



# Christian Meditation

NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

www.wccm.org

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## Sources of Creation: Art and Meditation

*Artists talk about the creativity that springs from the profound silence of meditation*

*Leonardo Corrêa (leonardo.correa@gmail.com)*

The genuine artist leaves behind thinking, logical reasoning, and gives himself or herself, body and soul, in the work of creating, whether expressing life in pictures, sounds, words or other ways. The creative impulse is always spontaneous and natural.

What is the influence of meditation on artistic work and creativity in general? John Main sees meditation as an art. For him, for example, the painter is "lost" while painting, just as the meditator leaves self behind during our periods of daily meditation.

We asked a poet, a musician and two artists who meditate to think about these questions that arise from this insight: Can meditation stimulate artistic creativity? What are the similarities in the "work" of meditation and of artistic creation?

**HILMAR FREDRIKSEN AND ANNE ROLFSEN,  
HUSBAND AND WIFE ARTISTS IN NORWAY**

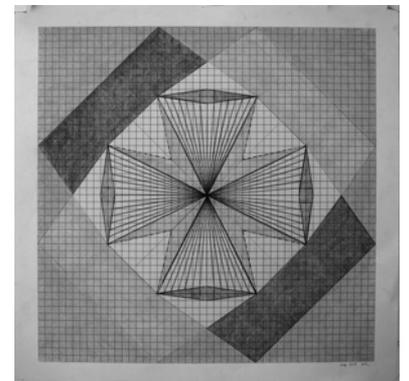


Hilmar: There are many similarities between the state of meditation and inspiration. When I work and when I meditate, I have to forget myself in order to come into a state of flow. Here, one is not looking for something - it comes to you. As soon as you concentrate on trying, you lose it.

Anne: I think meditation can stimulate creativity. It is easier to focus and concentrate and perhaps it

becomes clearer what one really wants to express. It is easier to make decisions and to see whether something is good or not. At least I think so. Many other similarities exist, for example, in the fact that you cannot fool yourself

either in the work of meditation nor in the work of art, when you are wholly in the work. One has to be absolutely true to oneself in both disciplines. To be THERE, in the present moment. And as Hilmar says, you cannot want it, because it comes to you - always as a gift.



**KERRY TAYLOR, MUSICIAN,  
MONTREAL, CANADA**



In the general sense that meditation is energizing, clarifying and joy-inducing, and the arts are important outlets for expressing and expanding these movements of the spirit. However, I personally am not interested in attempting to relate the "experience" of meditation with the content of music, i.e. describing meditation musically; I am however interested in the potential for music to be a vehicle for personal integration or even

for contemplation.

I think the relationship between meditation and the practice of music (I'll limit myself to the art form I know best) is much like the relationship of meditation to any other activity or pursuit: the discipline of meditation increases our capacity to do just one thing, to be available to what we are doing, to be present. In music, as with

anything else, the greatest joys, the subtlest delights, the clearest messages result from the greatest availability possible of the musician to the material or the circumstances at hand. I do not feel a specific link with meditation at the time of music making (my focus then is on making music!); but of course there is a periodic, post hoc recognition that these two disciplines are not separate but mutually reinforcing.

**ERALDO AMAY,  
POET, BRAZIL**

Frequently, after I leave a period of meditation, I notice poetry sprouting, germinating in my soul. It seems to me, sometimes, an extension of meditative practice. Here, I enter the silence full of life, gather inspiration from the fountain, resting in the lap of the Mother feeding me the Spirit. I am happy, and poetry so often comes as an extension of the state of meditation. These are moments when I feel that which is tangential. My soul smiles, words become enchanted and tumble from my heart. Some of the poems appear as a revealing of what cannot be put into words.

There is certainly a deep relationship between meditative "work" and poetic creation. In meditation we seek to overcome the

turbulence of the dualistic mind, overcoming all dualities in order to awaken the Self, the One without a second, our essence, which is the same in everything and everyone. In poetic creation, especially that related to the mystical path, looking for the word rooted in the heart, an experience is revealed that is beyond and below the word, the bliss of feeling part and at the same time, the All .

Below, an excerpt from the poem "Revelacao" (Revelation):

*no quarto, às quatro e meia estou sozinho*

*(in the room, at half past four I'm alone)*

*lá fora escuto o som que vem do templo*

*(out there I hear the sound coming from the temple)*

*hoje escolhi ficar a sós comigo*

*(Today I chose to be alone with myself)*

*na solidão do quarto me contento*

*(in the solitude of my room I am contented)*

**ONLINE:** You can see, listen and read works from Hilmar, Anne, Kerry and Eraldo at [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

## Friends of the Community

In these financially hard days the World Community is not alone, with many other charities, NGOs and countless individuals, in facing serious challenges. We are almost wholly a volunteer-based organisation and the depth of personal commitment in time, talent and resources from individual meditators and national communities around the world never ceases to inspire those who teach and travel to share the gift of meditation. The launch of our WCCM Outreach program – Meditation – found generous support from benefactors and national communities. Of course it is only part of the larger mission of the World Community. We go forward in this on all fronts in faith, conscious that this is the Spirit's work and if we are given the means we will be able to continue to



serve it. We are building channels for the leadership we need for the next generation and always trying to share the fruits of Christian meditation as widely as we can simply where there is need. To do this today and tomorrow we need financial help. If you believe in this work and in the community and if you have something to give, one-off or even better on a regular basis – large or small – please contact Susan at the International Office in London. Please remember the community too, when you come to write your will. You can also donate directly online from the webpage. Thank you. We are happy and encouraged to share this vision with you.

