

Meditatio

Newsletter of The
World Community
for Christian Meditation



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Returning to the Heart

In this issue: reflections by Laurence Freeman and Alex Zatyрка SJ, keynote speaker at the online version of the John Main Seminar (19-22 October)



Alex Zatyрка describes his journey as a missionary in Bolivia and Mexico: "I am certain that the experience of the heart described by the early Christians is the same as we find in the Indigenous societies today." (Photo: Alex Zatyрка archives)

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We need your help:
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WCCM is re-developing its entire digital presence. Please help us to understand the needs, desires, and longings of those who use our site. We want to identify our blind spots and do better. Our goal is to build one of the most useful, impactful, and user-friendly digital ecosystems in the Christian World. Please fill out our online survey by September 1st: www.wccm.org/survey.

Dearest friends,

A letter from Laurence Freeman, OSB

Several people have asked me, some with a smile, if I found it hard being confined at Bonnevaux during the past few months, given my frequent travel around the World Community in recent years. Hoping not to disappoint them with my answer, I said that I could honestly say 'no' to that question.

If one had to be confined anywhere, Bonnevaux is a beautiful prison and the community I was incarcerated with did not riot or make unreasonable demands. We grew together peacefully, sharing solitude and many wonderful moments of celebration and solidarity with the rest of the world with whom we wanted to share the peace we have found here. Before each of the four times that we meditate together daily, I walk up the hill and see other faithful pilgrims also quietly approaching the Barn from different directions and activities. Converging with others in a common place of prayer as the frame of one's life is a joy I wish more in our troubled society might taste even briefly. Many, of course, did discover it — in the blooming of online meditation groups — during these months of shutdown where they found loneliness cured by shared solitude.

I did not write the book or read as much as I hoped. Many days I wasn't travelling further than the Barn but I was meeting with meditators around the world, several continents a day sometimes. I am sure St Benedict would have written a chapter in his Rule on 'The Right Use of the Internet'. If the Bonnevaux commentary on the Rule that might come out of our daily sharing on it is written one day, I'm sure this chapter will be there, together with advice on welcoming guests like Christ while keeping social distancing.

The secret of peace, as children know, is regularity with variety. Since the Confinement, we have felt called to share the peace of our regular life with all who seek a "contemplative path through the crisis". This was how we called the new website we started when the crisis broke. With a small editorial group of our younger teachers — Sarah Bachelard, Sicco Claus, Vladi-

endedness to evolve into something rich and strange. Eventually we say 'this must be what hope is'. In events we cannot negotiate with, predict or control, or that seem meaninglessly cruel, there emerges the humble surrender of acceptance. Without words we say, 'As it is, then let it be'. Acceptance is a long process, with many relapses into rage or self-pity, that



Bonnevaux

mir Volrab, Leonardo Correa — we tried to help make meaning of chaotic events and also to see the opportunity being offered us in often hard and frightening ways. Despair and anger are normal reactions whenever we feel mastered by outside forces that block our plans. But when this negative resistance is not converted, it only worsens the suffering.

The cure is in the illness. Misfortune is a call to conversion. Of course, we cannot see this in the first impact of a crisis. Something childish in us, the ego facing its own powerlessness, makes us feel irrationally that if we deny and resist what is happening to us strongly enough, it will go away. But it doesn't. And as reality takes on the force of fate, it is clear that only deep and full acceptance can make sense of it. Only acceptance keeps us sane and allows the feeling of dead-

evolves into surrender. 'Resist not evil', Jesus said. Gandhi saw this truth, too, that what we resist persists. Merely to be against something gives it energy. In a silent moment of deep interiority, when the surrender is signed, what we refused to accept becomes a new permanent feature of the landscape of our life now deprived of its power to harm. Accepting the unwanted, welcoming the unattractive stranger into our household, liberates, bestows meaning and expands us beyond anything we could have imagined.

Surrender that is this deep and total becomes a triumph.

