just for the Church but for the world. Christianity fulfils



its mission in a world of many faiths to unite people in the universal truth. Part of this truth is that love, peace, joy and forgiveness are not just dreams or occasional lucky moments in life. They are essential elements of human nature that Christ taught by word and example. It means that, however peaceless and divided we may be, individually or collectively, our true nature can 'become God', as the early Christian teachers daringly said. We can always rise from our self-made ruins. Like Bonnevaux, we too can be renovated.

Before I was me  
I was God in God  
And can be again  
If I die to my me

*(The Cherubic Pilgrim, Angelus Silenius, transl. Anrew Harvey)*

To help understand the need for a universal understanding of contemplation, we have launched a new WCCM podcast – called "Contemplative Revolution". We have called it this because contemplative Christianity is unachievable unless it is held in the gentle grip of the continuous revolution of the gospel's wisdom and values. The podcast offers regularly updated teachings from the many gifted

teachers with whom our community is blessed. I urge you to sign up for it because it will help stimulate and enrich the hope and vision in you that we need to share with the world.

Revolutions come and go. They seek the highest goals of human perfection and then begin to splutter, lose height and crash. Most political revolutions in history reverted to the very forms they once rejected. It is a sadly frequent outcome of idealism that we are all familiar with at a personal level, in relationships or in our commitment. How many of us have not seen ourselves fall short of the generous selflessness of our initial enthusiasm? We gave ourselves without counting the cost. Then little by little..... compromise, excuses, complaints, the demand for reward or

recognition.

Revolutions – in individuals or societies – have complex causes. They happen when the existing order of things begins to dismantle in several places simultaneously. Fear and uncertainty begin to spread. In society those in power become alienated from each other and people see the calibre of leadership declining. In ourselves, the values and disciplines that give life harmony and meaning loosen. Injustice, imbalance and deception multiply. Feelings of resentment and shock ensue similar to what a child feels when it is treated badly. Conditions ripen for the coming of false prophets. Voices of protest form narratives and slogans that crowds can understand. Disappointment and a sense of betrayal scratch out a feeling of emptiness in the fear of a coming precipice.

Karl Marx had a vision comparable to that of Jesus: to realise the essence of Man in a classless society. It inspired the Communist revolution. France and China entered their revolutions with high ideals. But quickly, the large vision contracts to short-term advantages and the silencing of dissent. The dive upwards into higher consciousness falters and, feeling that we are losing our breath, we head downwards to the surface again. All revolutions fail, including the gospel's *metanoia* (the conversion of consciousness itself), if we don't learn to breathe underwater. This means that learning that we are more than our thoughts, even our best ideas. Nor are we limited by what we imagine. Not only can we survive the stilling of thought and the silencing of mental chatter; but we soar in all directions, losing nothing that we have lost. But to break into the contemplative clear sky, we have to have the realisation of dying to self-consciousness and be-

ing reborn. The life we find when we have lost our life is life indeed. Or, as a koan puts it: the dragon roars in a dead tree.

Passing through the paradox-portal of reality, we discover that contradictions co-exist. We are set free from the exclusively dualistic mind and from the compulsive search for happiness in pleasure alone. We learn that joy and sorrow (as we label them) are equally, sometimes simultaneously, revelatory. Everything teaches. Nothing is wasted. Seeing this impacts everything, as a revolution or an earthquake does, including our meditation practice. We no longer bargain with meditation, threaten to leave if we don't get what we want, panic when nothing happens or try to fill the desert with fantasy oases. The motivation of our meditation changes. A wisdom not just our own is born, almost shyly, of interior renunciation. It now seems so obvious. By learning to let go of all the stages – the dream, the failure and the intermittent reward – the poverty we dreaded now carries a peace beyond our understanding.

### *The life we find when we have lost our life is life indeed*

An entirely new class of experience unfolds. We may have tasted it briefly before but it is unfamiliar. If we have a language and belief system to help, they can help to find meaning in this contemplative experience. If not – and many who learn to meditate today are suspicious of all belief – the experience itself will suffice. A contemplative Christianity can teach the way to this experience and offer an understanding of it but patiently and with self-restraint.

