

## Benedictine Monk speaks on *Making the Most of Crisis*



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“A society of stress and anxiety, dragging a ball and chain around through the day” was how Benedictine monk Father Laurence Freeman OSB described some people’s experience of today’s world in his lecture to over 200 people gathered at The University of Notre Dame Australia’s Fremantle Campus on Tuesday 16 February.

Entitled: *Making the Most of Crisis: How a Contemplative Mind Grows*”, the lecture was focused on the importance of contemplation and role of meditation when dealing with crisis.

Father Laurence is a Benedictine monk and priest of the Congregation of Monte Oliveto, and the Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). WCCM is a global network of Christian meditation groups that practice the way of Christian meditation taught by Father John Main OSB.

In his lecture Father Laurence emphasised understanding time and its ultimate use. He said that society has lost the dual nature of time - sacred time which focuses on practises such as praying and religious rituals and then using time for survival, for example working a job for money.

“Often people find that time can be the enemy as they don’t have enough time to do the things that they would like to do which can bring crisis upon ourselves,” he explained.

“Finding the time for meditation, laying aside worries and anxieties assists in how people can manage a crisis.”

Father Laurence promoted the use of meditation in everyday life. He explained that meditation required letting go of control which is often not easy to do.

“If we accept the crisis as it strikes we are able to move through it in a smoother manner. “We need to lay aside our worries and anxieties and live in the present moment. Don’t worry about tomorrow.”

He shared with the audience an experience that he had when he first visited Australia when he spoke about the 2000 year old tradition of Christian meditation.

“An Aboriginal man come up to me and said that his people have been doing this (meditation) for 40,000 years. The man had become a Christian and I asked him what does your Christians faith bring to you in meditation. He answered that his people had been listening all those years to something at the heart of creation.

“For me this meant the word of God sounding at the heart of creation!”

Campus Minister, Mr Tom Gannon, coordinator of the event, said that he was pleased that the lecture had attracted so many people to the Campus.

Mr Gannon reflected that a man in the audience shared his experience of meditation in different cultures and traditions.

“He said that he had seen first-hand the role of meditation played in the lives of Buddhist monks in Thailand, and the role of Sufi’s in Turkey and his own experience of meditation as he swam every morning,” Mr Gannon explained.

“Father Laurence acknowledged the transformative nature of meditation in all religions, and responded to a member of the audience’s suspicion of organised religion who suggested abolishing religions and focusing on meditation. Father Laurence's response was ‘that without religion we wouldn’t have great art, we wouldn’t have music or institutions that taught people how to live good lives’.

Mr Gannon said that Father Laurence had explained that Religions that aren’t shaped by silence and attention to the divine are prone to make terrible mistakes.

“The media points us toward these mistakes everyday as we can see with sex abuse scandals in the Christian Community and allegations of terrorism and genocide in others.

“Meditation isn’t the only way to connect with a religion or society, but when people enter into meditation often the experiences of the formal aspects of society and prayer are more profound and transformative.” (Used with Permission from Notra Dame Website.)