*

For many, Covid 19 has unexpectedly begun a spiritual awakening and a re-evaluation of life's values. The tsunami of a tiny virus shut down

factories, financial institutions, offices, places of worship, planes and trains, schools and universities, overwhelmed healthcare and exposed the flaws of the people and institutions that govern us. But didn't the internet flourish! We newly discovered its human, spiritual potential. It allowed us to volunteer, in great numbers, to help others, to express solidarity with the worst affected, to meet and pray, to accompany the lonely, to discuss what all this craziness might mean for the future. The crisis has exposed fundamental flaws in our view of the world, our environment and social structures. We are all in the same storm, rich and poor, north and south. But we are clearly not in the same boat. There is a zip code and racial factor in how the virus strikes. So what does 'getting back to normal' mean? Do we *want* to go back, or alternatively, to learn from new sources of wisdom how to change, to be converted in heart and remember what we forgot even that we had lost when we were burning the candle at both ends?

In the black comedy "In Bruges", two hit men, friends as much as killers can be, are forced to go under cover. One has been commissioned to kill the other who is secretly suicidal. One morning as he is sitting on a park bench the assassin creeps up on him to shoot him. But he sees with horror that his friend is preparing to shoot himself. Forgetting his commission, he prevents him. This act of natural goodness restores a real human value and the story ends with dark but true meanings. The world has been on a course of self-destruction. Has the virus, a deadly assassin, become a friend saving us? Enemies can be our best spiritual friends.

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The John Main Seminar this year, hosted by WCCM Mexico, has a providential theme: how the wisdom of indigenous traditions still lives in the human family. How can the rest of the world learn from this? Instead of seeing indigenous societies as 'primitive' or just of touristic interest, can we accept their invitation to friendship? Can they help us back to the value we have foolishly abandoned, the sense of the sacred, the loss of which underpins our crisis of meaning and justice.

By sacred I do not mean a religious zone of elevated purity that names *this* as pure and holy by rejecting *that* as dirty and profane. This has been the flaw of religion from the beginning justifying the most appalling cults of sacrifice and cruelty. The collapse of the sacrificial, violent sacred has distorted organised religion everywhere. Yet this collapse has also released a global search for spiritual meaning which still mystifies most religious leaders. The truly sacred is everywhere and makes everything pure. 'God saw all the He had made and found it very good'. Nothing can survive outside the goodness of this divine source which is the meaning both of each human journey and of the unfolding cosmic miracle.

Alex Zatyryka, who is leading the Seminar in October, speaks in this Newsletter about his lifelong work with the Indians of Bolivia and of Chiapas, Mexico, from whom he has learned what he will share with us. In one particular community that he has come to know well, he sees a manifestation of Church such as we encounter in the Acts of the Apostles. A truly incarnated and indigenous church, a local community living a universal faith. As an example of how they see differently from us he describes how they greet each other with the ques-



Chiapas, Mexico
(Photo: Alex Zatyryka archives)

tion 'how is your heart?'. When they speak of someone who is false, they say 'he or she has two hearts'.

*

One of these Indians, from Bolivia, who was educated and exposed to modern society chose to return to his village. He was not seduced by consumer society or afraid of it. He returned because he intuited the fatal self-contradictions of industrial-technological society. One day, he thinks, it will crash and then we will need what is preserved in his and other indigenous wisdom banks. What we think of now as primitive or touristic will be seen as a healing link to the sacredness and wholeness of vision that we became separated from.

Covid has reminded us of what our fast-paced lifestyle made us forget, that life is short. However we may measure it, the human span of days is short. What matters is not the length and quantity, which is the dominant focus of medical science, but the management of suffering and the discovery of meaning. However suffering can be reduced or cured should be made available equally to

all. What cannot be cured – like death itself – needs to be accepted and so graciously surrendered to that we live and die with meaning. Meaning is the connection with all we have loved in life and with the whole that we belong to as a small part and yet also as a part that contains the whole.

Healers are not merely technicians who see death as failure and suffering as an embarrassment. Like artists and teachers and timeless wisdom, healers help us see the sacred in all things, whether they hurt or delight, from the direct source of meaning.

I was told recently of a renowned neurologist who was attending an elderly patient and gently broke the news to him and his wife that it was time to go to a nursing home, something the patient had long refused to accept. The doctor spoke from the heart. The patient felt it and surrendered peacefully. As they left the doctor's office, the doctor accompanied them to the elevator. They thought he was going to another appointment. But when they reached the ground floor, he took the patient by the arm, walked with them slowly to their car in the parking lot, embraced him, helped him into the car and returned to the hospital building.

When we reach the limits of curing, we become healers.

