



Stillpoint



Stillpoint is the official magazine of the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation

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What a year! What a pair!

by Vincent Maire

2018 will be a year to remember in the history of NZCCM. As well as the usual round of Community Days, Regional Retreats, an Essential Teaching Weekend and a National School Retreat, the Community took on the task of organising the biannual National Retreat and the first ever *Meditatio Seminar*.

Both events, held over the week 13 to 18 January 2019, were outstanding successes. Registrations for the Retreat closed at 120, the maximum number of people we could seat in the university chapel. In fact, discovering the chapel can seat 120 people was a wonderful surprise. I'm sure like many others, I felt this was a "comfortable" number to share that sacred space with.

The *Meditatio Seminar*, Compassionate Care – Healthcare

and Meditation, exceeded all expectations. The line-up of speakers was impressive, the venue superb and to have nearly 140 people attend at the height of the summer break was both a relief and a surprise.

Naturally, Fr. Laurence was a major drawcard for both events. For me, it was so good to see him again. He looked well, was in great humour and full of enthusiasm. In spite of the travel, he enjoyed his week with the NZ Community, is clearly revelling in Bonnevaux, and took great delight in updating us on this important and necessary project.

But events like a national retreat and a seminar don't just happen. While both had their teams, I wish to acknowledge the leadership, dedication and hard work of Linda and Nick Polaschek. Linda focussed on the Retreat while Nick took care of the Seminar.

Event management is a lot like juggling, but with balls of varying sizes. The larger "balls" like venue and catering tend to be easy. It's the smaller ones around marketing, registrations, travel, communication, etc, that can slip between overworked fingers.

On behalf of the New Zealand Christian Meditation Community, I wish to publicly honour and thank Linda and Nick for the amazing job they did in organising two outstanding and never-to-be-forgotten events. We are very lucky to have people of their abilities in our midst and at the helm.

Vincent Maire

PS And after it was all over, I was delighted to hear that Nick and Linda had gone on retreat – to Stewart Island!



Linda Polaschek, Fr Laurence Freeman, Nick Polaschek

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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
www.theschoolofmeditation.org

Relationship in Modern Culture



an excerpt from a teaching by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB published in the January 2019 issue of *Meditatio*. Reprinted with permission.

Monastic life led John Main to understand the meaning of relationship itself and how we are capable of it – or not – in modern culture. He saw the painful prison of individualism, isolation and loneliness in which so many feel locked. Since his day digital culture has greatly intensified this problem. For him, though, salvation meant, firstly, to be liberated from that separated sense of self and healed of the experience of division from our self and others. These experiences drive much of the depression and mental illness among the young.

He also knew that the “crisis of the self” has gone so far that traditional ways of communicating the healing message of the gospel merely bounce off this wall of separateness. The good news is that we are not alone and divided. We are embodied and tangible and known. Our true self, embedded in the web of being, is loveable like everyone and everything else. Self-knowledge is to touch the love which is the source of our being, and is being itself.

Through his own struggles and within his monastic tradition John Main saw a way through our modern crisis. It begins by recognising that the core of the crisis and its cure involves the rediscovery of the human spirit. For religious institutions this simple first step can be a huge stumbling block when religion itself has become de-spiritualised. Religious forms, loyalties, identities and beliefs can even become force-fields that deflect the energies of the

spirit. Religion has fallen into this sorry, self-contradicting state in other periods of history, as Jesus understood about the religiosity of his own time. In each of these eras where religion became disconnected from people’s spiritual hunger, the way forward comes as a rediscovery of the contemplative dimension. This dimension applies to all forms of human life and to each personal consciousness. We may debate about whether Jesus imagined a new religion called “Christianity”. But there is no question about the contemplative nature of his spiritual teaching – interiority, silence, equanimity and being in the “now”. This underpins his social vision of a world finally freed from violence and injustice.

According to John Main nothing is more urgent for us now than to rediscover the spiritual dimension and its energies. He did not say meditation was the only way to do this. He believed that love is the way. But meditation is a work of love that dismantles all that disempowers our capacity to love. For the new meditator, love will become visible as the first fruit of their new practice. It may not be what they expected or even thought they needed. It will also reveal that the solitude of their practice connects them to a different kind of experience of relationship, of community. This evolves. As a “school of service” it becomes a place where the hard shell of loneliness cracks open to reveal the true self in the boundless nature of relationship. ✕

It is essential to begin the practice of prayer with a firm resolution of persevering in it.

St Teresa of Avila

Meditation Retreat for Young Adults at Bonnevaux

24 July to 4 August 2019

Bonnevaux will host a Retreat for young adult meditators (aged 18 to 40), led by experienced practitioners under the guidance of Fr Laurence Freeman.

The first part of the Retreat offers times for meditation, silence and yoga, as well as creative activities such as pottery, writing, music and dancing. Participants will share in the life of the resident community. The second part of the Retreat, (optional) will be walking the Camino de Compostela.

“Young” is a state, not a measurement, but this Retreat focuses on meditators between ages 18 to 40. For more information contact:

accueil@bonnevauxwccm.org
or visit: **www.bonnevauxwccm.org**

During his visit to New Zealand, Fr Laurence stated that he is keen for NZCCM to send someone to the Young Adults’ Retreat. If anyone is interested, please let Linda Polaschek know. NZCCM may be able to help with some funding. ✕

Auckland Community Day Saturday 23 March, 2019 Tracing The Unbroken Tradition

Led by Caryl Haley

Inspired by a recorded talk given by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB on the Desert Fathers, Caryl decided it would be interesting to trace the practice of meditation in the Christian tradition from the Desert Fathers and Mothers to the present day. Her research has traced the unbroken tradition from the 3rd to the 21st centuries through the voices of ordinary men and women who lived out extraordinary lives. Caryl is a member of the St Francis by the Sea meditation group in Manly, Hibiscus Coast, Auckland.

The event will be held at the home of Tim & Rosemary Auld,
748 Waitakere Road, Kumeu.

- * Please bring your own lunch
- * Please bring a koha
- * There will be two periods of meditation
- * People new to meditation are most welcome
- * If you get lost on the way call Tim Auld
on 027 272-0233 or 09 412-8782

For more information contact:
Charmaine Tolich on 09 266-7651 or ctolich@me.com
or Vincent Maire on 027 276-6032 or
vincentmaire12@gmail.com

Introduction to Christian Meditation

*Be still and know
that I am God.*
Psalm 46:10

Meditation is an ancient form of prayer. Its aim is to bring the distracted mind to silence and stillness, and rest in the presence of God. Even in our modern busy lives, this is possible.

