



Stillpoint



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

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Eva Natanya

Resurrection in Christian Life

What it would take to believe so firmly in resurrection — both Christ's glorification and the promise of our own — that our lives would be radically transformed by that faith right now?

In this one-day retreat, Eva Natanya will guide us through core themes from the award-winning book that she co-authored with Veronica Mary Rolf, called *Living Resurrected Lives: What it Means and Why it Matters* (Cascade Books, 2020).

Balancing careful consideration of sacred Scripture with attention to history, theology, inter-contemplative dialogue, and personal meditation practice, Eva will seek to:

- * Offer compelling arguments to help us establish a bedrock for belief in the Gospel accounts
- * Elucidate St. Paul's teachings on the transformation of the body in resurrection: What dies? What lives on?
- * Revisit early Christian intuitions about the sublime qualities of the glorified body and explore how we might cultivate such qualities through our own individual practice
- * Propose an embodied resurrection mysticism that can permeate - and transform our lived practice every day.

3 December 2022, Christchurch

Venue & time to be advised see NZCCM website

Websites to visit:

christianmeditationnz.org.nz
wccm.org
wccmaustralia.org.au
christianmeditation.org.uk
bonnevauxwccm.org

Dr. Eva Natanya has served in many capacities as a practitioner, scholar, translator, and teacher of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, Christian theology, and comparative religion. Following a nine-year career as a professional ballet dancer with both the New York City Ballet and the Royal Ballet of England, she earned an MA in Christian Systematic Theology at the Graduate Theological Union, and a PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Virginia. She has spent more than three years in solitary meditation retreat, and now serves as hermitage director and resident teacher at the Centre for Contemplative Research at Miyo Samten Ling in Crestone, Colorado.



Stillpoint Editor

Applications are now being sought for the role of Editor for the NZCCM Newsletter *Stillpoint*, effective from 1st February 2023. *Stillpoint* is our quarterly newsletter, issued in March, June, September and December.

The role of *Stillpoint* Editor includes:

- * Liaising with the National Co-ordinator re each issue. This involves notifying the Co-ordinator of the deadline for each edition (usually two weeks before the month of issue). The National Co-ordinator and National Council request/arrange items for publication.
- * Managing editing, layout and publishing of each issue. This requires some ability in using (or willingness to learn) a publishing template.
- * Sending the draft *Stillpoint* to the National Co-ordinator for proofreading.
- * Providing a PDF copy to the Webmaster for distribution via NZCCM Website.
- * Arranging printing and distribution of each issue to those who have requested a posted copy.
- * Maintaining newsletter archives.
- * Liaising with the Membership Secretary re postal addresses of those members requesting hard copies.

The Editor is not expected to write for the newsletter themselves but may source material from the WCCM website or other relevant sources, to supplement local material.

We are looking for a person who is a practising meditator in the Christian tradition, and a member of the NZ Community for Christian Meditation.

If interested, please contact the NZCCM National Co-ordinator:

Linda Polaschek

12 Everest Street Khandallah, Wellington 6035

Phone: 04.479.7955 or 020 4797955

Email: nandlpolaschek@gmail.com

The new Editor will have the support and encouragement of the NZCCM Council, which they will be welcome to join. ✕

Obituary Paul Edwards

Long-time meditation community member Paul Edwards died on 12th August. For a good number of years Paul led a group at Windsor Park Baptist church in Mairangi Bay. He was a regular at community days and weekend retreats. Paul was a deeply spiritual man and very much a gentle soul.; a true contemplative. Paul's family was with him when he died. He was in his 90s and was loved by all who knew him. R.I.P Paul.

*contributed by
Vincent Maire*

Sacred Art & the Unseen God

**Auckland Community Day
24th September 2022**

Sacred Art and the Image of the Unseen God. Icons aim to draw the viewer into deeper spiritual communion with the unseen God. Icon writer Michael Pervan of the Studio of St John the Baptist will introduce us to the contemplative aspects of viewing icons and other forms of sacred art.

Venue to be advised.

**Contact: Vincent Maire,
vincentmaire12@gmail**

Wellington Region Community Day

11th June 2022

a report from Anne Cave

On a stormy, wet Saturday, 20 intrepid people travelled from throughout the Wellington and Kapiti regions for our first Community Day this year. Thanks to our hosts, Shirley Duthie and the group that meets at Sts. Peter & Paul Lower Hutt, we were warm, snug and well looked after.

The day was led by Rev. Jenny Dawson, Anglican priest, spiritual director and very experienced leader of retreats and quiet days. Jenny took as her theme for the day *Desert and Wilderness Spirituality*.

After a welcoming cuppa and meditation, Jenny's first talk was on *Seeking Desert Spirituality* (Matt 4:1-2). The small group sharing that followed, considered the questions:

- * Separateness has been described as "a very powerful illusion" by Peter Owen Jones, but do we need to pursue it?
- * How does physical setting shape our prayer?

Jenny's second talk focused on *The Desert as a Place of Mystery and Myth* (Matt 3:1-3) and discussion centred on:

- * "We should keep the dead close" (Moffat).
How does this shape our living now?
- * How is this different in what we call the "thin" places in Aotearoa?
- * Emulation and example: what do saints, and their places, mean for you?

After lunch and meditation, Jenny's last talk was on *Abandonment* (Matt 27:45-46)

- * How have you survived spiritual wilderness?
- * How does it help to remember where you have come from and through?

We have found that sharing in random, changing small groups, without feedback to the larger group, is a powerful way for people to share their experience. I came away awed at the sharing I had been privileged to be part of. Jenny's wide and creative, but scripture based, talks gave me ideas and questions to mull over throughout the following week.

