



Christian Meditation Community Malaysia Newsletter

January 2020

Dear Friends,

New Year blessings and Peace be with you.

We had a busy final quarter of last year starting with our annual retreat from 25 to 28 October held at the Stella Maris Retreat House , Penang.

Annual Retreat 2019

Father Paul Cheong OFM Cap. overwhelmed the crowd of 59 meditators on a retreat themed **“Meditation, Holistic Health of Mind, Body and Spirit”**. Participants from the Dioceses of Penang and KL and even one from Indonesia came together for this event.

Fr. Paul shared the importance of a holistic approach towards strengthening the core of being, integrating the mind, body and spirit. He highlighted the key elements in life and growth in the Spirit through 1. Prayer, 2. Word of God, 3. Love, 4. Service, 5. Prayer of the heart (practice Stillness and Silence) and 6. Prayer of the body. All these elements are needed to live life to the fullest and according to the will of God.

He also referenced the 7 pillars of Health from author Dan Colbert M.D., which highlights the importance of 1. Water, 2. Sleep and Rest, 3. Eat living food, 4. Exercise, 5. Detoxification 6. Nutritional Supplements and 7. Coping with Stress. It is only when we can manage our health better can we carry out the work of God more effectively. He strongly recommends that we practice daily meditation, mindfulness (living in the present moment), practice of gratitude and forgiveness, reframing and laughter daily.

The sessions allowed participants to experience daily morning Qi Gong exercises at 6.30am and throughout the day spend time in personal reflections, mass, prayers and meditation sessions.

The hourly morning exercises consisted of warm up sequences, prayer and constant awareness of the spirit and basic Qi Gong movements.. The exercises were designed to integrate the body, energy and spirit, with the right balance and the enhance the flow of inner energy, as we acknowledge the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The participants were constantly captivated by Fr Paul as he shared simple yet profound knowledge in this field of experience, which he learnt from his various trips to China and India.

This was reflected by his energy level, motivation and inspiration that was consistently transmitted throughout the sessions.

Natural to us, we are constantly having blockages that prevents the transmission and integration of the body, mind and spirit within our being. These are mainly caused by our constant chattering of thoughts, emotions, fear, anxiety, anger, stress etc., which is more prevalent today than ever. We need the constant practice of meditation and exercise in order to reduce these barriers and enable us to experience the fruits of the Spirit, and the practice the virtues of faith, hope and charity.

We were reminded of the importance of focusing on our breath, quoting the holy scriptures and quotes from Saints (incl St John of the Cross) on the breathe of God. In Eastern cultures, there is more focus on the awareness of the breath and the need to achieve a constant rhythm in breathing to heal and cleanse the body. Rhythm is key to the process and we need to have the discipline daily to keep up with morning exercises and meditation (2 times a day).

Father Paul used the concept of the wheel and spokes to describe the balance needed in interiority and exteriority functions and activities. The more we are involved in various projects in the parish and lives (outer wheel), it is important that we move towards the center (interior), the inner practices that will help to unify our body, mind and spirit.

In Christian Meditation, we practice sitting still, in silence, with the right posture and with the help of the mantra to keep us present and attentive. Eventually as we practice, we align the mantra with our breathing in a constant rhythm. This retreat has deepened our understanding and practices of Christian Meditation and at the same time develop new insights and practices in the Prayer of the Body.

The session ended on Monday afternoon after lunch with participants feeling energized after the weekend retreat, with gratitude to Fr Paul for the knowledge shared during those three days.

Roland Victor

CDM Penang.



Regional Silent School Retreat 3-10 November and ETW Update 10-13 November

Our own annual retreat was followed very closely by the Regional 8 day silent school retreat led by Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB.

This retreat is by invitation to those who have been on this path for few years and have attended an ETW (Essential Teaching Weekend). It is a regional event usually held once in 3 years for each region. The last such retreat for the Asia Pacific region was held in Chiangmai at the Seven Fountains Retreat Centre in 2013.

The Stella Maris Retreat House was the venue as it had the ambience and requirements for an event of this nature. We hosted 40 retreatants from Australia, New Zealand, Timor Leste, Taiwan, Philippines, Korea, Thailand , Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia, thus giving our local participants exposure to part of our International Community.

The ETW(Essential Teaching Weekend) Update was conducted by Cathy Day, the new WCCM International School Coordinator assisted by Kath Houston,WCCM Director of International Liason.