We invite you to come along and try this form of prayer which is simple and peaceful.

The introductory course provides an opportunity to experience the practice of Christian meditation in a small group, to learn about its origins, and to discover its relevance as a form of prayer for the contemporary world.



WCCM
World Community
for Christian Meditation
New Zealand.

Tuesdays:
12th, 19th, 26th March
and 2nd April 2019
at 7.00pm to 8 30pm.
St Thomas’ Church Hall
29 Church Street
Kawakawa, Northland

Admission free,
a small koha appreciated.

For more information contact:
Michael Dougherty
Email: md1@outlook.co.nz
or phone 09 436 5663

Bonnevaux and its Quirky Kiwi Connection

by *Vincent Maire*

There is something about Bonnevaux that really touches me. When the first photographs started to appear in my inbox, and in particular, those early ones of the blessing and visit by the Bishop of Poitiers, I felt deeply moved and somehow caught up in this wonderful project.

Rationalising this connection was, at first, difficult. Yes, I had a French grandfather and in my mid-20s I spent a year living and studying in France. But when I see images of France on TV or read about things French, I don't have the same reaction as when I go online and look at photos of Bonnevaux.

And when, at the national retreat, Fr Laurence told us that 2019 marks the 900th anniversary since the Benedictines first took up residence at Bonnevaux, I felt that shiver of other-worldly connection that somehow comes over me whenever I hear or read about this sacred place.

I have another connection too, and one that is, in its way, both amusing and amazing:

In October 2017, my brother Gerry emailed me from a campground in Wairoa to say that he had met a young French traveller who was interested in things spiritual and especially the enneagram. Would I please connect with him?

During my email conversations with Thomas, I shared my interest in Christian meditation and he replied, "That's amazing. My mother leads a small group of Christian meditation in France. Myself I don't meditate as much as I'd like, but I love doing it. Do you often teach in Auckland? I'll probably be there around end of November/December."

As it happened, I was due to run a one-day refresher in Orewa on the first Saturday in December 2017, and invited Thomas to join us, which he duly did.

During that day he explained that he was in New Zealand to explore permaculture practice in this country and that his university degree was in horticulture. He was a most interesting person to talk to.

And then I asked, "Where do you come from in France?" He explained where his home was and I said, "That sounds like it's near Poitiers, is it?" Thomas was quite startled. "Poitiers! No one in New Zealand has heard of Poitiers. How do you know about Poitiers?" I told him about Bonnevaux and how it was to become the home of WCCM. As he was due to return to France, I encouraged Thomas to visit Bonnevaux suggesting that with his skills and knowledge, he would be a great asset to this incredible project. We then had no further contact.



Thomas Litzler

You can imagine how amazed I was when, almost 12 months to the day, 30th November 2018, there was Thomas Litzler fronting the Bonnevaux monthly video, relating how, while on a trip around New Zealand in 2017, he first heard about Bonnevaux. I immediately emailed Thomas:

"Hello Thomas, how wonderful to open my email this morning and to discover that you are now part of the Bonnevaux Community. This morning we had a national Zoom session with the WCCM-NZ National Committee and I told them all about our meeting here in Orewa, and suggested they all look at the video. I think that your presence at Bonnevaux means that the New Zealand meditation community is also present in a significant way."

"Thomas replied: 'Hi Vincent! I love that you get this video! The loop is closed, you sent me to Bonnevaux and now the news gets back to you, all across the world! It's amazing. It's like an echo, or a special link that is still alive between me and NZ. Many thanks for giving me the occasion to discover Bonnevaux. I feel that I've been driven here by a loving energy far beyond my own will. When I first arrived and I met the community, it was obvious to me that I had something to do with this place. It's still the very first steps of everything here, it is sometimes challenging, but it's fascinating and we know that we are working at building a new way of living in this world, taking care of our inner selves and nurturing the Earth. Enjoy your retreat and seminar! I'm looking forward to seeing you in Bonnevaux. Thomas'"

Don't you just love those words of his: "we are working at building a new way of living in this world, taking care of our inner selves and nurturing the Earth"? He feels it too, the spiritual dynamic, the loving energy, that powerful connection that draws people to Bonnevaux regardless of where they live in the world.

At Fr Laurence's invitation I shared this story at the national retreat. He recounted how Thomas' crop of winter garlic had been destroyed by the wild boar that live on the 160-acre property. Thomas is very much part of the Bonnevaux management team and is the "voice" behind the monthly video bulletins. He's our first kiwi connection to the project so please make yourself known to him when you visit.

Vincent Maire



Summer heat and silence for Voluneers at Bonnevaux

by Andrew Cresswell

Like most of western Europe, we had a sweltering start to August at Bonnevaux with temperatures regularly over 35 C. Meditation at 6.15am has been at the coolest part of the day and made a refreshing start to the daily rhythm. Because of the heat, the work of volunteers in the vegetable garden, and in particular the greenhouse, was restricted to the morning with work in the afternoon being focused on clearing the attic and repairing some of the items of furniture currently in storage in the stables. Bill Aback, from WCCM Canada, was with us for the first two weeks of August and has made some essential repairs to the gatehouse at the entrance to the domaine.

Volunteers at Bonnevaux this month have joined us from Canada, France, Spain and Portugal. We have also helped to host a planning meeting of WCCM (CMMC) France for a conference to be held in 2020.

The vegetable garden has produced enough vegetables (tomatoes, potatoes, courgettes, herbs, onions and beans) to supply the kitchen at Bonnevaux during August.

Clearing of the attic in the stables enabled us to create an additional space for meditation and yoga, with Rebecca Brewin taking two informal yoga groups which were well received. About nine people attended each group. We have also found that people on holiday in the area have been interested to join us for meditation on a number of occasions this month, and it has been wonderful to welcome them.

The contractors working on the Abbey and the Barn stopped working, as planned, for the August Holiday and an air of calm has descended on the site which we have all enjoyed. The renovation work is progressing well and will resume by the end of August. We have also been notified

that the external work can start on the stables in October. The stables will be the guest accommodation at Bonnevaux after the renovation. It is wonderful that this work can begin earlier than anticipated, and we are now reviewing plans for accommodating the community over the winter period. ✕

Bonnevaux is currently being renovated and the main buildings are a construction site.

