



WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

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The fragrance of metanoia

LAURENCE FREEMAN EXPLAINS HOW PLANTING THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION TRANSFORMS THE WORLD



Metanoia Rose from Maria and Albert's garden in Ukraine (photo: Albert Zakharov)

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Yesterday I was Zooming with Maria and Albert Zakharov, the WCCM coordinators in Ukraine. Shortly after the war began, I was deeply moved by an extraordinary comment they made in a very ordinary tone of voice: 'We are in a war for our survival. But now is the time to speak about meditation.' This led to my visit there last year and to the online sharing of that and other events through which their example of unifying contemplation and action has come to inspire our community and many others. It feels to me that this unified consciousness is a sign of the power of metanoia. It testifies to the fruits of meditation which all humanity needs today for its survival.

Maria and Albert and I spoke yesterday about a visit by them and other Ukrainian meditators to Bonnevaux and also about a retreat in Lviv when I go there in September. I learned something else from Maria and Albert: about a rose called Metanoia. It is a vigorous climbing rose with double blooms on a spectrum from orange to salmon pink, with a powerful but delicate fragrance. It needs plenty of watering and a lot of sun but rewards this by blooming continuously from May to October. They had just planted a Metanoia rose bush in their small garden at home, talking about it smilingly and hopefully.

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Most of us are increasingly aware of how all of us are engaged in another kind of war. The daily tragedy in Ukraine painfully keeps us conscious of it. It is the struggle we are in for the survival of the human and the humane against the extreme forces of the shadow within humanity itself. The battlefields of this war are dominated by science, technology and market forces in every theatre of human activity, from the core crisis of the environment to all aspects of culture across all social institutions. Without a transformed way of seeing and under-



Albert and Maria with Laurence during his visit to Lviv in 2022

standing reality, the forces opposing humanity may be too great to resist, precisely because they come from within ourselves. The self-destructiveness of this war of humanity against the human is too immense and complex for any solution except what would emerge from a new and radical form of simplicity.

If we at least accept this need for a change of mind, we will see how much more urgent it is to plant the rose of metanoia in hearts and minds everywhere than to bewail, blame and polarise in endless argument. The delicate, pervasive fragrance of a rose attracts wide attention and highlights the very unity of humanity we have forgotten. I have never met anyone who says they don't like the smell or look of roses, but no doubt there is a social media forum for them.

Instead of conflict, metanoia produces abundant blooms, awakening the beauty of the human, showing us again our potential and the true meaning of existence. As it is seen, tasted, felt and smelled across the human spectrum, metanoia becomes more than another global fashion novelty. It is potentially the dawn of a new religious experience claimed exclusively by no single tradition but equal to all. Pope Francis says that 'prayer is a universal value.' The Dalai Lama says,

'my religion is kindness.' When the mind opens to the power of metanoia that it possesses, it understands itself and the world, offering a compelling vision of a new kind of humanity worth living and dying for. If nothing else, it is an alternative to our present trajectory towards self-destruction.

Like all new growth, the Metanoia Rose needs careful planting and nurturing, but it then becomes sturdy and resilient. Our personal inner work for metanoia must also start small and fragile. It too needs careful cultivation, but as it changes the way we see, it exerts a transformative effect on the world we inhabit. Meditation is the work of planting and cultivation. It is good work because it is not a selfish escape from reality, nor a private garden serving our self-interest.

It is essentially a delightful work producing the fragrance of peace. But peacemakers are blessed because they struggle. This is the meaning of 'jihad': not externalising our inner darkness in hatred of enemies, but combating within ourselves self-hatred, self-rejection and ignorance. 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but... against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Eph 6:12).

In the work of self-knowledge, we shed

illusions and come to see things as they are. The powers of darkness are forced to retreat but will launch counter-offences when we become complacent. Spiritual warfare tolerates no violence against others or ourselves. Its secret weapon is the power of other-centredness. Ego-centredness retreats before it and eventually accepts defeat. Meditation is a long campaign supporting metanoia that needs deep reserves from its alliance with gentleness, faithfulness and trust. As it looks fear in the eye and transforms suffering, meditation throws pure light on the human shadow.

If we refuse to work on our dark side, it inevitably undermines us from within. It increases misery by manifesting itself in self-centred action or self-absorbed inaction. The raw sewage of the psyche seeps out into the surrounding environment, spoiling the natural beauty of family, friendships, good work and social life. Eventually, psychic pollution spreads into the physical world, as we see happening to the soil, wildlife, air and oceans.

