

Meditatio

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On the path in light and shade

Laurence Freeman on how meditation helps
to reach equanimity and detachment



John Main Seminar 2018 in Bruges



The JMS 2018 in Bruges, Belgium (Sept 20-23) brings together leading contemplative thinkers on the theme *A Contemplative Response to the Crisis of Change*. It is preceded by a silent retreat led by Laurence Freeman OSB (Sept 17-20). p. 6-7

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Dear Friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

Before Easter a number of meditators involved in the leadership of the WCCM met for a crisp but sunny weekend at Turvey Abbey, part of my monastic family. Representing the geographical, gender and generational range of our members, we discussed the changes that the Community is passing through. For a while now it has seemed to me that we have reached a kind of ceiling in our growth. We are outgrowing some of the structures with which we have been clothed for some time. I do not mean just measurable growth, the metrics of the WCCM but, more importantly, spiritual growth, too. As we discussed all this, we saw, as always, how the inner and the outer reflect each other to form the whole.

Whenever an individual, a marriage or an organisation becomes aware of this kind of change it is time for decision. Do we stay as we are or, tempting as that may be, do we breathe in deeply, inspiringly, to create more space for the spirit to work? Change and growth can be disturbing and exciting in equal measure. How we face it exposes us to ourselves. Do we fear, resist or deny it? Do we embrace it in faith?

By deciding to go forward with Bonnevaux we have already opted to grow, to go forward in faith, rather than merely managing what we have. As John Main said,

Meditation is the prayer of faith because we have to leave ourselves behind before the Other appears and without the pre-packaged guarantee that He will appear. *(Word into Silence)*

We are doing it prudently. Among our leadership there are entrepreneurs who quite like risk and conservative managers who are rather wary of it. Overall, by the end of the weekend, we were on the same page, energised with a sense both of groundedness and adventure. We had begun to identify the

forms of change and adaptation that the Spirit is calling us into: what we are meant to be for each other and for the world. Our meeting was a joyful and creative clarifying of what the Community is being summoned to become – and how we need to manage



Bonnevaux

change. We agreed that Bonnevaux is both a sign of this change and a sign of our decision to embrace it in faith. Meetings like this – like meditation itself – don't solve all our problems – though, I am glad to say, we did solve a few. More importantly, we were able to see them as challenges we can manage and to feel united and supported in responding confidently to them.

Sixty million years ago a ten kilometre wide asteroid hit the earth creating the vast Chicxulub Crater in Mexico. It led to the quite rapid extinction of the dinosaurs. Biologists today think we are passing through the sixth mass extinction on the planet, this one caused to a significant degree by human mistreatment of our home due to a devastating collapse of our relationship to its ecology and to each other.

Change is and has ever been endemic to all forms of life. How we be-

come conscious of it and respond to it determines whether the outcome is growth or decline. Yet all growth involves some decline. New forms of life build on the extinction of others. The human challenge is not to be in total control as our increasingly widespread

mechanistic model of everything would have us think. It is to be fully conscious of the forms of change we are passing through. Consciousness sheds light into darkness. And where there is this light there comes quickly a lightness of soul, a spring in our step, a sense of humour and confidence mingled with humility.

Thinking and talking about it is a powerful help (as we did at Turvey, and as we all need to do when things change in our life for good or ill). But however helpful thinking is, it is limited by language, culture and our own patchwork of ignorance and knowledge, of light and shade, our personal and collective histories tugging at us from the unconscious. Merely putting our ideas into practice, as if we were just managers of life's changing forms, often produces results we never anticipated. Why should this surprise or

disappoint us as it often does? We cannot see around corners. Good thinking also needs striking metaphors to clarify and crystallise meaning. With the right symbol or an apt comparison, a complex, anxiety-producing situation suddenly becomes clear and confident. (Christ is the 'metaphor' to those who see him in faith.)

Deeper than thought or the best of images, we need clear consciousness. Continuous change underpins the variations of pattern and the alterations of light and shade in all life. Every painting is a combination of light and shade. Without both, there would be no picture - merely either blinding light or impenetrable blackness. Without both, our personalities and character would fail to develop into the unique work of art we are called to be. In this life our experience - day by day as well as in the pattern of decades - is like a painting. We are being created now and in every instant by how we live and respond to the varying shifts and shades in the light and, of course, to the occasional total eclipses we all undergo.