*

I am not saying that the indigenous pockets of wisdom still remaining on the planet hold all the answers. But they are reminders, like friends who stop us from inflicting further harm on ourselves and our fragile planet. If they are to help us, however, we need enough collective sensitivity to what their wisdom means. Without sufficient receptivity in the patient, no healer can work. Locally or globally, contemplatives are the first-level re-

ceptors of wisdom.

The 'contemplative path through the crisis' will not end when a vaccine for Covid 19 is discovered. The crisis will continue until enough people are on a contemplative path and know, without being told, what wisdom, meaning, surrender, acceptance and the sacred mean. A contempla-



Chiapas, Mexico (Photo: Alex Zatyryka archives)

tive consciousness has already been growing silently for some time. Just as Covid has sped up many other existing trends in society – online shopping and working from home – so it has accelerated the evolution of a contemplative consciousness – still side lined or mocked by many, but now emerging as a player on all sides.

The pandemic has reminded us of our inherent solidarity as a human family. It has also exposed the forces at work – like bad government, greedy money-makers and the obscene gulf between rich and poor - that demand correction or punishment. As a sign of our unreality the stock markets are producing great wealth for some investors while the real economy is crashing. But everyone feels the effects of this global crisis; and everyone feels global warming. As hard wake-up calls they recall us to the unity of humanity and the oneness between humanity and the natural world. Any glimpse into this unity and oneness

is grace: a moment of true contemplation, a lightning flash of wisdom, a healing touch on the wound of our ignorance. Even if it is painful, we want more of what we experience in these brief insights. Because deep down, as we feel the futility of personal isolation or collective nationalism unleashing chaos and pain, we also want to know

what this oneness means.

We face an enigma hidden in a dilemma: the hope concealed in disaster. Our first response needs to be silence. Deep acceptance and surrender release silence. Authentic silence. Not the silence of denial, evasion, refusing to listen to the other point of view, the sound-proofing exclusion of another's right to exist. This is the silence of the death of the heart that dehumanises and erodes all values. Authentic silence is not escape from bad news or failure but embracing and being penetrated by reality, pleasant or unpleasant as it may feel in the moment. John Main taught meditation so intently because he believed that nothing is more important for modern people than to discover the meaning of silence.

Silence is necessary for the human spirit if it is to thrive. Not only thrive, but to be creative, to respond creatively to life, to our environment, to friends. Silence

gives our spirit room to breathe, room to be... The silence is there, within us. What we have to do is to enter into it, to become silent, to become the silence... Silence is the language of the spirit. (John Main)

What makes anything authentic is that we sacrifice ourselves for it, put our whole self into it. Meditation asks this wholeheartedness of us. It gives the opportunity to lay down our life so that we can be lifted up again into a greater fullness of life. Authentic silence is the fruit of pure prayer and saying the mantra is simply a way of pure prayer. After we have taught meditation to a diverse group of MBA students or professionals in the secular world, I sometimes tell them that what we have just introduced them to is prayer – in its pure, essence. They can look mystified, but I have never found they look offended.

*

The essence of prayer is purity of attention; from it springs a new perception of truth and freedom. These golden-oldie terms are rejuvenated as current and liveable values. Relationships of all kinds are felt differently in the light of silence. Work acquires a meaning beyond the satisfaction of financial or reputational reward. It becomes *good work* that brings out the best of us in a spirit of service (think of all the volunteers during the health crisis) and brings benefits to others.

The wisdom of traditional societies flows from a lifestyle that is better connected to the rhythms and healing gifts of nature than we are in the techno-industrial world. But to avoid romanticism and idealism, we need a partnership, an innovative kind of friendship between a new order of contemplatives spread through all

levels and generations of society and these older cultures. If there is enough time left, this could help to change the course of self-destruction we are still on. The indigenous and the contemplative share a common understanding of the heart as the unified source of wisdom and all forms of love. When we act in harmony with the knowledge of the heart our work is God-centred and upbuilds the unity of humanity. The challenge to our over-noisy world that finds it hard to listen to anything except noise, is that this knowledge, like the heart itself, is silent. It is always now. It is not a tool. It is what it is. It speaks by its fruits.

