



Stillpoint

Stillpoint is the official magazine of the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation
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Websites to visit:

www.christianmeditationnz.org.nz
www.wccm.org/content
www.wccmmeditatio.org
www.christianmeditationaustralia.org
www.christianmeditation.org.uk

The John Main Seminar and pre-retreat in Houston 2017

by Nick Polaschek



Fr. Peter Murphy, Margaret Fairweather, Susana Perez Ortega (Venezuela), Linda and Nick Polaschek

Four members from our NZCCM community attended the John Main Seminar and pre-retreat in Houston Texas in early August. It was the height of summer with temperatures well in the 30s, very different from our New Zealand winter. Both events were held at the Catholic University of St Thomas, which has a beautiful chapel on the campus.

About 150 people attended the retreat (numbers were limited as it was live-in), and around 200 for the seminar. Most came from the USA, many from round Houston, but some from other WCCM Communities around the world. We met Susana from Venezuela whom our community

sponsored to come to the meeting. Her country is a very challenging place to live currently and she was most appreciative of our help. Attending the Seminar, networking and meditating together, strengthened the sense of belonging to a world-wide community based on a shared meditative practice.

The three day silent retreat preceding the seminar was led by Laurence Freeman, director of the WCCM. Each day in silence divided up with five sessions of meditation, three offices, a meditative walk, a contemplative Eucharist and two one hour talks. The theme of the retreat

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was “The inner room “, from Matthew Chapter 6, the quiet place we enter in meditation, through which we are gradually transformed. Very renewing of one's meditative practice.

The Seminar talks were given by Bernard McGinn, an elderly but lively speaker who is a leading scholar on western Christian mysticism. He talked about the relationship between meditation, prayer and contemplation. He viewed *lectio divina*, *meditatio* and *oratio* as our regular practices by which we cultivate purity of heart, disposing ourselves to receive the divine gift of *contemplatio*. He then talked about prayer and contemplation in the writings of various mystics of the western Christian tradition, including Cassian – often cited by John Main as the original exemplar of the meditative practice he re-established – and others such as Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila.



Bernard McGinn and Fr. Laurence Freeman

Bernard finally discussed various mystical readings of the Lord's prayer.

A highlight for many of us was a session with Laurence in the world-famous Rothko Chapel located next to the campus. A single large octagonal room, containing only wooden benches to sit on, surrounded by 14 huge rectangular almost monochromatic paintings in purple and

black, arranged as three groups of three separated by single works, lit by natural light from the ceiling. One doesn't see any images, one simply experiences being in the space, responding to the surrounding sombre but luminous colour. The experience is like meditation, a sense of emptiness in which is paradoxically discovered a fulness.

All the talks are available on the wccm website. ✕

WCCM in Venezuela

by Nick Polaschek

In May, NZCCM was asked to help sponsor one of the two Venezuelan National Coordinators, Susana Perez Ortega, to attend the August Retreat and John Main Seminar in Houston. Australia and USA WCCM Communities also contributed. It was a joy for the four of us from New Zealand to meet Susana. She was extremely grateful to be able to attend these events and sends her love and gratitude to everyone in NZCCM.

Sadly, Venezuela is going through a very difficult time at present with an ongoing deterioration of the socio economic and political situation. Economic hardship for many in the population, as a result of falling world oil prices, (on which the country is almost totally dependent for foreign exchange), has caused a lack of

food and medicines for many. Political unrest, as a result of economic hardship and repression by the ruling party, has led to arbitrary violence and general insecurity among the population.

Susana and her fellow Christian Meditators continue their work to provide Christian Meditation even as the political situation worsens, and the streets in many parts become more dangerous. The community gives priority to meditation with children in the Catholic schools, situated in the poorest and most insecure areas of the country, as a means to break the cycle of violence in Venezuela. They have more than 2000 children and youngsters meditating. Although it is difficult to visit the schools regularly, because of their dangerous locations, the teachers and pastoral workers who have been trained, continue to lead the children at school.

As a result of the general situation, although over four hundred people are on their Christian Meditation mailing list there are currently only 12 group meetings, because of the difficulties and dangers of going out to attend meetings. However, the community leadership group continues to run retreats and seminars and there is a small but growing group of oblates.

The Christian Meditation community in Venezuela faces very different challenges from our community here in New Zealand. Our partial sponsorship of Susana demonstrated the benefits of belonging to the World Community for Christian Meditation. Susana stated she has “a deep gratitude and a feeling of loving support from the WCCM Communities”. ✕

Introducing Thomas Merton Community Day at the Southern Star Abbey

by Noel Bryant

Meditators from Taranaki, Manawatu and Hawkes Bay gathered to meditate, commune and focus on the life of Trappist monk, Thomas Merton. Said to be one of the most influential Catholic authors of the 20th Century he was also known as a student of comparative religion, social critic and spiritual guide.