*Laurence Freeman OSB*



# A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

*Dearest friends,*

I was speaking to a young person recently who had just attempted suicide. A broken relationship had pushed this creative, energetic yet very sensitive soul to the edge of what felt emotionally endurable. Within moments I also learned of a tragic family trauma of loss early in this person's life, all the unfinished pain of which had surged up like a sleeping dragon, and made life seem a hopeless, ceaseless repetition of failure, loss and rejection.

Later, I felt drawn closer to this young person's lonely ordeal when I heard about the recent Nobel prize winners for physics who had discovered that the universe is expanding at an accelerating rate. Previously the orthodox cosmic theory saw a diminishing rate of expansion that would eventually lead to everything collapsing in on itself. All the reasons behind this new theory are, of course, uncertain. Science, like every quest for truth, never gives an answer without raising more questions. But the secret seems to lie in the dark matter that makes up about 70% of the cosmos and remains – apart from its obvious existence – a complete mystery to those investigating it.

Whether it is the terrible words 'we need a little space...we can remain friends.'; or tumbling into a new and vaster view of the universe; or the painful awakening to a financial view of the world that is revealed as illusion based on unsustainable greed and fear; the human journey is not an easy one. The young person with the broken heart, the scientist who has to revise his theories, the societies who have to struggle with economic decline are parallel examples, in different dimensions of knowledge, of how much we need to respect the mystery, the dark matter of life. The secret, the wisdom we need both to survive and flourish, lies here rather than in the over-confidence we put in periods of success or those moments when we seem to have a handle on everything and feel masters of the universe.

Growth is always transcendent. It requires that we accept loss in order to find the next phase of what we are seeking. The closer we come to it the more we have to revise our imagined goal. But it is at the edge of a cliff that we get the most dramatic views. St Gregory of Nyssa says this is what the experience of God is like. 'Imagine what a

person would feel', he says 'if they put their foot on the edge of this precipice and looking down into the chasm below saw no solid footing nor anything to hold on to. This is what the soul experiences when it goes beyond its footing in material things, in its quest for that which has no dimension and which exists from all eternity'.

Although these examples describe three distinct dimensions of our experience – emotional, rational and spiritual – they are related to each other. In each we find ourselves on the cliff-edge of what we once assumed was our stable world or world-view. Through each of them we tumble into crisis, confusion and fear. They are opportunities of growth, stages of transition. But to take advantage of the moment we have to draw on the dark energy present in each.

Using the language of our belief, let us not be reluctant to see that this energy is Christ. 'The secret is Christ in you: the hope of a glory to come (Col 1:27)'. But let us not forget either that this knowledge is the fruit of wisdom and experience – faith – not merely belief and surely not of scientific proof alone.

The word 'in' also means 'among'. What is in us is all around us. No truth can be discovered except through this paradox.

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During our recent 10-day retreat on Bere Island we had a lot of weather. Even during the morning sessions, made up of meditation, talks and personal sharing, we could go, within minutes, from golden sunshine to rain, from battleship-grey skies to brief dark storms. I warned those coming from warmer climes that the weather would be variable and therefore could be a good teacher, as indeed they found it. Predictability easily dulls our minds. The early Celtic monks, whose example and culture we drew on during these days, loved and accepted all forms of weather. In cold or heat, rain or shine, they felt and breathed the dark mystery of God.

Whenever we confront contradictions – whatever contradicts our emotional hopes or expectations, our way of seeing the world or the accidents of life – we are blessed. Often at first we don't see the grace that's there for us. But a passing angel, a friend, a counselor, a stranger who might cross the path of our life at this moment, never to be seen again, can alert us to it. Not all clouds have silver linings but we would not even recognise darkness without the light of consciousness.

Opposites create conflict and conflict frightens us

because it seems like a loss of peace. In fact conflict, properly and non-violently endured, is the way to deepen our knowledge of the 'peace that is beyond understanding'. Faced with the contradictions and setbacks of life, the spirit summons us to accept and integrate them, at a level deeper than the ordinary mind, not to deny or run away from them as we are so easily tempted to do.

To reject or deny paradox in our lives is tragic but also often contains a trace of the absurd. I tried, as gently as I dared, to suggest this to the young person who had tried suicide. Because, unless we can see the difference between paradox and failure, we condemn ourselves to repeat patterns of self-rejection and despair. To see our own absurdity in dealing wrongly with the problems of life can bring us to wisdom. We need to appeal to the wisdom that lives deeper than pain in our soul. As Simone Weil said, beneath our deepest lamentations there is the pearl of the silence of God. Wisdom summons us to endure and bestows strength from beyond the horizon of our expectations. But this is a struggle and we are unlikely to succeed at it if we are entirely alone.

The earliest accounts of the Celts highlight some of the characteristics that later became part of their stereotyping by other races. Plato mentions them as a people addicted to drink and Aristotle noted they were unafraid of the worst dangers. They were ferocious fighters but were unable to unite, as did the better-organized Romans, in larger clan alliances. Yet, because or in spite of these traits they developed a stream of spirituality of great power and enduring inspiration.

Celtic Christianity was never adequately respected by the Roman masters who eventually colonised it. It was personal, family-centred and democratic rather than legalistic. Their monasteries were like small villages, integrating different forms of vocation from hermits to families. Celtic Christianity had its shadowy sides but it imported many of the treasures of the pre-Christian experience of the ancient Celts' spirituality into harmony with the new faith. Above all, as we see in their poetry, they kept a passionate love of nature in all its forms.