Recently I met a mother who had lost her young teenage son in a tragic incident. She described him to me with such total recall and such total love that I felt I knew him. Somehow, he became present with us through her grief-stricken love. For her and all his family he had been a source of light and happiness, full of energy, caring and passion for life. The intensity of such a source of light is, forgive the pun, a source of endless delight. But that very light, when withdrawn, creates a black hole of equivalent intensity. Black holes - and death is one - are impenetrable and inexplicable in the ruthless way they swallow the light.

Not all of us have to endure the kind of darkness this woman had been plunged into. But none of us escape

the interweaving of light and shade we see in the Passion of Jesus, which we re-lived over Easter and which, in unique ways, unfolds itself through every life. Year by year, sharing in the re-telling of this story, we see how it is a universal metaphor, a commentary on the human condition bringing to consciousness shadowy parts of our mind and half-forgotten experiences from the past. Hour by hour in these few days, Jesus passed from the triumphant entry into Jerusalem (when everything is celebratory and successful, we have won the lottery and the love of our life) to exclusion and injustice, betrayal, rejection, abuse and death.

Like four cameras recording from different angles, the gospels create

Equanimity reveals our innate capacity to accept what actually is

overlapping views of the same events. None of them focus on the physical suffering as an end or a meaning in itself. What is most unforgettable is the way, after the watershed of Gethsemane, that Jesus undergoes his Passion. He passes through it with the necessary speed, not rushing, not lingering. We feel how he feels and this empathy illuminates our own passion. In his equanimity and detachment, we see how we must learn to weave light and shade into the picture, which is the unique representation of reality that we are.

Like all spiritual masters, Jesus sees prayer not merely as a means of fulfilling our desires or averting misfortune but as developing the interior clarity and harmony that we need if change is to lead to growth. 'Set your troubled hearts at rest', he tells us, 'and banish your fears'. Set your mind on God's

kingdom before everything else. Risk your talent, even if you have only one: don't bury it in the field of security where it cannot grow. Invest it in the field of change. Don't try to observe and control the process of change and growth or you will waste valuable resources of consciousness at the wrong level. Let go and let it grow - how you do not know.

Equanimity is the key issue. How, especially in times of deep shade, do we hold to the true centre rather than being dragged down into the black hole? But, in our Jerusalem moments as well, when all goes to plan and more than we could have imagined pours into our lap, we need equanimity. Without it we remain immature, childish adults, holding power over others in families or politics, but unable to manage the light and shade, success and failure, in our own lives. We are triumphant one moment, but can be selfishly insensitive to whether it is right to proclaim it; in the next moment we collapse in despair and anger if we don't get what we wanted.

It is not bizarre or inhuman to develop equanimity because it is not, as some believe, cold indifference or lack of feeling. Evenness of soul is a characteristic of deep mind not of superficial levels of consciousness. *Equanimity* reveals our innate capacity to experience and accept to the full what *actually is*. Because dark times can evoke denial or restless self-distraction, we are all prone to using fantasy to escape from suffering. The problem is that this only creates a new layer of darkness.

Instead, equanimity comes through endurance not evasion. It means passing through the different phases of the painting of our life at the appropriate speed. Keeping moving but not trying to skip anything we have to pass through and learn from. Endurance, however, is not just will power. It in-

volves surrendering our imagination to the truth revealed in a new expression of the present moment. In the contemplative mind, we renounce the option to fantasise about what could be or what might have been: we allow the images that express these false thoughts to float away. Each time we do so, we enter a new level of peace, a deeper enfolding of our consciousness with the source of consciousness.

The woman who lost her son and was facing the black hole of his absence already knew that the darkness was being occasionally relieved by flashes of light. She had learned to meditate some years ago and this discipline enabled her to keep meditating through her personal and the family's grief. Meditating in times of darkness is harder if you haven't already built it as a life-habit into your daily routines. Saying the mantra in the stabbing pain of loss is not easy. We should not expect instant transformation. But over time humble practice does show us that we can integrate even the worst oppositions and conflicts between light and shade that cause us suffering.

Endurance, discipline, is always a commitment to a deepening process. Eventually, we learn from experience how much better it is to dig one six-metre well rather than six one-metre wells. Not only will we find the hidden spring, but we will find the means to share the fresh water with others.

