



Christian Meditation Community Malaysia Newsletter September 2023

Dear Friends,

Peace be with you.

The third quarter kick started with our first bilingual Introductory Workshop at Church St. Theresa, Melaka.

Our team was led by Roland Victor , School Coordinator supported by Beth Rozario in the English sessions . The mandarin section was led by Peter Teh, supported by Jane Chong, while Nicholas Choong assisted in both sections.

The event was reported in the Herald as follows

Initiation to Christian Meditation. The Church of St Theresa, Melaka held a parish formation on Christian Meditation (John Main Tradition) both in Mandarin and in English, on Sunday, 16 July 2023, as part of the ongoing thrust of the Parish, to deepen the spirituality and prayer life of the parishioners. Response was overwhelming – 100 Mandarin speaking persons gathered at the ground floor and 60 English speaking persons gathered at the second floor of the parish building from 2pm to 6pm. The formation was given by a team of 7 persons from the World Community for Christian Meditation(WCCM), Malaysia.

Meditation is a universal spiritual practice that is found in many religions – Buddhism, Hinduism... what then is Christian Meditation? We traced back to the roots of our Tradition that goes all the way to St John Cassian in the 4th century, up to Fr John Main, OSB; who rediscovered this treasure in the 20th century. Fr Lawrence Freeman, OSB, took over after the death of Fr John Main in 1982 and he formed WCCM in 1991, that now has meditation groups (monastery without borders) in parishes worldwide. How is Christian Meditation different? Christian Meditation is spending time with the Lord, being in touch with the Spirit of Christ - God inside of us. It is an art of waiting, being close to Jesus and feel His love. In the Scriptures, we see Jesus spends times with the Father, Jesus is silent and He talks to the Father. Jesus is the master/teacher of Christian meditation/contemplation. Mt 6:6 speaks of the inner room(interiority), and Mt16:24- follow me, leave self behind.

During meditation, we are asked to use a single word/phrase. In John Main tradition, the word(mantra) recommended is Maranatha, an Aramaic word found in 1Cor16:22 and Rev 22:20. The prayer word (mantra) acts as an aid to bring our busy minds filled with thoughts to stillness. It is a way of detachment, and a way of training the mind. We become aware of God's loving presence in our hearts – it is the prayer of the heart. We experience conversion and have a close relationship to Jesus.

In the video on the wheel of prayer, Fr Lawrence Freeman says that prayer is a spiritual journey. There are different forms of prayer– Eucharist, Sacraments, Charismatic prayer, Petition prayer..... ie the symbol of the wheel. At the center of the wheel is the hub – the prayer of Jesus to the Father and compassion for the world. Jesus' prayer manifests and completes all forms of prayer. Jesus prays in us, within us and for us. I no longer pray but Jesus prays in me. How to find our way to the heart of the wheel? – a single word /phrase, said silently and repeatedly in our hearts will guide our thoughts, that we may enter into stillness and that stillness generates the movement of the wheel. Other forms of prayer become enhanced with the practice of meditation.

In Christian Meditation (John Main tradition), we are told to meditate daily, twice a day; once in the morning and once in the evening for 20mins to 30mins, with the prayer word MA- RA-NA-THA, say silently, gently, slowly and listen to it. In meditation (Silence, Stillness, Simplicity), we are being sanctified by a process of being healed. God transforms us and makes us whole – to be whole is to be holy. Transformation is gradual as the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control – grows in us in our meditation. The gift of meditation – a better way of living, a true way of seeing and a compassionate world.

Christine Ong

Parish of St. Theresa, Melaka



Interfaith Event in Penang

Meditation Cultivating Harmony

Aligned with the theme "Fostering Harmony in Diversity," the Penang Harmony Corporation (HARMONICO) recently hosted the inaugural Penang Harmony Celebration 2023, taking place from August 31 to September 21, 2023. The event aimed to showcase the diverse cultural heritage of Penang and underscore the value of community inclusiveness. Various activities were featured during the celebration, including arts, exhibitions, multicultural music, dialogues, meditation workshops, and educational programs.

