



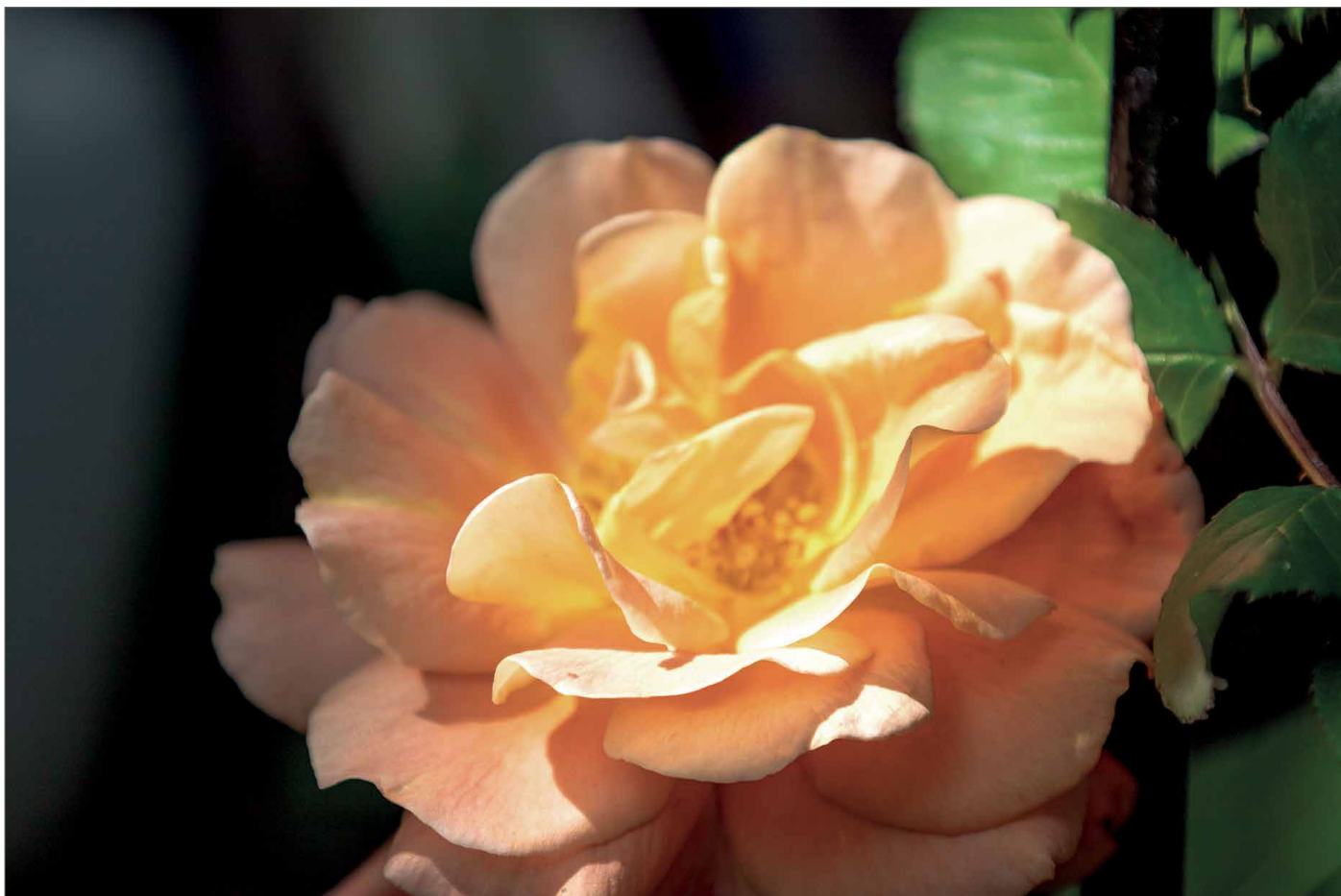
WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

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The fragrance of metanoia

LAURENCE FREEMAN EXPLAINS HOW PLANTING THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION TRANSFORMS THE WORLD



Metanoia Rose from Maria and Albert's garden in Ukraine (photo: Albert Zakharov)

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A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

Yesterday I was Zooming with Maria and Albert Zakharov, the WCCM coordinators in Ukraine. Shortly after the war began, I was deeply moved by an extraordinary comment they made in a very ordinary tone of voice: 'We are in a war for our survival. But now is the time to speak about meditation.' This led to my visit there last year and to the online sharing of that and other events through which their example of unifying contemplation and action has come to inspire our community and many others. It feels to me that this unified consciousness is a sign of the power of metanoia. It testifies to the fruits of meditation which all humanity needs today for its survival.

Maria and Albert and I spoke yesterday about a visit by them and other Ukrainian meditators to Bonnevaux and also about a retreat in Lviv when I go there in September. I learned something else from Maria and Albert: about a rose called Metanoia. It is a vigorous climbing rose with double blooms on a spectrum from orange to salmon pink, with a powerful but delicate fragrance. It needs plenty of watering and a lot of sun but rewards this by blooming continuously from May to October. They had just planted a Metanoia rose bush in their small garden at home, talking about it smilingly and hopefully.

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Most of us are increasingly aware of how all of us are engaged in another kind of war. The daily tragedy in Ukraine painfully keeps us conscious of it. It is the struggle we are in for the survival of the human and the humane against the extreme forces of the shadow within humanity itself. The battlefields of this war are dominated by science, technology and market forces in every theatre of human activity, from the core crisis of the environment to all aspects of culture across all social institutions. Without a transformed way of seeing and under-



Albert and Maria with Laurence during his visit to Lviv in 2022

standing reality, the forces opposing humanity may be too great to resist, precisely because they come from within ourselves. The self-destructiveness of this war of humanity against the human is too immense and complex for any solution except what would emerge from a new and radical form of simplicity.

If we at least accept this need for a change of mind, we will see how much more urgent it is to plant the rose of metanoia in hearts and minds everywhere than to bewail, blame and polarise in endless argument. The delicate, pervasive fragrance of a rose attracts wide attention and highlights the very unity of humanity we have forgotten. I have never met anyone who says they don't like the smell or look of roses, but no doubt there is a social media forum for them.

Instead of conflict, metanoia produces abundant blooms, awakening the beauty of the human, showing us again our potential and the true meaning of existence. As it is seen, tasted, felt and smelled across the human spectrum, metanoia becomes more than another global fashion novelty. It is potentially the dawn of a new religious experience claimed exclusively by no single tradition but equal to all. Pope Francis says that 'prayer is a universal value.' The Dalai Lama says,

'my religion is kindness.' When the mind opens to the power of metanoia that it possesses, it understands itself and the world, offering a compelling vision of a new kind of humanity worth living and dying for. If nothing else, it is an alternative to our present trajectory towards self-destruction.

Like all new growth, the Metanoia Rose needs careful planting and nurturing, but it then becomes sturdy and resilient. Our personal inner work for metanoia must also start small and fragile. It too needs careful cultivation, but as it changes the way we see, it exerts a transformative effect on the world we inhabit. Meditation is the work of planting and cultivation. It is good work because it is not a selfish escape from reality, nor a private garden serving our self-interest.

It is essentially a delightful work producing the fragrance of peace. But peacemakers are blessed because they struggle. This is the meaning of 'jihad': not externalising our inner darkness in hatred of enemies, but combating within ourselves self-hatred, self-rejection and ignorance. 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but... against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.' (Eph 6:12).