Shirley Duthie chose well his famous prayer of surrender, relevant for all our lives that anyone can pray. She presented this as a group reading, reflection and a video of that prayer as a dance. The prayer spoke to me of times in my life when I have felt lost, not knowing where I am going and having faith that I am not alone in my journey. The video had a

dancer on a deserted railway track going nowhere. Her movements in time expressing the profound words evoked an even deeper level of my life challenges and the faith needed to journey.

Group feedback talked of the relevancy of this prayer to our meditation practice of giving ourselves over to the silence and the unknowing. I took this back to share at my meditation group where similar impact happened, it also found its way to the Sunday church service at Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church, proving it really is a prayer for all.

Thank you Shirley for your work and wisdom in choosing this, and also to Father John in joining us.

Link to the youtube video with the Thomas Merton prayer as a dance:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNIHwniEQMw&authuser=0>



Thomas Merton Prayer

*My Lord God, I have no idea
where I am going.*

*I do not see the road ahead
of me.*

*I cannot know for certain where
it will end.*

*Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think that*

*I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually
doing so.*

*But I believe that the desire
to please you does in fact
please you.*

*And I hope I have that desire
in all that I am doing.*

*I hope that I will never do
anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this, you
will lead me*

*by the right road
though I may know nothing
about it.*

*Therefore I will trust you always
though I may seem
to be lost*

and in the shadow of death.

*I will not fear, for you are ever
with me*

*and you will never leave me to
face my perils alone.*

New Manurewa Meditation Group



Names (from left): Paulina, Antonette, Barbara, Elana, Pik, Stephanie, Peta,
(Charmaine - photographer) Absent: Taina, Tisha and Sesilia

Meditation and GBS

by Fiona Green

Early in December 2016 I got out of bed and found I couldn't walk properly. I saw a doctor who told me I had an inner ear problem and sent me home. The next morning it was much worse. My limbs would not do what they were supposed to do. I had to put my hand out to steady myself against the wall and had to lift my legs to put them into the legs of my trousers. I saw my doctor who sent me up to the hospital in an ambulance, saying I could be having a stroke.

I fell over climbing the steps into the ambulance and again in the bathroom on the ward. I had difficulty holding the utensils to eat the two meals I remember being given. It was a huge relief when a neurologist visited me and told me they thought I might have Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

Guillain-Barre, or GBS, is a syndrome in which the body's immune system attacks the nervous system, resulting in paralysis. It usually follows a viral infection, in my case a cold and cough, and occurs at a rate of about 1 – 2 per 100,000 population.

By the end of my first day in hospital I was having difficulty breathing and swallowing and was transferred to ICU where I spent the next ten days on a ventilator and feeding tube, catheterized and unable to move legs or arms or to speak (due to the ventilator).

I remember thinking "this should be the ideal time to meditate." Unable to go anywhere or do anything or even to speak, one's internal energy and awareness might be totally given over to the practice. But apart from a few "maranatha's" I didn't meditate or pray in any consistent way. The only "prayer" I recall doggedly reciting was an affirmation "I am getting stronger and stronger day by day."

Others prayed for me, some believing that I recovered as well and as quickly as I did because of their prayers. I rather see the prayers as part of a network of love and concern which helped support and carry me through the experience. Other strands of this network were the cares I received in hospital. Nothing can compare with the relief felt on the first morning when the neurologist sat by my bed and in giving me the diagnosis, also reassured me that although it would get worse I would almost certainly make a full recovery; or with the dedication of the nurses in ICU who continually watched me and the screen behind my head; or the caring of those who turned me, washed me and eventually took me for a shower and to look out the window.

"Christ has no other hands but these." Looking back on the care I received, it seems that those hands that ministered to me were Christ-like, even if the individual concerned had no intention or awareness of that. If healing comes from God, then our public health system and those who work in it, must be an instrument of that grace.

I was in hospital for six weeks. Once out of ICU, I made a steady recovery. I remember when I was able to pull myself on to my side in bed and then edge myself onto my stomach; when I started to feed myself and brush my hair; when I started to walk with a walker and

could at last take myself to the bathroom.

Medical science can explain how I got sick and the process by which I have got better. It cannot explain the "why." "Why did I get GBS and why have I made a full recovery when others are left with a permanent disability?"