A programme of retreats will start after Easter 2019.

A small community lives on site and hosts volunteers, who join in the life and work, and welcomes visitors.

If you would like to visit (or volunteer during the summer) please contact:

Andrew Cresswell
(email
contact@bonnevauxwccm.org)

Waikato and Bay of Plenty Community Day

New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation

Saturday 30 March 2019, 10.00am to 2.30pm

St Joseph's Catholic Church, 18 Mueller Street, Waihi

Theme for the day:

**Trappist Fr Thomas Keating
presented by Raewyn Blair**

Meditators and people new to meditation are very welcome.

Please Bring:

- * Your own lunch
- * Koha (*suggested \$10*) to cover costs
- * \$2 for a raffle (*all proceeds to be donated to "Friends"*)
- * Credit card, cheque book or cash if you would like to buy from Pleroma Christian Supplies – there will be a sales table and ordering facilities

If you have any queries, please contact:

Damian Robertson

07.3472087 or dae.pete@outlook.com



Jesus the Contemplative

by Bernard McGinn

Contemplative prayer tradition begins with Jesus the contemplative. If you look back at the New Testament texts, you'll find that Jesus spent his life praying. He prays the Jewish liturgical prayer obviously; the Last Supper, in a certain sense, was something like the Jewish liturgical prayer. He has public prayers that he teaches to others, the *Lord's Prayer* being the example, but then Jesus prayed to his Father privately, apart from others, as a key aspect of his whole life. Let me just cite a few texts:

Matthew 14:23 *After he dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray.*

Mark 1:35 *In the morning while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place and there he prayed.*

Luke 5:16 *He would withdraw to deserted places and pray.*

Luke 6:12 *Now during these days he went up to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God.*

There's a whole series of texts from the New Testament that talk about Jesus' prayer life and his dedication to it, particularly at night, by separating himself from others, by going up into the mountain. So, contemplative prayer goes back to Jesus as the model of contemplation.

Also with regard to the New Testament, there are two key texts that are central to almost every Christian mystic and spiritual writer as they meditated on what prayer means. The first one comes from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Paul says:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, giving thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for you.

So what does it mean to pray without ceasing? There is a parallel text in Luke's Gospel 18:1.

Jesus told them a parable about the need to pray always and not to lose heart.

So a big problem for Christian writers about prayer is, how can you pray always without ceasing? That's text number one.

Text number two is also from Paul, 1 Timothy 2:1.
First of all then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone.

Supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings – Paul is laying out four different kinds of prayer. The commentators, the students of prayer, will say, "What are those four kinds of prayer? How do we understand them? Are they separate? What do they mean?" et cetera.

You could almost write a history of Christian doctrine of prayer around the interpretation of those passages and then also, of course, with the model Jesus as the 'Prayer', the model of prayer.



Whangarei Community Day

Saturday 27th April 2019

Anglican Hall

Cnr Deveron Street and Kamo Road

Regent, Whangarei

9 30am to 3 00pm

Bring your own lunch. Tea/coffee provided

No cost. A small koha appreciated.

Theme: Meditation and Recovery

The day will be led by two people in a recovery programme who have discovered the life-giving practice of a daily spiritual discipline, that is, meditation. This has assisted them to meaningfully to practise the Eleventh Step in depth.

The 11th Step: Seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for the knowledge of His Will for us and the power to carry that out. There will be time available for comments, queries, basic instruction on how to meditate. There will also be two periods of meditation.

**All are welcome, faith or none,
12 Step or not.
Anonymity will be respected.**

We have entered the world of the Spirit.

*Our next function is to grow
in understanding and effectiveness.*

*This is not an overnight matter.
It should continue for a life time.*

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 84

*Meditation is the way of growth,
the way of deepening our own commitment
to life, our own maturity ...
in profound stillness
the human spirit begins to be aware
of its own Source.*

From Anxiety to Peace, John Main, page 13

**If you intend to come, please contact Michael
Phone: 09 436 5663
Email: md1@outlook.co.nz**

Are You Ready to Deepen Your Meditation Commitment?

Those who have been meditating for at least a year, and want to grow in understanding of the practice, are encouraged to participate in an

Essential Teaching Weekend

The School of Meditation, which is led in New Zealand by Fr Peter Murphy, runs two Essential Teaching Weekends in most years. John Main says of the School:

"In meditation you are learning to be. Just to be, as you are."

There is a radical simplicity to meditation and yet it is not easy. At the School of Meditation, we will help you on a journey to greater self-knowledge, bringing more balance, depth and meaning to your life.

What is The Essential Teaching Weekend?

For those who are finding that meditation is becoming an established practice in their lives, the Essential Teaching Weekend (ETW) is the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding. It is a residential experience with regular periods of meditation, simple teachings, and time for sharing and discussion. The style of the Weekend is relaxed, informative and participative. It allows time to develop friendships and a sense of community.

If you are ready to pursue greater depth and meaning, please contact either:

Fr Peter Murphy
09.2985134 or frpetermurphy64@gmail.com
or
Damian Robertson
07.3472087 or dae.pete@outlook.com

There are vacancies at the two following ETWs,
being held at Tyburn Monastery, Ngakuru:
24-26 May 2019 and 4-6 October 2019

A Next Step?

Just as I was taking Fr. Laurence to the airport following the Meditatio seminar, he mentioned setting up a meditation centre as a possible next step for us here in Auckland, and for that matter anywhere in New Zealand. That would be preferably in a city centre and modelled on others overseas, that is it would be staffed voluntarily and there would be meditation three times daily plus it could serve as a drop in centre for fellow meditators and others. I would just like to put it out there for future discussion and reflection.

Peter Murphy

Book Review:

A new book by
Fr Laurence Freeman OSB:

Good Work - Meditation for Personal and Organisational Transformation



Laurence Freeman defines good work as "work that brings out the best in the people who do it, and brings enduring benefit to those who are influenced by it". This book is about how meditation helps to make work good work, while transforming the workplace environment through more humanly rich and enjoyable encounters.

The first part concentrates on the fundamentals of meditation – as a universal and inclusive practice found in all wisdom traditions. It then shows how the experience enriches the experience of work itself with meaning. In the second part of the book, successful leaders from the corporate world who practise meditation speak from experience about the value of a contemplative approach to work and leadership.