In the work of self-knowledge, we shed

illusions and come to see things as they are. The powers of darkness are forced to retreat but will launch counter-offences when we become complacent. Spiritual warfare tolerates no violence against others or ourselves. Its secret weapon is the power of other-centredness. Ego-centredness retreats before it and eventually accepts defeat. Meditation is a long campaign supporting metanoia that needs deep reserves from its alliance with gentleness, faithfulness and trust. As it looks fear in the eye and transforms suffering, meditation throws pure light on the human shadow.

If we refuse to work on our dark side, it inevitably undermines us from within. It increases misery by manifesting itself in self-centred action or self-absorbed inaction. The raw sewage of the psyche seeps out into the surrounding environment, spoiling the natural beauty of family, friendships, good work and social life. Eventually, psychic pollution spreads into the physical world, as we see happening to the soil, wildlife, air and oceans.

We don't need conspiracy theories. The root of the problem is closer to home. The human shadow connects the pattern of mass shootings, the power games of despotic leaders, the wave of mental illness now affecting childhood on a massive scale, cynical injustices in the financial system, political hypocrisy, endemic addiction, and the desperate retreat from reality in processed entertainment. Much of this makes up the daily news and chat rooms, but it traces back directly to the human psyche. Misunderstood, it plunges us deeper in collective depression and hopelessness.

The fragrance of metanoia dispels the shadow and restores hope to the ecology of the human. As a student, I was once arrested by the words of one great poet on learning of the death of another:

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,

In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

(W.H. Auden, *In Memory of*
W.B. Yeats)

Kim Nataraja in 'Dancing With Your Shadow' shows how 'shadow work' is an essential element of the practice of meditation in every life and so it must be taken up seriously and fearlessly. Each of us has our shadow: think of the temptations of Jesus in the desert before his baptism or the mental jihad of the Buddha before his breakthrough. The question hovering over this mystery of human consciousness is 'where does this universal and

*The fragrance of
metanoia dispels the
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stubborn shadow come from?' If we are to deal with our fear and denial of the shadow, we need to answer the question. Only then can we dance with the shadow instead of being overpowered by it. Instead of projecting it as an external enemy – and exposed it is certainly repulsive – we need to see it with wisdom and self-compassion as our own, as part of ourselves. Each of us has within us an ugly duckling in a hall of happy dancers, sitting against the wall, glowering, refusing to join in the fun because it feels so unattractive and unwanted.

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Everything in the immeasurable universe, currently estimated at 95 billion light years, has a lifespan. Galaxies, stars, blackholes, come into existence and all reach their individual end. Our short span of days reflects this, but more consciously

and painfully than the stars. A galaxy doesn't know when it is young, middle-aged, old or dying. From stage to stage of the journey from fertilised ovum to lifeless corpse we are one story of evolving consciousness. Ageing begins with birth. At each stage of awakening, we must drop the past and accommodate the new. But then we become re-attached: "This is where I am now, and I know things from this perspective. I will pursue variety by all means but resist change." We think we're like God, above change. This becomes the clinging 'no' directed against anything really new, a closing of the mind to what we cannot control: a rear-guard action against transcendence and renunciation. This produces the combination of forces we call the shadow, and when we say the mantra seriously, the shadow comes out of the shadows.

Whenever our plans are thwarted or something terrible happens, we feel helpless and ask 'why?' and then, very quickly, 'who?' and look for someone to blame. Not surprisingly, at this stage of humanity's crisis, we are forever looking for scapegoats to demonise and explain our predicament. Indeed, there are many individuals who should face justice for their part, but this does not solve the problem. We need deeper context, broader and clearer minds. Metanoia is the continuous process that drives our ascent to full consciousness. Today we can see how it is revealing the spiritual, both within and beyond everything we worship in the material and quantifiable.

To see it, however, we need to let go of the idea of a spiritual path altogether. Failing this, we will continue to quantify, brand and commoditise it. What we call the spiritual path is simply the ever-changing life-journey of every human being. It is tough, an ongoing struggle between opposites. There are oases and places of rest, but not of long duration because even they are part of the flowing

stream of life. The flow is blocked unless we exorcise our inner forces of refusal and negation, evident not just in the political tyrant or megalomaniac tycoon but also in our own egoism under the influence of the shadow. When flow stops, stagnation begins. The happiness we crave evaporates, leaving us burned out and disillusioned.

We have become a culture of endless activity and exhaustion. But with the right treatment, the poison becomes the medicine. Disillusionment, for all its pain and shame, opens the door to the next vision of reality. When we hit bottom, we start the ascent. Breakdown leads to breakthrough. Burnout re-ignites. The treatment is freeing the flow of consciousness. We call it 'growth' – beyond any imagined happiness - or 'flourishing' or 'fullness of life' or the 'kingdom of God'. The challenge is that in a hyperactive, ego-driven culture, it is hard to imagine that this treatment is the application of stillness and silence to our troubled hearts and minds. John Main said that the greatest difficulty of meditation is its simplicity.

Metanoia is not achieved by an act of the will or even great suffering. It opens, like a rose, when we see and accept reality as it is. What little I know of growing roses is the importance of deadheading. As soon as the flowering rose begins to shed its petals, you snip it off at the point where it meets the stem of the plant. 'Regular deadheading directs energy into stronger growth and more flowers,' says the website. And from another source of wisdom: 'I am the real vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will bear more fruit' (*Jn 15:1-4*).

Pruning is a skill which demands courage to use. By ourselves we would fail to keep up the treatment for healthy growth. Who likes to cut things? The treatment is not a mere technique. It is written into the original design of our

creation which includes the mysteries of salvation by grace and of divinisation by love. Working with the shadow, deadheading our illusions, meditating, is impossible in isolation. The ego's deception is to believe that we grow without a radical loving surrender of our precious sovereignty. Jesus illustrated it by saying the branch needs to be united to the vine or it will wither. The Buddha said that the spiritual path is inconceivable without

Metanoia opens, like a rose, when we see and accept reality as it is

the sangha, companionship. Community – and (dreaded word to many) church – is the medium of sacred friendship helping consciousness to evolve. But this is not church as institution but the true church as communal experience.

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Everything personal, everything to do with consciousness, awakens us to two dimensions of this sacred friendship. Each seeks to embrace the other: the individual and the universal, me and them, the local and the global. These paradoxes create the elasticity needed for growth. Religious arguments divide when the local and the universal dimensions cannot be harmonised. The mystical symbol of the church as a human body reveals it as unified in many parts, one rose bush, one vine with many branches.

Think of our WCCM community, for example. Each local meditation group is a specific flowering, and yet feels part of a global community. Sometimes national coordinators tell me they meet groups which say they don't feel particularly connected to the vine. The fragrance of metanoia can change this and bring benefits for all. Those who are conscious of this connection help the local and the global

to embrace. The gift of sacred friendship is then valued even more highly. And with this usually comes a renewed generosity in sharing the gift of meditation with new people.

By entering the force field of the paradox of local and global, of the personal and the universal, we glimpse the endless overlapping planes of consciousness. Does this sound a bit like God? Aquinas said that every being is a name of God and no being is a name of God.