Our sense of global emergency

is triggered by our lifestyle. Speed, stress, addiction, virtual reality and the sense of alienation block out the contemplative experience. Without it, life, reduced to merely materialistic dimension, bleeds meaning. In contrast, John Keats wrote that life is a 'perpetual allegory'. But how many today are educated to understand this, to see how different dimensions reflect each other, bringing us deeper into the mystery of all existence? I think he means that life is eternally new as it unfolds to us its limitless connections. Beauty, for example, is the revelation of the whole in a part. We cannot help but love the beautiful. But love for one part expands to include each of its neighbours. To love one thing leads to loving everything. With love, meaning grows, not through an ideology or by defining ourselves against others but through boundless felt connections.

Everything is meaningful in relationship to something else. To have entered upon a path of contemplative experience is to be going beyond whatever we arrive at. It is to know the peace of 'being on the way' rather than the pressure of trying to get somewhere faster by competing with others.

The Greek word for this is *epektasis*. Gregory of Nyssa called it unceasing evolution in eternal happiness. St Paul used it too to describe the 'always something more', 'always going beyond', aspect of a life that can breathe inside the spiritual dimension. The contemplative scientist understands it. As does the self-transcending artist or the parent who puts the needs of their family before their own career. It describes life as uncontainable and self-renewing. Religious leaders often find it hard to understand when meaning becomes enshrined in beliefs, ritual and structure and

separated from real experience. The more one talks about what one has not experienced, the more unreal and unconvincing it sounds.

A contemplative Christianity has to learn to confess its own large areas of sinfulness before pointing out splinters in others' eyes. This is not self-laceration but the humility present in every teaching of Jesus and in his risen presence. Without this humility – what quicker way to humility is there than a daily fidelity to a contemplative practice? – the risk of the anti-Christ grows.

It is strange that the notion of the Anti-Christ appears so early in the life of the Church, in the first letter of John (2:22). An angel of darkness dresses up as an angel of light. Negation disguises itself as truth. The wolf sneaks up in sheep's clothing. This is the shadow of Christianity itself that crucifies Christ, in the ways we are tempted by power, corruption and hubris: anti-semitism, the Crusades including the Children's Crusade, the Inquisition, wars of religion, cover-up of clerical abuse.

Christianity, of course, is not the only religion in which dark forces can take over. Every religion today needs to be simplified, purified, restored to its contemplative core. Each one must take responsibility for this. In the meantime, religions do better not to criticise each other but to renew themselves.

A good way to renew a contemplative Christianity is to start a community. Seeds of new community are always trying to be born in spiritual traditions. What is new has power to inspire. In the World Community the weekly meditation group has long been a way in which meditators have seen the community that meditation creates and taken the risk to share it with new people. Meditation groups can become too cosy. It is easier to receive than to give. But at some point these two aspects of grace call to be reconciled.

Contemplative Christians know what grace means: to follow the teacher and go we know not where, to share what we have received, to give what we think we don't have. This demands the opening of the eye of the heart. At the blessing of Bonnevaux one of our most generous donors to the project said that, when he first considered it, he felt, 'this is more than we can handle'. Or rather, he said, this is what his head told him. His heart said otherwise. Bonnevaux, he said, is first understood from the heart.

*Every religion today needs to be simplified, purified, restored to its contemplative core*

Community, like a family or a good workplace or village, is a manifestation of love. The heart, which speaks the language of love, has reasons that reason cannot compute. Each day in community we engage, in every encounter, with a part of the universe's infinite web of relationships. At times we glimpse this big picture within the life of the community life, if it is trying to be a community of love. But, at other times, we think how much easier it would be to live alone. Even in community (or family or work), you can stop expanding in the web of love because your ego decides to seek a safe, separate identity. This occupies a space where you can criticise others and protect yourself. The ego forever seeks separateness (its ancient habit). The self, however, courageously seeks solitude as the means of true, loving relationship. If I cannot be myself as I am I cannot accept you as you are.