Thank you so much for driving through the storm from Pukerua Bay to Lower Hutt to lead this day, Jenny!



Prayer focus table;



Small Group Discussion



Rev. Jenny Dawson leading a session

Wellington Community Day

Saturday 5th November 2022

Marcelle Room, Home of Compassion,
2 Rhine Street, Island Bay, Wellington

Meditative reading:
the art of *Lectio Divina*
led by Jo Ward.

Enquiries contact: Anne Cave
Phone: 022.097.2939
Email: annecave@gmail.com



Obituary Chris Wilson

Chris Wilson, former co-ordinator of the Christchurch groups, member of the NZCCM National Council, and un-failingly generous supporter of Christian Meditation in Christchurch, died in June after a long illness. His unassuming cheerfulness and humour remained with him throughout all those uncertain years, and endeared him to all Christchurch meditators. He was still taking part in a Zoom group two weeks before he died, and at the funeral Mass at Christ the King Church, (where he had first encountered Christian Meditation), Fr. Rick Loughnan, speaking of going into our inner room, said that Chris told had him that the best path to interiority for him was the practice of Christian Meditation.

Chris helped to establish two new groups in the city, and was a characteristically fearless and whole-hearted advocate for the practice, in person and in print. Although he was not himself a WCCM Oblate, he loved to join in the first part of the monthly cell meetings of the Christchurch Oblates, meditating and reciting Vespers with them.

Chris lived life to the full, and gave of himself unstintingly to the Christchurch Meditation Community. We remember him gratefully, with respect and affection. ✠

Meditation at Delta Community Support Trust in Christchurch

by Margaret Nouwens

It has been a funny couple of years for us all. Many of the groups I normally attend have been on hold so I was delighted when Delta brought back their Friday Café so I could resume my meditation group there.

Delta Community Support Trust is an holistic social work organisation. It used to be attached to the North Avon Baptist Church, but the church folded, due to lack of numbers. However, Delta continues to offer support to the marginalised of our community and the wider city. It runs an “Evergreen” day relief programme for the elderly, a “Friendship Link” group for the mentally challenged, and community programmes for our community. These latter include a foodbank, budgeting advice, a community meal once a week and a café twice a week, plus various other courses aimed at those who slip through the cracks in our society. I have usually run my meditation group around the Friday lunch, but the lunch went into abeyance during the first lockdown. Now that there is a café on a Friday, I have started my meditation group up again.

The group is made up of people from various walks of life, some who struggle mentally and others who are more able. The routine is this: we begin with the meditation prayer; have a 15-20 minute meditation, (depending on whether we have newcomers); a short reading from Henri Nouwen’s *You are the Beloved* for the appropriate date; and end with the New Zealand version of the closing prayer. We have Jeff who always says the prayers and takes great pride in doing so. This seems to be manageable for most who attend and we have a core of 4-5 people. Many are able to take the practice into their lives and benefit from it. It has been a source of joy to me to once again have this group up and running — and with some new members!

Margaret Nouwens is a Christchurch meditator and Oblate, who for several years, was a warm and efficient welcomer and front person at our Christchurch Community Days. She also for some time led a meditation group in the suburb of Shirley and, as the article above shows, is using a simplified meeting plan for meditators at Delta Community Outreach, faithfully guiding the group each week. Margie’s sensitive initiative reminds us that we are called to find ways to make our meditation practice accessible to all. ✠

Oceans of God

The Story of NZCCM



Available from
Linda Polaschek

\$45.00 per copy plus p& p
nandlpolaschek@gmail.com

NZCCM TRUST

As a registered charity our NZCCM Trust lodges a performance report and financial statement with NZ Charities Services each year. We have six trustees (Fr. Peter Murphy, Jane Hole, Vincent Maire, Linda Polaschek, Maureen Eberhard, Damian Robertson). Our midyear Council meeting becomes our AGM as we take the time to review the year and discuss matters in more depth. The NZCCM Council is made up of all those with a specific role, eg regional co-ordinator, treasurer, secretary, *Stillpoint* editor, webmistress, School Co-ordinator. Anyone who takes on one of these roles automatically becomes a member of the Council. If you think you could be interested in joining us on the Council, feel free to talk with any Council member about possible ways in which you could contribute. We welcome all those with a desire to support and promote Christian Meditation.

One Council discussion this July was around the allocation of financial assistance for those who would like to attend NZCCM events but are financially constrained. Here are the guidelines we agreed. Any comments or feedback are welcome – feel free to contact me: Linda Polaschek, National Co-ordinator NZCCM.

Guidelines for Allocation of financial assistance for NZCCM and WCCM events:

NZCCM seeks to enable all who wish to attend CM events to be able to do so. While keeping our fees as low as possible, NZCCM recognises that these fees can still be out of reach for some members. We invite members to let us know if they are unable to attend an event due to their constrained financial situation. This document provides guidance on allocating financial assistance.

Principles:

1. NZCCM does not seek to make a profit from its events.
2. Events are priced on a cost recovery basis.
3. To support those in financially constrained circumstances, NZCCM invites those who are better off to donate additional funds to enable reductions in fees to others in need.
4. Funding may be offered to a person for a NZCCM or a WCCM event when it is known that this person would contribute actively to the CM community, and also would not be able to attend if financial support was not available. Such offers will generally be made when the learning and development from the event will, in some way, contribute to the ongoing work of CM; or the person is needed to help run the event they will be attending.

Funding Allocation Guide:

Any person may seek funding support, by talking with, emailing or writing to the event organiser with the amount they wish to be funded and the reason for their request.

The event organiser consults another Council member about applications for less than \$500. When applications are for more than \$500, given that there are sufficient NZCCM funds available, at least three Council members, preferably those who know the potential recipient, must agree. Once the decision is agreed, it is communicated by a Council member to the applicant.