Central to this celebration was "Meditate 21," a campaign encouraging individuals and communities to engage in meditation for peace over 21 days, beginning on September 1, 2023, and concluding on the International Day of Peace on September 21, 2023. This initiative witnessed collaboration involving 14 religious and non-religious groups from Penang.

The Cathedral of the Holy Spirit Meditation Group (CHS Meditation Group), in collaboration with the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM), played a significant role in supporting Meditate 21. They organized a workshop on the John Main way of Christian meditation on September 6, 2023, at the cathedral.

During the workshop, Bernard Capel of the CHS Meditation Group provided guidance to 40 participants, elaborating on prayer practices within the Catholic Church. He emphasized that the John Main way of meditation aligns one's spirit with the Spirit of Jesus, promoting communion with the Father within the heart. Key aspects of this practice, similar to various prayer traditions, include silence, stillness, and focused attention. Bernard underscored the importance of discipline in prayerful meditation as it enables individuals to delve into the core of their being and encounter the Spirit of God.

The workshop concluded with a 20-minute meditation session, during which participants silently recited the Aramaic phrase, "Ma – Ra – Na - Tha," translating to "Come Lord." Bernard highlighted the significance of dispelling thoughts,

words, or images, allowing individuals to remain present in the creator's presence, shaping it into a profound "prayer of the heart."

Bryan Oon, the HARMONICO representative, highlighted in his closing remarks that meditation serves as a potent means to attain inner peace. Meditate 21, he pointed out, aspires to unite individuals from diverse religious backgrounds in a spirit of friendship, contributing to a harmonious and unified society.

Continuing their commitment to harmony, on September 12, 2023, the CHS Meditation Group actively participated in the Mindfulness Zen for Everyday Life workshop by Zen Space Penang. A participant noted that Meditate 21 initiates a ripple effect of harmony, marking a new beginning.

Father Joachim Robert, the parish priest of CHS, reiterated that meditation and silence are true building blocks of harmony. Father Joachim shared deep hopes that more individuals would be inspired to join the CHS Meditation Group, which convenes on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the cathedral. He aspires for a growing number of people to experience the transformative power of contemplative prayer.





Participation in Archdiocesan World Mental Health Day at Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Cheras

9 September 2023

In conjunction with the world Mental Health Day 2023, organized by the Archdiocesan Mental Health ministry, we were invited to participate by having an experiential booth to introduce Christian Meditation to newcomers.

With the help of our WCCM team members we successfully facilitated our session showing a short video with explanation on how to meditate by Fr Lawrence Freeman OSB, followed by a 10 minute meditation , ending it with a short Q&A session. We facilitated 3 sessions.

There was an overwhelming response of more than 40 people per session. Our aim is to bring awareness and understanding that we practice meditation not in isolation but in a field of spiritual friendship. We also introduced reading materials and CDs from WCCM resources.



Many participants expressed their interest and and gratitude. The organizers showed their appreciation and their feedback was

“ It was such a powerful and insightful session and a lot of participants enjoyed the session”

A word of thanks to Elizabeth Rozario, Nicholas Choong, Dr Fabian Kung, Monica Gomez, Madam Kim, Irene Low, Valerie and Flora for supporting us.

*Mally Arokiasamy
Leader, Meditation Group
Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras.*

**Meditation with children.
Church of St. Michael, Ipoh**

29 August 2023



The mandarin speaking group was given a 30 minute slot during the Primary School children's camp to promote meditation to the children and adults (catechists and helpers) present. The children listened attentively, some followed, some fell asleep as they were tired from the day's activities. Response from adults was very encouraging. They felt calmer as they never had this experience before. We took the opportunity to encourage the adults to join our weekly meditation sessions held every Saturday at 11am.