Egotism rejects grace. It refuses the gifts that flow unpredictably and unconditionally from the universe into our wounded lives. It fears grace and pollutes it by trying to control it on the ego's terms. Often it even interprets grace as a threat and demonises it. But whenever the firewall of

egotism is breached, even in part, by contemplative experience, grace begins to work wonders.

But grace is not just a feel good factor in the spiritual life like a period of meditation in which distractions fade and peace rides high. It is not what Bonhoeffer called 'cheap grace', which he called the 'mortal enemy of our church', the kind of grace that we give to ourselves. Grace at low cost once shaped a certain kind of Christianity. The conditions and institutions that allowed it to flourish are disappearing. A time of radical disruption has begun without easy answers and big demands for renunciation. It is the first days of Contemplative Christianity. One aspect of the contemplative mind is the ability to live peacefully without certainty.

As always, what matters is not changing external realities but learning how to deal wisely with them. The heart of Christian faith reminds us of this from the beginning – how Jesus accepted his destiny and transformed the deepest dark to light. It is how James, 'the brother of the Lord', understood the meaning of suffering:

My Christian brothers and sisters, you should be happy when you have all kinds of tests. You know these prove your faith. It helps you not to give up. Learn well how to wait so you will be strong and complete and in need of nothing.

Like Simone Weil he sees meaning in suffering. She thought that the 'greatness of Christian faith is not that it seeks a supernatural remedy for suffering but a spiritual use for it.'

Sustaining this insight requires a considerable depth of peace, which is the fruit of prayer, fellowship and being responsibly engaged with the day-to-day tests of life. Then the peace at the heart of the contemplative revolution becomes our own contribution to the turbulent social revolution we are passing through. When the future seems disturbing we



need this interior depth to deal with the immediate issues of life without losing sight of the guiding principles needed for the long journey ahead. Community is the daily school of balancing the short and the long-term vision. One of the greatest masters of this wisdom in the Christian tradition is St Benedict.

For Benedict the rhythm of daily life holds the secret of remaining tuned into reality ('obedient'), steady ('stable') and continuously growing ('conversion of life'). Respecting the synergy of body, mind and spirit is the meaning of the daily management of time and tasks. Time to read, time to work, time to pray. It is as simple as that. Contemporary lifestyles show, however, that we feel it to be elusive and unsustainable. Yet, like a daily meditator in any walk of life, Benedict understood that the best way to achieve a natural, healthy rhythm of life, interiorly and externally, is to prioritise the times of prayer. It is when we see, as John Main said, that the 'times of meditation are the most important times of your day', that the contemplative revolution has swept us up into itself and we become this new kind of revolutionary and force for peaceful change. We become what Christians should always be, practitioners rather than preachers

Contemplation is a life-choice that doesn't provide answers. But nor does it demand blind allegiance to an ideology, as does the major alternative today, fundamentalism, with its false and divisive simplicities. Instead, it requires a sustained vulnerability of mind and heart, permitting us to be penetrated by a new expression of reality. It requires a detached approach to institutions and structures and an interior discipline supported by the love and forgiveness of your fellow-pilgrims.

Contemplation is the antidote to fundamentalism in all its forms. Woven into daily life, a contemplative practice sets off an alarm bell when the tendency is triggered to run from

reality into the false consolations of fundamentalism. The dangerous one is to absolutise 'us and them'. When states shut their hearts to a refugee crisis, when leaders play the race card to enflame the prejudiced. When religious people invoke God to exclude gay or divorced people from their fellowship. In these reactions, we reject the amazing contemplative gift that transforms humanity through seeing ourselves in others and others in ourselves. This gift is the vision of God.

Other-centred attention is the faculty that opens access to the web of reality, in which everything is connected, and which we call God. The



worldwide web of the internet is astounding but only a miniscule reflection of the great communion revealed by the contemplative vision of reality. In this great communion, if we are awake and present, we are taught by the simplest things: a walk by yourself around the lake, an evening with community and guests, the rhythm of meditation and prayer during the waking hours of each day.