I was recently reminded by a nice

The indigenous and the contemplative share a common understanding of the heart as the unified source of wisdom and all forms of love

surprise party (in Bonnevaux and online) of the fortieth anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood (the forty-first of my monastic vows). I don't count the years, so I take this on trust. But I do remember the thought passing through my doubting mind a long time ago – 'where will this take me? Will I be doing this for the rest of my life?'. Simone Weil wrote in her notebook that we can't meaningfully say 'always'; but we can truly say 'never'. I could say I will never willingly betray this gift. But I couldn't say I will always be a good disciple of it. So, it was a reasonable question to ask myself even if it doesn't have an answer. I don't pretend to answer it now.

But I can say that the simple teach-

ing that John Main introduced me to a long time ago has never ceased to reveal new levels of meaning and dimensions of reality. A wish-fulfilling jewel, a diamond sutra, a pearl of great price, a buried treasure. In your presence I would like to thank him – and for his continued guidance of this work. It has led me into the mystery of Christ in ways I could not have imagined. I don't think I know any more than I did at the beginning but I believe, with a confidence that surprises me, that the simple teaching on meditation is a precious gift for the world, never more precious than in our present need.

In the heart of this gift I have not found knowledge or belief in the ordinary sense, but an ever deepening, receding and approaching stillness. Sitting in that stillness we reach new frontiers and our lives will inevitably reflect what we discover there. Our personal imperfections are embarrassing but not important – which is comforting if you have many of them. In the stillness we are not going anywhere but we are fully on the human journey. We are becoming human and realising what human means. The silence of that stillness teaches us of the friendship of God towards us, His longing for us. This is what we need. Not to surrender to the lure of turning ourselves into cyborgs or genetically recreating ourselves. But to surrender wholeheartedly to the divine potential of our humanity, with all our – ultimately loveable and redeemable – flaws.

Thank you for sharing this vision.

With much love.

Lauren

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John Main Seminar 2020 Online, visit www.johnmainseminar.org

The way back to the heart

Alex Zatyryka SJ, presenter at the online version of this year's John Main Seminar hosted by WCCM Mexico, describes the richness of the culture and spirituality of native people.

By Leonardo Corrêa



Bolivia (Photo: Alex Zatyryka archives)

Alex Zatyryka SJ is the keynote speaker at the John Main Seminar 2020, online 19-22 October: "One Heart, One Hope - Indigenous Wisdom and the Future of Humanity." The Seminar's lineup will also include: Tau Huirama and Vanessa Eldridge (New Zealand), Ana María Llamazares (Argentina), Puleleng Matsaneng (South Africa), Ron Berezan and Ivan Rosypsky (Canada), Hilario Chi Canul (Mexico) and Laurence Freeman OSB (Bonnevaux).

Zatyryka's relationship with indigenous cultures and his passion and respect for them are evident. While this interview took place earlier this year, before the expansion of the pandemic crisis, Zatyryka's comments give ample insight into how much indigenous wisdom has to teach to "modern" societies on how to respond to and thrive in such challenging circumstances. In the beginning of his formation as a Jesuit, Zatyryka served as a missionary in Bolivia. Visiting the people of the high mountains of South America, he connected with something special: a genuine wisdom and way of life that goes beyond the apparent comforts

and promises of modern society.

He remembers one particular meeting with a young native man in Bolivia, who had had the experience of living in the city, but decided to go back to his agricultural village, where life was not easy, where hardships frequently threatened survival. He asked this young man why he decided to come back, if in the city his life could be so much easier and more comfortable. The answer shocked him: "Well I'm here for you". And Zatyryka asked, "Why for me?". He said: "I have been to your place, to your society, to your culture, to the city and I know that it cannot go on forever. That it is going to collapse sooner or later. And, when it collapses, people are going to start looking for someone to teach them how to live humanely, and it would be very sad if there would be nobody here waiting to teach you to live humanely...." This was Zatyryka's introduction to what he calls the "culture of resistance" of indigenous people: "This is not based merely on sentimental attachment to their old ways. It is instead a very thoughtful

and collective effort to preserve their wisdom and especially the way they have learned to relate harmoniously with nature and their surroundings. (...) They don't see the world as another thing that I have, that I can move and manipulate to my advantage. They relate to one another and, of course, to the world, as a living being. Their spirituality has a lot to do with that sensitivity to nature, to their surroundings, to one another and how this transform or turns into a way of living."

