



Christian Meditation Community Malaysia Newsletter

October 2019

Dear Friends,

Peace be with you.

Bonnevaux Inauguration and Blessing.

Malaysia was represented at this event , witnessed by Sharon Chai (leader, OMPH, Ipoh) and family.

The Bonnevaux Experience

Ever since we heard about Bonnevaux, in 2017, we had this desire to visit it one day. The opportunity came when our daughter Michele told us that she would take us there. After all the arrangements, on 14 June 2019, we flew to Paris, took a train to Poitiers, a 2 hour journey.

On the next day 15 June, we took a cab to Bonnevaux to attend the Blessing of the Abbaye,

It was a sunny afternoon and the guests were standing around mingling together. Then from afar we spotted Fr. Laurence, talking to some of the guests, and then he turned and saw us. He came towards us and was indeed very surprised. Of course we were delighted to see him.

After the Blessing, we returned to Poitiers and stayed there until 19 June and returned to Bonnevaux, where we stayed at the Abbaye for 5 days (19-23 June)

Our stay there was an experience like no other. The community were very welcoming, truly the Benedictine hospitality.. Each guest is welcomed as Christ himself

The five days we stayed there seemed to flow effortlessly into the rhythm and schedule of community living. It surprised us.

Since our stay there was short, our daily chores were simple, like weeding the vegetable garden, vacuuming, hanging out the laundry. On our last day, we even cooked dinner , curry chicken, roast pork ribs, mixed vegetables and fried noodles.

The surroundings of Bonnevaux are simply so natural and life giving. In the evening after dinner, it is ideal to go for walks especially during summer.

We were very touched by Fr Laurence, who, in spite of his busy schedule, made time for us and the gift of his latest book "Good Work "

We treasure the time we spent in Bonnevaux, the ringing of bells calling us for prayer, the myriads of birds singing tirelessly, the wild flowers popping up everywhere in the fields and the chants echoing still.

"Bless the Lord my soul and bless his Holy name. Bless the Lord my soul, who leads me into life "

MARANATHA

Sharon, Peter, Michele (OMPH, Ipoh)



(L-R) Sharon, Peter and Michele with Fr. Laurence and the Bonnevaux community. Peter weeding the vegetable garden.

Sharing the Gift – Introductory Workshops at SFX and SIC, P.J.

Experiencing Christ through Meditation

Saturday 24th August 2019, had seemed like just an ordinary day. However, for almost a hundred participants it was a day their perception of prayer and meditation would change forever.

The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) Malaysia was invited by the Golden Seniors Group led by Peter Tan, to conduct an Introductory Workshop on Meditation in the Christian Tradition at St. Francis Xavier’s Church, Petaling Jaya. Led by Rev Fr. Gerard Theraviam and the WCCM Team, young and senior participants were taken on an infinite journey with Christ.

We learnt that Christian meditation existed long before but was lost for centuries, only to be rediscovered in the twentieth century and to our surprise, its revival had its roots in Malaysia. Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB, who is director of WCCM described it simply as “a privilege of grace given by the Spirit to all”.

To fully experience the effects of meditation, we need to be mentally and spiritually prepared, to fully awaken the heart of the presence of God within us. Three keywords will set us into that mode, Silence, Stillness and Simplicity. Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still and know that I am God”.

A few prayer words were given to us to transform our minds. It is any word that one is comfortable with which would be our silent mantra. Most chose MARANATHA an Aramaic word, the language of Jesus meaning “Come Lord”. We closed our eyes lightly, adjusted our posture to sit upright and slowly let the spirit flow into our beings.

We were meant to stay alert though there were some silent snores around the room. Despite all the little distractions, and the “ monkeys jumping around in our minds” that kept popping up (in other words distractions) we were told to just keep repeating the word from beginning to end during the 20 minutes of silence. Ultimately, we could feel a sense of calmness, the mind did not feel stressed , the body relaxed and not thinking of anything else, the spirit of Christ consumed us.

The workshop was a humbling experience for all. To make meditation as part of our daily prayers, we need to have a routine, of meditating twice a day with a minimum of 20 minutes each, morning and evening. Meditating alone may be difficult so we are encouraged to meditate at weekly group sessions as well.

Having captured as much as we could during the workshop, the group decided to move forward and set a date to start a weekly group session. In this aspect, we are pleased that our Parish Priest Fr. Norris Sreenevsan SJ has supported our endeavour. After all, apart from some quiet time with the Lord, we also come together to strengthen our bond and friendship among the members as they meet at a deeper level - in silence.

Noeline Chanan Singh
Participant



Participants at the workshop with Fr. Gerard Theraviam

INTRODUCTORY CHRISTIAN MEDITATION @ CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS, P.J.

Six weekly sessions of Introductory Christian Meditation, conducted under the auspices of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM), were held in St Ignatius Church (SIC) from 20 August to 24 September 2019. Held every Tuesday at the Costantini Centre from 8.15 pm to 9.45 pm, the sessions were well-attended with 90 registered participants. The sessions touched on various aspects in understanding meditation and how it enhances the growth of prayer life. Fr Paul Cheong OFMCap highlighted aspects of meditation through integrating Body, Mind & Spirit in the practice of meditation of stillness, silence & simplicity to lose ourselves and to dwell in God's presence.