Priority will be given to:

1. Meditators who currently contribute to, or have the potential to contribute, in concrete ways;
2. Those who have significant additional expenses, eg travel
3. Those who have not received NZCCM financial support in the previous three years;

Review:

This process to be reviewed tri-annually, or more often as required.
Discussed by NZCCM Council and agreed, July 2022



Meditators on Meditation & Marriage

the experiences of those who do both

a review by Jane Hole

This valuable collection of short reflections, from 27 meditators from all over the world, is the brainchild of two meditators: Liz Watson from the UK and Gene Bebeau from the USA. In her introduction to the collection, Liz writes:

“... we simply asked people from around the World Community for Christian Meditation for ‘a reflection on your practice of Christian Meditation and how it has affected your own marriage relationship,’ adding “It seems to us that the word marriage encompasses all sorts of relationships thriving or surviving in all sorts of circumstances. This will include some which have broken down permanently or temporarily, some which have been severed by death of one of the partners, and some of you may have experience of more than one marriage.” Liz tells the reader: ‘Perhaps these pieces will serve to . . . allow the experience of serious, committed people to begin to be heard, people serious about their partnerships and committed to their meditation practice. These are not ‘ideal’ marriages, or ‘perfect’ contemplatives, but people with real marriages and real prayer lives discovering they have something to say.’”

In his Foreword, Fr. Laurence wrote, of the editors:

“They have produced a beautiful and unique book, a choir of voices in harmony, simple, moving, yet of profound significance for our time. A conjugal theology.”

On my first readings of *Meditation and Marriage*, as I am married myself, I was particularly aware of how the reflections related to my own marriage and meditation practice, with their joys and inevitable problems. I was comforted to realise how much of my own experience was universal. The reflections suggested ways I hadn’t thought of for living lovingly within both my commitments.

But this book holds wisdom for every meditator. Not everyone is called to marriage. In his Foreword, Fr. Laurence writes movingly of monastic and married life as two distinct but related paths to God. And surely all states of life and the long-term relationships they enfold — if they have been offered to us by Love and are accepted and sustained by love, are also

sacred. All of us have significant experience of someone else’s marriage — our parents, other family members or friends. And marriage isn’t the only long-

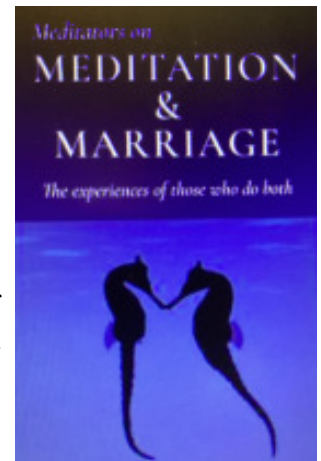
term relationship. The reflections in these pages have even helped me to find better ways of living within those enduring relationships that circumstances themselves bring about — with neighbours and work colleagues.

Those who marry expect a long-term relationship and many still view it as essentially a lifelong commitment. One meditator, looking at his society’s obsession with instant gratification and perfectionism, says that puzzling questions about marriage arise from this perspective:

“Why should I continue to live with a person who’s getting older, who I know so well, and who I have to take care of? Why should I bother? Isn’t it easier to simply change partners instead of accepting him/her every single day? It’s definitely easier to change partners than ourselves. But meditation has taught this writer to take a different and a longer view of marriage. He says It’s the work of a lifetime.”

Below are some of many reflections in the book that throw light on the truths of meditation and marriage — and of other close and sustained relationships.

- Our spiritual needs are stronger than any conflicts there are. To sit each morning and evening together softens the conflicts and sharpens our minds...
- Even during periods of disagreement and unhappiness when we have found it hard to discuss our feelings, we have stuck with our shared meditation practice, trusting that this would help us to find a way through our difficulties.
- For those of us who are able to meditate daily, I believe it’s important for us to reflect on the fact that the doing of it has the potential to threaten, however mildly, or even alienate, a partner who doesn’t understand what meditation is. (It may be helpful here if we remind ourselves that meditators take a



long time to come to an understanding of what meditation is about!).

- My wife . . . is a deeply contemplative person who doesn't meditate as I do, but who finds solitude and great peace in gardening. But, even though we don't meditate together, I have no doubt that both of our contemplative practices have influenced our marriage relationship for the better...
- Faithfulness ... in marriage and meditation, calls on us to live life from the understanding that the commitment we have made is grounded in a love that is deeper than ourselves and to acknowledge, as John O'Donohue expresses it, that 'there is nothing more intimate in a human life than the hidden inner landscape where Love anchors'...
- Both marriage and meditation hold a mirror up to us, allowing us to see with fresh eyes how we have developed habitual, often familial, ways of dealing with life's challenges and show us, sometimes with great humour and sometimes painfully, how such habits are often defensive and unhelpful in life and in relationship...
- Twice daily meditation doesn't find the answers ... It helps me to take time away from them, to settle down and help the answers find themselves...
- After I began meditating ... I began to notice what I call an unexpected pause prior to my responses during exchanges — especially tense exchanges or arguments. I just wasn't as immediately reactive for a few seconds into a response but through no conscious effort on my part... Inherent in the pause lies the capacity to wait ... the subtle movement of the pause gradually revolutionised the way we related, primarily by allowing at least one of us to step out of the competition and begin to pay closer attention to the other with consequent slow but steady reciprocity...
- Thanks to the practice of recognising and letting go of ideas and thoughts, I started to notice that in many ways I was the builder of my own prison
- I now consider real love to be an endless dance of being too close or too far from someone else...when you are too involved you can easily lose track of what's real and what the couple's fears or ghosts are...
- As Fr. John and Fr. Laurence have taught, no matter how long we have been meditating, we are all beginners. We are always learning a new alphabet...