Indigenous Christian Community & similarities with the Primitive Church

Zatyryka's path as a Jesuit priest continued in Mexico, and, again, the link with Indigenous spirituality was (and is) present. He describes a Christian indigenous community in Bachajón, in the Chiapas region, as a unique example of how Christianity and indigenous culture can grow together, enriching each other.

"I would say this church is a rare example of a truly Indian Church in America, after 500 years of Christianity. Of course, there are churches where Indians form the majority of the faithful. But they have very little to say about the organization and operations of the church. The "truly Indian" Church presents, on the other hand, the face of a living community, one that reminds us of the kind of communities we read about in the Book of Acts. Here we see how the earliest Christians fostered a way for

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participants to learn how to care for one another, how to care for the environment, and how to care for communities that are outside of their mission territory. Of course, I think they have a message to give to the universal Church, which, as we know, in many places has lost much of its vitality and power to make Gospel values incarnate, not just for themselves but for others beyond their borders. But here you have a Church that is the very centre of the life of these people. They make the Church and the Church makes them. And it is a church with an indigenous face."

The heart - a universal experience

Zatykra explains that in the earliest Christian anthropology, St Paul, in dialogue with Platonic philosophy, describes the human being as formed by: body (soma), mind (psyche) and spirit (pneuma). The spirit (or pneuma) is the centre of human identity, where body and mind come together and are harmonized. It is the place where we become what we are supposed to be, in communion with God and with others.

According to Zatykra, the second and third generation of Christian writers replaced the word "pneuma" with "kardiá" (or heart). "If you read the Desert Fathers and Mothers, they talk about the heart. And how prayer should take you to the heart. The



Chiapas, Mexico (Photo: Alex Zatykra archives)

heart is the place where you meet God. Where you can live in communion."

The experience of the heart is also present in the cultures that Zatykra had contact with in South America and especially in Mexico. In Tzeltal (the Mayan language), the use of the word for heart pervades every aspect of community and relationship. "O'tan" mean the heart and there are a lot of words that have to do with heart. People greet one another, saying "how is your heart?". In other communities they say "Am I in your heart?". The way they express forgetting something is "It fell from my heart". When someone is not honest, they say "he or she has two hearts", which means, they are divided and fragmented, not unified or whole.

"I am absolutely certain that the experience of the heart is the same,"

considers Zatykra. "The experience that early Christians had of finding God in that place where you can only arrive when you are quiet, when you have the right attention, when you are not actively trying to achieve and acquire and consume is exemplified in indigenous spirituality. At first, we might not see the connection, but when we are open to see and receive the gifts and graces of the Spirit, we see that it is the same. It is the same experience that the early Christians described and that these indigenous cultures have cultivated. The opening to the loving presence of God I think is universal. The different cultures have found different ways on how to get there, but the destination is the same."

ONLINE - watch videos with Alex Zatykra and other JMS 2020 speakers here: <http://tiny.cc/alexz>

Enrique Lavin, WCCM Mexico Coordinator:

Indigenous wisdom has been since the beginning of our knowledge a deep fountain where we can find resources to heal the earth. Indigenous people from all over the world share this common insight: that we form a unity with all, with all of nature. We have forgotten that creation is the first Bible. (...) It is very important that we find a way to listen to the ancient wisdom of indigenous peoples. In listening, we might remember what we have forgotten.

JMS 2020, Online: One Heart, One Hope Indigenous wisdom and the future of humanity

19-22 October

Alex Zatykra SJ (keynote) & others

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www.johnmainseminar.org

Bonnevaux

Online events: bringing the global community together

In the past months, in response to the pandemic crisis and as a sign that it is the international home of WCCM, Bonnevaux has offered a series of opportunities for the global community to connect online, including meditation, Contemplative Eucharist, yoga sessions, seminars and retreats.

In June (10-13) Prof Mark Burrows led the online retreat "Reframing: Meister Eckhart's Wisdom and the Contemplative Integration of our Lives". Speaking from the USA, Prof Burrows led retreat sessions, Q&A, and invited the participants to join the meditation times.

The first online retreat in French from Bonnevaux took place at the beginning of July. Eric Clotuche led this "hybrid" retreat on the theme "Quelques Mots du Desert (A Few Words From The Desert)", with a small group attending in person and others joining online.