We don't need conspiracy theories. The root of the problem is closer to home. The human shadow connects the pattern of mass shootings, the power games of despotic leaders, the wave of mental illness now affecting childhood on a massive scale, cynical injustices in the financial system, political hypocrisy, endemic addiction, and the desperate retreat from reality in processed entertainment. Much of this makes up the daily news and chat rooms, but it traces back directly to the human psyche. Misunderstood, it plunges us deeper in collective depression and hopelessness.

The fragrance of metanoia dispels the shadow and restores hope to the ecology of the human. As a student, I was once arrested by the words of one great poet on learning of the death of another:

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,

In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.
(W.H. Auden, *In Memory of*
W.B. Yeats)

Kim Nataraja in 'Dancing With Your Shadow' shows how 'shadow work' is an essential element of the practice of meditation in every life and so it must be taken up seriously and fearlessly. Each of us has our shadow: think of the temptations of Jesus in the desert before his baptism or the mental jihad of the Buddha before his breakthrough. The question hovering over this mystery of human consciousness is 'where does this universal and

The fragrance of metanoia dispels the shadow and restores hope to the ecology of the human.

stubborn shadow come from?' If we are to deal with our fear and denial of the shadow, we need to answer the question. Only then can we dance with the shadow instead of being overpowered by it. Instead of projecting it as an external enemy – and exposed it is certainly repulsive – we need to see it with wisdom and self-compassion as our own, as part of ourselves. Each of us has within us an ugly duckling in a hall of happy dancers, sitting against the wall, glowering, refusing to join in the fun because it feels so unattractive and unwanted.

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Everything in the immeasurable universe, currently estimated at 95 billion light years, has a lifespan. Galaxies, stars, blackholes, come into existence and all reach their individual end. Our short span of days reflects this, but more consciously

and painfully than the stars. A galaxy doesn't know when it is young, middle-aged, old or dying. From stage to stage of the journey from fertilised ovum to lifeless corpse we are one story of evolving consciousness. Ageing begins with birth. At each stage of awakening, we must drop the past and accommodate the new. But then we become re-attached: "This is where I am now, and I know things from this perspective. I will pursue variety by all means but resist change." We think we're like God, above change. This becomes the clinging 'no' directed against anything really new, a closing of the mind to what we cannot control: a rear-guard action against transcendence and renunciation. This produces the combination of forces we call the shadow, and when we say the mantra seriously, the shadow comes out of the shadows.

Whenever our plans are thwarted or something terrible happens, we feel helpless and ask 'why?' and then, very quickly, 'who?' and look for someone to blame. Not surprisingly, at this stage of humanity's crisis, we are forever looking for scapegoats to demonise and explain our predicament. Indeed, there are many individuals who should face justice for their part, but this does not solve the problem. We need deeper context, broader and clearer minds. Metanoia is the continuous process that drives our ascent to full consciousness. Today we can see how it is revealing the spiritual, both within and beyond everything we worship in the material and quantifiable.

To see it, however, we need to let go of the idea of a spiritual path altogether. Failing this, we will continue to quantify, brand and commoditise it. What we call the spiritual path is simply the ever-changing life-journey of every human being. It is tough, an ongoing struggle between opposites. There are oases and places of rest, but not of long duration because even they are part of the flowing

stream of life. The flow is blocked unless we exorcise our inner forces of refusal and negation, evident not just in the political tyrant or megalomaniac tycoon but also in our own egoism under the influence of the shadow. When flow stops, stagnation begins. The happiness we crave evaporates, leaving us burned out and disillusioned.

We have become a culture of endless activity and exhaustion. But with the right treatment, the poison becomes the medicine. Disillusionment, for all its pain and shame, opens the door to the next vision of reality. When we hit bottom, we start the ascent. Breakdown leads to breakthrough. Burnout re-ignites. The treatment is freeing the flow of consciousness. We call it 'growth' – beyond any imagined happiness - or 'flourishing' or 'fullness of life' or the 'kingdom of God'. The challenge is that in a hyperactive, ego-driven culture, it is hard to imagine that this treatment is the application of stillness and silence to our troubled hearts and minds. John Main said that the greatest difficulty of meditation is its simplicity.