Reducing all aspects of life including even personal relationships to mechanical, control-centred processes has led to the great fragmentation and complexity in our culture. Meditation delivers us from this constant slippage into dehumanisation. It can do this because it reminds us of the identity of wholeness and simplicity. In learning to meditate we also learn how not to complicate and divide the means of escaping fragmentation and complexity. In other words, we learn to keep it simple. We are not watching our-

selves saying the mantra, observing our own journey into the healing and unifying power of silence. Experience teaches us to let go of our self-reflexive consciousness and that this is simply why we return to the mantra faithfully through the infinite variations of light and shade that it will present. This leads to equanimity and restores equanimity when, as often happens, we lose it.

Silence is full attention, which is love. The source of light is love. The darkness we experience at times is our inability to see the light when it becomes blinding and, to all intents and purposes, disappears. Meditation keeps us more or less balanced through the worst. One of the best ways it achieves this is through a sense of oneness – community – with those you are meditating with. In communi-

Silence is full attention, which is love

ty we detach from thinking about 'my meditation' or 'my experience' because we see and feel involved in the lives of others. This is rarely perfectly achieved. It is often tested in ego-conflicts. But if change is managed well, community remains a major contributor to equanimity. Community remains, like God, always younger than we are, if it stays centred in the ever-present moment of contemplation. Like a particle that moves at the speed of light it does not age through differences of time and location – even though it continues to grow.

The contemplative mind is engendered by regular immersion in the source of light. This allows consciousness to enfold into all dimensions of reality – light and shade and the transitions, the dance between them. Our capacity for attention grows stronger and ever more steady even in times of turbulence. I felt this grace of attention

in the woman suffering her dark night of grief. At times, though, our consciousness and attention may be more self-aware and self-regarding. At these times we are less silent, although still supported and shepherded as we pass through the valley of the shadow of death. At other times it may transcend self-reflection altogether and the level of silence becomes full, wholly healing and fully alive.

This alteration of light and shade, then, penetrates deep even into the process of meditation. It reflects a universal law of nature that is present and obeyed, like all such laws, everywhere and at all times. By withdrawing our attention from both inner and outer objects of attention we descend deeper into it and we break through more often. Tunnels of darkness and emergence into the light form a rhythm, like that of the heartbeat or the breath. As we change we are constantly dying and constantly being born. We see in this pattern that there is an ultimate purpose to it all and that this purpose is not darkness but eternal light.

A sense of the wholeness and purpose of life is essential if we are – personally and as a human family – to navigate the forces of change buffeting us today from all directions. Not ideas alone, but human relationships are the solution. This will be a theme in the John Main Seminar in Bruges in September when several contemplatively minded speakers from diverse fields of expertise and endeavour will engage us in this reflection and dialogue. One point of view is never enough. Dialogue is the way to truth. Thought itself is never complete. Contemplation opens us to the portal of paradox through which we pass, in solitude, together.

Pope Francis has given the world a rich teaching on this unity of human purpose across all dimensions in his recent *Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in the World Today*. It is a remarkable,

fresh view of holiness approached not from an intellectual angle but a practical, indeed incarnational one. It speaks of the holiness we find in our next-door neighbours rather than only in the stardom of sanctity, saints who are universally acknowledged. These saints can inspire us but we are not going to answer our own unique call to holiness just by imitating them. We have to be 'holy as God is holy' by discovering, accepting - and above all being through all the changes of life - that unique manifestation of divine love that each of us is. Because this uniqueness does not separate us from others - on the contrary it reveals our implicit belonging to each other - we cannot be holy in a state of isolation.

The Pope identifies the opposition to holiness that exists in the consumerist individualism of our time. It affects us all, but it is a special threat to the younger generation who have grown up with it as the new norm. He is also strong in exposing the false, inimical forms of holiness sometimes proposed by religious people. They believe that holiness is achieved by a cold intellectualism, a rigid adherence to rules and regulations that are often implemented or imposed in ways that disrespect our humanity. He says, for example, that the way we respond to a person sleeping out rough on a cold night has priority over bio-ethical issues. Obvious as this sounds in print, it is often not lived. In the same way politicians expressing platitudes about peace invest heavily in the armaments and chemical warfare industries.

At its most obvious, holiness develops consistency between values and realities, preaching and practice. As for Jesus, holiness is not about saying 'Lord, Lord' but loving one another. If Pope Francis left his exhortation on the call to holiness at this point we would nod and move on. But, as he wove the mystical view of creation into his teaching on the environment, he has

woven the contemplative dimension into the practical and incarnational program of holiness that takes time to change us but soon reveals the signs of its growth.