Our local participants share their experience.....

A week of silence!!! Never knew what that would entail... Fr. Laurence's sharing gave depth and meaning to this silence. I gained a lot of insight into myself, surroundings and people around me. To crown it all, the food was absolutely fantastic and the participants so orderly.

Teresa Fernandes

SMC, Ipoh

When I signed up for the 8 day Silent Retreat there was this nagging thought.... Can I make it through?. It was rather encouraging though to meet other meditators from so many countries other than our locals..... Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong,Taiwan, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Singapore....all coming together journeying on the same path. I felt the need to deepen my spirituality.

On the first evening we were given some house rules. There was to be total silence even during meal times and throughout the sessions, no use of our mobile which was indeed good as there was no distraction at all from the outside world. As the days went by, I became more aware of the surroundings....among them; the eagles soaring in the nearby hills, the beauty of the sound of the waves lapping on the rocks in the beach in

front of Stella Maris. With this awareness, we were encouraged to write daily a Haiku (a very short form of Japanese poetry in three sentences) whenever we encounter an experience, It was my first attempt...

*An eagle soars
Above the canopy to the mountains
Unhindered, untethered, Letting go.....*

When I realised we had to meditate 8 times a day ,,,a half hour session each it was a bit mind boggling for me. I was used to only 20mins per session daily instead of 30mins twice a day! Initially it was a struggle but after a few days I managed to get into the momentum of it. The contemplative walk was a good break in between the half hour meditation. Fr Laurence's talks were very inspirational and uplifting. The 15mins daily session with my Companion was very encouraging as well.

When the 8th day came, it was like it ended too soon. Yes, one can do with silence and without the mobile to be more rooted into our daily living. It made me reflect more into my life and the Teachings of Letting Go by Fr Laurence was indeed the essence of the retreat to me.

It amazes me that since the Retreat I am now able to meditate 25mins twice daily.....Maranatha!

**Anne Khor
SFX, P.J.**

Experience at the Retreat and Essential Teaching Weekend. (3rd – 13th Nov. 2019 at Stella Maris, Penang.

The retreat itself was challenging the group to focus on the silence. An obvious reality, even though the last one was at Chiangmai. I did not expect anything spectacular and that enabled me to come back to the basic concept of simplicity. Father Laurence “did not spare” us of the need to go back to the mantra. Did we all have to travel so far to come and hear the simple aspects of meditation? Yes, it was worth the trouble. The respect of all to communicate and be present to the Lord and each other helped me.

The ETW gave me the basic outline and this was what I needed. I have always been reluctant to give something outside this tradition. Now, that does inhibit one from sharing experiences. It is less an obstacle. Hence with the information received in the workshop, there is a definite form to follow. The danger is always there when we go out of the mainstream to be unique. The hesitancy is there that one might “start another school!”. The workshop gave hope to clarify the meaning of meditation. “..

Eugene Fernandez CSsR

OMPH, Ipoh

Signing in for the “Eight days Silent School Retreat” was a challenge to my spiritual growth especially after having noted on the Retreat highlights - to have eight meditation sessions per day and to meditate 30 minutes at each session - ie going to meditate four hours a day !!!

Perseverance to the unique gift of the mantra (MA-RA-NA-THA), listening to talks by Fr Laurence and having personal reflections guidance - it led me to get into the routine with ease and embraced with peace and harmony within.

It is a blessing that I did not by pass this Silent Retreat as to experience such a spiritually enriching retreat and having the opportunity to share and meditate together with meditators from various parts of the world. “.

Judith Lee

SFA, Cheras

Reflection on Silent Retreat & ETW 3-13Nov2019

Before November 2019, I had never attended a Silent Retreat that lasted eight (8) days. I didn't expect to enjoy it but to my surprise at the end of the seven days of silence, I was happy to talk but at the same time I missed the quietness and calm which I had began to feel inside of me after the first three days of meditating eight (8!) times daily. During this week with its daily rhythm of meditation, contemplative walks, eucharist and meals I discovered meditation as the “pearl of great price” which I would want to hold forever. I also discovered that it was possible to be in silence with perfect strangers and yet feel connected to them.