**"A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE LIKE  
MEDITATION TAKES US DEEPER  
THAN THE OBSERVING EGO."**

They understood faith itself as a pilgrimage rather than as a peak to be conquered and then held against the infidels. In the radiant images of Celtic Christian literature we see an exuberant creative imagination playing around the epiphanies of the dark mystery of experiences of God which we undergo through the beauties of the natural world as well as in the depths of the individual soul. As we enjoy these poetic connections between spirit and mind we can learn how different is imagination of this order from our usual fantasy or day-dreaming. We understand what John Main means when he says that 'imagination is the great enemy of prayer' or why the earlier masters of prayer told us to 'lay aside thoughts' because 'every image of God is a god'. Unless we enter the dark energy we cannot see the full light of reality. It is not words that break silence but absent-mindedness. It is not movement that destroys stillness but aimlessness.

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The Celtic monks loved the spiritual struggle for all these reasons and so they were able passionately to embrace the spiritual practices that led them into closer union

with Christ. They loved the asceticism (the word means training and gives us our 'athlete') of their profession. Not because it caused them discomfort or cost

them painful detachment from what they loved, but because it opened up the mystery that was both within and around them.

In their freer forms of life they integrated the paradoxes of community and solitude more explicitly than did St Benedict in his Rule. We became conscious of this during the Bere Island retreat as we came together, at strong moments during the day, for prayer and sharing before unwinding again, dispersing to our different dwellings or 'cells'. This elastic rhythm of gathering and dispersal is characteristic of a 'skete', a form of solitude-in-community. The modern mind, over-dependent on its individuality and seeking to escape it, often finds this an attractive and alternative life-style.

The word 'skete' derives from a Coptic term that means to 'weigh the heart'. In a crisis the heart, the calibrating centre of each person, seems overloaded and unable to bear the heaviness laid on it. To weigh the heart means to get our problems in perspective and to assess how much more we can take and how we can deal with it. Although it is also a solitary work that no one can do on our behalf, very rarely can we do this entirely on our own. Celtic monks emphasized the dual importance of community and spiritual friendship in carrying this burden of solitude. For most people today this is achieved not by monastic life or even going on the temporary state of monkhood that a retreat offers, but rather by living their ordinary lives in a disciplined, spiritually-balanced way. One element of this balance for anyone embracing a spiritual discipline is the experience of community found, for example, in belonging to a weekly meditation group or, where that is not possible, in feeling connected to others by digital means of

communication.

A spiritual practice like meditation takes us deeper than the observing ego scanning our body or mental states. In deep meditation a power of integration is unleashed that leads to permanent beneficial change in character and behaviour patterns. Nothing may happen in the meditation period but our life is changed. Because of the speed and high desire-levels at which we live today we are full of loose ends. Like a badly finished construction job where wires are left hanging out of the wall or gaps appear between the wall and the ceiling, our minds and feeling are scattered with unresolved experiences. As with the young person I mentioned above who has to relive a childhood trauma whenever emotional loss is experienced, we often don't know what our loose ends are until a new trauma strikes. Healing is the tying up and soothing of these wounds. It is a work of grace on our natural selves but it is not miraculous: 'your faith has healed you', Jesus often told those whom he healed. Healing is grace working on and through the natural. Simply to be open to a deeper or higher power and to become fully human we do not have to appeal to 'supernatural powers'. Jesus discouraged the seeking of wondrous signs. But mystery there is. The powers of wholeness that effect healing lie in the dark, divine energy of our heart that needs to be released and given free play.

In prehistoric forms of Celtic art the spiral or dancing curves are already visible. In the more sophisticated and elegant Christian art of the tradition, especially in the renowned illuminated Gospels, these spirals form intricate patterns emerging from the major capital letters of the text and weaving their way around the page. They portray the web of life, beautiful in its ebb and flow, in a continuous movement with a wild, lunging energy but always held in dynamic balance. There are no loose ends.

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We cannot sustain the practice of meditation if we see it only as a linear journey or if we hope to arrive, on some future occasion or through some new experience, at an imaginable destination. Learning this will entail giving up the practice at times. Yet, each time we give up meditation and then return to it - some days or years later - we learn better its true meaning. Infidelity teaches the meaning of faith, just as sin reveals the nature of grace.

Nevertheless no one's motives are completely straight at the outset. You may begin to meditate merely for the physical or psychological benefits. These do come with regular practice. But then a further horizon begins to appear as the eye of the heart becomes clearer and the spiritual dimension more conscious. Then, beyond these obvious benefits, the meditator senses, maybe dimly at first, the meaning of the spiritual fruits. Foremost among these is the gift of love. As we see our capacity for love being enhanced - and our very understanding of love's meaning being redefined - we expand into the unknown.

I recently spent a week on a meditation retreat with an

ecumenical group of clergy. It was evidently a relief for many of them to drop the expectations that are so often projected onto them when they are expected to be the source and defender of religious beliefs, spiritual answers and moral rules. Several spoke about the difficulty they face in meeting these demands. The projections often proceed from an image of God that the priest himself or herself can no longer believe in. They have already moved beyond the God made in our own image and designed to support our view of the world into a God of the dark energy, the unknowing. We had several discussions about how challenging and frightening it can be for contemplatively oriented priests or ministers to introduce this 'unknowing' dimension of faith and prayer to their congregations. As one woman priest remarked, 'being here I am learning it is Ok to be in this unknowing, I don't have to pretend to have all the answers'.

What emerged from this was an awareness that failure, of any kind, can be borne. Christianity, after all, does failure quite well. Jesus hardly ended his mission with a resounding success. The Resurrection is not about turning tables on your enemies but about overcoming the mindset that puts people into enemy boxes in the first place. Nor does the teaching give guidelines such as 'ten bullet-points to spiritual mastery'. It rather shows ways of finding the meaning of simplicity and humility, the point from which where the journey is begun continuously.