From 21 to 26 July Bonnevaux hosted another teacher "in house": James Alison, priest, theologian and author let the online retreat on the theme "Basic Christianity: what does the "real thing" look like when all the kitsch has collapsed?"

The online version of the Young Adult Retreat was held 29 July to 2 August, with the theme "Sources of Happiness – Where to Find Them", led by Laurence Freeman, Giovanni Felicioni and a team of mentors. The programme included meditation, yoga, talks, Q&A sessions, contemplative eucharist and personal mentoring.



Upcoming online events

We had hoped to re-start residential retreats in September but, unfortunately, due to the many uncertainties of the present crisis, we feel it is safer to hold all events and retreats online only for the rest of this year. Some upcoming online events:

29 August - The Message from Bhutan to the World: a seminar with Dr Julia Kim and Laurence Freeman

28 September - 1 October - Monte Oliveto @ Bonnevaux: online retreat with Laurence Freeman and Giovanni Felicioni

9 - 15 November - Beyond Words, Beyond Dualities: online retreat with Liz Watson

23 - 29 November - Lovers Are Always Meeting for the First Time – Advent Retreat with Laurence Freeman

Bonnevaux also offers weekly live events: meditation, Contemplative Eucharist and yoga classes.

Check all information at:
www.bonnevauxwccm.org

Comments from participants

"I have been on many WCCM retreats but never one of any sort online. It was an intensely contemplative experience - in the listening, the meditation alone and with the Bonnevaux meditators. The transmissions were without problems. I found the Q&A sessions and discussions further deepened my appreciation of Eckhart and sent me back to the books already on my shelves. (Comments from the UK on the retreat with Mark Burrows)."

"I want to express my gratitude for the retreat with James Alison. It has expanded me and opened me to many insights which I will be meditating with for some time, I expect. Your contemplative life at Bonnevaux is a gift for us all, and it warms my heart and gives me courage when needed, to think of you in your commitment to this work in the world. (Comment from Canada on the retreat with James Alison)"

"Thank you so very much for providing the online retreat- I realise the amount of resources and time required to put the technology on. Having the videos to watch afterwards is very helpful, as it was not always possible to make it to the live sessions. (Comment from the UK on the retreat for Young Adults)"

Meditatio

A Gift for our Times – Meditation with Children and Young People

First Meditatio's Education outreach online seminar was held on the 30th of June

By Paul Tratnyek

The 30th of June marked what Fr. Laurence called "an important milestone" in Meditatio's Education outreach. Our first online seminar, "A Gift for Our Times", hosted by WCCM Mexico, was offered to community members teaching meditation to children and young people. The response, 181 registrants, speaks of the great need and desire to bring the gift of meditation to children and young people, especially during this time of crisis.

With the goal of collectively encouraging and re-energizing the sharing of the gift, Fr. Laurence spoke to the significance of meditation for the young generation in light of our current global crisis, and Anne Graham, a meditator and professor at Southern Cross University in Lismore, Australia, discussed current research pointing to the benefits of meditation with children and young people.

Fr. Laurence identified as the root of our modern crisis a spiritual crisis of disconnect from our own essential spiritual identity. Mental health and finding meaning are major concerns for children and young people. "This disconnect brought about by the forces in our culture is the reason why meditation is important to teach to children." He also spoke of the immeasurable gifts of meditation.

Anne's presentation emerged from the international gathering at Ashburnham outside of London in 2016. In her research with children and young people in schools, Anne



found that the benefits of meditation include improved attention, cognitive function and mindfulness along with reduction in depression, stress and anxiety.

An encouraging and beautiful video containing voices of children

from various countries reflecting on their experience of meditation was also shared at the seminar. The full report by Anne Graham with a summary leaflet, and the video are available online here: <https://rebrand.ly/medchilds2020>

Meditation & Earth - Knowing Where We Are



This booklet helps us to engage with the growing crisis of environmental destruction and climate emergency faced by the entire world. At its heart is the recognition that - collectively and individually - we need to change our habits. We are invited to look, with increased urgency, at how meditation can help us to save the planet. Order here: <http://tiny.cc/medearth>

Meditatio

Meditatio Ecology: an experience of solidarity in face of our climate emergency

By Pascale Callec

Although the Meditatio ecology event could not take place as planned in Bonnevaux from 21 to 24 May 2020, the experience lived online was rich and profound. The theme "Towards a new Earth" was so topical that the French organisation team were keen to propose a journey based on videos and an online book as well as workshops and sharing meetings on Zoom. The objective was that this journey could help each one individually or collectively in the deep changes to operate at the front of the stakes of our planet.