Meditators on Meditation and Marriage is available as a print book from Pleroma Books, Otane (christiansupplies.co.nz) and as an e-book from Medio Media, Singapore (mediomedia.com). ✠

Eastern & Western Christianity

by Kim Nataraja

copied from wccm.org/weekly-teachings
6th August 2022

This significant flowering of Christian contemplative prayer lasted about two centuries in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine and Syria. It was Cassian, who brought it to the West in the early 5th century. He founded two monasteries in Marseilles in 415, one for women and one for men. He transmitted in his "Cenobitic Institutions" and his "Conferences" his knowledge and experience of the early Christian desert Communities and their teaching, especially that of Evagrius. In his writings Fr. John Main came across meditation, a discipline of stilling the mind by repeating a short "formula" or prayer phrase. "O God, come to my aid, O Lord make haste to help me." (Ps. 69).

Later St. Benedict quoted Cassian frequently in his Rule and encouraged his monks to read Cassian's Conferences daily. But by the end of the 6th century this practice leading to contemplation went underground in the Dark Ages that followed the migration of the Germanic tribes and the break-up of the Western Roman Empire. It became the province of a few saints, blossoming more in certain periods of turmoil and insecurity. Until in our century Fr. John Main rediscovered this way of prayer and pronounced it suitable for everyone.

But in the East this way of prayer continued to feed the spirituality of the Orthodox Church. The teaching of the 4th century Desert Monks, as written down by Evagrius and Diadochus of Photike amongst others, continued to exercise great influence, especially their exhortation to "pray continually" by repeating a short phrase. This contemplative way of prayer was first known as the "Prayer of the Name", then "The Prayer of the Heart" and eventually became the "Jesus Prayer".

The origins of the "Jesus Prayer" itself really go back to the Gospels: Blind Bartimaeus calls out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47) and the publican who just says: "O God, have mercy on me, sinner that I am." (Luke 18: 10-14) is praised by Jesus.

Famous theologians giving teachings on the "Jesus Prayer" were St. Simeon the New Theologian (10th c), St. Gregory of Palamas (14th c), St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and St. Seraphim of Sarov (18th c) and Theophan the Recluse (19th c).

The "Jesus Prayer" was taken by Greek missionaries to Russia, where in the 20th century the translation of the *Philokalia* and the anonymous 19th century classic of Russian Orthodox spirituality *The Way of a Pilgrim* drew the West's attention once more to this way of prayer. John Main's viewed it as a way of praying for ordinary people in all walks of life rather than just being the province of a few saints.

It is beautiful to see how from the same source, the Desert Spirituality and especially the teaching of Evagrius, came a way of prayer that is now considered by both Western and Eastern Christianity as an authentic way to pray for ordinary Christians. ✠

Learning to See in an Evolving Universe

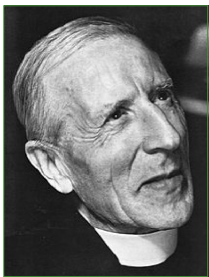
Christchurch - Otautahi Community Day, 11th June 2022

A report from Bobbi Laing

Kevin Gallagher led us on our second community day for this year with the theme of *Learning to See in an Evolving Universe*. Kevin is a spiritual director with the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch/Otautahi. His presentation was taken from the St. Ignatius perspective, mainly through the writings of Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881 – 1955). A brief overview of Teilhard’s life was shared throughout Kevin’s presentation.

Summary of Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s life:

Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a French Jesuit priest, scientist, palaeontologist, theologian, philosopher, and teacher. He was Darwinian in outlook and wrote several theological and philosophical books. He was born in France, the fourth of 11 children. His father was a librarian and a keen naturalist.



His mother was the source of his spiritual influence. Teilhard entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1900 and made his first vows in 1902. His education and philosophical studies made him strong in science subjects, and he taught physics until 1908. For the next four years, he took up education for his theological formation. From these experiences, he developed his scientific, philosophical and theological knowledge in the light of evolution.

From 1912 to 1914, Teilhard developed his skills in palaeontology and then WW1 intervened. During this time, he chose to serve as a stretcher-bearer and received several citations, including the *Médaille Militaire* and the *Legion of Honour* for his valour. During the war, he developed his reflections in his diaries and letters. While on leave from the military he pronounced his solemn vows as a Jesuit in 1918. In 1919 he then went on to further study (geology, botany, and zoology) earning a science doctorate in 1922, and became an assistant professor.

In 1923 he first went to China which was a practice he continued. He made five geological research expeditions in China between 1926 and 1935. While there he joined the ongoing excavations of the Peking Man. During this time, he continued his writing, attempting to combine Christian thought with modern science and traditional philosophy. This resulted in

him being forbidden to teach any longer by the superiors in the Jesuit Order, and in 1933, Rome ordered him to give up his teaching post in Paris. A number of his theories brought reservations and objections from within the Roman Catholic Church which was still grappling with the concepts of Darwinism versus the creation account in the Bible. This meant none of Teilhard’s writings were published until after his death.

Teilhard prepared the first pages of his main work *Le Milieu Divin (The Divine Milieu)* in 1927. The Holy See refused to print this. In 1937, Teilhard wrote *Le Phénomène Spirituel (The Phenomenon of the Spirit)*. Rome banned his work *L’Énergie Humaine* in 1939. In 1941, Teilhard submitted to Rome his most important work, *Le Phénomène Humaine*. By 1947, Rome forbade him to write or teach on philosophical subjects. In 1962 the Holy Office issued a warning, against uncritical acceptance of his ideas, and in 1963 the Diocese of Rome required Catholic booksellers in Rome to withdraw his works as well as those that supported his views. His spiritual dedication, however, was not questioned.