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A profound theme of Celtic spirituality juxtaposes the love of place with voluntary exile. This is the 'white martyrdom' that led them to take the idea of pilgrimage literally and align their outward life on their inner life in explicit ways. A dramatic form of this was to push off from land with a few companions in a small boat and let the tides and the spirit direct their course. Reckless as this might seem it led some of them, probably, to discover America and others certainly to plant monasteries from Iceland to Italy. On reflection, our own pilgrimage of meditation is not so different. We voluntarily renounce the places where our mind feels most attached. Thoughts, words and mental patterns are allowed to recede as our attention focuses in faith on the mantra, the little coracle in which we take refuge but are also swept from mind to heart.

Jesus, too, like the Buddha, was an itinerant and lived detached from place, family and position. Even Mohammed wrote that his 'connection with the world is like a traveler resting for a while under the shade of a tree and then moving on.' Yet, the most radical Celtic monks were kept balanced by the moderating wisdom of the tradition. It reminded them that even the most dramatic outer pilgrimage is useless unless it is teaching us self-discovery. "To go to Rome is much of trouble, little of profit (one of their poems tells us); the King you seek there - unless you bring him with you - you will not find."

St Benedict, who does not emphasise pilgrimage or exile, nevertheless has the monk commit both to ongoing

"NOTHING MAY HAPPEN  
IN THE MEDITATION PERIOD BUT  
OUR LIFE IS CHANGED."



conversion, continuous change and detachment, and to stability. This paradox of change rooted in stability bears fruit in wisdom. Irish monks, always great pilgrims, also have many moving poems describing their love for their cell. If we do not have somewhere in the world we love, even if we are often far from it physically, it is hard to endure constant uprooting and change.

The modern world has mastered the means of cheap and quick travel. Business and professional travelers and tourism keeps half the world always flying or driving. It often seems to me that more productivity and better communication is achieved by staying at home, it takes strong faith to put this to the test. What the Irish monks can teach us, however, is at least how to travel better and how to turn the long, often sterile hours between departure and arrival into prayer. For example, next time you fly go straight from security to the airport prayer-space or to a quiet gate where no one is waiting and make that, at least for a while, the outer manifestation of your cell.

The cell is not only a place to which one is attached, as one is naturally to one's home. It is more than a location. It is also your spiritual practice to which you remain faithful. I was discussing meditation with someone recently who is a true and sincere seeker but a very restless soul. This person, whom I have known for a long time and assumed had a regular practice, turned out not to have one. Like many people fuddled by today's wide range of spiritual choice, commitment to any one practice, let alone to a single tradition, seemed to represent a loss of freedom.

People still ask anxiously before they commit, how long will meditation take to show results. The answer is how long does it take to arrive where you are, to let go of the future and past, to commit to what and who one is now? Perhaps, like the new Mexican law giving marriage licenses initially for a two year period, a spiritual practice should also come with a minimum commitment. But as soon as the idea of commitment emerges resistance and fear are aroused. The immense interest in meditation appearing in western societies is at one level an encouraging sign. But when it remains disembodied, outside a steady regular practice and from a support group it easily becomes another short-term affair. Hence the importance of seeing your

practice as a cell that you take with you wherever the spirit may lead you.

It then becomes, physically and psychologically, a perennial place of refreshment. Each time we enter it, each time we meditate, we refresh and update ourselves, tying up some more loose ends and bringing mind and heart into better harmony. Like the reload feature on your web page proper practice saves you from getting stuck in old scenes of life and helps you instead to feel and act uploaded, empowered with the freshness of the spirit of life.

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The cell can also be understood as community. We 'sit in our cell, which teaches everything', when we remain stable and faithfully connected to that network of relationships, working at all levels, that we call community. Today, in our hyper-individualistic culture, many people seek community, on their terms, as an escape from a corroding sense of isolation. Even marriage or partnership alone cannot heal this modern experience of alienation. These intimate relationships themselves need a wider social context of meaning and different kinds of friendship in order to flourish. Why else do we celebrate marriages and anniversaries in a public way? We need roots in community to hold the ground of our lives together.

Community however is challenging. As we grow and feel supported by it, we are also tested by it. People, situations, plans, collaboration, often don't work out as we would like and then it is easy to blame, condemn, or indulge in self-rejection and so relapse into isolation. Community is a cell we need to persevere in just as we need to learn to be faithful to the mantra. Indeed, as we learn to meditate in community we find that these inner and outer aspects of our selves are increasingly synchronized.

In Christian terms this is the beginning of the awareness that my relationship with Christ is not merely a lucky find in a spiritual dating agency. We move from the ego's perception of itself as the one who chooses to the self's awareness that we are chosen, indeed that we exist because we are chosen. We expand in freedom by accepting that. Meditation is a cell of solitude. This is why it creates community. The community, however, is more than the visible group we meditate with. It is the mystical body of the teacher, the one who shows us the way to the ultimate goal, beyond the last visible horizon.

We have briefly reflected here on the nature of a spiritual practice, as we might understand our need for it today. I hope you can find not only from these thoughts but above all within the friendship of our community and its shared vision and purpose something of what you need to deepen and expand the journey that gives such rich meaning to life.