*Jenny Chan,
Leader, Mandarin group
St. Michael's church, Ipoh*

Reflections of pilgrims on our 30th Anniversary pilgrimage to France and retreat at Bonnevaux

Living out the practice of meditation in contemporary culture

A reflection by Pam Nair

Born a cradle Catholic, my prayer life has evolved over the years from the usual family devotional style of prayers: From kneeling and reciting the Rosary and Litanies to the louder than loud Praise & Worship in my 20s until I discovered the gems imbedded in the Christian Scriptures whilst studying Theology at the Pius XII Seminary here in Brisbane. The Word came alive in a new way for me and thus began my commitment to the *Lectio divina* – a time of dialogue with God that embraces my whole self: thoughts, images, memories, hope...etc. This contemplative manner of prayer, guides me in my self-reflections and in my engagement to counsel those who seek my expertise as a Clinical Mental Health Practitioner. Yet I desired and thirst for more...

I recognised that my professional world of words and sacred narratives of individual stories would sometimes be a cognitive overload and despite using known unwinding strategies like journaling, supervision, walking (whilst angels talk...); yoga, a good glass of red etc., these still did not cut it, so about a decade ago I decided to simply **sit and be**. I had by then already starting attending a couple of retreats when Fr Laurence was in town and subscribing to the WCCM Newsletter (hard copy I must say as nothing beats the touch and feel of words!).

Gradually, my prayer time took on more the ritual of *Lectio divina* followed by meditation using a mantra. There were “peak experiences” (to use Abraham Maslow’s terminology) ¹ during this prayer discipline but I also had to live “off-peak” in the messiness of human stories and tragedies of grief and loss. However, one thing I began to recognise in my own life was that I was able to **hold** these sacred narratives in a loving and supporting manner without feeling overwhelmed. The words of counsel that I would convey sometimes even surprised me as the words of wisdom was beyond my own human intellect or skillset. I began to recognise and attribute these ‘wins’ to my discipline of meditation.

Reflecting further, I was beginning to understand that most human/ cultural experiences i.e. the way we think, live, feel, respond based on our value systems, and celebrate life, can sometimes be a dichotomy between *Lectio divina* and culture. Almost 50 years ago Pope Paul VI spoke of this tragedy of our times ²and if only we can learn to live a more congruent life. Culture continues to bombard our senses and fill our minds and much of the time we are oblivious of its sway on us. If only we can learn to bridge this gap and herein I believe lies the answer – **meditation!**

¹ A. Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*, New York, Penguin, 1964.

² Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), No. 20.

Despite being trained in various modalities of therapeutic practices and its associated strategies, and with 30 odd years of clinical experiences, I come back to the basics as an intervention – ***sit and be***. I have begun to advocate as a starting point this strategy to my clients – the discipline of meditation to deal with grief, loss, and anger, the seductiveness of additions and the pressures of life etc.

More and more there is a real and positive regard for the power of meditation so that tranquillity replaces fretfulness, thoughtfulness replaces busyness, and the desires for instant satisfaction (in a fast-food/world) is replaced by considerate attention to the working of the Spirit and for the common good of all. A beautiful quote from St Augustine comes to mind – God is *intimior intimo meo* ³ deeper within me than my own inner self. In the unseen recesses of our soul Creator meets creature, Divine Spirit meets human spirit. Further Karl Rahner's renowned maxim "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he (sic) will not exist at all"⁴ espouses the importance as we continue our journey of seeking God as individuals and as collective.

Through the discipline of meditation we begin to experience a deep centered interiority (a kind of everyday mysticism) and it is not as if we are called to escape from our cultural setting. It is also not about being self-centered (inward looking), rather I believe that because of our discipline of meditation, the fruits and effectiveness of this discipline influences us to be 'better' human beings and to relate to the our common earth and all peoples in a way that "acts justly, love tenderly and to walk humbly with God." ⁵

May we become what we receive.

Pam Nair
WCCM Brisbane

My reflection on this retreat is based on the reading for Trinity Sunday on the 4th of June 2023.

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 13:11-13 "Sisters and Brothers, we wish you happiness; try to grow perfect; help one another. Be united; live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with the holy kiss. All the saints send you greetings.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The word of the Lord

³ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 3, 6, 11.

⁴ K.Rahner *Theological Investigations* 20, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981, 149.