Despite our limited experience with online events, the journey was very successful with more than 180 participants in the workshops and many more people in the sharing groups. Each meeting of these sharing groups began with a time of meditation and then engaged in a benevolent dialogue around the issues raised by the state of our planet and the need to radically change our behaviours. A synthesis of these groups was shared during the final meeting on the afternoon of Saturday 20 June. Here are a few elements from this time of sharing, which brought together Laurence Freeman and Michel Maxime Egger with more than 15 groups, including Canadian and Australian groups that enriched the French reflections:

- * The confinement allowed for a change of perspective and relationship to time with greater attention to nature. We understood that it was a matter of facing our fears head on,



Bonnevaux Community sharing group during the Meditatio Ecology

with courage, to overcome them and act at our level, starting from our inner transformation to better preserve our Earth. Our individual transformations are necessary for a mutation towards a solidarity economy to become truly inseparable from the ecological well-being of our Planet.

- * If meditation is essential to our path of transformation, the situation also implies a new inner attitude, more connected by the sensitivity to living, in order to discover it and thereby discover ourselves. Meditation is therefore a path inseparable from that of attention to nature.

- * Spirituality and militant commitment must go hand in hand. Our inner transformation only finds its meaning in a praxis in connection with our daily meditation. "Our daily experience prepares us for our meditation," John Main taught.

- * Wanting to move towards a "new Earth" requires a precise attention to our consumer choices, a real attention to the preservation of nature but also to helping others. It also implies

trusting in listening, in collective intelligence in deep joy, love and enthusiasm. Meditation is of course the foundation of our life but it is not enough and we are invited to a real connection between the inside and the outside as a path of integration and so of unity.

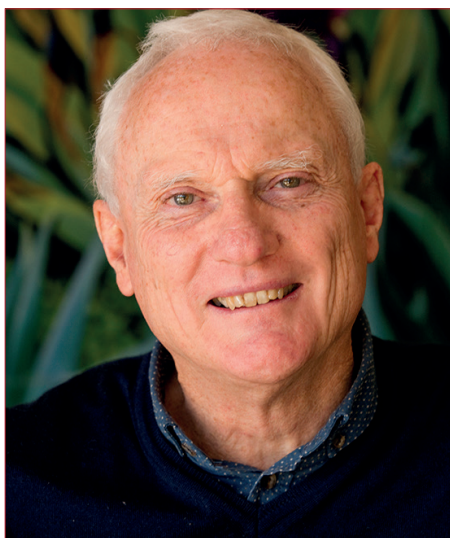
Bonnevaux has often been cited in the exchanges as a place that can be a place of coherence and experience for a new Earth. Moreover, the sharing group of the Bonnevaux community proposed to embark on the "Green Church" approach which in France commits communities to implement ecological life choices.

The participants also agreed on the need to make widely known the experience lived during Meditatio Ecology and above all to continue on the path undertaken! We are therefore already working with heart, perseverance and hope rooted in our meditation journey.

Meditatio ecology videos with English subtitles:
<http://tiny.cc/medecovd>

In Focus

Vincent Maire, New Zealand



My introduction to meditation in the Christian tradition in August 2004 was akin to discovering an oasis in a desert. I had been wandering this spiritual desert for more than 20-years but finally I had a place to call home. I connected with the meditation community in Auckland and met many people including Fr. Peter Murphy who then, as now, is a mentor to many in the New Zealand community. In 2008 I became a founding trustee of NZCCM and have served on the national committee in various roles ever since. Highlights include hosting the 2015 John Main Seminar, a Meditatio

Seminar in 2019 and in November 2017 meeting a young Frenchman, Thomas Litzler, at a teaching day I was leading in my parish. When Thomas told me he was a horticulturist, I encouraged him to visit Bonnevaux as I felt his skills would be appreciated. A year later, almost to the day, Thomas launched his first web talk from Bonnevaux. Because of this unique link with Bonnevaux, the New Zealand community donates funds each year for the development of the orchard and gardens. Currently I am the NZCCM Auckland regional coordinator and in March became a novice oblate of WCCM.