If you believe in messages from God, it seems that there must be a message here: that I am loved certainly; that sometimes I am required to do nothing but "be" in all my weakness and need; that there is no need for excessive plans and concerns which can be swept away in an instant; and that resting in the present moment and feeling gratitude for all that I have is such an essential antidote to my busy-ness and anxiety. If sometimes during the day I am conscious of the breath in and out – this most fundamental of physiological functions of which we are mostly unaware – it is with an enhanced sense of having something of which I was briefly denied returned to me. Pondering these messages will engage me for some time.

I feel changed in some way that is difficult to pin down. It is as though for me, as for the Israelites, the seas parted and I walked across in safety to a different shore that is unique to me.

John Main talks of the mystery of God. The "why" of my illness and recovery is also a mystery that I can bring to the silence and stillness of meditation. Being able to breathe when before I could not, and to use my limbs when before I could not, reminds me of the God in whom *I live and move and have my being*. To have been disabled and then to have got better, surely must bring me closer to God. To take time out in meditation gives me the opportunity to be with that reality. ✕



National Co-ordinator Update

Fr. Peter Murphy, Margaret Fairweather, Nick and I were the NZ contingent at the August Silent Retreat with Fr Laurence and John Main Seminar. How glad we are that it was early August and not now, when the city is flooded! It was a great experience to be there.

Meeting with Fr. Laurence:

As a new national co-ordinator I had a meeting with Fr. Laurence. I was very pleased when he confirmed that he will come and lead our national retreat in January 2019 and contribute to the *Meditatio* Seminar, Contemplative Care, straight afterwards. I asked Fr. Laurence about promoting CM, for example, could it be promoted in terms of its health benefits? He replied that early missionaries built schools and hospitals and admitted all. We offer silence and stillness from the Christian tradition and need to admit all, whatever their initial motivation to come. Only some will want to make it their personal practice, just as only some, treated and educated in Christian hospitals and schools took up the faith. He talked about the meditation course to business students which he was invited to run and was initially dubious about, but agreed to. He realized, as he was running it, that this was a new form of evangelization.

Bonnevaux:

WCCM hope to have the keys to Bonnevaux (the new international centre for WCCM in France) very soon. There is great support and enthusiasm for Bonnevaux within the World Community and the scholarship fund is growing, which will support those whose travel expenses are high.

Regions in New Zealand:

We are delighted to welcome Marie Shepherd to our National Committee. Marie moved to Nelson two years ago from Tasmania, where she was the state co-ordinator for the Australian Christian Meditation Community. She is working closely with Jane Hole, the South Island Co-ordinator, and is supporting the Nelson area groups.

Upcoming Events:

Essential Teaching Weekend in Wellington 27-29 October. Auckland Retreat 17-19 November. Oblate Retreat in Wellington in January 2018. Week long Silent School Retreat in Sept/October 2018.

Linda Polaschek
September 2017



NZCCM ESSENTIAL TEACHING WEEKEND in Wellington October 27-29

With Fr Peter Murphy

Home of Compassion, Island Bay, Wellington

7pm Friday 27th October to 4pm Sunday 29th October 2017

Have you been meditating for more than a year? Do you feel that you would like to grow in your understanding of your meditation practice?

Essential Teaching Weekends explore the history of meditation in the Christian tradition and help you arrive at a deeper insight into what the experience of this practice means to you personally and to see ways in which this experience can be shared with others.

Many meditators attend the 'Essential Teaching Weekend' more than once, because it is always slightly different and the experience of learning together and of spiritual friendship is so strengthening.

The style of the weekend is relaxed and informative. The Home of Compassion offers single rooms with shared bathrooms. We will celebrate a contemplative Eucharist on Sunday afternoon.

Cost: \$290. Please let us know if the cost is a barrier for you. Some financial assistance will be available.

To find out more and / or apply,
email Linda at nandlpolaschek@gmail.com
or phone 04 4797955 or 020 4797955.





A Violin String

Be like a violin string tuned to a precise note, without slackness or super tension; the body erect, shoulders back, carriage of the head easy.

Theophan the Recluse

Transcript of talks prepared by Liz Watson to help meditators understand the meaning and purpose of the practice of Christian Meditation. The talks were recorded in the UK in February 2013 specially for the Meditatio Series.

Here are some words from Theophan the Recluse from the nineteenth century, talking about the body in meditation. He says:

“Be like a violin string tuned to a precise note, without slackness or super tension; the body erect, shoulders back, carriage of the head easy”. He is describing a very good way to sit in meditation and it is very helpful to hear from someone about the body in prayer.