Meditation liberates us through the awareness that because God is unknowable, religion - as institution, dogma, ritual and devotion - is a pointer, not the container or final word about God. Only when we know we cannot know God can we trust and love him. 'Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy' (*1Pet 1:8*). This degree of knowing awaits us in the cloud of unknowing, which we enter by relegating everything else we know, *everything*, to the cloud of forgetting. This is the work of the holy word.

Like a laser beam, the mantra takes us through increasingly subtle levels of consciousness. A laser beam is a beam of light reduced to immense narrowness. The beam can be shot miles into the sky and used to cut through metal. It is vast and miniscule. Personally, I am very grateful for it because laser treatment saved my sight after I suffered detached retinas in my twenties. Like a laser on its narrow path, the mantra cuts through the blocks of negation and denial and moves the mountain of the ego which stands in the way of the next stage of consciousness. It becomes narrower and finer as we give it our attention and the more of the surviving shadow it consumes. Even before the end, which lies in God's grace not our effort, we will have glimpses of the end of our journey, not projected into the future but as a present reality.

A condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything. The Christian teaching on the mantra as a path into 'pure prayer' begins in the 5th century with John Cassian. He compared it to the first step of teaching a child how to read. 'How could a child pronounce the syllables of the simplest word unless he had first learned the letters of the alphabet?' The paradox here, however, is that in learning to read in the ordinary sense, we become capable of greater complexity – words, then sentences, reading letters, then meditation newsletters. But in learning meditation, everything gets simpler and simpler.

The mantra is a life-long path that progressively becomes one with its destination. Children understand it better than adults because they are closer to the immediacy of the experience. Commitment is a problem only as long as we think of meditation as a means of achieving something. So, perhaps passion is a better way of understanding what we need for this work and to walk this path. Not the passion for possession, but the passion of loving with our whole heart, mind soul and strength, and then allowing the love focused to a single point in the work of meditation to expand outwards.

The passion of love is the unified way of union and of dispossession, the joy of the marriage bed and the suffering of crucifixion. The contemplative mind that grows through this repeated experience understands why the words passion and patience have a single root. Faithfully going through what must be endured produces the wild risk of losing one's life in love without any guarantee that we will find it again.

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Humanity today needs the new values that arise from these mysterious paradoxes of the spiritual dimension. They emerge into consciousness through the changes

we experience in ourselves and the hope reborn by confronting our shadow.

Everywhere, we see the collateral damage done by hitching our future to the illusory value of unlimited, material growth. True, with the magic of technology, humanity has developed miraculous powers, but what does it profit us to have gained the world at the cost of our true self? Is this progress? The values of a culture of wasteful excess and false hope have exhausted us and the planet. The resulting psychic burnout and social dis-



Icon of the Pantocrator

integration are therefore not a cause but an horrific consequence of human beings dehumanising themselves.

Prophets have always urged people to read the signs of the times. They are hard to read and interpret while we are caught up in them and our personal lives feel dragged down by their polluting false value system. We need metanoia to see the signs, but we also have to restore the skills required for metanoia.

Of these, firstly, I have mentioned the gift and power of the mantra. Pure prayer is the essential ascesis, the main exercise, of spiritual growth. Like the Metanoia Rose, meditation needs planting, rooting and nurturing before it blooms and its

fragrance delights. Secondly, we need to relearn the ancient art of reading wisdom texts. I am talking about this in an online WCCM series beginning in September. Thirdly, there is the counter-cultural skill of sacred friendship. This form of trusting and caring relationship is not tied to convenience or pleasure or using people. It arises when we share the solitude of silence with others. Finally, an authentic community, committed to service and a mission, grows from this solitude. It is not a club or party or think tank. It is a school of service where we work with our shadow and help others to work with theirs. With these spiritual skills and gifts, we can work to dissolve the atomising grip of polarisation that is tearing societies apart. Meditation opens the door to mediation.

A few years ago, when I visited St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, I was blessed to be able to see in person an icon of the Pantocrator, made in the 6th century, that I had long loved and contemplated in reproductions. Now I was in its original presence, and I spent much time sitting in front of it. Seeing how differently each of Christ's eyes engage with us and draw us into his way of seeing changed me. In his total metanoia, he sees everything at once, the world of shadow, illusion and suffering, but also the clear light of eternal day. I felt that his whole face in this unique work of sacred art that reveals the divine humanity we have been given. It expresses the knowledge and compassion that his passion – in both senses – released. Simply to look into it is to see that it is present and conscious within ourselves.

With much love

Laurence Freeman OSB

News & Articles

John Main Seminar 2023 - New Wine, New Skins

BONNEVAUX, SEPTEMBER 14-17, LED BY CYNTHIA BOURGEOULT, ANDREW HARVEY AND LAURENCE FREEMAN

A wineskin, traditionally made of goatskin or sheepskin, was used to hold or dispense wine. Storing new wine in old skins while it was still fermenting risked splitting the skins and causing the wine to be lost. Jesus uses the metaphor of new wine in new wineskins to illustrate the perennial freshness of the revolution he began and continues to drive – his empowering call to a renewed consciousness that will bring forth new forms and structures of human life. Christians pray that the ‘reign of God will come down on earth as it is in heaven’.

The powerful parable of the wine and the wineskins will inspire the trio of teachers presenting this year's John Main Seminar, the 39th. With very different voices, minds and life-experience, they are friends serving a common cause, who believe in the transformative potential of our present Dark Night. Each sees the urgency of a renewed global Christianity empowering the breakthrough in consciousness and behaviour that humanity needs in order to survive. The transformation depends on the mystical wisdom traditions being rediscovered and, like “new wine”, being poured into the “new wineskins” of unprecedented religious and societal channels. Some forms of the community that meditation is forming and creating are already signs of the coming new era.

The Seminar will include workshops led by each teacher, a workshop on Embodiment led by Giovanni Felicioni, and group discussions. The individual presentations by the three, as well as their interactions with each other and with the participants, will no doubt



(Photo by Alex Fragoso from Pixabay)

stretch the skin of the Seminar format to breaking point. However, the skin will be fortified by the regular times of prayer and meditation.

As is the custom, the pre-Seminar meditation retreat will be led by Laurence who will invite contributions from Andrew and Cynthia. Giovanni will lead a daily embodiment session.

Both the John Main Seminar and the pre-seminar retreat will also be online.

New Wine New Skins

John Main Seminar 2023

Bonnevaux, September 14-17

Led by Cynthia Bourgeault, Andrew Harvey and Laurence Freeman

Why Practice Does not make Perfect Pre-Seminar Retreat

Bonnevaux, September 11-14

Laurence Freeman with Cynthia Bourgeault, Andrew Harvey and Giovanni Felicioni

MORE INFORMATION:

<https://wccm-int.org/jms2023>

Cynthia Bourgeault

Modern day mystic, Episcopal priest, writer, and internationally acclaimed retreat leader, Cynthia divides her time between solitude in a hermitage in Maine and a demanding schedule traveling globally to spread the recovery of the Christian contemplative and Wisdom paths.

Andrew Harvey

Founder-Director of the Institute for Sacred Activism, inspiring people to become effective and practical agents of systemic change in order to create peace and sustainability.

Laurence Freeman

Benedictine monk and Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation and its international home, Bonnevaux.

News & Articles

Young WCCM members will participate at World Youth Day



WCCM will be present at the 2023 World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, August 1-6, on the theme “Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39).

Our International Coordinator for Meditation for Young Adults, Tavnā Malaspina, is forming a group with young people from our global community to represent WCCM and spread the gift of meditation at this event.