Metanoia is not achieved by an act of the will or even great suffering. It opens, like a rose, when we see and accept reality as it is. What little I know of growing roses is the importance of deadheading. As soon as the flowering rose begins to shed its petals, you snip it off at the point where it meets the stem of the plant. 'Regular deadheading directs energy into stronger growth and more flowers,' says the website. And from another source of wisdom: 'I am the real vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will bear more fruit' (Jn 15:1-4).

Pruning is a skill which demands courage to use. By ourselves we would fail to keep up the treatment for healthy growth. Who likes to cut things? The treatment is not a mere technique. It is written into the original design of our

creation which includes the mysteries of salvation by grace and of divinisation by love. Working with the shadow, deadheading our illusions, meditating, is impossible in isolation. The ego's deception is to believe that we grow without a radical loving surrender of our precious sovereignty. Jesus illustrated it by saying the branch needs to be united to the vine or it will wither. The Buddha said that the spiritual path is inconceivable without

Metanoia opens, like a rose, when we see and accept reality as it is

the sangha, companionship. Community – and (dreaded word to many) church – is the medium of sacred friendship helping consciousness to evolve. But this is not church as institution but the true church as communal experience.

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Everything personal, everything to do with consciousness, awakens us to two dimensions of this sacred friendship. Each seeks to embrace the other: the individual and the universal, me and them, the local and the global. These paradoxes create the elasticity needed for growth. Religious arguments divide when the local and the universal dimensions cannot be harmonised. The mystical symbol of the church as a human body reveals it as unified in many parts, one rose bush, one vine with many branches.

Think of our WCCM community, for example. Each local meditation group is a specific flowering, and yet feels part of a global community. Sometimes national coordinators tell me they meet groups which say they don't feel particularly connected to the vine. The fragrance of metanoia can change this and bring benefits for all. Those who are conscious of this connection help the local and the global

to embrace. The gift of sacred friendship is then valued even more highly. And with this usually comes a renewed generosity in sharing the gift of meditation with new people.

By entering the force field of the paradox of local and global, of the personal and the universal, we glimpse the endless overlapping planes of consciousness. Does this sound a bit like God? Aquinas said that every being is a name of God and no being is a name of God.

Meditation liberates us through the awareness that because God is unknowable, religion - as institution, dogma, ritual and devotion - is a pointer, not the container or final word about God. Only when we know we cannot know God can we trust and love him. 'Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy.' (1Pet 1:8). This degree of knowing awaits us in the cloud of unknowing, which we enter by relegating everything else we know, *everything*, to the cloud of forgetting. This is the work of the holy word.

Like a laser beam, the mantra takes us through increasingly subtle levels of consciousness. A laser beam is a beam of light reduced to immense narrowness. The beam can be shot miles into the sky and used to cut through metal. It is vast and miniscule. Personally, I am very grateful for it because laser treatment saved my sight after I suffered detached retinas in my twenties. Like a laser on its narrow path, the mantra cuts through the blocks of negation and denial and moves the mountain of the ego which stands in the way of the next stage of consciousness. It becomes narrower and finer as we give it our attention and the more of the surviving shadow it consumes. Even before the end, which lies in God's grace not our effort, we will have glimpses of the end of our journey, not projected into the future but as a present reality.

A condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything. The Christian teaching on the mantra as a path into 'pure prayer' begins in the 5th century with John Cassian. He compared it to the first step of teaching a child how to read. 'How could a child pronounce the syllables of the simplest word unless he had first learned the letters of the alphabet?' The paradox here, however, is that in learning to read in the ordinary sense, we become capable of greater complexity – words, then sentences, reading letters, then meditation newsletters. But in learning meditation, everything gets simpler and simpler.

The mantra is a life-long path that progressively becomes one with its destination. Children understand it better than adults because they are closer to the immediacy of the experience. Commitment is a problem only as long as we think of meditation as a means of achieving something. So, perhaps passion is a better way of understanding what we need for this work and to walk this path. Not the passion for possession, but the passion of loving with our whole heart, mind soul and strength, and then allowing the love focused to a single point in the work of meditation to expand outwards.