The emphasis throughout is on practice rather than theory. The language is inclusively secular. The approach is wisdom-based rather than a merely physical or psychological one.

The spark for this book came from a series of talks Laurence Freeman gave to the staff at DP Architects, Singapore in January 2017, where they now continue to meditate every morning

**The book is available in New Zealand
from Pleroma:**

**www.christiansupplies.co.nz
or order@pleroma.org.nz
or Freephone 0508 988 988.**



NZCCM National Silent Retreat - Light and Shade

13th-16th January 2019, University of Waikato, Led by Fr Laurence Freeman, OSB

a report from Jane Hole

The student village where we stayed, and the chapel where we gathered, were set in tree-lined lakes with floating waterlilies and cruising ducks, a patchwork of “light and shade” that recalled the theme of our Retreat. Fr Laurence reminded us that we need outer signs – retreats and pilgrimages - to illuminate our inner journey. The accommodation was simple and comfortable, and the meals ample and attractive. Waiting in queues for 120 of us to be served gave us a chance to become aware of bird song from the lakes and wooded gardens coming to us through open doors. (Natural sounds are not noise, Fr Laurence reassures us, and are no barrier to silence.) Several serious downpours challenged those of us who hadn’t brought umbrellas, rain jackets and puddle-proof shoes, but cheerful sunshine soon followed - another show of light and shade. The planning and organising that kept 120 of us comfortable and catered for in every way for three days was superb: efficient but relaxed, unobtrusive but sensitive to different needs.

Speaking to the theme of the Retreat, Fr Laurence spoke of the light in our lives (joy, wonder and faith) inevitably having its counterpart in times of shade (pain, sadness and discouragement) - the two experiences seemingly at odds with one another. But we need to learn to live with contradictions and accept them, rather than be crushed or depressed by them. In today’s world we’ve lost our ability to deal with contradictions, and that inability to cope with our divisions breeds violence. Before we can deal with external contradictions, we need to learn how to deal with our own internal divisions. Sometimes this can lead us to strike rock bottom, but even this painful experience can open us

to growth. If we can accept divisions we will be led into paradox, the doorway to wisdom. Whenever we recognise paradox, he said, we are not far from the truth. In paradox we learn that differing issues, once accepted, can lie together peacefully. The relationship between death and resurrection - we must die in order to live - lies at the bottom of all other paradoxes. We find paradox throughout the beatitudes and in the parables.

Fr Laurence knows we need encouragement in the actual practice of meditation – we all find it challenging. He has a gift for reminding us of the old essential truths that we might have forgotten, while throwing new light on the practice. He spoke of poverty of spirit; we are poor in spirit if we allow ourselves to be empty, though we may not want to discover our emptiness or to admit it. Saying the mantra is like planting a seed. To do this we need to leave behind all our possessions, all the things that we call “my”, also letting go of our resentments and of the image of ourselves as victim that resentment brings. Conversion can be described as changing the direction of our attention. Eventually we become deeply thankful for the poverty we’ve been led into; we fall in love with it.

When we first start to meditate we feel a failure, until we realise that we must give up our ideas of failure and success except in being faithful and persevering. So we keep going, and over time we learn detachment as we tell ourselves “I don’t have to evaluate this. I did the best I could and that’s always enough”. We need to trust our own experience. Meditation becomes a leaven in our lives; it affects everything for good, becomes a gift to us. As we come to

see life itself as a gift, we gradually become one with the giver.

In establishing a meditation practice, we look first for regularity in our daily practice, then for building our daily practice up to within the 20 – 30 minutes that we’ve been told is best for us. The practice will then lead us toward purity of heart – the primary aim of our meditation – the state of desiring only one thing. We are told that those who have a pure heart are blessed for they shall see God, yet God is the one no one has seen. The Beatitudes present us with many of these paradoxes, apparent contradictions. To be pure in heart is to desire one thing; single-mindedness then is our primary aim, to set our minds on one thing - the kingdom – and everything else will fall into its proper place. Purity of heart frees us from self-centredness; it liberates us into concern for those around us.

Fr Laurence reminded us that meditation needs community to be experienced fully. In an unforgettable description of the interplay between solitude and community that meditation allows, he described it as a journey taken in single file community. He spoke of the value of small groups, saying we need as many as possible. He recognises that something of great value may come even to those who have no deeply established meditation practice, simply from being part of a meditating group, a meditating community. At this Retreat we came together as a New Zealand Community, (while warmly welcoming visiting meditators from the Australian, Fijian and United Kingdom Communities). We felt the particular warmth, reassurance and encouragement of being together with those who feel like a family, our family, of like spirits travelling by grace the same path of contemplative prayer in our own land. ✠



Teaching moments:

**Fr Laurence teaching
during the Light & Shade
Silent Retreat
at Waikato University**



Linda Polaschek (far left) thanking Fr Laurence, at the end of the Light & Shade Retreat



Fr Laurence speaking to the gathering at the Contemplative Care *Meditatio* Seminar



Vanessa Eldridge addressing the Contemplative Care *Meditatio* Seminar



Fr Laurence with the three Fijian representatives: Filo Tagivetaua, Elizabeth Krishna, Maria Nasemira.

The three ladies were jointly funded by WCCM International, WCCM Australia and NZCCM, to attend both the Retreat and the Seminar

Contemplative Care: Healthcare & Meditation Seminar

January 2019, Auckland Hospital, Led by Fr Laurence Freeman, OSB

a report from Nick Polaschek

Healthcare and Meditation was the theme of the first *Meditatio* Seminar organised by a small group from NZCCM. Held at Auckland City Hospital on 17 and 18 January 2019, the event was led by Fr Laurence, and included speakers from mental health, hospice care and general practice, two of whom are Benedictine Oblates. As well as plenary talks there were workshops and panel discussions, interspersed with several short periods of meditation each day.

While the majority of speakers were from the Roman and Anglican Catholic Christian traditions, there were also speakers from other spiritual traditions, including Buddhists and people from an indigenous Maori spiritual background. The variety of perspectives from a range of excellent presenters greatly enhanced the Seminar. Participants at the Seminar included both healthcare professionals and also religious and interested laypeople, not only from New Zealand, but several from Australia and Fiji. Many were meditators from our Community.