Meditation is a very complete way of prayer, a very whole way of prayer where we bring our whole person to God. In most of our other sorts of prayer within Christianity, we come to God with part of our self. Sometimes we come to God with our desires, our needs, our petitions and intercessions. Sometimes we come with our thinking and reflecting – thinking about God, what God is, thinking about the life of Jesus; reflecting on the Scriptures or on spiritual texts, reflecting on our own life, examining our own life. Sometimes we bring our bodies, so we may make the sign of the cross, or we may kneel or stand in worship, or we may use our body in sacred dance. Sometimes we use our imagination in particular. Sometimes we make acts of the will or set ourselves to particular intentions.

But in meditation, we bring all of those human faculties, all of those human energies together into a point of stillness, very like the stillness at the centre of a moving wheel where all the energies are resolved into the single point of stillness. But it is not a dead stillness; it is a very alive and alert stillness, an energetic stillness that we have come into. Because the human person is a unity, each part of us affects every other part of us and so we are very wise, when we come to meditate, to attend first of all to stillness of the body and that is what Theophan is speaking to us about.



He says, “Be like a violin string tuned to a precise note”. We are coming to do something in particular. We are coming to focus on our word, on our mantra, very clearly and precisely, albeit gently and lovingly, so we should bring our body to the help of that goal. Whether we are sitting on a chair or on a prayer stool or on the floor, the advice is to sit with the body, with the spine in particular, upright but not stiff, and that sets the whole of the body into a good posture.

This helps the body to become both relaxed and alert, without slackness or super tension, as Theophan puts it, tuned, well-tuned - relaxed because we are coming into the presence of unconditional love. We are not trying to be anything or do anything; we are simply being in love, relaxed. But we do not want to fall asleep in that presence. We want to be awake and receptive to it, so we want the body to be both relaxed and alert. So we can sit, if we are on a chair, with our feet flat on the floor and our hands in some way comfortably in our lap, with nothing tangled up. We begin to allow ourselves to relax.

You might begin by bringing your attention to the crown of your head and just feel the weight of your head on your shoulders, let it just sit on your

shoulders, allowing any tensions, any furrows in your brow to smooth out, allowing the corners of your eyes to drop down, your cheeks to melt away and the corners of your mouth to drop down too. Then bring your attention to your shoulders and let them just sit on top of your body. You do not have to be holding them up. Then let the whole of the upper part of your body just drop down from your shoulders, drop down to the seat of the chair or the stool, or the floor if you are sitting on the floor. Trust the chair to take your weight. Feel the heavy muscles in your thighs, let them drop down; you do not have to do anything just now; let your legs just hang down from your knees and drop to the floor.

Then, if it helps, bring your awareness to your breath. For many people, this is the easiest way to begin to relax, to come out of the head into the heart. So bring your attention to your breath. Be aware of the breath flowing in and the breath flowing out. You are not trying to alter your breath, just observing it – the breath flowing in and the breath flowing out, the breath flowing in and the breath flowing out. But it may well be that that simple giving of attention to your breath will in fact help your breath to smooth out and to drop a little more deeply into your body. But you are not trying to make that happen. As John Main says: “Meditation is to the spirit what the breath is to the body”. Without the breath flowing in your body, you have no physical life and it is in the practice of meditation that we bring life to our spirit, allow life to begin to infuse our whole being.

So now you are ready to take up your word, your mantra, to begin to say it inside of yourself, listening to the sound of it as you say it, giving it your attention, but without strain. And every time your attention has wandered off, whenever you recognise that your attention has wandered off, bring your attention back to the sound of the word. ✕

The Daily Discipline



by Vincent Maire

Fr. John Main was introduced to meditation by a Hindu swami who encouraged him to follow the ancient tradition of making his practice a daily discipline.

While I have met the occasional meditator who has gone from a standing start to a once or twice daily period of meditation, for most of us it is something that takes time to incorporate into our lives.

In my own case it took five years before I achieved the twice daily practice and that first year or so was very stop-start. However, in my favour was the weekly group I connected with in my local parish; a group I now lead. Looking back, I would have to say that the group is my most formative experience in the journey of meditation in the Christian Meditation. Out of this came the feeling of being an accompanied traveller and this helped me to develop the discipline of my twice daily practice.

While reading a book with the interesting title of *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics* (Marsha Sinetar, 1986), I found this quote from William Glasser. Dr Glasser was an American psychiatrist and the developer of reality therapy and choice theory. In 1976 he published *Positive Addiction* in which he observed that a discipline must meet six requirements if it is to help us grow healthier.