Our International Coordinator for Meditation for Young Adults, Tavnā

Malaspina, is forming a group with young people from our global community to represent WCCM and spread the gift of meditation at this event.

Fr Laurence explains the idea: “World Youth Day is organised every few years by the Catholic Church. I have attended one in the past and it is joyful, hopeful and energising. The young people who come are open and enthusiastic about their faith. They are also realistic about the challenges they must face in our world if it is to grow. Our reason for being there is to share meditation as a way of faith to help them continue to progress into adulthood with an ever-maturing spiritual life. We will also share our ecumenical, inclusive, contemplative community with them.”

Tavnā comments: “We deeply believe in the importance of presenting Christian meditation to young people all over the world. Many young people in our tradition are not yet familiar with the practice transmitted by John Main.

This will be a unique opportunity to live in community, guided and inspired by the teachings of Laurence Freeman and the presence of Pope Francis. We will also participate with other contemplative Christian Groups such as *Laudato Si*”

Young meditators interested in joining the WCCM group in Portugal can get more information visiting this link: <https://wccm-int.org/wyday23>

The only way OUT is IN: Toolkit for Meditation in Prisons



This Toolkit is available now on our website as a guide to setting up and running meditation groups in prison. This new resource has been produced by **Mary Devane** (mary@wccm.org) the WCCM International Coordinator for Meditation in Prisons using her 20 year experience of Education and Rehabilitation in prisons. Download it here:

<https://wccm-int.org/mptoolkit>

Spring Appeal: The power of community



The response to our 2023 Spring Appeal in the last week of March showed the commitment and generosity of our community acting together. We received donations from 40 countries around the world. This initiative will be repeated annually in early Spring (in the North Hemisphere) as an opportunity for every member to nurture the growth of WCCM.

News & Articles

WCCM Academy, an inspiring start

BY VLADIMÍR VOLRÁB, DIRECTOR OF THE WCCM ACADEMY



The first term of the two-year WCCM Academy programme of contemplative study began in March with 24 of the 35 students meeting in Bonnevaux. The rest participated online. We spent a week in the Bonnevaux rhythm of prayer with the residential community and attended classes led by faculty, including Laurence Freeman, Prof. Ivana Noble, Sean Hagan and Giovanni Felicioni. We also explored the early days of Christianity in the nearby city of Poitiers. On another day we visited the Benedictine monastery of Ligugé, near Bonnevaux, which was the first monastery in Europe founded in AD 361. The hospitable Abbot Christophe guided us through the monastery and then gave an inspiring introduction to *Lectio Divina*.

The Academy programme includes three of these residential weeks, which we consider essential elements of the learning process, alongside the online teachings and tutoring.

This first experience confirmed our initial hopes. Spending time together in person proved to be a remarkable opportunity for the students to connect, foster deeper relationships, and engage in meaningful discussions. At the Academy, we believe that education goes beyond mere information transfer. It is intricately connected to one's inner experience, facilitating the integration of knowledge, personal growth, a holistic understanding of oneself and the world, and dialogue. Our students had the chance to experience all of this during both the formal and informal parts of the programme. Together, they embarked on a transformative journey that combines individual exploration with collective support.

The second cohort of students is scheduled to start in March 2025. Class schedules will be designed to accommodate students from Asia and Australia especially. If you are interested in par-

ticipating, please email us at academy@wccm.org and we will be happy to put you on a waiting list.

THE STUDENTS SPEAK

"I am very enthusiastic about the Academy. Ivana Noble's class on God as Creator and creation, Sean Hagan's class on contemplative practice and its meaning for our own professional stability, as well as the course on the roots of Christian mysticism, complement each other very well and have had a great influence on my daily work and prayer. The meetings with my tutor are absolutely wonderful, providing spiritual direction for my whole life."
(Pia Freyschmidt-Paul, from Germany)

"What a privilege it is to be part of The Academy, and especially of the first cohort! The initiation in Bonnevaux was a unique experience. It provided an opportunity to make essential and effortless connections with the other students and to create companionship and solidarity – sometimes even unspoken – among us. It accelerated the process in the academic classes of challenging first the unlearning and consequent emergence of new learning. I am most struck by the depth and breadth of the participation of the teachers, fellow students, Academy Director, Vladimir Volrab, and each individual tutor. I am so grateful to be one of the first thirty-five."
(Michele Jodhan, from Trinidad)



The Space Between Words: How to read the Bible and other Sacred Texts

Online Series led by Laurence Freeman starting on 25th September
For more information visit <https://wccm-int.org/scpseries>

News & Articles

Earth Crisis Forums – Meditation and Hope

BY JIM GREEN

“When I visit remote indigenous communities, the children recognise me, and they come and hug me. I’m sure I can do something for these children, I can give them hope. I can give them the motivation to keep on resisting - defending their land, defending the environment. This is what motivates me, this is where I get my energy - from the children.”

These are the words of Barto Macuxi, one of the indigenous people living in the northern highlands of Brazil. Barto, an artist and an environmental activist, stood for election as a senator to represent the state of Roraima in last year’s elections. He was addressing about 60 meditators from around the world, all sitting in their neat Zoom boxes on each other’s screens, all united in rapt attention to everything that this compelling speaker was saying. For Barto had been talking about the destruction of the natural environment in the place where he was born and now works, the disintegration of his people’s way of life, and of the genocide which has been casually but relentlessly allowed to continue in this remote part of his country. Tears were shed as he spoke and – as the large group later shared together – these tears are not only the necessary grieving for what we have done to our precious Earth and to each other, they are also the first steps in our journey towards healing and change.

This was the third in a series of Earth Crisis Forums (ECFs), held in February of this year, facilitated by Meditatio and offered as part of its *Earth Crisis: Climate and Ecology* outreach initiative. The first ECF had been hosted from the UK in May of 2022, with the aim of determining the level of people’s interest in what



seemed to us (a small organising group of WCCM members) a fundamental question: “On an Earth where climate emergency, habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity and rampant social injustice seem to threaten all forms of life, what role is there for those who practise contemplation?”

The forum drew attendees from all over the world. Since then, there have been two further events, one hosted by New Zealand with Australia, and one by Brazil. People have made passionate contributions and it is clear that the opportunity to share and learn, to grieve and hope together is greatly welcomed. Such has been the level of enthusiasm that an open blog space has been created where the conversations can continue. A dedicated online meditation group is also being set up.

Our organising group has always thought of the *Earth Crisis Forum* as a continuing virtual roadshow. We are hoping to host around three ECFs every year, with each one featuring a different part of the world. If you or any members of

your national community have an interest in making a presentation reflecting the experiences and issues where you live, please do get in touch. We would love to hear from you and to help every part of our global community make its voice heard and play its part in what the visionary Thomas Berry – author of *The Dream of the Earth* and self-described “geologist” – has rightly called *The Great Work*.

Meditatio is also keen to establish an Earth Crisis Co-ordinator within each national meditation community. The tasks and responsibilities of this volunteer role would not be onerous. It would mainly involve communication and liaison, encouraging awareness of the global ecological crisis, and supporting the development of a contemplative response within that country’s meditation community. Please get in touch if you’d like to know more: meditatio@wccm.org.