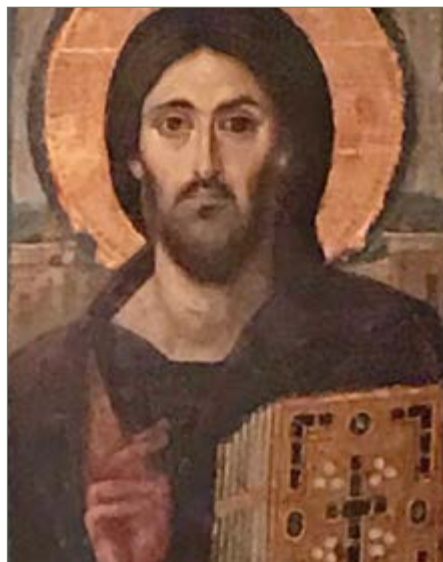
The passion of love is the unified way of union and of dispossession, the joy of the marriage bed and the suffering of crucifixion. The contemplative mind that grows through this repeated experience understands why the words passion and patience have a single root. Faithfully going through what must be endured produces the wild risk of losing one's life in love without any guarantee that we will find it again.

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Humanity today needs the new values that arise from these mysterious paradoxes of the spiritual dimension. They emerge into consciousness through the changes

we experience in ourselves and the hope reborn by confronting our shadow.

Everywhere, we see the collateral damage done by hitching our future to the illusory value of unlimited, material growth. True, with the magic of technology, humanity has developed miraculous powers, but what does it profit us to have gained the world at the cost of our true self? Is this progress? The values of a culture of wasteful excess and false hope have exhausted us and the planet. The resulting psychic burnout and social dis-



Icon of the Pantocrator

integration are therefore not a cause but an horrific consequence of human beings dehumanising themselves.

Prophets have always urged people to read the signs of the times. They are hard to read and interpret while we are caught up in them and our personal lives feel dragged down by their polluting false value system. We need metanoia to see the signs, but we also have to restore the skills required for metanoia.

Of these, firstly, I have mentioned the gift and power of the mantra. Pure prayer is the essential ascesis, the main exercise, of spiritual growth. Like the Metanoia Rose, meditation needs planting, rooting and nurturing before it blooms and its

fragrance delights. Secondly, we need to relearn the ancient art of reading wisdom texts. I am talking about this in an online WCCM series beginning in September. Thirdly, there is the counter-cultural skill of sacred friendship. This form of trusting and caring relationship is not tied to convenience or pleasure or using people. It arises when we share the solitude of silence with others. Finally, an authentic community, committed to service and a mission, grows from this solitude. It is not a club or party or think tank. It is a school of service where we work with our shadow and help others to work with theirs. With these spiritual skills and gifts, we can work to dissolve the atomising grip of polarisation that is tearing societies apart. Meditation opens the door to mediation.

A few years ago, when I visited St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, I was blessed to be able to see in person an icon of the Pantocrator, made in the 6th century, that I had long loved and contemplated in reproductions. Now I was in its original presence, and I spent much time sitting in front of it. Seeing how differently each of Christ's eyes engage with us and draw us into his way of seeing changed me. In his total metanoia, he sees everything at once, the world of shadow, illusion and suffering, but also the clear light of eternal day. I felt that his whole face in this unique work of sacred art that reveals the divine humanity we have been given. It expresses the knowledge and compassion that his passion – in both senses – released. Simply to look into it is to see that it is present and conscious within ourselves.

With much love

Laurence Freeman OSB

Laurence

News & Articles

John Main Seminar 2023 - New Wine, New Skins

BONNEVAUX, SEPTEMBER 14-17, LED BY CYNTHIA BOURGEAULT, ANDREW HARVEY AND LAURENCE FREEMAN

A wineskin, traditionally made of goatskin or sheepskin, was used to hold or dispense wine. Storing new wine in old skins while it was still fermenting risked splitting the skins and causing the wine to be lost. Jesus uses the metaphor of new wine in new wineskins to illustrate the perennial freshness of the revolution he began and continues to drive – his empowering call to a renewed consciousness that will bring forth new forms and structures of human life. Christians pray that the ‘reign of God will come down on earth as it is in heaven’.

The powerful parable of the wine and the wineskins will inspire the trio of teachers presenting this year's John Main Seminar, the 39th. With very different voices, minds and life-experience, they are friends serving a common cause, who believe in the transformative potential of our present Dark Night. Each sees the urgency of a renewed global Christianity empowering the breakthrough in consciousness and behaviour that humanity needs in order to survive. The transformation depends on the mystical wisdom traditions being rediscovered and, like “new wine”, being poured into the “new wineskins” of unprecedented religious and societal channels. Some forms of the community that meditation is forming and creating are already signs of the coming new era.