He says we cannot expect holiness to be advanced if we use times of silence and solitude to avoid our per-



sonal and social responsibilities. We don't meditate just to deal with stress and improve personal 'well-being'. Like happiness, these benefits of the practice are natural fruits, not first-level goals, and they are themselves signs of a deeper human wholeness. However, the Pope insists, we absolutely need times of interior silence and solitude. We need to return often and directly to the words of Jesus in Scripture, too, but eventually we enter the silence of the inner room. He quotes St Bonaventure saying,

We must suspend all the operations of the mind and we must transform the peak of our affections, directing them to God alone. (*Journey of the Mind to God*)

Understanding the creative play of light and shade shows us that we never need to fear the oppositions and conflicts of life. The Pope reminds us that

the Russian Pilgrim did not find that the prayer of the heart and his deep interiority separated him from what was going on around him. Instead, he now saw creation and humanity bathed in the light that flows from the source of light.

The mother who lost her son re-

cently was also able to navigate the dark valley of grief with the help of the community that meditation formed and through her own continued practice. 'I do not know how I could get through this without meditation', she told me. I think this is simply why we meditate and help each other to keep on the path in times both of light and darkness. And it is why we commit ourselves, for the benefit of all, to helping our Community in all its challenges of growth and change.

With much love

Laurence Freeman OSB

News

John Main Seminar 2018 - Bruges, Belgium

A Contemplative Response to the Crisis of Change



Since 1984, the annual John Main Seminar has enriched participants in and beyond the community through dialogue with leading contemplative thinkers and teachers. The 1991 JMS, led by Bede Griffiths, was a transformative moment when the basic form of the WCCM was established. Later speakers have included the Dalai Lama, Jean Vanier, Mary McAleese, Thomas Keating, and Rowan Williams.

This year – one of change and growth for the community and of crisis in many areas of global society – promises to be another transformative occasion. Believing that meditation opens the common

ground of humanity and refreshes our perceptions of reality, we have convened a diverse group of leading thinkers and experts in their fields – politics, economics, science, gender and medicine. Philosopher Charles Taylor will speak and also summarise the flow of thought each day. Workshops and discussions will involve the participants in the experience of new ways of seeing. Regular times of meditation will ground the thought in real silence.

The Belgian community is proud to host this major event (20-23 September) in one of the most beautiful – and contemplative cit-

ies of the world. Bruges is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Seminar will be held in the centre of the city and the main points of interest in its rich history are all in walking distance.

The JMS18 will be preceded by an optional silent retreat led by Laurence Freeman (Sept 17-20) on the theme 'Experience and Meaning' and offers will be an excellent preparation for following days of new horizons in global change. After the Seminar there will be a pilgrimage ('Believe in Peace' Sept 24-25) to two of the iconic sites of the two devastating World Wars of the last century: Flanders Fields (Ypres) and Dunkirk. Looking back to what we must avoid in the future will sharpen our sense of the meaning of change.

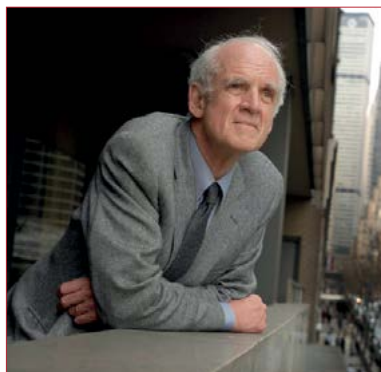
The week long program of retreat, Seminar and pilgrimage has been designed for full or partial registration. Come to all or part. We hope it will help us to see many dimensions of the present crisis in a contemplative light and emerge with clarity and renewed hope.

WCCM Belgium warmly invites you to come to the JMS18 and we will welcome you to the place we love.

Visit www.jms2018.org

News

The JMS 2018 speakers



Charles Taylor

Canadian philosopher from Montreal and professor emeritus at McGill University, known for his contributions to political philosophy, the philosophy of social science, history of philosophy and intellectual history.



Robert A. Johnson

Executive Director of the Institute for New Economic Thinking, a Senior Fellow and Director of the "Project on Global Finance" at the Roosevelt Institute.



Sr Teresa Forcades

Contemplative Benedictine nun of Montserrat and an active political and social commentator in Catalonia; she is also a medical doctor and a theologian.