Teilhard died on Easter Sunday (as he desired) in 1955, in New York City, where he was in residence at the Jesuit Church of St. Ignatius Loyola.

Kevin Gallagher then helped us settle into the day by guiding us through an observation exercise to notice where we were physically and mentally, and then to make eye contact with each other in the room to indicate “welcome”. He then asked us “What did you notice on your journey here?” “What one thing is standing out?” He then referred to the pivotal centrepiece created by Chrissy McKeage with



its Icon, candle, held hands figure, plants and flowers. To this, Kevin had added several stones. He invited us to choose one – taking time to consider which one, as he would use them to help ground us in our journey this day. He asked us to hold them, feel their texture and ask ourselves what was the journey this stone may have made to get to this point? He suggested we journey with this stone through the day referring to its journey and source as we listened to his presentation. He then briefly introduced us to St Ignatius’ (the founder of the Jesuits) philosophy and his spiritual practices, following then on to Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s life and his teachings, and how they can help us in our journey of ‘Learning to See in an Evolving Universe’, the theme of the day.

Kevin’s next question was “For you learning to see, what does this mean to you?” “Is meditation a way of learning to see?” Then he gave us two quotes from Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin while we viewed an image of the earth from the perspective of outer space:

By virtue of the creation and still more of the Incarnation, nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see creation,
and

God is pervasive and perceptible as the atmosphere in which we are bathed.

Kevin then asked for our responses.

This way of working continued through the day – images, and quotes from Fr. Teilhard and interweaving St Ignatius’ way of seeing through all the senses. That is to engage with the incarnate presence and how the human body is the site for the encounter with God. Kevin then discussed with us Fr. Teilhard’s book *Le Milieu Divin* an essay on the interior life – “a way of teaching to see the spiritual foundation is on being attentive, awareness, and seeing”. Kevin then made the observation that Mystics invite us through this way of looking. *Christ in the heart of matter. Something is shining in the heart of matter.*

Kevin presented us with Fr. Teilhard’s writing from the *The Mystical Milieu* where he describes the stages of mystical growth in terms of a spiral of circles that he visited and revisited as the map of his journey into the heart of matter and God. These circles were: the first circle -presence, the second circle - consistence, the third circle - energy, the fourth circle - spirit, and the fifth circle - a circle of fire embodying Jesus Christ. We were then invited to respond to these ideas including our thoughts on our



Standing left to right: Delwyn Beattie, Bill Black, Mary Carshalton, Marion Fairbrass, Kathleen Gallagher, Rachel Pepperle, Josie Freeman, Dugald Wilson, Jane Hole. Sitting left to right: Glenda Hicks, Deborah Hancock, Helen Moran, Annette Reinheimer.

stone’s journey. Discussion followed. The morning concluded with meditation.

The afternoon opened with a thought from St. Ignatius *What fills and satisfies the soul consists not in knowing much but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savouring interiorly*’. Kevin then asked us to pick up our stone and consider where we were now? He invited us to share our thoughts again. After this, we were shown a slide show with excerpts from Kathleen Rushton and Maureen Wild’s work. These illustrated the different ages of the universe, the earth and the arrival of different reptiles, animals, and man on earth. A comment was made on how climate change is impacting the evolving pattern. Another question was posed by Kevin: “This rock you have had quite a journey. Where does this land for you as you reflect on this journey?” Discussion followed.

The afternoon presentation closed with some more quotes from Fr Teilhard, eg, *in eo vivimus*, translated *in light of the incarnation*, meaning - *in Christ we live*; our soul is wholly dedicated to Christ and centred upon him (*The Divine Milieu*). This led to a discussion on the place for preparatory prayer - so what we do is purely directed to God. Another comment made was whatever our meditation practice, it is all to wake us up to the presence of God in all things, eg:

Christ, his heart; a fire; capable of penetrating everywhere and gradually spreading everywhere.

The afternoon finished with meditation and Kathleen Gallagher fittingly concluded our day with a *karakia*. Many thanks to Annette and Yvonne Reinheimer, and Janice Waters for making the day happen – organised the morning tea, book stand and setting up the hall to make it a very welcoming space.

A Reflection on Stability

by Rosie Dell



As one who includes Benedictine guidelines as part of my practice, the peripatetic nature of my life has often caused me to ponder the principle of stability which was so important to St. Benedict. Over my life I have lived in many different places and this only intensified when I entered ordained ministry. God has called me on after a few years in each of the ministry positions I've held.

I always held strongly that the practice was both the source and outworking of my particular expression of stability. I wasn't searching for another way, I was settled in what I had found, and what had found me. This was my stability so my somewhat transient lifestyle was inconsequential, until...

God called me onwards once again. God called me to a place I had never been to, let alone ever imagined I'd actually live. I was sceptical to say the least, so I went on an undercover mini-break to Whangamata. As I walked along the beach that day the words that sang in my heart were "this is like heaven." So when the vacancy was advertised, I applied. One of the concerns expressed at my interview was if I would stay. "I am looking for somewhere to put down roots" I said. A few months later, sure enough, here I am, permanently living in Whangamata with a full time ministry position.

While all my previous ponderings on the place of stability in my life were true and valid for that period, in only a few weeks that has all changed dramatically. Living in 'heaven' (or 'paradise' as the locals call it) with a sense of permanence and deep connection to place, to family and to God, has impacted me intensely. Life has a completely different flavour. Stability of place has had far-reaching consequences. Even the patterns of my days are regular and rhythmical. I join with my Diocese on Zoom for morning prayer each week day, I walk on the beach daily with a big smile at the glory of it. I am deeply peaceful, whether the world is stormy, as in the first picture or unseasonably sunny and warm as in the second picture.