The sessions did not address the complex ethical issues involved in contemporary healthcare services, but rather on providing holistic care for the sick or dying person that

responded to their needs as a human being with a spiritual nature. In busy healthcare institutions oriented by technological therapies, finding silence and time for such a caring approach is challenging. Various speakers talked about how their own spiritual orientation and meditation practice enabled them to be responsive to the individual whom they were caring for in their professional practice. Some of the presentations will be on the *Meditatio* website, including a talk by NZCCM Community Member, Vincent Maire, who, along with two fellow hospice spiritual carers, spoke on the contemplative care of the dying.

The Seminar was chaired by Dr John Collins, a Nephrologist and Associate Professor at the University of Auckland. “We had 140 people attend the Seminar, which is remarkable given mid-January is peak holiday time. Our speakers did justice to the topic of contemplative care and we have received great feedback from the people who attended the event. It exceeded our expectations in many ways,” Dr Collins said. Organizing such an event required considerable time and effort over many months from a small group. However, given the success of this initial Seminar, it may be followed in due course by another focussing on a different topic such as the environment.

✠



Panel session at the Meditatio Seminar. Dr John Collins is at the podium. Dr John chaired the Seminar.

Oblates plan ahead at the Light & Shade Retreat

22 WCCM Oblates, including several from Australia, attended the “Light & Shade” National Retreat held at the Waikato University.

Fr Laurence had a meeting with the Oblate Group during the Retreat which included five new people, two of whom, Raymond and Maureen Eberhart, made their initial commitment as Oblates.

At that meeting it was announced that, over the next year, Jo Ward would gradually take over the leadership of the New Zealand WCCM Oblate Group from Hugh McLaughlin, who has led it for many years. Thanks were expressed for Hugh’s pastoral care of individual Oblates, which has contributed greatly towards the continuing growth of the Group over the years.

Fr Laurence asked about the value that members of the Group found in being Oblates. He suggested that Bonnevaux would provide a base where the communal aspect of Oblate life could be developed in new ways, ways that could provide exemplars for Oblate Groups around the world.

Two Oblates, Kathy Egan and Teresa Manion-Wood, made their final Oblation with Fr Laurence during the Mass that ended the Retreat; a happy event for them and the NZ Oblate Group. ✕



Kathy Egan and Teresa Manion-Wood making their final Oblation



Fr Laurence Freeman meeting with Oblates Group during Light & Shade Retreat

Pacifica Women Reflect on the Meditatio Seminar



Paulina Ifopo, Peta Tulia and Sesilia Moniati with Linda Polaschek

Funding from The Mother Aubert Home of Compassion Trust Board enabled three Pacifica women, Paulina Ifopo, Peta Tulia and Sesilia Moniati, each with caregiving roles in health and education, to attend the Meditatio Seminar. Paulina and Peta also attended the Retreat. As Pacifica people they were very happy to welcome people to the Seminar and spend time with our Fijian visitors for whom the Seminar was an unusual experience. Sesilia came with her Taovala - traditional Tongan costume - to be truly present in this role.

The Pacifica women were impressed by the honesty and simplicity of the presenters, even though they were highly educated professionals. The Seminar could have been intimidating for some, but they felt there was a very accepting atmosphere in which they could be themselves and talk freely with other participants from different backgrounds. Peta said "it was a pleasure to hear different points of view in a joyful atmosphere." They felt this reflected Fr Laurence's words that "Ego will dress itself up in any way to appear humble to fool others, but in meditation you face the fact you are only trying to fool yourself".

The Pacifica women appreciated hearing different points of view presented throughout the Seminar, stimulating their own conversations. For example, the directness of Tony Fernando about the mind and happiness ("Don't be poo collectors, be egg collectors"), led to a discussion about the importance of attitudes and gratitude, as they put it, "about how you think takes you

and others down. How collecting eggs lifts us and others up, and how this relates to meditation and God's love". As Peta said, "we need to relocate our attitudes", and Paulina "at the end of the day be grateful and recollect yourself".

Peta was struck by the difference between curing and healing. "The body can be cured sometimes. Healing can always happen, healing is interior and supported by families and communities". Paulina noted, "Healing is a process. When there is connection, healing takes place. We connect by giving our attention". Sesilia said "As a caregiver I found it so helpful talking to and listening to others from medical teams. I have more knowledge about what to do when people are dying and the importance of being present." In his talks Fr Laurence linked it all together, attention, being present, meditation and healing. Attention is being fully alive and present. Meditation practice trains our attention so we can be more fully present. Being present with the person who is sick helps in their healing.

All three women expressed their profound appreciation of the funding from The Mother Aubert Home of Compassion Trust Board and have sent a card expressing their gratitude to Sr Sue Cosgrove, a NZCCM member and CM group leader at the Wellington Home of Compassion. The NZCCM Council joins with Paulina, Peta and Sesilia in thanking the Home of Compassion Trust Board. Many thanks also go to Charmaine Tolich, Auckland Co-ordinator, for arranging the practical details for their attendance and for providing the material for this report.



The Spirit of Truth

by Ross Miller

... the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. John 14:17

It is important to understand that contemplative life and prayer is not some cosy escape route from difficult truth and the often harsh realities of life. Just the opposite. These days, when I don't inhabit a pulpit any more, there is sometimes a distant urge to get back up there and say some of the things I might have said more clearly long ago. For instance, that there is only one truth in the universe. There is not one truth of mathematics and another truth of God. There is not the truth of science and the truth of religion. There is not one truth of nuclear physics and another truth of the Bible. It is not a question of what you or I believe, or what we call our faith, but of what is, whether we believe it or not. But, as St. Paul said, we see what is, *dimly - darkly*, says the King James version - the Greek word is actually *enigma*. The contemplative person, through prayer, silence, stillness, is learning to live with

this inescapable mystery - and it actually comes to many as a very great freedom.

Jesus, according to John's Gospel, said that his followers would come to know the *Spirit of Truth*. Well, I think we do, once we discover how to hold our tongues, be still and listen to God's silence.

One of our important contemplative writers, Kathleen Norris, went to a church in Chicago where the minister was actually a highly qualified scientist. He told her of what he called a wonderful irony - he said the science that many Christians had felt over the centuries to be our greatest threat ... is now teaching us the ancient truth about mystery, a truth that once long ago was ours - that when it comes to ultimate truth, the most appropriate posture is modesty, silence, reverence, not propounding, shouting, condemning, excommunicating.