In the year 2000 a million actual suicides were recorded and there were twenty million attempts. For these - and for many others harming themselves in our global culture - life became, as it did for Hamlet as he considered the same option, 'weary, stale, flat and unprofitable'. At the core of this mental state is a desper-

ate monotony and boredom such as every addiction eventually produces. The cure is not to increase the dosage or multiply the ways of self-distracted. It is to find a therapeutic repetition that is energised by the rhythm of life. It is this inter-weaving that renews the blessed immediacy of our relationship to reality.

We are told to pursue happiness and fulfilment. But we can only pursue them by waiting for them. It is in stillness that the most real contact happens. Only contact with the great communion 'delivers us from evil'. By breaking the cycle of fear (it doesn't matter whether the swallows drop

their message on the speaker), of desire and anger and by dissolving the fixed patterns of our self-defeat, we are sent back to live, not fight life. We find the meaning of good work. The inevitable disappointments, fears and sorrows of life dissolve into a new hope and joy.

And, in each moment of defeat, it summons up the certainty of a second chance, the liberation from the law of karma by a love that can neither leave us nor punish us: because it is a perpetual beginning.

With much love, Laurence Freeman

Laurence Freeman OSB

## Bonnevaux

### Blessing

# A day to treasure in our hearts

The blessing of Phase 1 of Renovation brought together a group representing different aspects of the WCCM



Part of the ceremony was held in the Abbaye's cloister

An illustration of the vision of life at Bonnevaux. This is how we can synthesize the gathering for the Blessing of Phase 1 of renovation, on the 15 June. The historic day had participants from a local and global level. The Archbishop of Poitiers, Mgr Pascal Wintzer did the official blessing. The group included the Abbot of Ligugé Dom Christophe Bettwy, WCCM members of Poitiers, the French Community, coordinators and members of other national communities. Friends from local Zen Soto and Tibetan Buddhists groups were also present, as well as neighbours and friends.



## A chance to get to know Bonnevaux

The day provided an opportunity for people from far away or nearby to see different aspects of Bonnevaux: the renovated Abbaye, the work in progress, the natural environment. The House and Garden tours were led in English and French to include everyone present.

Laurence Freeman:  
"We are all here to bless"



*It is a very special moment in the life of our Community and for the Bonnevaux Community. A blessing is not only something that comes externally, it comes from within. I think we are all here to bless this place of prayer, this place of hospitality, this place of healing. Your presence here is an integral part of this blessing. It gives us all great pleasure to see the diversity of our friends and guests today. We have religious monks, priests, lay people, we have many forms of Christian faith and we are delighted we can welcome friends from other faiths with us today. Bonnevaux is committed to the service of peace and there is no peace without unity. The power of unity is that people who are very different from each other can live together in friendship. People of different beliefs, but sharing a deep common faith in humanity.*



## Bonnevaux

### Monseigneur Pascal Wintzer: Blessing of the Abbaye "We need access to silence"



*It is easier to talk about meditation than it is to meditate. In the turmoil of ordinary life, we need silence. In times of war, in times of quiet and in our daily life, we need times of silence. In a violent world, the inner silence will bring us to peace, we need to have access to silence and to peace.*

### A message from Monte Oliveto

Dom Ugo de' Sangro represented the mother house of Fr Laurence, Monte Oliveto Maggiore. He read a message sent by the Abbot Dom Diego Rosa: *I hope to come soon to visit Bonnevaux. I am very pleased that this former Abbaye is starting again as a Centre of Christian Meditation and peace, as a Centre for France, for Europe, the entire world and a Centre for the renewal of the contemplative life in the church. (...) I feel very close to Bonnevaux and the whole Olivetan congregation feels an affinity to this foundation. We hope it can live and bear many fruits.*



*Abbot of Ligugé Christophe Bettwy blessing the icon of the Trinity*

Fr Laurence gave a short introduction to meditation followed by a few minutes of practice. Then it was the moment for Mgr Pascal Wintzer to lead the blessing throughout the internal and external parts of the Abbaye. The Abbot of Ligugé Christophe Bettwy led the blessing and the installation of the icon of the Trinity in the small prayer chapel in-

side the Abbaye. This was followed by the installation of the blessed sacrament also in the prayer chapel. Then Mgr Wintzer continued the blessing to the external parts of the Abbaye and all the guests gathered at the back of the building, in front of the image of Our Lady of Bonnevaux - Queen of Peace - this image was blessed by the Archbishop.