The third picture includes the post and chain bounding the dunes, speaking to me of the deep anchoring solidity of the post, the depth of the roots, the stability and peace. Within the stability is growth, glory and change. Everything is available to me here, right where I am. The stability of place, in this place of God's calling, has brought satisfaction and contentment of a quality not experienced elsewhere. Stability of place at this time has brought me an extended sense of connection to God, to nature, to people and to family.

Finally, some might remember my prayer plant from an earlier article. It became so large and unwieldy that it was damaged in the move from Te Kauwhata. I cut off all but two leaves, but look at it now, after only a few weeks. So much new growth and more on the way. *Thanks be to God.*

Peace that the World Cannot Give

Silent Retreat

16th to 19th January 2023

University of Waikato Hamilton, NZ

Led by
Kath Houston
a WCCM Director



We live in turbulent times with the pressures of climate change and natural disasters, the covid pandemic, wars and violence. More and more people are asking how can we find peace?

We need to understand what peace means, yet it is beyond understanding. The only power that can create peace in our world is the power of peace found, known and experienced in human hearts. Meditation takes us to that place beyond understanding where mystery is known and knows us.

In this Retreat we will journey deep into our hearts to explore this mystery and uncover the wellspring of peace that is to be found there.

Throughout each day there will be presentations from Kath, a number of periods of meditation and prayer times, with opportunities to explore the gardens, talk with an experienced Christian meditator and visit the retreat bookshop. The retreat will be in silence from Monday evening until Thursday late morning.

**Cost: NZ\$420 earlybird until 16th November,
thereafter NZ\$470.**

This includes all meals and accommodation at Waikato University.

NB If Covid means that you are unable to attend, a full refund will be given.

**For more information see the NZ Community for Christian
Meditation website <https://christianmeditationnz.org.nz/>
or email retreat@christianmeditationnz.org.nz
or contact Linda Polaschek, 020 4797955 or 04 4797955.**

*For those new to meditation an Introduction to Meditation session
will be held before the retreat programme begins. All welcome.*

Christ Consciousness

There is a beautiful story told by Fr. Anthony de Mello of a group of tourists who are travelling by bus. While going through some beautiful scenery, they were all absorbed in taking photographs and capturing those scenes in their cameras. At the end of the journey, they had a very special dinner prepared for them. It was the American Thanksgiving Day and the turkeys were brought out. While they were sitting together, there arose a discussion and an argument, and the whole group got involved in that argument. At the end of the dinner, the chef came round and asked them, "How was the food? How was the turkey?" They all were at sea; they couldn't answer him. They were embarrassed because they were so involved in arguing that they did not remember how the turkey tasted.

This is a story that expresses the way we live most of the time. We miss out so much on what is really present to us. We like to capture scenes in our cameras, we are always thinking of the past or of the future, but we are so absent from what is happening right now.

The consciousness of Jesus was the opposite. He was fully present. To be fully present is only possible when you are able to silence all your preoccupations. To come into the here and now is to be able to open up ourselves to what is really confronting us, to give our full attention.

*From: Letting Go Letting God
Fr Joe Pereira, Meditatio Talk 2010*

Back to the Source

A report on the Auckland Retreat by Vincent Maire

Late last year Annette Reinheimer called me from her home in Christchurch wanting to talk retreats. Annette had had a great idea; why not have a retreat devoted to the teachings of John Main OSB? I thought this a wonderful idea and we quickly saw the merit of having the retreat in both Christchurch and Auckland. But who would be best qualified to journey us through the teachings of John Main? Both of us agreed that the very best person was our very own Fr. Peter Murphy. I made contact with Peter and he accepted our invitation to lead two retreats in 2022.

For almost 25 years Peter has been a leader and a guide to the New Zealand Christian Meditation Community. Nowadays he is the spiritual formator at Holy Cross Seminary in Auckland. As Peter would later tell us, the invitation gave him an opportunity to rediscover the wisdom of John Main's teachings at a time he is introducing a new generation of priests to the contemplative life. It was his chance to return to the source; a set of spiritual teachings that have influenced the lives of countless people globally and led to the formation of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

While Covid has negatively impacted the Meditation Community in many ways, the annual Auckland retreat has continued to be held over the middle weekend of July. As organiser, I was delighted to have 23 people attend. We were a mix of new meditators and people for whom the annual retreat is a must-do activity. New friends and old friends but above all, friends.

On Friday evening Peter opened by giving us an overview of John Main's life. He drew on *The Gethsemani Talks* which, in my opinion, is the very best book to look to when wanting to know more about John Main and his spiritual journey. John Main's life from D-Day soldier, to diplomatic service in Malaya, the *Pure Light* orphanage in Kuala Lumpur, academia in Dublin, the Benedictine community at Ealing Abbey and then on to Washington DC, and ultimately Montreal where he died aged just 56, is a truly compelling story. John Main is someone whose life is both thoroughly modern yet conforms to the ancient pattern of pilgrimage, including time wandering in a spiritual wilderness.

Peter made comparisons and connections between John Main and great teachers before him including Thomas Merton, Catherine of Genoa, Meister Eckhart, Origen and referenced the gospels and Jesus' teachings on prayer. He gave us worksheets with quotes from John Main for *lectio*, to take away and ponder. Here is a brief summary of many of the notes I took over the weekend:

"Contemplation is pure grace – it is simply a gift. Meditation is being open and not having any expectations. The real teaching comes with the practice, to living it inside ourselves and not outside intellectually. Meditation is a learning process, learning to pay attention. To meditate is to be with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit. Experience is the teacher."