Herman Van Rompuy

Count Van Rompuy is a Belgian and EU politician, who formerly served as Prime Minister of Belgium and then as the first President of the European Council.

Sean Hagan

General Counsel of the International Monetary Fund and Fellow of Kings College, London.

Laurence Freeman OSB

Benedictine monk and director of the World Community for Christian Meditation and its Oblate Community.

Dr Barry White

Consultant Haematologist at St James's Hospital, Dublin and National Haemophilia Director who was the first National Director of Clinical Care for the Irish Health Executive. He is CEO of a new healthcare system that will integrate contemplative insights with clinical care.

Marco Schorlemmer

Leads AI research at the Artificial Intelligence Research Institute of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), Barcelona.

Workshops



Jenny Scott

Liz Watson (Meditation: healing and hope), Cathy Day and Lieven Boeve (Contemplative education), Catherine Goodman (Art and society) and Jenny Scott (What means Theology in a Secular Age?)

We can't live a full life unless our life is firmly grounded on some underlying purpose, unless we come to know that each of us has an ultimate significance. (John Main)

News

Meditation & work: the routine of volunteers in Bonnevaux



Through February and March, a group of volunteers emptied the Abbey to allow renovation work to begin. They cleaned the farmhouse, to make it habitable simple but warm. Henriette Hollaar, a resident oblate from Mediatio House in London, was part of this team of volunteers:

Our project with three volunteers was to complete emptying the Abbey and prepare the farmhouse for accommodation during the next year or so of work. The attic and the basement of the Abbey had still lots of secrets to share. We found 3000 (empty but beautiful) handmade bottles which lay dormant since the wine production at Bonnevaux had stopped decades ago. Vintage clothes and furniture turned up as well.

Meanwhile, winter was playing its

game and the skin of my hands and face felt the dry cold. But the sky was clear and after sunset, the night sky free from light pollution - as the land has been free from pesticides - showed us the wonder of the constellations. The temperature rose steadily and the smell of Spring energised us.

We agreed on our communal meditation times. So we were joined regularly by meditators from Poitiers and around, which were very supportive and joyful. We started using the bell on the roof of the farm to call us to these times. Maybe the first time in centuries the bell has called Bonnevaux residents to prayer! We moved out of the Abbey on the 9th of March, a bit sad to leave behind the wood fire stove, which had been a lot of work to keep going but had provided us with warmth and a special atmosphere.

WCCM Leadership Meeting: In the light of Bonnevaux



Seventeen leaders, older and younger, from our global Community met at the Monastery of Christ our Saviour in Turvey (UK), 16-18 March, to discuss our challenges and opportunities in the light of Bonnevaux. We felt that the community has reached a new point of growth. Bonnevaux reflects this and also gives us the means to respond to it under the leadership of the Spirit.

Everybody caught up on the current project status, the financial needs for, Bonnevaux retreat program plans and the relationship between global and local community. We had new constructive ideas about the participating of the younger generation in the life and leadership. We left energised joyful and energised by a renewed and clarified sense of common purpose and creative action to share the gift of meditation with future generations.

VOLUNTEERS: We are hugely grateful for all the interest in volunteering. Spaces are now full up until August.

Visit www.bonnevauxwccm.org

News

Christian Meditation with Children and Youth



By Paul Tratnyek, International Coordinator for Christian Meditation with Children

Recognizing the incredible growth of Christian meditation with children and youth globally over the past 15 years has been a source of hope and light in the digital era of virtual experience. Witnessing the impact meditation has on children and youth internationally led me to saying yes to Fr. Laurence when he asked if I would take on the role of International Coordinator for Christian Meditation with Children. In a world filled with social media image-making, one significant antidote has been the gift of teaching Christian meditation to children and youth which through its fruits, provides them with the gift of "simply the courage to be, to be who you are and to live your life with all the fullness of life-force which is given to you." (John Main, *The Heart of Creation*).

I want to thank and acknowledge Penny Sturrock for the important work she has done over the years. Penny has laid the foundations for the growth of CMC in many countries along with

the pioneering work in schools led by Ernie Christie and Cathy Day. It was Ernie and Cathy's visit to Canada in the fall of 2014 which helped lead to a flowering of CMC in Catholic schools in Ontario. I have been inspired by Sr. Ruth Montrichard and her leadership in the Caribbean, along with Sr. Denise McMahon in Fiji, Noel Keating in Ireland, Charles Posnett in England, Susana Casupo and Carla Pietra in Venezuela, Yvonne Sciberras in Malta, Josephine Jasmin in Semarang, Teresa Valenzuela and Enrique Lavin in Mexico, and Gene Bebeau in the United States whom I have had the privilege of meeting in person and/or corresponding with. One of my main goals in the coming year is to have direct one on one contact with those in the international community leading CMC to offer support and encouragement and to share our collective wisdom in spreading and enhancing the practice within the WCCM and beyond.