*With much love,*

*Laurence Freeman OSB*

## NEWS FROM THE WORLD COMMUNITY

The following is a small representation of the life of the Community. For weekly news and more information visit the Community web page: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

### ALIVE IN CHRIST:

#### 2011 JOHN MAIN SEMINAR IN IRELAND



*Fergal McLoughlin*  
[fergalgmcloughlin@gmail.com](mailto:fergalgmcloughlin@gmail.com)

In 1997 the John Main Seminar was held in Ireland when the speaker was a young lady named Mary McAleese, shortly before she became President of Ireland. This year the Seminar made a welcome return to the Emerald Isle. The speaker was Fr. Timothy Radcliffe who came with a reputation for depth and

experience. The location was University College Cork and the initial estimate of 150 attendees was far exceeded when we had to cap it at 330, with 21 countries represented.

The week began with a Silent Retreat “The Fruits of Crisis” led by Fr. Laurence in the serenity of the old Aula Maxima building. Laurence spoke of the many crises which surround us today - social, personal and spiritual – and how meditation can help us to cope in today’s world.

On Thursday, the 150 who attended the Retreat were joined by another 180 in the spacious De Vere Hall for Timothy Radcliffe and the start of the Seminar. His theme was that of being a Christian in today’s world and of crisis. A spirit of joy and hope were at the core of his talks – “the joy of celebration”. God is in the love we have for other people. He addressed the crisis of leadership in the church and the need for each of us to share in the co-responsibility of leadership. He spoke of prayer and sanctity, and about becoming the human being that God created us to be. He spoke of our need to be in touch with young people and the importance of addressing them at their level. And, in all this, the importance of silence in the spiritual life of today.

Serious content was interspersed with Timothy’s personal anecdotes and wonderful sense of humour – a friend remarked to me afterwards “isn’t it wonderful to laugh!” In the mornings we were greeted with the quiet sound of young Fiachra O’Corragain who played his harp as we entered the hall and entered into silence. We listened to the poet Liam O’Muirthuille who spoke of the early Irish monastic tradition and who read poems from that tradition. And there was much more besides – Networking Groups on Meditation for Children, Addiction, and Mental Health, as well as “Silence in the City”, an afternoon session for young people led by Fr Laurence. There was also a tour of Cork city, and a post-seminar pilgrimage to Skellig Michael off the Kerry coast and the even holier Bere Island.

On Sunday morning we had a special Eucharist



celebrated by Fr. Timothy, Fr. Laurence, Bro. Richard from UCC and Fr. Patrick Hederman, Abbot of Glenstal Abbey, who, in an excellent homily, spoke of prayer as being “a sound of sheer silence

which we hear and to which we accustom our hearts”. Four meditators made their final oblations during the Eucharist and gave moving accounts of their personal journeys. We ended as we began in a rich silence. So, we came to the end of a week which will long remain in the memories of all who were there. Sylvia Thompson wished the Brazilian community well in hosting the John Main Seminar in Sao Paulo in 2012. The conclusion was a blessing from our young trio of musicians, Mactire who left us with these words of St. Patrick’s Breastplate:

*Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ in me,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me.  
I arise today.*

**ONLINE:** See more John Main Seminar 2011 pictures and videos at [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

### WCCM’S ANNUAL MEETING 2011

*Clement Sauvé, Chair of the WCCM Guiding Board*  
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The Community’s Annual Meeting is held during the John Main Seminar as indicated by our Constitution. The first item this year in Cork was the Director’s Report that covered the significant events of the past year. Fr Laurence gave talks, led retreats and workshops, participated in conferences and chaired meetings in 22 different countries. He told us that from 2012 he would be limiting his travelling- teaching to six months of the year.

Three areas of the community’s life he especially highlighted were:

- The Meditatio Programme’s first two seminars, coordinated in London by Briji Waterfield, on Meditation and Children and Meditation and Mental Health proved successful and influential. He also underlined the important role of the new Meditatio House in Central London which is home to young resident oblates and interns. Francisco Wulff, a Canadian- Venezuelan, will be joining the team this month with special responsibility for strategic planning and fund-raising.

- The significantly enhanced website of the community now active through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., has become a major catalyst in our growth thanks to Adriano

Massi, our new IT coordinator based in Rome.

• The Georgetown University Meditation Centre is maturing well and may soon spawn similar centres in other educational institutions.

Pauline Peters, the National Coordinators Liaison, spoke of her work which includes keeping Fr Laurence's schedule. Four of the seven proposed regional meetings have been held so far: Asia/Pacific in Malaysia, Northern Europe in London, Latin America in Caracas and Western Europe in Geneva. Major areas of interest at these meetings included meditation with children, meditation with the poor and marginalized, the website, translations and the twinning projects between countries.

Susan Spence and I presented a summary of the WCCM Trustees Report and Accounts for the Year ending 31st December, 2010. The Trust reported total income of £619,512 and expenses of £453,315. I explained that the resulting surplus was a paper one due to cashflow considerations. The WCCM Accounts are filed each year with the UK Charity Commission and can be accessed at any time on the Commission's website. Unanimous approval was given by the members to the amendments to the WCCM Constitution previously publicised.

Trish Panton of Australia spoke about the WCCM Benedictine Oblate Community and Kathryn Houston, also from Australia, explained the importance of the Friends' Programme. Several participants agreed to become Friends and a freewill donation basket yielded more than a thousand Euros to support the work of the community.

Roldano Giuntoli of Sao Paulo, Brazil, concluded with an enticing foretaste of the 2012 John Main Seminar 2012 to be held there with Leonardo Boff, theologian, philosopher and ecologist, as the main presenter and Fr Betto.