"Meditation is a radical way of being human, it is not an option or a duty but a fundamental grounding experience of being restored to ourselves. The aim is reality, to grow in self-knowledge. It is not the self, but the image of self, that we renounce in meditation. In meditation we discover our own grandeur, we become alive, we are liberated."

The retreat programme allowed plenty of time for walking, reading and private prayer. Peter made himself available for one-to-one chats and it was pleasing to see his schedule well-booked. The Friary provided its usual high standard of hospitality and we all participated in periods of shared prayer and meditation. We had Mass on Saturday and Sunday, and for me, a real highlight was the Saturday evening Q&A session which went on well beyond the allotted time.

Throughout the retreat I was reminded of the often-quoted lines from T S Elliot's poem *Little Gidding*.

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

Our thanks to Annette for her intuition that John Main's extraordinary life and teachings would make for a wonderful retreat. And our heartfelt thanks to Fr. Peter Murphy for enabling us to once again rediscover a familiar story for the first time.

Vincent Maire

Different Types of Prayer

by Kim Nataraja

copied from wccm.org/weekly-teachings 12th August 2022

In John Cassian's "Conference 9" Abba Isaac, one of the Desert Fathers, starts to teach Cassian and his friend Germanus about prayer. He first emphasises that there are different ways of praying:

"The apostle (St Paul) notes four types of prayer. 'My advice is that first of all supplication should be offered up for everyone, prayers, pleas, and thanksgiving' (1 Tim 2:1). Now one may be sure that this division was not foolishly made by the Apostle. So we must first enquire what is meant by prayer, by petitions, by intercessions, and by thanksgiving."

Abba Isaac continues by giving detailed explanations of the types of prayer mentioned and when they are appropriate, concluding:

"Hence all of these types of prayer ... are valuable for all men (and women), and indeed quite necessary." He even illustrates how Jesus used each of these types of prayer himself. He proceeds with an explanation of the prayer Jesus taught us, the *Our Father*, and names it the most perfect of prayers. But finally he arrives at the most desirable prayer of all: 'pure prayer', 'contemplation', when we are no longer aware that we are praying and he quotes St Antony: 'Prayer is not perfect when the monk is conscious of himself and of the fact that he is actually praying.'

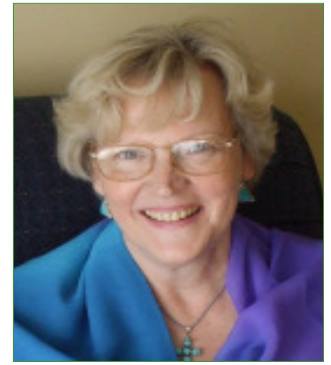
Abba Isaac stresses that all forms of prayer can lead to 'pure prayer' – what is needed is persistence and faith. He then urges them: "to follow the gospel precept which instructs us to go into our room (Matthew 6,6) and

shut the door so that we may pray to our Father. We pray in our room when we withdraw our hearts completely from the clatter of every thought and concern and disclose our prayers to the Lord in secret, as it were intimately. We pray with the door shut when, with closed lips and in total silence, we pray to the searcher not of voices but of hearts."

Here he outlines the essence of contemplation without telling them how to "go into our room". But in the next Conference he does do so, as Cassian and Germanus show that they are ready for this type of prayer by asking the right question. Now we have arrived at the way of prayer Fr. John Main found to his delight in Cassian's teaching: praying with a "formula", which leads to contemplation. Cassian does not restrict this type of prayer to certain periods of the day, but urges Cassian and Germanus to "ceaseless prayer"; "You should, I say, meditate constantly on this verse in your heart. You should not stop repeating it when you are doing any kind of work or performing some service or are on a journey. Meditate on it while sleeping and eating and attending to the least needs of nature."

Whereas there is no denying the importance of this way of praying to us and the early Christians, we must remember it is only one way of prayer amongst others. Fr. Laurence Freeman uses the image of prayer as a wheel:

"Think of prayer as a great wheel. The wheel turns our whole life to God ... The spokes of the wheel represent different types of



prayer. We pray in different ways, at different times, and according to how we feel... The spokes are the forms or expressions of prayer which fit into the hub of the wheel, which is the prayer of Jesus himself... All forms of prayer are valid. All are effective. They are informed by the prayer of the human consciousness of Jesus which is in us by the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Fr. Laurence Freeman

From:

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

translated by Thomas Merton.

A certain brother enquired of Abbot Pastor, saying: "What shall I do? I lose my nerve when I am sitting alone at prayer in my cell." The elder said to him: "Despise no one, condemn no one, rebuke no one, God will give you peace and your meditation will be undisturbed."

To one of the brethren appeared a devil, transformed into an angel of light, who said to him: "I am the Angel Gabriel, and I have been sent to you." But the brother said: "Think again – you must have been sent to somebody else. I haven't done anything to deserve an angel." Immediately the devil ceased to appear.

An elder was asked by a certain soldier if God would forgive a sinner. And he said to him: "Tell me brother, if your cloak is torn will you throw it away?" The soldier replied and said: "No. I will mend it and put it back on." The elder said to him: "If you take care of your cloak, will not God be merciful to His own image?"

Q: “There are occasions when I would like to meditate for longer than 30 minutes. Is this recommended?”

A: John Main was very definite about the length of time we should meditate; twenty minutes to begin with leading to an optimum time of thirty minutes. There is the temptation to shorten the time if the meditation is difficult and to lengthen the time when it is “going well”. His response was not to give in to those temptations. If one wishes to meditate more, then doing an extra meditation such as in the middle of the day is recommended. To my knowledge the community at Bonnevaux meditates four times a day, the fourth later in the evening.