1. Non-competitive and done, for the most part, alone.
2. A practice that is independent of others for its execution.
3. Easy to do; should not require much mental effort such as straining to the make the mind go blank or sitting in a painful position.
4. A practice that is done regularly, about one hour per day or twice a day in equal amounts of time.
5. Something that the doer believes will improve his or her psychospiritual state. We must see our improvements without needing an “expert” or guru to tell us we are getting better. It should build self-sufficiency rather than dependence upon another.
6. Something that can be done without inordinate self-criticism or comparison to someone else’s progress.

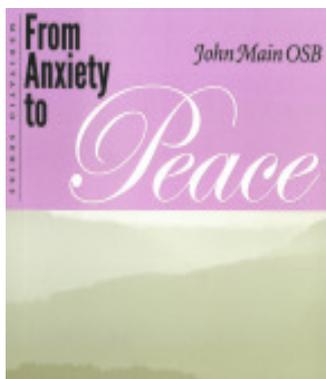
Dr Glasser was no doubt writing from a secular viewpoint, but much of what he writes above is echoed in the writings of Fr. John Main.

Vincent Maire



New on Pleroma Shelves

by Shirley Duthie



Good Things Come in Small Parcels. The Meditatio Series of beautifully presented small books on Christian Meditation are ideal to have on hand ready for the appropriate occasion. Each of the four titles talks of Christian Meditation but each will ideally fit into a different situation or best meet the needs of a particular person. While they are ideal give-aways they will bless you as you read them while you are waiting for the chance to give them away.

John Main OSB's

From Anxiety to Peace is ideal to offer to a friend showing a desire for spiritual growth and awareness and who is beginning to recognise this desire as a priority. Both layout and content will please the literate seeker wanting truth to wrap around their spiritual yearning.

98pp. \$14.99

Why Are We Here?

Laurence Freeman, OSB explores the radical question of our being in the world. We are here, he reflects, to come to continuous prayer, to a constant openness to the prayer of Christ in our hearts. It covers the three simple rules that guide us on the way of meditation.

76pp. \$14.99

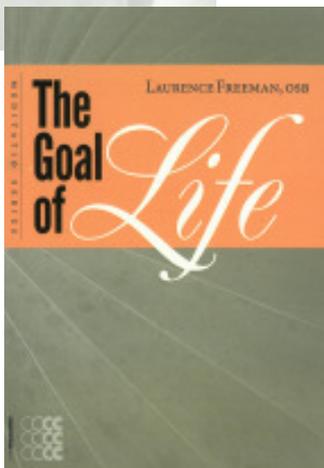
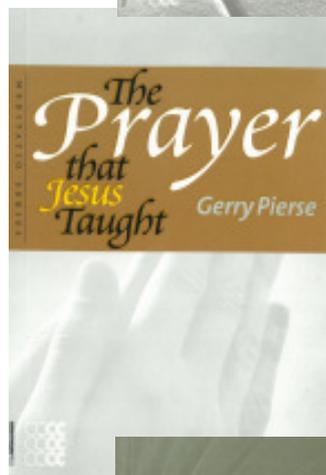
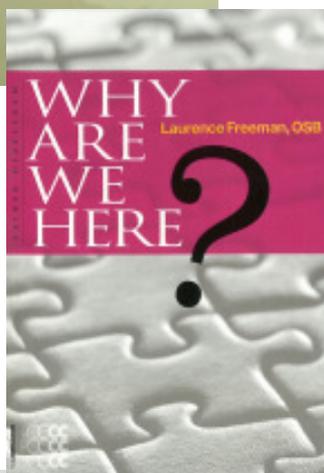
The Prayer that Jesus Taught

Gerry Pierse looks at the surrendering of all thought and repeating of the prayer word, or mantra. Such meditation is a discipline to be followed every day as we attempt to create a space for God. We do not pray to be successful, we pray to be faithful. We do not need to seek God's presence, because he is already within us; we must simply recognise it, for "The Kingdom of God is within you."

91pp. \$14.99

In *The Goal of Life* Laurence Freeman, OSB shares insights into understanding Jesus in order to better understand ourselves. He teaches that the goal of life is to know fully who we are, and that self-transcendence is the way to self-knowledge.