### Support & Gratitude



The Mayor of Marçay, Sandra Girard, has been a voice of support to Bonnevaux since the beginning. She thanked the Community for a project that respects the history and nature of the place and once more emphasized she will keep supporting Bonnevaux as much as possible. Thanks and gratitude were also expressed to the renovation team at the end of Phase 1: Bernard Ruel (Architect from France), Kailas Moorthy (representing DP Architects) and Wolfgang Hasne (Project Manager).

## Bonnevaux

### Peter Ng: "This rose is not only about Patricia but about all members of our Community who made Bonnevaux possible"



Photo: Peter NG planting an English rose in memory of Patricia Ng

Another symbolic and moving moment of the day was the planting of the roses. Dom Ugo did the planting of a French rose and Peter Ng (National Coordinator of Singapore) planted an English rose in memory of his wife Patricia Ng:

*My family is very honoured that the Community at Bonnevaux asked me to plant this rose in memory of my late wife Patricia Ng. We are planting this rose not only in memory of her but also in memory of all members of*

*our Community, over the last 50 years, who have passed on but have laid the foundation of Bonnevaux today. I think Patricia would like me to say that this is not only about Patricia, but about all members of our Community throughout the world, who have contributed to the growth of our Community and made Bonnevaux possible today.*

#### Music Concert and Salve Regina

A music concert in the Abbaye's entry hall, organized by the resident community, gave the final special touch for this day of blessing, after which everyone went again outside to sing "Salve Regina" in front of the image of Our Lady.

ONLINE: Watch videos on the Blessing: <http://tiny.cc/BnvxBless>

### Angelene Chan (DP Architects CEO) on Bonnevaux: "It is truly a project of love"

#### First impression

*When we first saw Bonnevaux, when I came upon the land, I found that it was truly magical. It had everything that we wanted: a beautiful chapel, an abbey (what was an abbey on the 12th Century), all the surrounding buildings and the land, the rolling plans, the hills, the lakes, the stream. Although there was a lot of restoration work that we had to do, we all felt that it was something that we could achieve and we should achieve, because the whole place, as I said, is magical and has everything that we wanted.*

#### Why did I get involved?

*My office is all the way in Singapore; it is a long way. But when I saw the place and I knew what the place was going to be for, I could see it is almost like creating heaven on earth. So I asked myself: "How could I not be involved?" It is so beautiful, and it is especially for people who will come from all over the world to meditate. A place of retreat, of restoration. For me, I felt deeply that I had to be involved.*

#### A unique project

*This project is unique because I don't think we have ever worked in a*

*building from the 12 century, that was an abbey, and restoring it over the years to what was originally built for. It is a project of passion, of love - I think maybe because a lot of this is done through voluntary work, and you can see that everyone involved in it is truly passionate. It is not a commercial project, and there is a bond out of the belief that this will be a place that everyone will enjoy, everyone needs, and that everyone will grow to love.*

ONLINE: watch the full video with Angelene: <http://tiny.cc/AngBvx>

To know more on Bonnevaux visit [www.bonnevauxwccm.org](http://www.bonnevauxwccm.org)



## News

# Laurence Freeman visits Korea for the first time

By Sr. Enosh Cho, OSB

Father Laurence Freeman visited Korea from May 13th to 24th. He was invited by the Korean Benedictine Association to introduce Christian Meditation to the Korean Benedictines and Oblates. In particular, the conference of the Korean Benedictines, held at the Tutzing Daegu Priory on May 16th and 17th, was very meaningful in that Christian Meditation was officially introduced in Korea for the first time. Learning and practicing Christian Meditation together, Benedictine monks and sisters who attended the conference were able to discover or recover the essential aspects of the monasticism - silence, simplicity, and stillness - and to rekindle our desire to devote ourselves to the journey to the purity of heart and inner growth.