In May I received an invitation to Zoom with Fr Laurence. He asked if I would give an online talk about my work as a hospice chaplain. At the 2019 Meditatio Seminar I gave a talk on The Contemplative Care of the Dying. The basis of my talk is this: when I started working at Harbour Hospice in 2013, I discovered that my meditation practice had prepared me for the role in ways I could never have imagined. My work often involves periods of silence and stillness, of being at peace with not knowing what is going on, of navigating deepening levels of

presence, of using the mantra as a way to prepare myself for each new encounter with a dying person. I absolutely love working at my local hospice here on Auckland's Hibiscus Coast.

The other reason Fr. Laurence wanted to talk was to invite me to join the WCCM Guiding Board. This is a huge honour for the New Zealand community. It is also a great honour for me. I have worked and volunteered in the not-for-profit sector for many years and prior to becoming a hospice chaplain, I had a long career in marketing and communications. I hope that what I have learned through life's many twists and turns will be put to good use during my time on the Guiding Board.

I am married to Liz; we have two daughters, Victoria and Emily. Emily and her husband Paul have three daughters, Lucy, Georgia and Thea. Liz and I are conservation volunteers and love exploring New Zealand's many national parks. Each Wednesday at 1730 hours I lead a meditation group at my local Catholic church, St Francis by the Sea in Manly on the Hibiscus Coast. My life is blessed in so many, many ways.



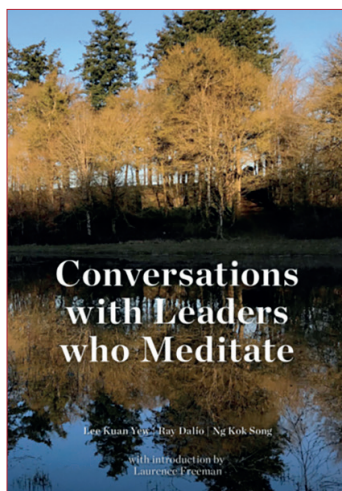
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Would you like to contribute to the Meditatio Newsletter? Our next deadline is 20 October.

Resources

Books



Conversations with Leaders who Meditate by Lee Kuan Yew, Ray Dalio and Ng Kok Song
Order here: <http://tiny.cc/convleadm>

In these conversations, leaders holding responsibility at a global level speak about the practice of meditation and its place in their lives, personally and professionally. They bear witness to the need for an enlightened approach to leadership where responsibility, vision and success find meaning in the deeper dimension of personal integrity and altruism, and where contemplation is inseparable from action. The introduction defines clearly the meaning and purpose of meditation and offers a simple teaching of the practice.

Audio



The latest Meditatio Talks Series: Contemplative Reflections on Scripture 1 by Laurence Freeman
Listen to or download the tracks:
<http://tiny.cc/medt2020b>

This is how you can now get the quarterly Meditatio Talks

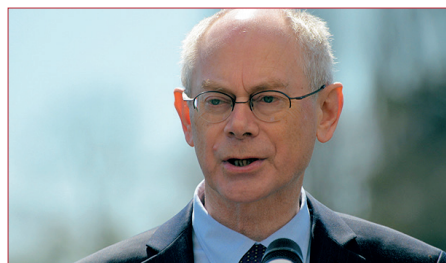
To keep up with the times, the distribution of the Meditatio Talks Series in physical CDs has been discontinued with effect from the 2020-B Apr-Jun issue.

A set of talks will continue to be released every quarter and will be made available for downloading from <https://meditationtalks.wccm.org>. There you will also find the complete Meditatio Talks series, from 2005, together with the corresponding transcripts.

A Contemplative Path

www.acontemplativepath-wccm.org

In recent months this new website addressed the urgent needs arising from the pandemic with a series of video-conversations and other teachings with meditators from diverse fields (spirituality, society, health, education, and others), developing a contemplative approach to the crisis and how to respond to it.



Herman Van Rompuy, president emeritus of the European Council, speaks on the Contemplative Path website

Online Courses

Meditation, Wellbeing and More with Jim Green - Enroll now:
<https://rebrand.ly/mwboc>

Meditation, Wellbeing and More has been designed to help you explore a range of concepts associated with health, wellbeing, human development and personal growth, alongside the practice of meditation. Meditation has long been recognised as something that can support personal wellbeing.

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