75pp. \$14.99



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Questions and Answers

by Shirley Duthie

Q. *A friend and I had a discussion recently on the best posture for Christian Meditation. She was insistent that a prayer stool should be used but I'd never heard of that.*

A. Your friend is right in that a prayer stool may be used for Christian Meditation but there is no insistence on what form of relaxed attention has to be used. The majority of people would use a straight backed chair but in our group one member sits flat on the floor, legs outstretched, back hard against the wall. In other groups some people sit cross-legged on the floor, possibly with a small cushion for support. The most important thing is to use a posture that enables the body to be at rest but alert. Fr Laurence Freeman suggests that it is a good idea to experiment with various positions until you find the one that works best for you.

Q. Sometimes I can't find enough time in the morning for my meditation so I make up for it with a longer time at night. I feel I'm just changing the equation from $1+1=2$ to $0+2=2$. That's OK isn't it?

A. It's great that you are finding good meditation time in the evening and on most mornings. You will be noticing the benefit of this. Had you thought of setting that morning alarm just 15 minutes earlier? We know that regular morning and evening meditation gives a prayer rhythm to the day that is both kind to your body and helpful to growing your meditation practice. You may then find you can increase that morning period gradually over time until you have, say 20 – 30 minutes morning and evening. Your equation was innovative but will not really support the discipline needed for effective meditation.

Acknowledgement:

Freeman, Laurence OSB: *Christian Meditation: Your Daily Practice*. 2008.



Q & A - a place for your questions related to Christian Meditation - no matter what! The **Q & A** Convenor Shirley Duthie will answer, or find an expert to tackle any question relating to your daily practice, your CM Group or Community Days, parish difficulties related to Christian Meditation, Christian Meditation history or writings about CM and related subjects.

Send questions to sjmduthie@gmail.com

Spiritual knowledge is the result of total attention: *Set your mind on God's kingdom before everything else and the rest will come to you as well.* (Matthew 6:33).

Spiritual knowledge is a way of perception that arises from a clear and awakened centre of consciousness: *Be still and know that I am God* (Psalm 46:10). It arises from stillness rather than just from intellectual activity and it is marked by the contemplative qualities of silence, stillness and simplicity.

Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB: Health & Wholeness

About Silence

Silence is a key component of contemplative prayer. But as we rapidly find, silence is exceedingly difficult. The best we can manage is a relative silence, perhaps a little quieter round about than is usually the case. It is a noisy world. People who come to visit us at Algies Bay, typically remark how quiet it is. So it seems to them. But the vehicles still roar up and down the road at intervals - and that's just the upright local citizenry carting their kids to school, or the blokes cruising around on their tractors or quad bikes, or starting up chain saws in case there might be something to hew down. Thomas Merton in his hermitage far out in the woods of Kentucky complained about hammering he could hear distantly down the hill, or some farmer's far off machinery.

Well, the lesson about this is that our prayer is never about escaping from the real world. We needn't try. The noisy world is real and it's there and we inhabit it, it is part of us and we are part of its clamour.

The real challenge with silence is interior silence. As soon as we become still and start to pay attention to the present moment, we are reminded of the degree of noise and indiscipline in what has been called our "monkey minds". St Teresa compared it to a ship whose crew has mutinied, tied up the captain and is chaotically taking turns to steer the ship. Jesus teaches: *Therefore I bid you put away anxious thoughts about food and drink to keep you alive, and clothes to cover your body. Surely life is more than food, the body more than clothes.*

We aim to be in the present moment, which is the only moment of reality, of encounter with the God who is "I Am". Yet within seconds we are thinking thoughts of yesterday, making plans for tomorrow or weaving daydreams and wish-fulfillment in the realm of fantasy. *Do not be anxious about tomorrow, tomorrow will look after itself,* says Jesus.

So, we only approximate to interior silence as well. But Christian Meditation is the discipline in which we come back to our approximation each day, and with the help of the mantra bring our "monkey minds" back to the centre again and again. A silence and stillness begins to settle into our lives at the other times. Simply discovering that we are, however poorly, free to place our attention elsewhere than on ourselves is the first great awakening. It is the beginning of the deepening of consciousness, which allows us to leave the distractions on the surface, like waves on the surface of the ocean.

from *Sharp Darts of Longing Love*
by Ross Miller. Reprinted with permission

Situations Vacant

We are looking for two volunteers for these roles:

NZCCM Webmaster/Mistress

Webmaster/mistress and email distributor

This role covers content management of the NZCCM website (Wordpress) and emailing out emails to members on the mailchimp (email) list.