For more information visit the *Earth Crisis: Climate and Ecology* page: https://wccm-int.org/med_eccm

News & Articles

Spanish artist Odnoder installs a sculpture of the *Ascending Christ* in the Barn at Bonnevaux



Photo: from video by Proyecto Citron (<https://www.proyectocitron.com/>)

Bonnevaux received a special gift during Holy Week – a sculpture representing the Ascension of Christ, which was installed at the Barn. The piece was created by Odnoder, the artistic name of Spanish architect and artist Pablo Redondo, who attended the Holy Week retreat with a group of Spanish meditators, including National Coordinator John Siska.

Odnoder came to Bonnevaux last year and chose the piece of oak which, after months of work, was to become *Ascending Christ*, his vision of Christ ascending into heaven.

“The focus of my work is the resacralization of art. In the art of today as

we know it, and in the Christian religion, the usual symbol is the cross, the crucified Christ. I wanted to go beyond what is habitual and expected, and the idea came to me of creating the Christ ascending into heaven, which is to me the most beautiful image of Christ,” explains Odnoder.

Laurence Freeman reflects: “In order to create peace on earth, we need to find peace within ourselves. And two of the most important ways that we can do that are through meditation and art. To allow the turmoil and the distractions and the conflicts within ourselves gently, firmly, to settle down and to bring the mind to stillness, that is the work

of meditation. It releases this energy of peace within us, into our life, into our relationships, into our work. And the other great means to that peace, closely linked to meditation, is through art. I think this is where Pablo’s gift is so important and beautiful and really part of the vision of Bonnevaux. We are very blessed to receive this deliciously tangible representation of the Ascending Christ.”

Watch a short video showing Odnoder’s artistic process in creating *Ascending Christ* here:

<https://wccm-int.org/podnoder>



Contemplative Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and optional extension to Jordan

2-11 October 2023 - Led by Laurence Freeman

For more information visit <https://wccm-int.org/hland23>



In Focus

Patricio Lynch Pueyrredon, Argentina



“Our real journey in life is interior. It is a matter of growth, deepening, and an ever-greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts.”
Thomas Merton

I agree with this marvellous quote. The word “journey” to me evokes an existential meaning. My life and everyone’s lives are journeys, and we are on our way, asking questions, looking for meaning, trying to go deep down in our hearts, thirsty for the Divine. I remember expressing to God in front of the Tabernacle many times during my youth: “I’m searching for you, I love you, I need you.” There was an infinite desire within my finite life. There was a fire inside and there still is.

I grew up in a Catholic family. My

parents were members of a lay movement within the Church in Argentina with charismatic experience in prayer. From being a little kid, I was surrounded by a sense of belonging, faith, love, and powerful prayer experiences.

Around my thirties, however, I began to feel a strong attraction to contemplative prayer. Feeling a strong need and desire to silence myself and be open to the mystery of God, I went many times to monasteries. I stopped looking for answers outside of myself, desiring cer-

... our journeys are about learning to live with uncertainties

titudes, and accumulating charismatic experiences. I had the awareness that everything belongs, and all the answers were already given. I believe it is a matter of unfolding this awakening in which we are submerged. I’m coming to the understanding that our journeys are about learning to live with uncertainties and unexpected situations, surrendering to the now in deep acceptance, letting go of attachments and the tendency to want to have everything under control. Our egos, which I call the antique and contemporary cancer of our existence,

are called to let go with tenderness. “And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself (ego), and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

I met the beloved Marina Muller, a WCCM Oblate, in Argentina, and she introduced me to the WCCM and this beautiful stream of grace coming from Desert Mothers and Fathers. At that time, I was in a dark place in my life. I was lost, I didn’t know what to do. Two things saved me: dancing the Tango (a story for another day) and, particularly, the daily commitment of repeating the sacred word, in silence and stillness. I can repeat with the psalmist: “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10) Christian meditation is crucial in my journey to know God. Now, as a priest, I witness the importance of this gift in today’s world. I agree with the famous theologian Karl Rahner, SJ: “The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all.”

I’m grateful for my charismatic experience of the past. As Merton said, it was part of the creative action of love and grace in my heart, but now I have been brought by this flow to the contemplative practice of Christian meditation, to the school of John Main and Laurence Freeman. Lord, I am ready for the new chapter of this journey.



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Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano
Would you like to contribute to the WCCM Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 August.

Resources

Online Courses

Coming soon:

Meditation and Leadership and Being on the Way

Two WCCM online courses will be published soon. *Meditation and Leadership* is taught by Bertrand Bouhour and Laurence Freeman with prominent guest speakers such as Peter Ng, Angelene Chan, Ray Dalio, Sean Hagan, and others. This course, blends the contemplative path with the values of other-centred leadership. It offers a grounding approach to sustaining healthy leaders. It is based on the class that has become the most popular

elective in the Georgetown McDonough School of Business MBA program. For emerging and established leaders alike, this course offers a rare opportunity to go beyond standard training and experience the bringing together of personal and professional transformation.

The other course, *Being on the Way*, is for meditators seeking to deepen their practice, their understanding of the Christian tradition, and their contemplative

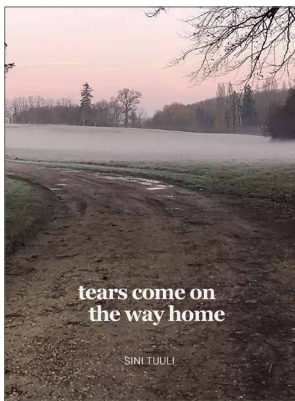
journey. Thanks to meaningful instruction and contemplative practices, participants will be led to a deeper understanding of their own Divinity, thereby coming to know themselves better and God better. This course was written by Stefan Reynolds, a Christian scholar and author who also wrote the *Roots of Christian Mysticism* online course.

Check out our online courses here: <https://wccm.org/courses/>

Books (available at mediomedia.com)

tears come on the way home

By Sini Tuuli



This collection of poems tells the story of an inner journey, through moments of euphoric joy, devastating memories, and quiet reflection, to a place of peace.

Sini is a meditator from Finland and the book is a fruit of her experience of living at Bonnevaux: "A regular writing practice was a much-needed foundation, a lifeline of sorts during my time in Bonnevaux. At times it was as if there were no tangible thoughts at all, and then suddenly, ten new poems appeared from the dark.

Creating a collection of poems in English felt like a leap into the unknown... But certainly one worth taking. I am grateful for this fruitful time of inner growth and the reinforced trust not only in myself but also in all the dear people I was surrounded by at Bonnevaux. It gives me overflowing joy to know these poems have already touched the hearts of many. All I really wish for is that they will continue to do so."

Order this book here:

<https://wccm-int.org/tcwhbook>

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Christ lives, alleluia!

By Roland Ashby

Love is stronger than death.

That is the hope that Christians celebrate at Easter, in their belief that the Spirit of Christ lives on, and is present to each one of us, whether we are aware of it or not. And that this 'Christ Consciousness' or 'Christ mind' can be found at the centre of our being, particularly in times of prayer and meditation.