Recently a 3-year strategic plan was proposed to the Meditatio Council to enhance the support and growth of CMC internationally. Below are the key initiatives that were identified by 100 representatives of the WCCM from around the world at the Open Space Meeting held in England on June 29, 2016. National Coordinators of CMC and National Coordinators of CM participated in the Open Space process, which was led by Ernie Christie and Cathy Day. The strategic plan focuses on the top five priorities that emerged through the process as identified by the international leaders

of the WCCM. Those who volunteered at the Open Space Meeting will be contacted and asked if they are still willing to volunteer in the area they identified. Others who are interested can contact me directly (tratnyek@golden.net).

1. Creating opportunities for children in rural, remote or marginalized communities to experience Christian meditation.

2. Bringing meditation to children in state/secular schools.

3. Providing research that demonstrates the many benefits of Christian Meditation for children, teachers, and catechists.

4. Identifying current practical resources and developing further resources that will help the promotion, sustainability and ongoing support of CMC in its different contexts.

5. Using strategies to collaborate and share best practice in CMC around the globe.

The Meditatio Council, along with those working at the grassroots level, will be kept abreast of the progress of these priorities and asked for further input as we move forward.

App for Children

Teresa Valenzuela and Enrique Lavin from Mexico initiated the concept of developing a simple app for Christian Meditation with Children. The app is a result of a partnership with an international app development company based in Canada called Synergo Group. **ONLINE** - see how to download the app here: http://tiny.cc/app_chld

News

Meditation with Children in Scotland



Pat Hay, a Glasgow-based meditator is developing the teaching of meditation with children. In February she organised a series of events for Fr Laurence during which he met with group leaders, primary and secondary school teachers and Glasgow University students and primary school children. He addressed a well-attended public meeting on "Contemplative Mind: Seeing Things Differently". With Glasgow University Education Department he discussed a future research project. In Edinburgh, he led a full day retreat on "Spirit and Liberty."

Czech Republic



In January the Czech national retreat took place in a Capuchin Monastery. The four days were led by Vladimír Volrab, the national coordinator, who is a WCCM member of the Contemplative Exchange group.

Meditation in Schools, Universities and in the media in Spain

By John Siska

Laurence spent five full days in Madrid last February, and despite our reputation for a leisurely life and siestas, he did not get a break. During his visit, he met with both the press and TV, and was featured on the front page of *Expansion*, Spain's leading business newspaper. Along with local meditators, he also met with Cardinal Osoro, who recognises the need to foster the contemplative dimension of our Christian spirituality and supports our work.

We visited a bilingual school and meditated with three groups of children in their very own meditation room. What a delight to see how naturally children engage in the silence of

the here and now! We were also invited by IE University to meditate with freshmen. This packed event was very well received and generated a new wave of interest in meditation at IE's Catholic club.

We spent the next day at ICADE, a leading Jesuit university. In the morning we engaged with ICADE's business school that recognises the value of our Meditation and Leadership Program at Georgetown's MBA program. In the afternoon, we held a round table on Mindfulness, Meditation, and Leadership, with over 200 attendees, some of whom had to sit outside as, literally, the place was fully packed.

During the weekend, a retreat with over 70 attendees. provided a very

valuable opportunity for meditators in Spain to meet Laurence. The overall consensus was that, what really sets Laurence apart is not what he says, but from where he says it – from his heart and from the experience of a very long contemplative journey led by Jesus, our teacher within. On Sunday, we invited retreatants to bring over their families for mass and a kids-only meeting with Laurence. What a joy to see families meditating together!

Laurence's visit was a blessing for all of us. He left many, many valuable seeds in our hearts.

ONLINE - Watch Laurence's interview on the website "Religión Digital": http://tiny.cc/interv_rd

In Focus

John Siska, from Spain

WCCM Spain National Coordinator



As we grow older, we tend to become wiser. In my case, age has brought insight and acceptance as to the real threads of my life. Life happens, whether we like it or not. Our real choice is whether or not we just drift or examine it, make sense of it, and leverage it for the benefit of all beings.