It involves:

- * Entering information about upcoming Community Days, seminars, retreats.
- * Managing the events calendar.
Information that needs to be entered on the website comes in 1-2 times per month on average and takes between 30- 60 minutes each time to be entered.
- * Sending out mailchimp emails 1-2 times a month on average. These emails are usually linked to the information about events on the website. Most information comes as finished flyers and just needs to be copied and pasted into the website and emails.
- * Communicating with the web designer if needed. The web designer is prompt in responding, easy to talk to and very helpful. Some creativity is involved if you like adding relevant pictures to the flyers and to the content on the website. The person in this role is also a member of the NZCCM Committee and communicates with the National Co-ordinator as needed. The current webmistress will offer full training and support for this role as needed.

Membership Secretary Wanted

Membership secretary

The person in this role maintains the membership list and sends out the annual subscription invitation.

It involves:

- * Keeping the membership list (stored on Google Drive) up-to-date when any changes are notified.
- * Liaising with the webmaster to ensure that any new members are also added to the mailchimp list of those who receive NZCCM emails from the webmaster.
- * Ensuring an invitation to pay the annual subscription is sent out to each member when due.
- * Checking that those receiving *Stillpoint* by post are currently up-to-date with their subscriptions and sending out subscription reminders by post as needed.
- * Liaising with the treasurer and national coordinator as needed.

This role is not onerous, usually taking just a few hours a month.

If you would like to offer your help or find out more about either of these roles, please contact:

Linda Polaschek
nandlpolaschek@gmail.com
or phone 04 4797955

“Better than Winning the Lottery”

by Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB

I was talking to a young meditator, about 21 years old, the other day. I was quite surprised that at his age he had responded quite deeply to meditation and understood it and had begun to practise it in a serious way. He wasn't - as many of us do when we are beginning - saying "I'm not doing it very well" with the sort of slight Christian guilt about it. He was saying that it was helpful to him, that it was helping him with his very healthy questions of faith that he was going through, his doubts, his questioning of his traditional religious training which he had gone through and he appreciated that he was questioning it in a healthy way. His meditation was helping him with that but it was also helping him to concentrate, helping him deal with the anxieties of adolescence.

So I asked him how he came to meditation. Did he hear a talk on meditation that had started him on the path? He said he liked the basic idea of being in the present moment. So then I asked him what helped him to persevere. And he said that he had joined a group of older people and he was talking one day to one of the women in the group. He asked her why she meditated or how she came to it or something like that. Her answer was, "Well, I was going through various difficulties in my life and I was introduced to meditation and I began to practise it. And then I realised what a great gift it was. I realised I felt that it was better than winning the lottery." And that expression that she used - "better than winning the lottery" - just hit him and it struck him with the full force of a faith communication. And that had deepened and energised his own



commitment to his practice that he had begun. I think if we look at that remark and that little exchange between this young person and this older meditator, it may tell us something about the fruits of meditation and also about how we can share those fruits. They are not meant to rot on the tree and they are not meant to be just stored in your own larder. They are meant to be marketed and shared with others. That's what fruits are for, aren't they?

First of all, there was the sincere questioning that this young person asked of an older person - looking for experience, looking for some wisdom that would help him. And, secondly, there was the response - that very simple, uncomplicated, unpretentious response as she told a little bit about her own experience and how she had come to it, and what it meant to her. Then that wonderful metaphor that St. Paul would have used probably, if there were lotteries in his day. That wonderful metaphor drawn from ordinary life, not God-talk, not pious language, but one that struck home with full force of experience and faith and authenticity. So certainly that is one of the fruits of meditation, the ability to share the fruits, the ability to speak honestly and simply and to be authentic, to be truthful. Basically, she was just being truthful and simple; sincere, without acting a role of any kind and using simple language to do it.

from *Meditatio*

Talks by Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB
UK Annual Conference, April 2005.

Hearing the Word of God: *Lectio Divina* at Sunday Mass

An initiative next month will introduce the practice *Lectio Divina* to all Catholics in the Wellington Archdiocese. Cardinal John Dew has announced that on the weekend of 28-29 October all parishes will use the Gospel of the day as *Lectio Divina* in their Sunday Mass. This initiative is in response to consultation on the upcoming Synod where a number of people asked about growing in holiness through prayer, and specifically how best to pray with the Scriptures.

In his pastoral column Cardinal John quotes Pope Francis' letter *Misericordia Et Misera*, written for the conclusion of the Year of Mercy:

"...a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people. Creative initiatives can help make this an opportunity for the faithful to become living vessels for the transmission of God's word. Initiatives of this sort would certainly include the practice of Lectio Divina, so that the prayerful reading of the Sacred text will help support and strengthen the spiritual life. Such a reading, centred on themes relating to mercy, will enable a personal experience of the great fruitfulness of the biblical text – read in the light of the Church's spiritual tradition – and thus give rise to concrete gestures and works of charity."