Fr Gerard Theraviam (Parish Priest, Church of Divine Mercy, and Spiritual Director of WCCM Malaysia)) led participants to understand how to leave themselves behind in meditation to move from thinking about God to simply being with God. Ms Niloufer Harben then took participants through the roots of meditation in our Christian tradition. The general feedback from a high percentage of first-time attendees was that they benefited from understanding that Christian meditation is another form of prayer, which is prayer of our hearts.

Nicholas Choong
Leader, SIC Group



The Group at SIC with Fr. Paul Cheong OFM Cap

Light on Addiction and Encountering the Inner Physician through the Wisdom of the Body 28 – 31 August

Fr. Joe Pereira from Mumbai was back to conduct two events.. The first was a one day seminar dedicated to his area of expertise in using yoga and meditation in treating addiction. The turnout of 140 participants on a weekday was amazing.

It was a diverse audience from all walks of life who came away enlightened by this Spiritual paradox of addiction.



(L-R) Fr Joe in action ; Oyent sharing his story in song; : the attentive group

The second was a 3 day yoga workshop on 'Encountering the Inner Physician through the wisdom of the body'. Saralee shares her experience....

I was really unsure about attending these two events both offered by WCCM Malaysia and Father Joseph Pereira. My reluctance had nothing to do with past experiences. I

have always found WCCM Malaysia to provide wonderful events which are well planned and executed and which are invariably helpful to me on my spiritual journey. I know that we are all addicts and so the topic of the first one day event was most welcome. The real problem was with a 3 day Iyengar Yoga workshop.

Anyone who knows me will realize my body is aging rather more quickly than I would wish. My flexibility is such that while I might be able to get down on the floor, getting up requires engineering which is not always available. Falling is not a new experience for me and getting up usually involves crawling to something that I can use to lever myself up. Not pretty and not without a certain amount of discomfort. So I explained to Niloufer why I felt this would be an event I could miss.

Niloufer was adamant that I should come. She reassured me that this kind of yoga is spiritual and also the postures or asanas are achieved via props and other ways of thinking such that what isn't possible for a body like mine can still lead to results which are profound. As usual Niloufer was 100% correct.

Father Joe stressed that yoga is not exercise. It is a way of harnessing the heart to heal the body, a way of getting the mind out of the way. He talked about activating the spine so that the mind could be deactivated. During the 'prayer of the heart' asana, as I think of it, he asked that with every breath we move the brain (mind) to gaze upon the heart. This involves lowering the chin slightly. I remember several years ago Father Laurence suggesting this as a way of decreasing coughing during meditation. Therefore the use of these asanas to help prepare us for meditation became a natural way of thinking about our practice and our mind/body/spirit connections.

The 3-day yoga workshop was a revelation to me. Fr. Joe was assisted by two excellent Iyengar yoga practitioners, Ricardo and Carol from the local Iyengar yoga school. They moved around the room of over a hundred people to make sure the precise positions were correct. They assisted people with straps and opening up of the chest by adjusting our shoulders. For me they helped me to achieve the outcome of the asanas or protocols with props, i.e., without being on the floor. I will always be grateful to Father Joe, Carol and Ricardo for helping me see that yoga is not only for the young and fit but also for those of us who can't achieve those postures one sees in the photos depicting how yoga is done.

The role of meditation and the connection between the spirit and the body was emphasised and this helped us to get a great deal more out of this workshop than just physical stretching. Our breathe, that life giving mechanism that keeps us alive from birth until death, was given a great deal of attention. Meditation over time also becomes synchronised with our breathing.

I am grateful to WCCM Malaysia for organising this workshop. On a personal note I also appreciate the high quality of the meals served to us over the 4 days. At a reasonable price we were able to eat clean nutritious food.

THANK YOU!!

Saralee Turner, WCCM Singapore



The group at the Yoga workshop with Fr. Joe and Fr. Gerard.

Annual Retreat.

Our annual retreat led by Fr. Paul Cheong OFM Cap is just over. This will be featured in our next issue.

Group Activities and Directory Update

1. The Section 17, P.J. Home group led by Pat on Thursdays @8.15pm has been transferred to Parish level to Church of St. Francis Xavier,(SFX) P.J.
2. Elizabeth Anthony's home group in Southern Park, Klang has also moved to merge with the church group at Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang on Mondays at 8pm.
3. Niloufer's home group on Sundays has been discontinued
4. The STM , Subang group is now led by Philip Tan while Karen Kong is on 'sabbatical'.
5. Sr. Clara Antoni's group at the Good Shepherd Seminary in Malacca has relocated to Church of St. Francis Xavier and merged with the group there. They meet at 4pm on Fridays.

Forthcoming events.

Fr. Laurence will be visiting East Malaysia for the first time on 12 November 2019.

He will be delivering a talk on 'Prayer of the Heart ' at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Kuching and will be meeting His Grace, Archbishop Simon Poh.

The Friends and International news with Fr. Laurence's message are attached. Do update yourselves with the happenings around the world.

Happy reading and blessings

Pat Poi

National Coordinator