... the Spirit of truth, says Jesus, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because

he abides with you, and he will be in you.

There is that word *abide* again. To the writer of John's Gospel this is a very special word. Jesus speaks to his disciples of a mutual abiding, he in them and they in him. It is more and deeper than simply belonging or believing, or doing lots of good works. It is a relationship not negotiable, and it certainly has nothing to do with the contemporary wisdom of keeping your options open, never burning your bridges. This abiding embraces doubt and mystery.

Jesus' disciples do not understand everything. Typically, we understand very little. But we are learning to set ego to one side - and so we are able to stand aside and admit the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit brings us the humility and attention to see and understand, and to embrace the mystery. We find we are no longer afraid of truth - if it is true, then it is of God.

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



Meditation makes for better judgement by Sean Hagan

As soon as I was appointed IMF General Counsel, the range of issues expanded exponentially. I felt that I had lost control of my agenda. I would come in to work with a list of things to be done and by the end of the day none of those things had been done. The list had gotten longer. I found myself not being able to focus on anything, because I was being asked to focus on too many things. That is one of the reasons why my daily practice of meditation has been so helpful for me. As you know, meditation is effectively about learning to be in the present moment. It's not easy because our thoughts place us either firmly in the past or firmly in the future. As John Main said, it is about developing a "spirit of attention".

What I found is that to the extent to which I could retain that spirit of attention outside my meditation, it would have

important benefits. Dealing with a multitude of issues became easier. Instead of panicking, I would learn to just focus on a specific task in front of me. To be here now.

The second benefit of meditation is in the decision-making process. It is in some respects more important and more profound for me. It relates not to the process but to the quality of the decisions. A key benefit is that it helps you develop a degree of detachment. I think the Dalai Lama uses the word "equanimity". By letting your thoughts go, you realize that you have thoughts but you are not your thoughts. You are something bigger, better than those thoughts.

It's important not to view this detachment as a form of disengagement. That is one of the problems I have with the word

"detachment". It suggests that you're disengaging. Rather it gives you the benefit to actually engage more effectively. It helped me engage more effectively. So many of our thoughts are unconscious, we are often driven by them, not just random ideas, broken narratives, but also emotions, anxieties, anger. By separating ourselves from them, by creating this "space", using Laurence's word, they basically have less power over us. It enables us to see things more clearly, as they really are, rather than as distorted by our narratives, our fears, our emotions, our fantasies. This equanimity, this detachment, has enabled me to exercise better judgment.

Reprinted with permission from
Meditatio, November 2018 issue



Listening to the daily news with a contemplative heart:

The Power of Silence

*The fifth in a series of talks by Glenda Meakin given
at a Silent Retreat held in Canada, March 2010.*



I'd like to reflect with you on what silence does for our vision, what sitting in the temple of our hearts does when we allow Christ to clear out the clutter by the Spirit of Christ, what the silence does for our vision; what it enables us to see of God being made manifest in every situation.

First of all the silence helps you and me realise the extent to which we do live in a time of information overload. We're sinking under the weight of all this information. We have far more information than we can bear. It is estimated that if you and I read only the weekend edition of a city newspaper, if that is all we read, we will have taken in as many images, ideas, and as much information, as a person in the middle ages would have taken in during a lifetime. What the silence of meditation does is cleanse our perceptions and help us to see more clearly the degree to which we are inundated by the daily news. So we are able to name – that great Biblical word of importance – *name* what is going on. Only then can we respond and decide what to do about that information overload.

And it is the silence that sets up that understanding, that perception of just how much information – notice I didn't use the word knowledge or wisdom, but information – is coming at us. I think too that the gentleness of our meditation practice helps us to realise there are no spaces in the daily news. So many of our images and ideas come through the hot medium of television. Television just keeps adding on the images and words one after another, versus the cool medium of print where you and I can read a line or a paragraph, and stop and reflect and ask ourselves: What is that saying to me? What is that calling me to do? Where am I to be? In television there are no spaces for reflection; no spaces for pondering, for holding the weight of the thought, of the words; no spaces for pondering what we have seen and heard, before any response can take place. And what meditation does in its gentleness is remind us of space, breath, openness, weight.

You and I often speak about the ways in which Christian meditation creates community. In sharing the silence you and I experience a deep connectedness to one another. Yet so often the daily news gives us horrifying images of bombings and body parts lying in the streets, and then it juxtaposes these images with commercials for shiny hair and laundry soap. What do these images do to our hearts and minds, and sense of human connectedness?

We need the silence so that we not only feel our connectedness but we live from that sense that we are all one, brothers and sisters in Christ. The more you and I meditate, the more we become aware of the silence opening our hearts to the gentleness of God towards us. God comes in Word made flesh as a child so that you and I can first receive and then grow into his likeness. There is no manipulation, no forcing of God's self upon us. No coercion. And that is so true in meditation. You and I in trust open our hearts to the silence, to the presence of the Spirit of Christ, and there we are given the freedom to respond and the spaciousness we need to grow. In silence, you and I are called to a deeper, richer life, not to spin, nor to management of the news we receive, and not to a dumbing down of life.

And one of the gifts of silence is that it restores for us paradoxically the importance and the power of words, and especially of God's word to us in scripture, in Christ. And in those words you and I are presented with an alternative vision for human life, for all creation. The more you and I enter into the silence, the more powerfully those words speak to us and empower us. There are so many ways the silence drives you and me deeper and deeper into life. Not just for our own life but so that you and I are empowered to bring the healing words of love to the Aldonzas of this world. So that you and I not only speak about the alternative vision Jesus teaches and lives, but that we do our part to make it real. We have to first have the vision before we can offer it to others.