## SILENT RETREAT IN SWITZERLAND, SEPTEMBER 16-18, 2011

*Deborah Walton : Swiss coordinator.  
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It was our first try at a weekend silent retreat in French-speaking Switzerland. We were a little anxious. Although we had organised inter-faith dialogues and other day events a silent

retreat was a first for us. Numerically, the event was a success—sadly we had to turn people away. Catherine Charrière and I waited at the retreat centre in Montbarry, near the ancient castle of Gruyère in its quintessentially bucolic Swiss setting.

Thanks to Catherine's attention to detail, all went well. Five meditations with readings and music, two yoga sessions led by John Moederle and lectio divina offered by André formed the basis of the Saturday with free time for walks,

reading, art work, Haiku writing and in the evening, sharing in song, poetry and personal feelings generated by the day's events. We had hoped that the beautiful weather would continue on Sunday for the planned meditative walk to Mass at the nearby Carmel. A violent downpour however forced us into cars for the 10-minute drive. Thanks to their warm welcome - and the crystal-clear voices of the sisters, the Mass was a high point of the retreat.

## THE "SCHOOL RETREAT", ITALY



*Giovanni Felicioni  
giovanni@rolfing-yoga.com*

The welcome letter said: "it is an opportunity to enter deeply into your own spiritual journey and to see why the Spirit called you into the community and how this is part of that journey. Fr John often quoted St Ireneus: 'if we cannot understand the silence of Christ we cannot understand his words either.' I hope you can come into this friendly and joyful silence of the retreat . . ."

I had been looking forward to this moment of the year when I would "go on retreat." It felt urgent and timely since my commitment to the meditation practice and to the community, I feel so lucky to have been found by, was all coming apart. I needed help to come into "contemplative recovery". Now, a few days after the retreat, back home and on the verge of many post-summer work demands, I have been reflecting on the words from the Letter of John "it was there from the beginning; we heard it; we have seen it with our own eyes; we have looked upon it, and felt it with our own hands; and it is of this we tell. Our theme is the word of life."

I can say now – as witness – undergoing the retreat was the sanest thing I have done in a long time. It did not solve my problems nor answer my questions. It was not altogether comfortable. It gave me back to myself.

At the beginning of the retreat Fr Laurence asked us "what is the point of coming all this way to make a retreat - when we could practice at home or with our meditation group?" Good question. One answer he hinted at might seem obvious but it resonated with me -- "we come on retreat because we find encouragement from the community we make while practicing together for a few days."

And this I did find -- this context of mutual support

that is community -- wise and compassionate friends all of the same mind -- the mind of Christ -- journeying together in love. This journeying in solitude together is the meaning.

*ONLINE: Read another text about the Fara Sabina Retreat, by Joseph Clarkson in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)*

## TEN DAY SILENT RETREAT IN BERE ISLAND



A group of 25 meditators from the World Community participated in the first Ten Day Silent Retreat on Bere Island 14-24 September. The theme of the retreat was "The Cell of the Heart." You can watch all the talks in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

## JOHN MAIN'S LAST SIBLING, IAN MAIN DIES AT 89

*Paul Harris*  
*paulturnerharris@aol.com*

Ian Main, the last survivor of the six children in John Main's family, died at his home in Southern France on May 23 aged 89. Born in 1922 four years before John Main, but also in London, he is survived by his wife Judith and six children. John Main died in Montreal 1982 aged 56.

*ONLINE: Read more about Ian Main in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)*

## NEW COMMUNITY HOUSES: GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY JOHN MAIN CENTRE

*Tim Casey*  
*tocasey@gmail.com*

The John Main Center for Meditation and Inter-religious Dialogue's Meditation House is a living-learning community of two townhouses (one male, one female) a block from the campus main gates. It is a place for undergraduate students of all faiths and traditions at Georgetown University committed to live together out of the Christian value of contemplatives-in-action.

The students meditate twice or more daily and lead many of the meditations and yoga sessions at the Center. In the spirit of 'ora et labora' they are particularly focused on several sustainability projects on campus with the administration -

setting up a communal university compost for wasted food scraps and working to weatherize all university townhouses for energy efficiency.

The Georgetown Meditatio House began with a small group of meditators who frequented the John Main Center and felt drawn to living a more integrated way of life between their studies and their meditation.

What students think:

*Alexa Ryan West*

I am a junior in the School of Foreign Service, studying Culture and Politics and receiving a certificate in the Program for Jewish Civilization. Originally from New York, I enjoy meditation to enhance my overall concentration and to relax. Meditation helps me to manage my work and my time in the stressful college process, and it's also been a great way to make friends! I also am responsible for scheduling the weekly Sunday Brunches for the Magis Row Meditation Community, and love thinking of fun, meditation-related activities in which the meditation community can take part.

*Madeline Collins*

I am a junior from Connecticut studying English, with a concentration in Creative Writing, and Philosophy. I meditate because I believe in the value of clearing and disciplining one's mind. Meditation has enhanced my perception of both myself and the world around me. The practice of actively clearing my mind has made me more aware of the thoughts that occupy my mind during the other hours of the day. This has helped me to be a more thoughtful writer and has improved my study of philosophy. In addition, I am passionate about environmental justice, and I have worked on the Meditatio House's community composting project and our initiative to weatherize Georgetown University townhouses.

*Juman Khweis*

Originally from Palestine, I grew up in Taos, New Mexico. I am an International Politics major. I chose to be a part of Meditatio House because I wanted to surround myself with people who also see the value in meditation. Meditation is not easy, so it is helpful to be a part of a larger network of people who encourage you to stick with the practice. Meditation has helped me become a better person, and it has been rewarding to see how much better I feel as result of integrating it into my life

## NEW FEATURES IN [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

The wccm website has begun several new features including a Facebook page and a new series of blogs written by meditators from around the community. The School of Meditation page has also been revised and is now redesigned, updated and is an easier major resource for meditators, group leaders and all those teaching meditation.