Through the conferences given to the Oblates of Waegwan Abbey and Olivetan monasteries of Gosung and Yangju, Father Laurence quenched the spiritual thirst of many faithful. The talks for the Tutzing and Olivetan Benedictine sisters' communities awakened us to re-opened our eyes to the precious gift of Chris-



*Fr Laurence with kindergarten children*

tian Meditation which is deeply rooted in the monastic tradition and the wisdom of desert Fathers. Father Laurence also had a chance to meet with children in a kindergarten run by Olivetan Sisters. He introduced meditation to the children and had a time of prayer with them. We were pleased to see that even six-year-old children could easily get into meditation.

Father Laurence's visit to Korea was as experience for which will always be grateful – a time that the

seeds of pure prayer were sowed into the contemplative soil which already cultivated in the heart and nature of Korean people. Father Laurence recommended that we have a somewhat longer time of silence after reading the Scripture during the Divine Office and we have been following it in our community. This little change keeps reminding us of the most important things for our monastic lives - centered on Christ and the poverty of the heart!



## Guiding Board meeting announces the WCCM Theme 2019-2020: Contemplative Christianity

The Guiding Board meeting this year was held near Bonnevaux shortly before the Easter Retreat. One of the key decisions of the Board was selecting the Community's theme of reflection and teaching for the coming year as "**Contemplative Christianity**". National Communities are encouraged to use this to focus and unify their annual programmes. ONLINE: watch GB members reflecting on the theme: <http://tiny.cc/thm1920>

## News

### WCCM Mission to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, West Indies

By Sr. Ruth Montrichard

At the request of Bishop Gerard County CSSp, himself a meditator, a team from WCCM Caribbean visited St. Vincent for a week in June with funding provided from the "Emerging Communities fund" of WCCM.

At the beginning of the visit the team met with the Bishop and a newly appointed team for Christian Meditation in the diocese and mapped out the programme which included:

- \* Giving talks at six parish Masses on Saturday and Sunday
- \* Revisiting one primary and three secondary schools where the practice of Christian Meditation continues
- \* Visiting and reintroducing Christian Meditation in the male prison
- \* Introducing Christian Meditation to teenaged girls in a home for abused teens
- \* Giving talks to the priests, deacons and their wives at the Pastoral



Centre

- \* Giving three Radio Interviews.

The Bishop highly praised the team who conducted the sessions with a great deal of confidence. They had previously attended Essential Teaching Weekends, John Main Seminars, and Retreats with the help of funding from the USA and Australia. Attending these events in no small way prepared them for the task, and helped set up a team model that could be replicated in

the other Islands of the Caribbean.

The visit inspired the Bishop to encourage each parish to host a meditation group, the schools to continue their practice on a daily basis, and those in the Prison Ministry to be faithful to the practice.

Additionally, the Bishop has asked Fr. Laurence Freeman to address the Caribbean Bishops at their annual meeting in 2020. This will surely anchor Christian Meditation firmly in the Caribbean.

### Project to bring meditation to rural schools in South Africa is in progress

In South Africa WCCM is working in partnership with The Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) to bring Christian Meditation to rural schools. On 30 April, a three-hour workshop was held at Mthatha and 44 teachers from 8 schools attended. Two of these schools are in the town itself and the remainder are rural, at various distances from Mthatha. A group of six teachers travelled 150 km from Cofimvaba to be at the workshop, and a principal from a deep rural school some 100 km away in Maclear also attended.

This was the second workshop as part of this ongoing project in South Africa.

A third workshop took place in Polokwane in the north of the country on 24 May. 11 schools attended, sending one or two representatives of their teaching staffs. Some travelled between 200-300 kilometres (return trip) to be at the workshop which began mid-morning and ended with a late lunch at 14:00.

Follow-up visits to interested schools in areas already visited are planned for the second semester.



# In Focus

## Maciej Zurawski, Scotland



As I will explain, it all started with a fire. I started meditation about 19 years ago at an eight-day silent retreat, the so-called Spiritual Exercises. We meditated several hours per day in a beautiful natural setting. It was a time when all illusions of the ego would painfully fall apart, one by one, and I could go deeper and deeper and discover the astonishing spiritual reality within. It was like discovering a new continent – a promised land.