For Trappist monk Thomas Merton, this centre is "a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth ... which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. [It] is the pure glory of God in us ... It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven."¹

Benedictine monk John Main also described this centre beautifully when he wrote that it is in our hearts that

Christ prays day and night. "I can describe it only as the stream of love that flows constantly between Jesus and his Father. This stream of love is the Holy Spirit."²

St Paul also knew of this love, this presence of Christ within, when he wrote: "God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (Romans 5:5)

And Australian poet and mystic Noel Davis, in his poem *Sometimes*, captures something of how this profound Easter mystery can be experienced:

*Sometimes
As we let our bodies
sink deeper and deeper
into the depths of our being*

*the healing Spirit
comes in the stirring of the waters
of our silence*

*or is felt as a gentle breeze
on the face of our hearts*

*or is heard by our hearts
calling us to take the step
that love invites and fear resists*

*or is tasted in the quiet
amid the bustle
of our days*

*or is savoured in our solitude
as we remember
a moment shared*

*or is heard in the yearning
of every cell of our being
for oneness with the Beloved.³*

This article first appeared on Living Water, a blog which promotes contemplative wisdom in the Christian tradition. Roland is the contributing editor, and subscription is free. See: www.thelivingwater.com.au

References:

1. From *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Image, 1968)
2. As cited in *John Main – Essential Writings* (Orbis Books, 2002) 83
3. From *Heart gone walkabout: poems, prayers, lines and spaces* (Shekinah Creative Ministry Co-op, 1991)

Seek out the suffering

by Andrew McAlister

In chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel, we find the mission statement of Jesus. Quoting Isaiah, Jesus announces:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, For he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of the Lord's favour. (Luke 4:18-19)

Here we have what Jesus was about. Who were the poor of Jesus' time? They were the beggars, the crippled, the sick; they were widows and orphans. And the sinners of Jesus' time: the tax collector collecting money for Rome, those not following the Judaic law, the uneducated, basically anyone who deviated from the guidance of the scribes and Pharisees.¹ It was a time when the many were culturally and psychologically cut off from the love and acceptance of God.

As disciples of Jesus, as Christians, we are invited to also be with the poor and marginalised. The more we encounter the healing Spirit of Jesus, the more his mission can itch in us. How can we, in our own ways, in our own lives, be people for the poor, the oppressed: the socially and economically marginalised of our time?

The WCCM also has a mission statement:

To communicate and nurture meditation as passed on through the teaching of John Main, in the Christian tradition, in the spirit of serving the unity of all.

In the life of a Christian meditator, how might these two mission statements, that of Jesus and of the WCCM, combine? How might an oblate of the WCCM engage this mission statement of Jesus, making it somehow our own?

Being an Australian Christian, and a Benedictine oblate, I find myself looking towards two others in answering this question, two people who in their own ways and time attempting to engage this

mission statement of Jesus: Benedict of Nursia and Mary MacKillop. How might their lives and mission help us as meditating Christians?

First a bit of context.

Benedict of Nursia (480-547), went to Rome in his teens for study.² The Rome Benedict went to however, was in the grip of two crises: the continuing disintegration of the Roman Empire and a debate about the nature of Christ.³ Around 498 (probably when Benedict was still in Rome), the theological crisis blew-up into the election of two Popes: Symmachus and Laurentius. It is likely that Benedict sympathized with Laurentius, however Symmachus (a hardliner) was eventually recognised as Pope. So, Rome's disintegration, and Symmachus' recognition, were both likely factors that caused Benedict to leave Rome and his studies.

"How can we, in our own ways, in our own lives, be people for the poor, the oppressed: the socially and economically marginalised of our time?"

Mary MacKillop (1842-1909), was born into a poor Scottish immigrant family in the colonial settlement of Melbourne. Melbourne had only been settled in 1837. It, like European Australia generally at the time, had a great disparity between the rich and the poor. Those who did not come from Europe with the necessary resources were often waylaid and marginalised.⁴ There was no welfare system and little education.

In 1866, Mary and the priest Julian Tenison Woods founded the Sisters of Saint Joseph. Their first focus was education. However, by the time of Mary's death in 1909, as well as schools, the Sisters had opened refuges, orphanages, and houses for the aged and infirm throughout the east and south-east of the Australian continent, and

New Zealand.⁵ Writing to her community in 1900, Mary said:

"Let St. Joseph's true children remember their mission to seek first the poorest, most neglected parts of God's vineyard."⁶

Mary's living of Jesus' mission was to seek out the suffering. What was Benedict's? Benedict's response in his time was to set up communities of prayer and hospitality. Hospitality was a risk during his time of societal instability.⁷ As well as this, he wanted to preserve and promote the way in which Christ could work on a human life, freeing us for love and union with God. Central to the outward focus of these praying communities was the reception of guests (see chapter 53 of the Rule of Benedict). While all were welcomed, Benedict asked that "great care and concern be shown in receiving poor people

and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received."

While Mary's primary response was to seek the marginalised, Benedict's was to receive them. Of course, after the seeking there was care and support, so too, after the receiving. In both this seeking and receiving, the marginalised of Benedict's and Mary's time were supported. Both Mary and Benedict expressed, in their own time and place, in their own ways, the mission statement of Jesus. The question remains, how do we, as Christian meditators, show this same love and compassion to the marginalised of our time?

Both Benedict and Mary were, in their own ways, contemplatives-in-action⁸ supported by the God-life within themselves and their own Christian



communities – Benedictine and Josephite. A communal and a personal attentiveness to God was practiced by both and was vital for both as a support for their missions. As it was for Jesus.

Contemplative-in-action

The meditator and Christian are also invited to be a contemplative-in-action. Being Christian *and* a meditator, we are invited to live out something of Jesus' mission *and* the mission of the WCCM. Both are not mutually exclusive. Meditation can support us as we (in our own personal ways) include and support the marginalised. And we can also show the ways in which meditation itself can be practiced by the marginalised as a way into the experience of the God of Jesus. How we do this depends on temperament and the drawing of our hearts within our own circumstance – just like Benedict and Mary.

What has been my experience? Back in 1995, I volunteered for twelve months, in Sydney, with a live-in community inspired by Mary and her Josephites called Josephite Community Aid (JCA). We walked with the mentally ill living in boarding houses, as well as newly arrived European war refugees (from Bosnia-Herzegovina). At this time, I was new to Christian meditation

and discovering how it could support my volunteer experience.

My time volunteering with JCA instilled in me a deep appreciation of the importance of Jesus' mission. I was also discovering that I too was one of the poor that Jesus loved. My own personality and internal disorder limited what I could do. Over many years, meditation has helped God to sooth and heal me and has helped me see my limitation as a freedom to focus on what is possible.

Over the years, both JCA and the WCCM have helped me in the integrating of meditation (the internal practice) with my own commitment to the marginalised (the external practice). After volunteering with JCA I began working to support people with acquired brain injury as they lived in their own homes. Also around this time, I continued a friendship with Cam – a friend of mine with a substantial brain injury due to a car accident.

Today I support Cam as he continues to live with the ways his injury has marginalised him. My meditation practice helps me greatly in this. As well as being a part of our local mediation group, I am also wondering how I might provide meditation as a way of loosening the bonds of captivity for those not with the WCCM and somehow marginalised.

How do we all, as Christian

meditators, live with the marginalised of our time? They may be closer to us than we think.

Andrew lives in Bathurst, rural NSW. He is an active member of the Sydney Cell. He has previously been part of Oblate communities in London and Bonnevaux.