John Main, in *The Gethsemani Talks*, describes his meeting with his teacher and the advice he gave that to meditate less than twice a day would be frivolous. You have to be serious about it if you are going to do it. You can’t do a bit of meditation. The temptation to go beyond the prescribed time (30 minutes) can be an ego-trip and if there is anything meditation is not, it is an ego-trip. That is a very good reason to stay within the prescribed time.

In one of his talks he speaks of a priest who came to him once wanting help with his difficulties in meditation. John Main went through the details of the practice: sitting up straight, closing his eyes, saying the mantra and doing it twice a day. The priest replied that the rule he made for himself was just once a day in the morning because of other commitments during the latter part of the day. John Main told him to go back and meditate twice a day and then come back to him. When the priest came back he said that he would never have imagined the difference the second time made, it was so different. That has also been my experience. This follows from the advice of St. Paul in 1Thessalonians 5:17, to pray without ceasing. Prayer, when it is central to one’s life, infiltrates everything that one does. Monasteries have communal prayer up to seven times a day following this dictum. Hence twice a day is a minimum in order to grow in this journey.

Q: “I prefer to stay with my devotional practices rather than meditate. Meditation is not for me.”

A: One of the images Laurence Freeman uses to describe prayer is the wagon wheel. The spokes of the wheel represent different forms of prayer, including devotional practices of which there are many. With all prayer the letting go of self is the underlying reality; “Let go and let God” as they say in AA. Evagrius, the theologian among the Desert Fathers, said that prayer is the laying aside of thoughts. All prayer, including devotions, leads into the silence of nothingness, where the self becomes one with God. Where the wheel touches the ground is what drives the wheel and that can be whatever form of prayer one prays. The transition for many to the prayer of silence is often when the devotional prayers that they have been used to, do not feed them in the way they once did. This can be a distressing time and this is where the right form of guidance is vital. One needs to go beyond saying prayers. Many people who have followed a dedicated prayer life reach this impasse. Meditation offers a way through this passage. A frequent response to finding meditation is “I have come home.” That is they have come home to themselves and are restored to themselves through meditation. As we keep saying, meditation is simple but not easy.



Meditatio Talk Series

Four times a year for many years a Meditatio CD was sent to each registered Christian Meditation group around the world. These talks have come from many different teachers in the community, including John Main and Laurence Freeman.

These Meditatio CDs are now offered as audio files that can be downloaded and used at weekly groups and for personal reflection.

A simple tutorial (<http://tiny.cc/medtonl>) shows you how to find and download the audio files.

The latest talks, *The Brick Wall of the Ego* by Laurence Freeman, are available now to listen online and to download.

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Stillpoint is the official magazine of the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation. It is published quarterly to provide a forum for sharing and teaching within the NZ Christian Meditation Community and to keep members informed of events, past and future.

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The opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the attitudes and views of the editor or publisher.

Events Calendar:

- 16th-18th Sept Christchurch Retreat**
Further details see flyer on NZCCM website.
Contact: Annette Reinheimer - annettere852@gmail.com
- 17th September Rotorua Community Day**
Exploring the Pathway to Healing in the Inner Room, guided by the work of Thomas Keating.
St. Mary's Catholic Church Hall, Corner Ranolf and Seddon Streets, Rotorua,
10.30am – 2.30pm. Arrive for morning tea or coffee.
Contact: Raymond Eberhard - celebrantraymond@gmail.com
- 24th September Auckland Community Day**
Sacred Art and the Image of the Unseen God. Icons aim to draw the viewer into deeper spiritual communion with the unseen God. Icon writer Michael Pervan of the Studio of St. John the Baptist will introduce us to the contemplative aspects of viewing icons and other forms of sacred art. Venue to be advised. Contact: Vincent Maire - vincentmaire12@gmail
- 5th November Wellington Community Day**
Meditative reading: the art of Lectio Divina, led by Jo Ward.
Marcelle Room, Home of Compassion, 2 Rhine Street, Island Bay.
10am – 3.00pm. Please bring your lunch (cafe will be closed); cash for koha to cover expenses.
Meditators and people new to meditation are most welcome!
Contact: Anne Cave 022 097 2939, annecave@gmail.com
- 12th November Waikato Community Day**
Matamata. *Meditation, St. Benedict and Oblates* led by Nick Polaschek
Holy Angels Church, Hohaia Street, Matamata
10.30am - 2.00pm. Arrive for morning tea or coffee.
Contact: Raymond Eberhard - celebrantraymond@gmail.com
- 19th-20th Nov Auckland Essential Teaching Workshop**
Mary McKillop Centre, 30 Holgate Rd, Kohimarama, 9.00am – 4.00pm
led by Peter Murphy and Mary McLister. Contact Mary mclisterm@gmail.com
- 3rd December Christchurch Community Day**
with Eva Natanya. 10.00am – 3.00pm. Venue to be confirmed.
See Eva in conversation with Fr. Laurence in this one-day retreat, *Resurrection in Christian Life*. Eva Natanya will guide us through core themes from the award-winning book that she co-authored with Veronica Mary Rolf, called *Living Resurrected Lives: What it Means and Why it Matters* (Cascade Books, 2020). Contact Annette Reinheimer- annettere852@gmail.com
- 2023**
- 16th-19th Jan National Retreat at Waikato University, Hamilton.**
Leader: Kath Houston, WCCM Director of Liaison with National Communities.
Topic: *Peace that the World Cannot Give*.
More details in this issue of *Stillpoint*. Contact: retreat@christianmeditationnz.org.nz