In his column about the initiative Cardinal John presents *Lectio Divina* as a spiritual practice, a dialogue animated by meditation and prayer, in which we hear the divine word to us producing a transformative effect in our lives. From the perspective of the meditating, Christian community this Sunday's *Lectio Divina* will bring into attention for the wider Church community, Christian meditative spirituality via a focus on one of its key elements. Some would view this as a small step in bringing out the profound spirituality that is the heart of the external practice of the Christian religion. Many of us will welcome introducing a period of meditative silence into the Mass, as a way of deepening our spiritual experience of the Eucharist.

Cardinal John concludes:

"I certainly hope and pray that on this particular Sunday in October, we will all discover new insights, reflect on – discern – how this particular Gospel text relates to our own lives; that it will stimulate us to pray and that we will know a deep inner joy. When we do feel that joy within, we will know we are growing in holiness, because joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. My prayer is also that as we experience the Gospel in a different – but time-honoured way – it will even more whet our appetite for reading Sacred Scripture and we will continue to discover the richness of Scripture through our own meditation and prayer."

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9 Somerset Crescent Kapiti Village,
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hugh.mclaughlinnz@gmail.com

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Publishers: New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation, c/o Linda Polaschek, 12 Everest Street, Khandallah, Wellington 6035. Phone: 04.479.7955 Email: nandlpolaschek@gmail.com

Editor: Margaret Paton. Articles for publication may be sent to margaretpaton@xtra.co.nz or the National Co-ordinator Linda Polaschek, Email: nandlpolaschek@gmail.com

New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation National Committee Members

National Co-ordinator - Linda Polaschek
12 Everest Street, Khandallah, Wellington 6035
Phone: 04.479.7955 Email: nandlpolaschek@gmail.com

Northland Co-ordinator - Michael Dougherty (ex officio)
Shantigriha, 735 Owhiwa Road, RD1 Onerahi, Whangarei 0192
Phone: 09.436.5663 Email: mdl@ihug.co.nz

Auckland Area Co-ordinator - Charmaine Tolich
24 Lemonwood Place, Manurewa, Auckland, 2105
Phone: 09.266.7651 Email: ctolich@me.com

Waikato-Bay of Plenty Co-ordinator - Damian Robertson
117 Ranolf Street, Glenholme, Rotorua, 3010
Phone: 07.347.2087 Email: damian.peter1@vodafone.co.nz

Hawkes Bay/Manawatu Co-ordinator - Shirley Duthie
2A Knorp Street, Otane, Central Hawkes Bay, 4202
Phone: 06.856.8110 Email: sjduthie@gmail.com

Wellington Co-ordinator - Elspeth Preddey
39 Anne Street, Wadestown, Wellington 6012
Phone: 04.472.3369 Email: elspeth.preddey@xtra.co.nz

**Meditation in Schools National Co-ordinator
& National Oblate Co-ordinator - Hugh McLaughlin**
9 Somerset Crescent Kapiti Village, Paraparaumu, Kapiti Coast 5032
Phone: 04.298.9370 Email: hugh.mclaughlinnz@gmail.com

**South Island Co-ordinator and South Island
Meditation in Schools Regional Co-ordinator - Jane Hole**
341 Wairakei Road, Bryndwr, Christchurch 8053
Phone: 03.359.9036 Email: holejane66@hotmail.com

Nelson Co-ordinator - Marie Shepherd
Email: mlshepherd54@gmail.com

Friends Co-ordinator - Vincent Maire
7 Motuora Road, Manly, Auckland, 0930
Phone: 09.424.2293 Email: vincentmaire12@gmail.com

Treasurer - Ngaire McLaughlin
9 Somerset Crescent Kapiti Village, Paraparaumu, Kapiti Coast 5032
Phone: 04.298.9370 Email: hugh.mclaughlinnz@gmail.com

Trust Board Secretary - Damian Robertson
117 Ranolf Street, Glenholme, Rotorua, 3010
Phone: 07.347.2087 Email: damian.peter1@vodafone.co.nz

School Co-ordinator - Fr Peter Murphy
52 East Street, Papakura, Auckland 2110
Phone: 09.298.5134 Email: frpetermurphy64@gmail.com

Webmaster - Ingrid Bryant
410A Hemi Street, Hastings 4120
Phone: 06.876.7948 Email: inbryants@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor - Margaret Paton (ex officio)
29 Coulthard Terrace, Papakura, Auckland 2113.
Phone: 09.298.4409 Email: margaretpaton@xtra.co.nz