References:

1. *Jesus Before Christianity*, Albert Nolan (see chapter three). This book, first published in 1976, has stood the test of time as a great introduction into who Jesus of Nazareth was (before he also became the Christ of Christian faith). The book was republished in 2022 with a forward by Sister Helen Prejean.
2. *Saint Benedict In His Time*, Richard Newman (2013). This is a wonderful little book to read if you want to know who Benedict was and his influences. Very well researched. Much of the information about Benedict and his times for this article comes from this book.
3. Gregory The Great's classic spiritual biography of Benedict, *The Life Of St. Benedict*, really only touches on Rome as the centre of a falling empire and the moral challenges this held for Benedict.
4. *The Unmapped Place*, Joan Healy, RSJ, P.9, 1994.
5. *Think Of The Ravens: The Sisters of St. Joseph in Social Welfare*, Marie Therese Foale, RSJ, 2001.
6. Quoted in Mary MacKillop: *A Window Of Hope*, Monica Cavanagh RSJ, 2010.
7. 'Benedictine Hospitality', Robert Atwell, in *The Oblate Life* (ed. Gervase Holdaway), 2008, pp. 87-93. "Benedict's households of God were stable and economically self-sufficient units. They were not only places of prayer and learning, they were safe havens for weary travellers, the weak and the vulnerable. Monasteries were valued places of hospitality and refuge." (189)
8. I've never really liked this description. It sounds as if there is an option in the contemplative life: you can act or not act. Contemplative life is part and parcel of the Christian life and so part of an active life. How we act is influenced by time, place, temperament, and the call of our hearts. All this needs to be in dialogue with the mission of Jesus so that his mission becomes somehow, uniquely, and practically, our mission.

The National Appeal

The National Appeal invites us to think carefully about giving back to our community here in Australia for the gift we have been given, the gift of Christian Meditation.

Your donations help us to continue to share our tradition with the wider community in many ways and support the large number of groups meeting every week across Australia.

As we start this new year with our 'new normal' way of living, holding events along with our weekly groups I am thankful to each of you as you have continued to find new ways to keep in touch with each other and draw

our national community closer together.

This gift of meditation we have received is priceless and it is our wish to continue to share it.

"The Peace, the stillness, the harmony that we experience in meditation becomes the basis for all our action."

John Main OSB

I would encourage you to support the community by giving to our National Appeal.

With my love and grateful thanks,

Jan Wylie
WCCM Australia
National Coordinator



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How to Meditate

Open to all ways of wisdom but drawing directly from the early Christian teaching John Main summarised the practice in this simple way:

Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word – a prayer word or mantra. We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word *Maranatha*.

Say it as four equal syllables. Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently, gently, faithfully and above all – simply. The essence of meditation is simplicity. Stay with the same word during the whole meditation and from day to day. Don't visualise but listen to the word as you say it. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images and other words.

Don't fight your distractions but let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively and returning to it immediately that you realise you have stopped saying it or when your attention is wandering.

Meditate each morning and evening for between 20 and 30 minutes.

What Online Zoom Meditation means to me

by Neville Hargrave

I find it difficult to locate a convenient Meditation group near my home which meets at a time when I can attend.

The regular Wednesday morning meditation group held on Zoom has been something which I find I can often attend.

The group is led by Dianne Schaefer at 10.30 am CST and anyone who wants to attend is welcome.

I have been an irregular attender for some time now. I have a regular yoga class that I attend in term time so I have been able to attend the Zoom meditation in school holidays and also whenever I am absent from yoga due to things like COVID lockouts, other ill health, travel interstate etc. I am sure others can think of reasons to participate online. Increasing age and infirmity, travel difficulties or inclement weather could easily be reasons to consider participation in online meditation.

The format of the group is that we convene on Zoom 5 minutes before the start time so that those participating can introduce themselves to one another, sort out problems with sound or

"Increasing age and infirmity, travel difficulties or inclement weather could easily be reasons to consider participation in online meditation."

computer as needed and settle so as to be ready to start at 10.00am.

Participants usually mute their microphones at this time and continue in silence until the end of the session at 10.30am.

Dianne reads a short item, often something by Father Laurence or an extract from the Weekly Readings or Weekly Teachings available on line from WCCM followed by the prayer usually used at groups of WCCM.

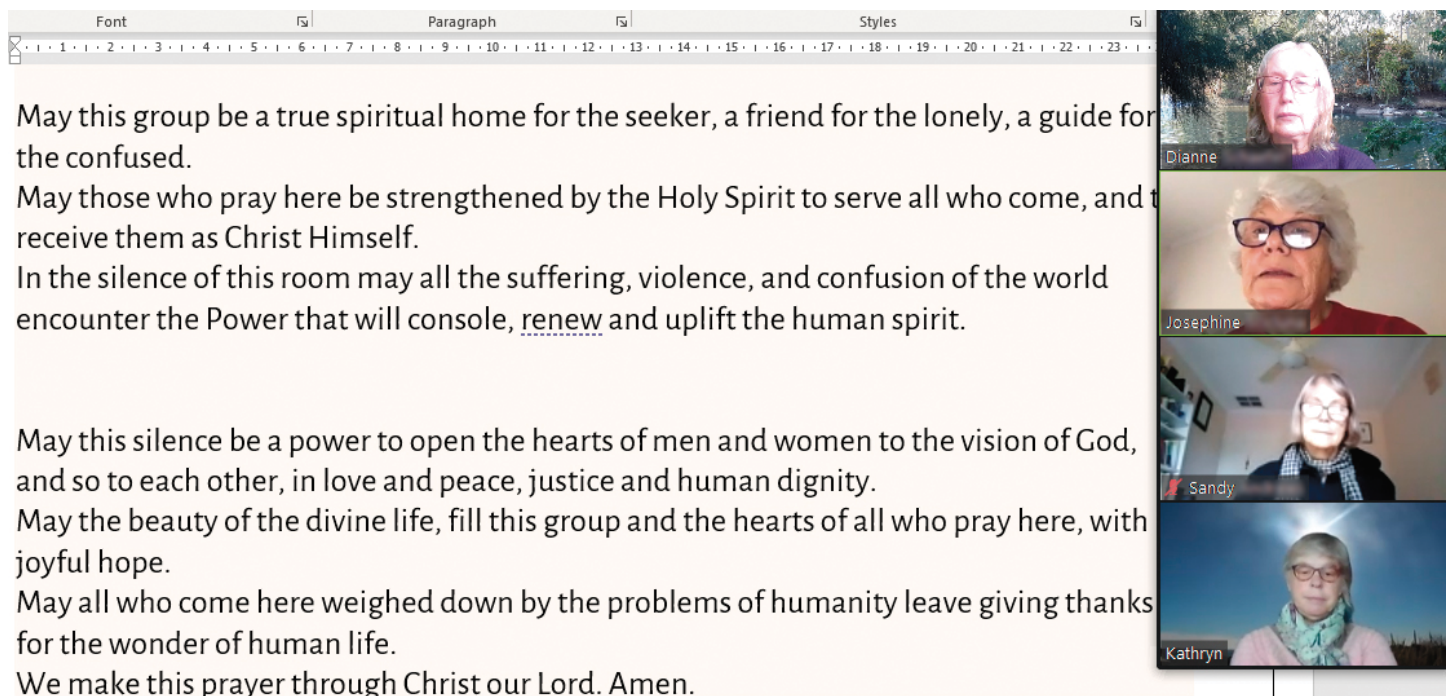
A sound on a singing bowl and we start our 20 minutes of meditation. The end of meditation is signalled by the singing bowl, and then after a short poem or final blessing we signal farewell in silence to the other participants and leave zoom for the rest of our day.