It is paradoxically the silence of meditation that enables you and me to assess the words, and the meaning of the words we hear and the images we see in the daily news. It is also because of the silence of meditation that you and I learn how and when to respond to the daily news with compassion and action. I'd like to end with a quotation from John Main's *Moment of Christ*:

The words we use in trying to communicate the Christian message in the Christian experience, have to be charged with strength and power, but they can only be charged with strength and power if they spring from the spirit of our inner being. Learning to say your mantra, leaving behind other words, ideas, imaginations and fantasies, is learning to enter into the presence of the Spirit who dwells in your inner heart, who dwells there in love. The spirit of God dwells in our hearts in silence, and it is in humility and faith that we must enter into that silent presence. ✕

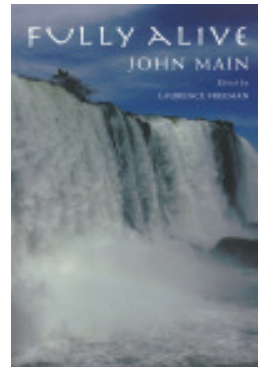
New on Pleroma Shelves: *by Shirley Duthie*

Fully Alive: John Main (edited by Laurence Freeman)

Published in 2013 using material from the weekly meditation groups that met at John Main's monastery, this book really is essential reading for all meditators, from those early on the journey through to the most experienced, all will find new understanding and encouragement in the clarity and simplicity of John Main's teaching. The book is arranged in three parts: In the Beginning, Being on the Way and Fully Alive, and is a practical prayer companion for every stage of the contemplative pilgrimage. A copy circulating around a meditation group will give every member a personal refresher course. Laurence Freeman says "*I hope that many readers of this book will be disturbed and enriched by what he (John Main) says and the deceptively simple way in which he says it*".

98pp. \$29.99.

<https://www.christiansupplies.co.nz/product/9781848255593/fully-alive-the-daily-path-of-christian-meditation/>

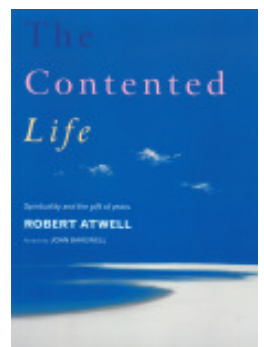


The Contented Life: Robert Atwell

A book about spirituality and the gift of years, this will resonate with older meditators, affirming and complementing their spiritual growth. It can be easy to live in the past but many of us have found that retirement can be a time to discover the essence of life; to "mine the seams of spirituality and faith" (author's comment). This is not a book about meditation, it is a book about maturing spirituality which is the rich dining hall into which we step through the door of meditation. It is a gentle book that gently takes us through the hard questions. Published in 2011, this is a gem that has only this year become accessible to us.

98pp. \$19.99.

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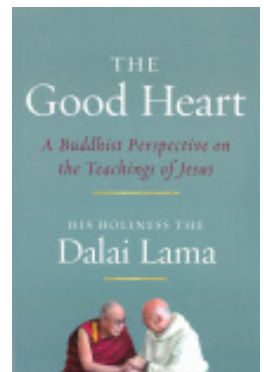


The Good Heart: The Dalai Lama

His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives us an extraordinary Buddhist perspective on the teachings of Jesus which has been praised as the best published book on interfaith dialogue. Published in 2016 this is a reprint of the 1996 classic that captured the proceedings of the 1994 John Main Seminar with the addition of further contextual material from both Buddhist and Christian traditions. It takes spiritual maturity to risk reading "outside" commentary, but the Dalai Lama delivers a profound affirmation of the sacred in all religions. Readers will be uplifted by the exploration of each tradition's merits and the common humanity they share. "To hear the Dalai Lama reflecting on the Gospels is exciting, refreshing, and illuminating, reminding those of us who are Christians that this is a living Word." Diana L. Eck, Harvard University.

208pp. \$34.99.

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Mystics: the Beauty of Prayer: Craig Larkin SM

This introduction to 20 mystics and spiritual teachers was initially published as "An Inner Music", in a limited edition in NZ just after the author's death, and is now republished by Columba in Ireland. Throughout history, writes Craig Larkin, there have been countless people who have experienced God in liberating and joyful ways. Foremost among them are the mystics and spiritual teachers of the Church who *have experienced God as someone who has set them free and brought light to their lives*. This book provides a fascinating introduction to 20 mystics and spiritual teachers. The author, a gifted teacher and communicator, also offers a series of down-to-earth reflections on how these profound insights can help transform our lives. Features photography from Wellington's St Mary of the Angels Church.

291pp. \$34.99

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Questions & Answers: *by Shirley Duthie*

Q: *How long will it be before I can detect any personal growth from my Christian Meditation practice?*

A: Most of us are rather good at self criticism and, while we don't "do" Christian Meditation to change personal attitudes and behaviour, most of us hope for change. Also, knowing of our Creator's love for us, we anticipate that some of the fruits of meditation will be personal growth in the fruits of the spirit.¹ My experience is that change is observed retrospectively, i.e. a realisation that a usually irritating situation or person was easier to handle, more trust in waiting for a situation to unfold, less need for noise, growing to a delight in silence and peace, and a growing confidence to own, even rejoice in, my weaknesses. The graces or gifts unfolding in each person will, of course, be different. I have noticed, and John Main seems to confirm this² that the discipline of regular meditation brings the most discernable spiritual/personal growth. Having said all that, we meditate simply to enter into "that stream of pure prayer" without expectations.³

Q: *Is it alright to pray in tongues during my time of meditation?*

A: Laurence Freeman often uses the analogy of the spokes of a wheel to clarify the value of various types of prayer. All valuable, all leading to the hub that turns the wheel. If you have the gift of Tongues then using it during praise and worship, or even in private prayer is appropriate. During meditation we are instructed to "pray the mantra". John Main says it is very simple "just keep your attention on the mantra" and if at any time you realise you are not praying the mantra, simply return to it.⁴

Q: *Perhaps I was being proud, but when I told my group leader I was meditating for an hour several times a week to make up for the times I missed meditation, he said that was not a good idea. I felt "put down".*

A: Your enthusiasm in wanting to meditate was positive, but I suspect that your group leader was wanting you to understand the importance of John Main's insistence on the discipline (see first question) of meditation. At the recent Retreat with Fr Laurence Freeman, he also stressed this saying that, wherever possible, to use the same time of the day so that meditation is anchored into your pattern of living. John Main does not recommend meditation periods of longer than 30 minutes.⁵

¹ Letter to Galations 5:22

² John Main: *Fully Alive* p.34

³ John Main: *Fully Alive* p.57

⁴ John Main: *Fully Alive* p.36

⁵ John Main: *Fully Alive* p.36

Q & A - A place for your questions relating 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 Christian Meditation and related subjects.