I started life in Jesuit schools, became an altar boy, had Jesus deep inside myself, and was a happy boy. Time went by and I continued to have Jesus in my heart. But life started to happen.

When I was 13, I discovered and explored my emerging sexual-

ity. Rather than being guided in that natural experience, I was emotionally abused and made to feel dirty and unworthy of Jesus. My family was struck by misfortune, too. And by the time I reached university, spirituality, as I had been taught it, did not stand up to reason. So, in my late teens, I found myself unworthy and without either a spiritual or a family home.

I found refuge in literature and my academic studies. I started working in a major bank in Chicago. Work was demanding but allowed me to indulge as I fancied. Despite all the frenzy, however, I could hear now and then the yearnings of my heart. Eventually, I returned to Madrid, got married, bought a house, and had kids. I went through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

I was gradually restoring the life I had lost in my early teens. I ended up as a Managing Director in London. Although we greatly enjoyed living there, I was still not at rest. What the hell was going on??? At that point, I decided I had to find the answer. But, where do you start when you are totally lost?

To start with, I went to a psy-

chiatrist. By either chance or destiny, I run into Sochu, a Zen monk who provided priceless insights and guidance into suffering and living life. I also came across and explored the work of Laird, Keating, and Freeman. To my surprise, I could relate very well to them as I had learned about silence and about pondering with my heart.

A few years later, my wife Isabel and I met Laurence at a retreat in Manresa. Through him, I discovered Jesus, the teacher within. We returned to Madrid and started meditating together. We had our daily practice and a weekly group meeting. Eventually, we realized that our practice was a precious present, a gift that we had to share. And so we did. And that is the mission we have now in life, to help others look for the keys to their happiness were they actually lost them, not where there is more light, as I did for years.

In the search for my happiness, I discovered that, truly, I had to let go. In leaving self behind, I found Jesus, others, and my centre. Finally, I was arriving home. Everything I had been looking for was under my own two feet, just inside my heart, in my own spiritual tradition.



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Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 20 may.

Resources

New Online Bookstore: **mediomedia.com**

In February Medio Media launched its new website – a One-stop Shop for WCCM resources. The website's clean, simple, attractive layout makes it easy to browse titles by subject category, format, author or publisher. Ebooks and MP3 downloads are available instantly upon checkout. Wherever you might be, resources for your personal journey and for sharing the gift of meditation are now just a click away. ONLINE - Visit <https://mediomedia.com>



New resources on Meditation with Children



Books

Ernie Christie and Dr. Cathy Day (Townsville, Australia) just released a new book entitled *Children Love to Meditate* (Garrett Publishing). The book contains reflections on Christian meditation in Catholic schools in vari-

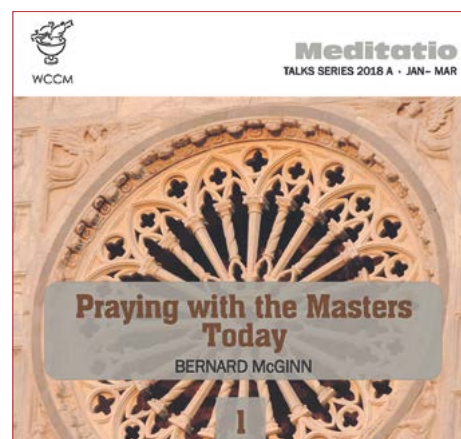
Online Course

Charles Posnett (WCCM UK) has been working with Steven Pryers (School Systems Developer) to develop a six week on-line learning course for teachers entitled "Share the Gift." The online course encapsulates the essential teaching in six lessons so that teachers can confidently pass on the gift of meditation to children and youth. For more information visit: <https://courses.learningtomeditate.org>

ous parts of the world. The book is affirming and inspiring for all who currently practice meditation in schools.

ONLINE - more info:
<http://tiny.cc/medcherccday>

CDs



In these talks, Bernard McGinn draws on the experience and writings of the Christian mystics who saw the mystical or contemplative practice as crucial to what it means to be human. ONLINE - order this CD here:
<http://tiny.cc/mcginn1>

To order: contact the resource centre nearest to you. Our centres are listed below

VISIT WCCM's ONLINE BOOKSTORE: <https://mediomedia.com/>



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