## MEDITATIO NEWS

### THE BUSINESS OF SPIRIT: A CONVERSATION ON LEADERSHIP



A Meditatio Forum on Enlightened Leadership: on October 12th, Peter Ng and Sean Hagan, members of the WCCM Guiding Board, spoke at Georgetown University Business School on the importance of meditation in their personal and professional lives. Peter Ng, Chief Investment Officer at the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation, spoke on the attributes of leadership and how meditation bears fruit in self-transcending leadership. Sean Hagan, General Counsel of the International Monetary Fund, spoke about how the practice of meditation has made him a better decision maker and manager.

**ONLINE:** Watch videos of the talks in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

### FUTURE EVENTS:

**November 13, 2011:**

*Christian meditation as an 11th step practice*

**Keeping it Simple.** A day retreat in London facilitated by May Nicol. At the Kairos Retreat Centre, London. Contact: maymbnicol@aol.com or call 07768 310666

**January 07-08, 2012:**

**A Meditatio Seminar – Common Ground - The Contemplative Dimension of Faith**

Led by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB and contributors from other faith traditions Sat 7 and Sun 8 January 2012 – Non-residential - To be held in Singapore –

**Enquiries E:** [commonground2012@gmail.com](mailto:commonground2012@gmail.com)

The seminar will focus on the contemplative practice of religion and how the shared experience of silence in meditation can enhance inter-religious dialogue.

Sitting in the silence of the mystery, that all religions recognise as the essential nature of God or ultimate reality, is a good preparation for effective dialogue.

This silence, gentle, non-judgemental, non-coercive, non-persuasive, does not compromise or merge our important differences which deserve respect. But it has the power to unite, fostering a new level of tolerance and understanding

and a clearer recognition of each other as brothers and sisters of the great originating mystery. This makes an immense difference to the quality, depth and effectiveness of dialogue.

**April, 01-08, 2012:**

**Bere Island Holy Week Retreat**

**May, 04-06, 2012:**

**Christian Meditation as an 11th Step Practice**

A weekend retreat to be held in London. Enquiries May Nicol 07768 310666 or Email [meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org)

**May, 2012:**

**Meditatio Seminar on Meditation and Mental Health called "The Spiritual Ground of Wellbeing - Meditation as an Art of Healing"**, to be held in York, UK.

**More information in [meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org)**

### THE MEDITATIO JOURNAL

New publication due out in Autumn 2011.

This is an exciting new venture for Meditatio. The theme of this first Journal is Meditation and Education which is based on the inspirational seminars held in London, Ireland and the UK in December 2010. The Journal will have the talks from the seminar, related articles by leading figures in the field of children's spirituality and how the gift of meditation is being shared with children around the world. This issue will be relevant to parents, grandparents, teachers, catechists and all involved in nurturing the spiritual dimension in the young.

**To pre-book your copy and get details of cost and shipping please email: [meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org)**



### CHILDREN: DVDS IN NEW FORMAT



The two Meditation with Children's DVDs ("Christian Meditation With Children - an introduction" and "CM, A Spiritual Practice for our Modern Times") now are available in NTSC format, which is suitable for USA, Canada and other.

**And is available from [www.contemplative-life.org](http://www.contemplative-life.org)**

## IN FOCUS

*Adriano Massi*  
*adrianomassi@gmail.com*

I was a 38 year old Italian Catholic-educated Christian, with a scientific background, who had early on dismissed everything that the Church could have provided me. I had tried almost every spiritual path that I could connect with through its teaching in books or on the web. I looked for God through the Buddhist practice of Bon. I tried Vipassana meditation, the Chinese Falun Dafa, the Toltec way of the warrior (inspired by Castaneda books), lucid dreaming, autogenic training, astral projection, chakra work, pranic healing, the Ridwhan school, yoga of dreams, creative visualization and many more...

Some of these methods exerted a more or less intense effect on my being. Yet I invariably reverted back to the same old "me" that I was before. I was the same, with the same fears, compulsions, weaknesses. And in my heart I had the same old longing for a home about which I had no memory besides fleeting, infrequent glimpses.

So I found my self in a kind of quiet desperation. Sometimes I wondered if I should leave everything and go to India looking for a guru. I could not convince myself this was the right thing to do. Gradually I even lost the usual excitement I felt every time I went into a bookstore and browsed the fresh piles of New Age books among which I used to think I could find the "right one" that would help me reach the enlightenment! In this spiritual void I just waited, in hope, for something good to happen that would at least give me a clue about a road to follow.

I was reading "The Way of a Pilgrim", the book about the Russian pilgrim who found God through the prayer

of the heart. So I looked for it on Google and found "Christian Meditation" I was puzzled - do Christians really meditate? This sounded quite interesting and after having investigated further I decided to join a silent week end retreat in Tuscany at the Abbey of Camaldoli.

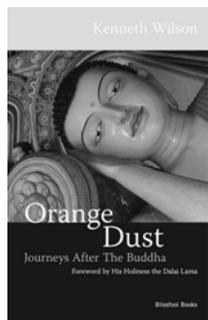
What I found there literally changed my whole life. Christian Meditation allowed me to make peace with Jesus, who for a long time had been imprisoned in a jail deep inside my heart. It gave me a practice that I found wonderfully effective if I followed it consistently. Meditation cleared the space for my real Self to come back bit-by-bit, day by day, session by session.