It certainly helped having a spiritual director to interpret all movements of the spirit and the endless stream of images that were generated in my mind during the medi-

tation. It seems that these images captured all of human experience, from heaven to hell, from darkness to light, from despair to hope.

In hindsight, I came to realize that if we are afraid to face our darkness, and instead embrace the distractions that the world is trying to offer us constantly, we never really discover our inner treasure, our vocation, or God’s redemptive light resting within us.

I also experienced that every moment God is still creating me, and that meditation brings me in touch with an inner, deeply hidden, life-giving well. I made a commitment to always stay in touch with that inner well of life, since I had decided that there is nothing more important. This retreat was a sudden, life-changing experience, and I have been meditating every day since then, both in good times and in bad times. At the retreat we meditated in silence, but together, exactly as we do in WCCM. I find that meditating in a group is still an extraordinary experience, and the Spirit often leads us in unexpected directions – the Spirit is fully of serendipity and surprises.

Sometime people tell me that

they don’t have time to meditate. On the other hand, people sometime underestimate my age by about 15-19 years or so. Can time stand still? One translation of the Golden Sequence, the prayer to the Holy Spirit, reads “Free us from the tyranny of time”.

The secular world is by its nature anti-meditative. It wants us to live by illusion, addiction and disease. The discipline of meditation, on the other hand, leads us to truth, freedom and holistic health.

Now back to the fire. During that retreat when everything started, I experienced for the very first time the presence of the Holy Spirit in a physical way like a fire going through my body, purifying and bringing to life, but not burning. Meditation is as much about the body as about the spirit, and that experience has been with me, even though we do not seek any experience at all in meditation, but rather simplicity. I have been helping to lead a WCCM meditation group in Edinburgh for many years. In my work as a software developer, I have also been developing mobile apps for religion, spirituality and healing.



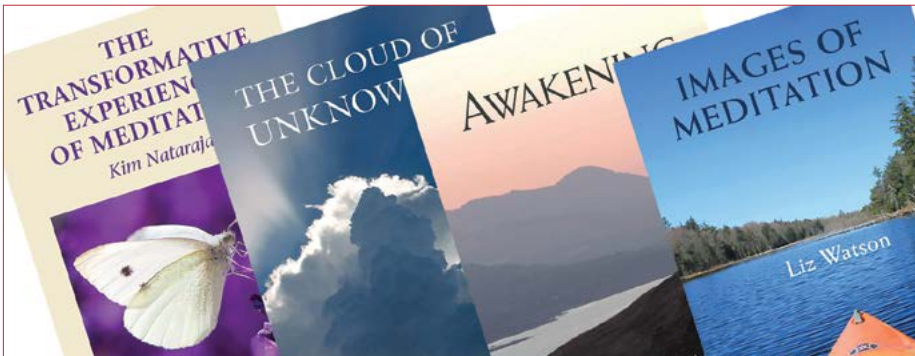
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Editor: Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo@wccm.org) Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano **Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 September.**



## Resources & Events

### New Pocket Book Series



#### The Transformative Experience of Meditation

By Kim Nataraja

In leaving thoughts and images behind and applying attention to the word we transcend the ego and enter the Presence of God.

#### The Cloud of Unknowing

By Graeme Watson

The teaching of the 14th century spiritual classic is presented here in a lively and contemporary way.

#### Awakening

By John Main

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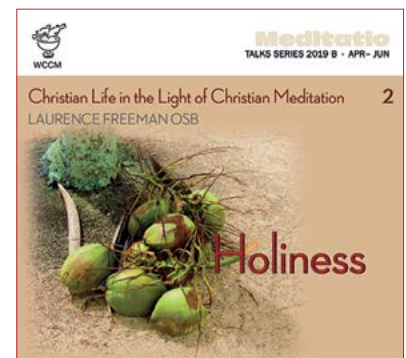
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For more information contact the administrator Tina:

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