One could be forgiven for thinking that meditation online is unusual. I do not find it so. Many of the participants are fairly regular and one gets to know them. Usually there are around six to eight participants when I am there. We come from Adelaide, the regions and interstate on occasion and sit in our own environment, I expect it is the one where we usually do our daily practice.

It feels familiar and the Zoom presence of the others has a sense of "coming home" about it. It probably sounds odd, but I find it easier to meditate in a group than alone, and a Zoom group still delivers this feeling of community to me.

I am very grateful to Dianne for the opportunity to participate in this way.

Neville is a member of WCCM South Australia.



The screen shot shows participants at the time of The Closing Prayer, during a recent Christian Meditation Group on Zoom.

Meditation creates community

by Johanna Lawrence, WCCM State Coordinator for Queensland

It's been an exciting start to the year in Queensland with our new freedom to meet in person encouraging groups to recommence meeting face to face.

Some have reported that new members have joined their groups. Some which had been meeting online are struggling to find a suitable location to resume meeting face-to-face. It is a testimony of their commitment to the practice that they persevere and persist in working to find a suitable location in spite of the obstacles in their way.

Some group leaders also persevere in trying to get their priest or minister involved in meditation and we've heard of a couple of groups where the priest is supportive and joins the group when possible.

Some leaders in our regional areas are considering offering a day for their communities to gather such as a Quiet Day. One such day was held in Hervey Bay in March with a very good attendance. Sylvia Wright organised the day and she had wonderful support from the Anglican School, and the Anglican and Uniting Church parishes. Kath Houston spoke on the theme of *The Path to Peace, a peace the world cannot give*. It's a joy and blessing to be able to share the gift of meditation with newcomers as well as offering something to deepen the practice for others.

In Brisbane we held an event for Group Leaders for the first time since COVID struck. We arranged a venue where those travelling from a large distance could stay overnight before the event. Kath spoke about formation, both personal and group leader formation, past and present and looking to the future. The Group Leaders Day was enthusiastically attended and we all felt the truth of the saying that meditation creates community.

For our first Community Day for 2023 we invited a meditator who also is a trained labyrinth facilitator to lead us in

walking the labyrinth in a contemplative way. As it was held on the feast of the Annunciation, our theme was *Divine Invitations*. With meditation first, and then walking the labyrinth, it was a prayer-filled morning and touched people in various ways. We were very grateful to our presenter couple who went to a lot of effort to ensure that we all could enter into the experience of walking a labyrinth and pay attention to what invitations were being offered to us in our lives at this time.

Here are a couple of contributions from the groups at Airlie Beach and Warwick, Queensland.

Airlie Beach

We keep "the flag flying", by meeting every week in a group member's consulting rooms.

Meet Noah, the newest member



of the Whitsunday meditation group. The two members of the Whitsunday Meditation group met with a church pastor regarding permissions to meet in the church building and offer the group to the community. The levels of complexity and process simply for people to meet in a church building to pray to their God was quite confronting. Thus, the two members continue to meet in a therapy space.

That is where Noah comes in ... he is an apprentice therapy dog. As his ears reflect, he can be a lively pup, yet he soon settles into the calm balm of meditation. In fact, this is where he exists, and often helps people to enter into this space. The presence of an animal is certainly something worth contemplating.

Lively discussion relevant to the practice of meditation continues to flow and the shared experience and encouragement of meditation revealed in this space.

It is a gift to continue and to remain loyal to the practice.

Warwick Meditation Group

Our small group continues to meet faithfully and regularly.

The Mantra remains our centred focus, saying it faithfully from the heart, but not mindlessly or mechanically. We aim to feel the Mantra in our heart rather than in our head.

We said a sad farewell to one of our older members recently; may you Rest In Peace John. It made us realise we are a close family sharing a sacred space in our common lives. We are stronger together.

We have welcomed a few new members into our Meditation group.

God bless you all in the work you do.

We'd love to hear news from your Community Meditation Group

Email editor:
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Obituary for Jillian Morrison

by Richard Cogswell

I think I can pinpoint the date when I first met Jillian Morrison. It was 22 November 1989.

There was an event where Canadian Paul Harris was speaking about Christian Meditation. I was helping with the event. It went well; Paul spoke to about 30 people. After it had finished, I had a lot of cash (how one paid in those days) and other bits and pieces to clean up and to account for. Seeing that I was floundering, Jillian stepped forward and took over, drew up an account of the income and directed the cleaning up.

From that event, Jillian and I worked as a team. Together through the nineties, we organised various meditation events at numerous venues around Sydney. We would plan the event by phone (the way one communicated back then). We would work out appropriate venues and then, very importantly, we would arrange to visit the venues together and speak to the caretakers. We would then select the venue and I would draw up a brochure. Jillian and I thought very similarly. We both had a practical bent. During each event, Jillian would organise the catering and the cash and look after 'the floor' while I was on stage introducing the speaker and taking questions.

One particular event I remember well. It was William Johnston SJ speaking at the school hall of our Lady of Mercy College at Parramatta. It happened to be Jillian's old school. The event was very popular and drew interest not only from the Christian Meditation community. At the end of the day, we had hundreds if not thousands in cash. I had organised the helpers on the day (we needed a lot) to attend a Chinese restaurant in Parramatta for dinner. But I was reluctant to walk very far at all with all the cash stowed in a bum bag around my waist. Jillian drove me around the streets of Parramatta looking



"She carried with her a numinous sense of what is beside us or beyond us in another life."

for a Commonwealth Bank cash machine, which we eventually found. I deposited the cash and then we joined the rest of the team for dinner.

The boot of Jillian's (relatively small) car became a mobile meditation resources cupboard. She and I would arrive an hour or two before the event started and unload catering supplies, food, coloured brochures (for the next event), books and signage.

Jillian and my wife Anne always shared and laughed over one event which was held at St James Church (our own church), organised by Jillian and me. Anne was there to help,

but we were very concerned about parking because the church was in the middle of the city. When Jillian and Anne arrived, they found all the parking meters had been officially covered and put out of use. They attributed this to divine intervention.

You knew where you stood with Jillian. She wasn't afraid to state her views, including about people. I remember we had hosted Gerry Pierson in 1999. He then left for Queensland where he tragically drowned. The first I knew of this was a phone call from Jillian who opened the conversation with 'Gerry's dead.' She also mischievously and irreverently referred to Laurence Freeman as 'God'.

There was a numinous quality about Jillian which extended beyond Christian Meditation. She had dealt with death and loss a lot, both personally and at her work. She carried with her a numinous sense of what is beside us or beyond us in another life.

Jillian and I organised a number of events in the crypt of St James Church. At one stage, she brought along her little grandson, Jack. He was a toddler or not much older. I met him at Jillian's funeral. 'Little' Jack is now in his late 20s and himself a father.

When I stepped down as coordinator for NSW, Jillian was the obvious choice for my successor. We stayed in touch through committee meetings and also over lunch once or twice a year.

Jillian's health deteriorated over the few years before she died. She spent a lot of time in hospitals and rehabilitation centres. The pandemic did not help in seeing her, but I got along once or twice.

Jillian served the Christian Meditation Community in NSW faithfully and energetically in its formative years throughout the 1990s and beyond. We owe an enormous amount to her. Well done, good and faithful servant.



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