⁵ Micah 6:8

This reading speaks to me of meeting Fr Laurence in Brisbane, Australia in 2010 and later the two retreats I attended in Bonnevaux. My first visit was in 2018 to celebrate WCCM Malaysia's 25th anniversary. The second was in early May this year to celebrate WCCM Malaysia's 30th anniversary.

Reflecting on Saint Paul's greeting, "Sisters and Brothers, we wish you happiness; try to grow perfect;" In this context, the word "happiness" means joy and the word, "perfect" means whole. My experience of meditation in WCCM is that it does transform lives to create a community of joy-filled people, where we try to grow into wholeness. In meditation and other contemplative practices, my life is transformed by the Holy Spirit and my relationship with God is deepened. My meditation practice and the two pilgrimages to Bonnevaux has affirmed that we are the body of Christ making us all brothers and sisters in Christ. The fruits of meditation are the fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This can be witnessed within the WCCM communities around the world.

One of the reasons for taking leave to come on this retreat in May to Bonnevaux was to discern what God was asking me to do after completing 37 years of my vocation in teaching. This year we had a change of leadership at the College – new principal, new assistant to the principal in religious education and a new campus minister. God does work in mysterious ways as I was asked to read and reflect on this reading. I see this as one of the many signs for me to continue to "help one another" to know, experience and love our Creator God who dwells within our hearts, through Christian Meditation. Giovanni who gave us two yoga workshops during the retreat, has definitely helped us experience our embodiment of the risen Christ. Fr Laurence and the late Fr John Main have helped us to experience the real presence of God within and among us through Christian Meditation. I, in turn see my calling to continue to share the gift of meditation to all those whom I minister to, in my teaching vocation.

Saint Paul advises, *"Be united; live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you"*.

It is clearly evident that Christian Meditation does create community as witnessed here in Bonnevaux, and all the Christian meditation communities around the world. The World Community for Christian Meditation transcends boundaries of race, culture and religion. We are united as a World Community even though we may not be in the same geographical location.

I had the privilege to meditate in real time online with the meditators in Lviv, Ukraine when Fr Laurence was with them in person in March 2022. Inspired by this, I shared with my students that they can unite with the people in Ukraine through meditation to bring peace to the people in Ukraine. The God of love and peace will be with those who are united and live in peace, even in the midst of war or crisis.

Saint Paul continues, *"Greet one another with the holy kiss."*

According to some bible scholars, in New Testament times, a kiss on the cheek was used for greeting and implied friendship and acceptance. A kiss of greeting between Christians implied that no elite groups existed and that all were equally loved and accepted—not only by God—but

by one other. One would find it difficult to give a kiss of peace especially in Covid times but the implied meaning can still be expressed in other ways to show that all are loved and accepted. This I believe is the challenge for us in our communities today where the marginalised suffer because they are not accepted into our communities.

Saint Paul says, *"All the saints send you greetings"*.


According to Clarke's Commentary *"All the saints" in this context means "All the Christians now at Rome."*

I liken this verse to the greetings of all meditators in the World Community. Wherever you go in the world you will be greeted warmly by the meditation community. We were greeted and welcomed so warmly with open arms by the Malaysian Meditation Community and the Bonnevaux Community. The challenge for all our local meditation communities is to be able to live out this beautiful farewell greeting and advice from St Paul.

On this feast day of the Holy Trinity, I conclude this reflection by sending you greetings and love from deep within my heart, the same relational flow of LOVE between Father, Son and Spirit that transcends space and time to connect and unite with all who are immersed in this flow of love.

In the Words of Saint Paul *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all"*

In my words, *may the Trinitarian
that flows between Father, Son and Spirit
embrace all of us.*



Edmund Lai
WCCM Brisbane

Forthcoming Events

30th Anniversary Retreat 29 October to 1 November at Stella Maris Retreat House, Penang

Theme : The Art of Friendship ,

Finding Oneself in the Other

Led by Fr. Laurence Freeman, OSB .

Registration is open till 15 October 2023

Contact ; Mike Yong 012-4217924

Email: mikeckyong@yahoo.com

The international News with Fr. Laurence's message is attached.

Enjoy this update on news around the world

Blessings

Pat Por

National Coordinator