Among the many things shared by Father Laurence in his daily talks to us, I will always remember this poem by William Blake :

Eternity

He who binds to himself a joy

Does the winged life destroy

He who kisses the joy as it flies

Lives in eternity's sunrise

The ETW after the silent retreat was a refreshing opportunity to interact with my fellow retreatants and to learn how to conduct future ETWs using all the resources shared by our facilitators, Cathy and Kath. My fellow participants from Penang, Indonesia, Taiwan, Philippines, Timor Leste and other countries in the Asia Pacific region, also added their own experiences to make the whole ETW update a happy, fruitful and meaningful experience.

Beth Rozario

SFX, P.J.



Contemplative walk at dawn



The local School Team in discussion at the ETW Update



Meditators from the Asia Pacific Region at the Silent School retreat and ETW Update, Stella Maris Penang.

Father Laurence Freeman's Visit to Kuching, Sarawak, his first time in East Malaysia.

We were blessed with a visit from Fr Laurence Freeman on the 12 November 2019. It is his first trip to Kuching. We hope there will be many more to come.



At 3.00 pm, Fr Laurence met up with our Kuching Archdiocese Archbishop Simon Poh. The discussion was more than 2 hours. Both parties exchanged and shared ideas. As His Grace had another meeting, the exchange continued at the dinner.

On the same night at 8:00 pm, Fr Laurence gave a talk on “Prayer of the Heart” at the ACCPC Auditorium, St Joseph’s Cathedral, Kuching. Our Archbishop Simon Poh started the session with the introduction and closed it with a prayer. There were more 120 persons. The duration of the meditation was 15 minutes. The silence was well-observed.



Archbishop Simon Poh delivering the welcome address



Participants in rapt attention listening to Fr. Laurence speaking on ‘Prayer of the Heart’ introducing Christian Meditation to Kuching , East Malaysia.

On the next day, His Grace Simon presented Fr Laurence with a commemorative book entitled “Icon of Change”, written by Archbishop Emeritus John Ha which was in conjunction with the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Dedication of St. Joseph’s Cathedral.

We are indeed blessed with the presence of our beloved Archbishop Simon and Fr Laurence. We would like to give our heartiest thanks to both of them.

Alexandra Wong

Coordinator, E. Malaysia

On line meditation on 30 December, Fr. John’s anniversary.

We were invited to celebrate Fr. John’s anniversary by meditating on line with Fr. Laurence in Bonnevaux linked to the Hong Kong Community to be united with them during this period of unrest in H.K.

Group Activities.

The Chinese Meditation group at CDM, Penang led by Peter Teh celebrated their first anniversary on 10th Oct.



CDM Penang Chinese meditation Group

Elizabeth Anthony’s home group in Southern Park Klang, merged with the group in her Parish, Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang.

Patricia Por’s home group in Section 17, P.J. relocated to her Parish church, St. Francis Xavier , P.J. following an Introductory workshop in the Parish.

The School of Meditation

Niloufer Harben (School Coordinator) and Bernadette Suppiah (meditation with children) have retired from their respective posts. We thank them for their immense contributions and many years of service to the community. The School in Malaysia is now headed by Roland Victor, (CDM Penang) with team members Nicholas Choong(SIC, P.J.) Beth Rosario (SFX.P.J.) ,Jessie Chin,(Friary Gp. Pg) Fr. Eugene Fernandez,CSsR (OMPH, Ipoh) and Theresa Fernandes (SMC, Ipoh).

Forthcoming Events.

15 February 2020 : Introductory Workshop led by Fr. Paul Cheong OFM Cap at St. Joseph's Cathedral, Kuching. Contact person: Alexandra Wong 012-8899219

For lent

Stations of the Cross and meditation in the following locations :

7 March : St. Anne's Church, B.M. Contact person Mike Yong 012- 4217924

8 March : St. Ignatius Church, P.J. Contact person Nicholas Choong 019-2227232

Ipoh : St. Michael's church Details to be advised .

Contact person : Theresa Fernandes 016-4577199

Annual Retreat 2020 and Group leaders meeting

Please mark these dates in your calendar : **26-29 November 2020**. Details to follow.

Our website will be updated with events during the year. Do visit us at

www.wccmmalaysia.org Updates will also be posted on Facebook.

WCCM Calendar 2020

The calendar is no longer in print from this year. Please view it on line at:

www.wccmcalendar.org.

The International News is attached . Please update yourselves with Fr. Laurence's message and news around the world.

Wishing you every blessing in 2020.

Pat Por

National Coordinator.