I don't want to suggest by this that other spiritual paths are of no worth. But - for a person like me, messed up by an 'orthodox' Christian education and therefore holding secret grievances against Jesus and the God of Christians - the Community, its friendship and its spiritual teaching gave me a key. It opened - is opening - the door between the unforgiven past and the present. It sheds new light on a future that the practice of meditation makes every day new and full of hope.

If this were not enough, the benefits of finding an enriching spiritual path was further extended into my working life. In the Community where I found precious friends I also found the best job of my life in managing the WCCM IT sector.



## REVIEWS - FILMS, BOOKS, ART



## ORANGE DUST: JOURNEYS AFTER THE BUDDHA

*Clem Sawé*  
*clementsauve@gmail.com*

It's quite difficult to categorise this book. But it's about Kenneth Wilson (a non-Buddhist) looking for traces of the Buddha, in the four principal places where the Buddha lived: Lumbini where

he was born, Bodhgaya where he achieved enlightenment, Sarnath where he set the dharma wheel in motion and Kushinagar where he died. Central to the story is the 1998 WCCM Way of Peace pilgrimage to India. That pilgrimage memorably brought together in Bodhgaya a hundred Christian meditators with an equal number of Buddhists. We spent several days together in a dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Fr. Laurence Freeman as well as daily periods of prayer and meditation. In welcoming the WCCM pilgrims there, the Dalai Lama said that to the best of his knowledge it was the first time that a group of Christians came to Bodhgaya not as tourists or missionaries

but as pilgrims to join with their Buddhist brothers and sisters in prayer and meditation under the sacred Bodhi Tree. He referred to the event as "truly historic".

Kenneth Wilson, at different times town planner, property developer and Anglican vicar, is the founder of Soul of India Tours and has been guide for many groups to the sub-continent, including three WCCM pilgrimages to India.

As the Dalai Lama writes in the Foreword; "I am sure Christians, Buddhists, and indeed anyone who seeks to cultivate a good heart, will enjoy reading this inspirational, uplifting book". (The book may be ordered from our online bookstore: [www.contemplative-life.org](http://www.contemplative-life.org)).

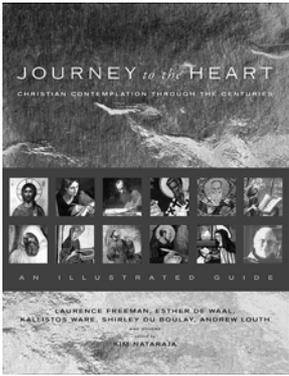
A fourth WCCM Pilgrimage to India is now being planned for late 2012 or early 2013.

*Clem Sawé has helped organize and co-managed the WCCM pilgrimages to India and may be contacted about this one: [clementsauve@gmail.com](mailto:clementsauve@gmail.com)*

**ONLINE:** Read the review by Carla Cooper about the novel "STATE OF WONDER" in [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)



# MEDIO MEDIA - NEW TITLES



**JOURNEY TO THE HEART**  
*Christian Contemplation throughout the Centuries - an illustrated guide.*

*Edited by Kim Nataraja*

Published by Canterbury Press in the UK, Orbis in the US and Novalis in Canada November 2011.

At a time when there is often a bewildered superficiality in the spiritual marketplace, this book will be a help and long-term friend for many seekers of all traditions as well as those without a named path. In an alluring and refreshing way it guides us through the rich stream of Christian Mysticism from its inception to today. By using key spiritual teachers as stepping stones along the way we are able to form a person-centred overview of the great tradition that has helped shape us all. From Laurence Freeman's opening chapters on Jesus and the New Testament we move directly into the stream for which this is the spring. It leads us to discover the great Patristic teachers, then on through the Desert Fathers, Meister Eckhart, the English Mystics, the Spanish Mystics and up to modern times, with emphasis on key figures such as Thomas Merton, John Main and Bede Griffiths. The reader will be given enough both to form a fresh overview of

the tradition and to be inspired to dip in deeper as the Spirit leads in future seekings.

ISBN 9781848251083 Paperback book 352 pages  
Retail price £25.00 US\$29.95

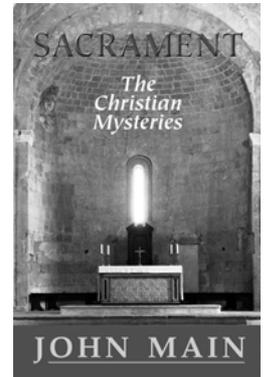
## SACRAMENT

*The Christian Mysteries*  
*John Main OSB*

This new edition of a John Main classic is very timely. For John Main the sacraments in the modern age can only be rediscovered through deep prayer.

Deeply rooted in his theological tradition, he also sees the sacraments freshly as healing, enlightening mysteries of the mystical dimension. In this simple book he offers a new way of describing these ancient truths. John Main often stressed that meditation helps the Christian to better appreciate the truths of the faith. His reflections on the sacraments show how that appreciation first springs not so much from the head as from the heart. It is depth of spiritual experience that awakens the sense of the sacred in one's own body as well as in the physical universe.

Catalogue # 6257 ISBN 978-981-08-8342-3  
Softcover book 74 pages Retail price £6.50 US\$9.95



**TO ORDER: Please contact your resource center or supplier for the price in your local currency**



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## Words by John Main....

*The essential thing about creative energy is that it be turned out beyond itself.*

*The watchmaker is lost in his watch, the painter is lost in his art"*

*(The Heart of Creation)*

**PLEASE MAKE A CONTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO YOUR MEANS TO THE COST OF THIS NEWSLETTER AND IF YOU CAN TO THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY WORLDWIDE.**

**Go to "Donate" at [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)**



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