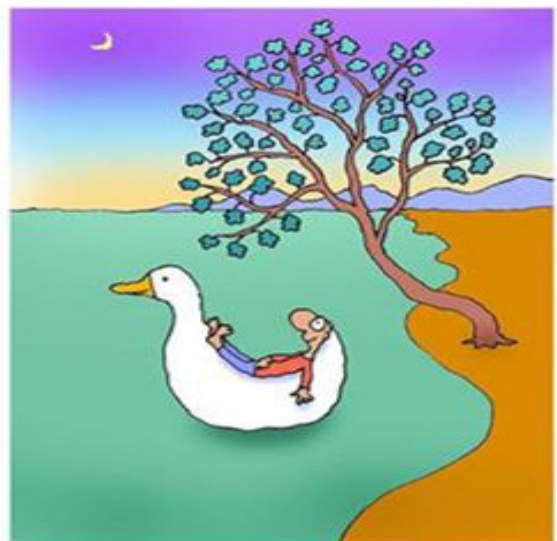
*Send questions to
sjmduthie@gmail.com*

Sender's name not disclosed without permission

JOMO (Joy Of Missing Out.)

Oh the joy of missing out.
When the world begins to shout
And rush towards that shining thing;
The latest bit of mental bling –
Trying to have it, see it, do it,
You simply know you won't go through it;
The anxious clamouring and need
This restless hungry thing to feed.

Instead, you feel the loveliness;
The pleasure of your emptiness.
You spurn the treasure on the shelf
In favour of your peaceful self;
Without regret, without a doubt.
Oh the joy of missing out.



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Events Calendar: (more details available in Events Calendar at NZCCM website)

- March 1 - 3** **Waikato Retreat “Enriching the Pilgrimage”**
led by Raymond Eberhard. *(all places taken).*
- March 9** **Christchurch Community Day**
1:00 - 4:00, Methodist Church Hall, cnr Chapel Street and Harewood Road,
Contact: Chris Wilson, cwilson@expensereduction.com
- March 12** **Introduction to Christian Meditation** seminar begins
Tuesdays 12th, 19th, 26th March and 2nd April
St Thomas’ Church Hall, 29 Church Street, Kawakawa, Northland.
Contact: Michael Dougherty md1@outlook.co.nz 09.4365663
- March 22-24** **Hawkes Bay, Manawatu and Taranaki Leaders and emerging Leaders’ Retreat**
at Southern Star Abbey, Hawkes Bay. Contact: Shirley Duthie sjmduthie@gmail.com
- March 23** **Wellington Community Day**
Home of Compassion, Island Bay. 9.30am for 10.00am start,
Sr Sue Cosgrove on *Suzanne Aubert* 2.00pm Contemplative Mass with Fr John Pettit
Contact: Elspeth Preddey elspeth.preddey@xtra.co.nz
- March 23** **Auckland Community Day,**
Tracing the Unbroken Tradition with Caryl Haley, Venue: home of Tim & Rosemary Auld,
748 Waitakere Road, Kumeu. Contact: Charmainne Tolich 09.2667651 ctolich@me.com
or Vincent Maire 027.276.6032 vincentmaire12@gmail.com
- March 30** **BOP/Waikato Community Day**
St Joseph’s Catholic Church, 28 Mueller St, Waihi. Theme: *Trappist Fr Thomas Keating*,
Leader Raewyn Blair. Contact: Damian Robertson, dae.pete@outlook.com
- April 27** **Whangarei Community Day**
Meditation and Recovery, 9.30am to 3.00pm, Anglican Hall,
Cnr Deveron Street/Kamo Road, Regent, Whangarei.
Contact: Michael Dougherty, md1@outlook.co.nz 09.436.5663
- May 24-26** **Essential Teaching Weekend,**
Tyburn Monastery near Rotorua, Contact: Damian Robertson, dae.pete@outlook.com
- May 25** **Christchurch Community Day**
1:00pm - 4:00pm, Methodist Church hall, cnr Chapel Street and Harewood Road.
Contact: Chris Wilson, cwilson@expensereduction.com
- June 22** **Hawkes Bay, Manawatu & Taranaki Regional Day**
Southern Star Abbey, Contact: Shirley Duthie, sjmduthie@gmail.com
- July 20** **BOP/Waikato Community Day,**
St Mary’s Catholic Church Hall, Ranolf Street, Glenholme, Rotorua.
Theme: *Contemplative Reflections*. Leader Damian Robertson.
Contact: Damian Robertson, dae.pete@outlook.com
- July 26-28** **Auckland Retreat, St Francis Retreat Centre.**
Contact: Charmainne Tolich, ctolich@me.com
- July 29** **Auckland, NZCCM AGM, St Francis Retreat Centre.**
Contact: Linda Polaschek, nandlpolaschek@gmail.com
- August 17** **Christchurch Community Day,**
10:00am - 3:00pm, Methodist Church hall, cnr Chapel Street and Harewood Road.
Contact: Chris Wilson, cwilson@expensereduction.com
- August 31** **Introduction to Meditation in the Christian Tradition**
presenter Vincent Maire. Vaughan Park Anglican Retreat Centre, Long Bay, Auckland.
To register visit www.vaughanpark.nz
- September 28** **Hawkes Bay, Manawatu & Taranaki Regional Day**
Southern Star Abbey, Contact: Shirley Duthie, sjmduthie@gmail.com
- October 4-6** **Essential Teaching Weekend**
Tyburn Monastery near Rotorua. Contact: Damian Robertson, dae.pete@outlook.com
- October 26** **Christchurch Community Day**
1:00pm - 4:00pm, Methodist Church Hall, cnr Chapel Street and Harewood Road.
Contact: Chris Wilson, cwilson@expensereduction.com

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EASTER

Wait here, keep awake.

Collapsing in anguish
surpassing imagination
sensing hopeless isolation
sudden fear came over him
his soul sorrowful unto death.

Wait here, keep awake.

Tentatively we make time to pray
so as not to be tested.

And we learn the hard lesson
to sit with our vulnerability and weakness
witnessing a growing sorrow in our depths
beyond imagining of a
sense of self, cut off, isolated.

A budding sheer grace blossoms forth,
an emerging longing creating
an opening, a receptivity to
God's grace of loving embrace.

In a trust-filled silence
we wait for the lifting of
the veil of blindness
revealing the Light of
a new transforming Dawn.

Get up, let us go forth.

Michael Dougherty. 2018