The Seminar will include workshops led by each teacher, a workshop on Embodiment led by Giovanni Felicioni, and group discussions. The individual presentations by the three, as well as their interactions with each other and with the participants, will no doubt



(Photo by Alex Fragoso from Pixabay)

stretch the skin of the Seminar format to breaking point. However, the skin will be fortified by the regular times of prayer and meditation.

As is the custom, the pre-Seminar meditation retreat will be led by Laurence who will invite contributions from Andrew and Cynthia. Giovanni will lead a daily embodiment session.

Both the John Main Seminar and the pre-seminar retreat will also be online.

New Wine New Skins

John Main Seminar 2023

Bonnevaux, September 14-17

Led by Cynthia Bourgeault, Andrew Harvey and Laurence Freeman

Why Practice Does not make Perfect Pre-Seminar Retreat

Bonnevaux, September 11-14

Laurence Freeman with Cynthia

Bourgeault, Andrew Harvey and Giovanni Felicioni

MORE INFORMATION:

<https://wccm-int.org/jms2023>

Cynthia Bourgeault

Modern day mystic, Episcopal priest, writer, and internationally acclaimed retreat leader, Cynthia divides her time between solitude in a hermitage in Maine and a demanding schedule traveling globally to spread the recovery of the Christian contemplative and Wisdom paths.

Andrew Harvey

Founder-Director of the Institute for Sacred Activism, inspiring people to become effective and practical agents of systemic change in order to create peace and sustainability.

Laurence Freeman

Benedictine monk and Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation and its international home, Bonnevaux.

News & Articles

Young WCCM members will participate at World Youth Day



WCCM will be present at the 2023 World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, August 1-6, on the theme "Mary arose and went with haste" (Lk 1:39).

Our International Coordinator for Meditation for Young Adults, Taynã Malaspina, is forming a group with young people from our global community to represent WCCM and spread the gift of meditation at this event.

Our International Coordinator for Meditation for Young Adults, Taynã

Malaspina, is forming a group with young people from our global community to represent WCCM and spread the gift of meditation at this event.

Fr Laurence explains the idea: "World Youth Day is organised every few years by the Catholic Church. I have attended one in the past and it is joyful, hopeful and energising. The young people who come are open and enthusiastic about their faith. They are also realistic about the challenges they must face in our world if it is to grow. Our reason for being there is to share meditation as a way of faith to help them continue to progress into adulthood with an ever-maturing spiritual life. We will also share our ecumenical, inclusive, contemplative community with them."

Taynã comments: "We deeply believe in the importance of presenting Christian meditation to young people all over the world. Many young people in our tradition are not yet familiar with the practice transmitted by John Main.

This will be a unique opportunity to live in community, guided and inspired by the teachings of Laurence Freeman and the presence of Pope Francis. We will also participate with other contemplative Christian Groups such as *Laudato Si'*"

Young meditators interested in joining the WCCM group in Portugal can get more information visiting this link:

<https://wccm-int.org/wyday23>

The only way OUT is IN: Toolkit for Meditation in Prisons



This Toolkit is available now on our website as a guide to setting up and running meditation groups in prison. This new resource has been produced by **Mary Devane** (mary@wccm.org) the WCCM International Coordinator for Meditation in Prisons using her 20 year experience of Education and Rehabilitation in prisons. Download it here:

<https://wccm-int.org/mptoolkit>

Spring Appeal: The power of community



The response to our 2023 Spring Appeal in the last week of March showed the commitment and generosity of our community acting together. We received donations from 40 countries around the world. This initiative will be repeated annually in early Spring (in the North Hemisphere) as an opportunity for every member to nurture the growth of WCCM.

News & Articles

WCCM Academy, an inspiring start

BY VLADIMÍR VOLRÁB, DIRECTOR OF THE WCCM ACADEMY



The first term of the two-year WCCM Academy programme of contemplative study began in March with 24 of the 35 students meeting in Bonnevaux. The rest participated online. We spent a week in the Bonnevaux rhythm of prayer with the residential community and attended classes led by faculty, including Laurence Freeman, Prof. Ivana Noble, Sean Hagan and Giovanni Felicioni. We also explored the early days of Christianity in the nearby city of Poitiers. On another day we visited the Benedictine monastery of Ligugé, near Bonnevaux, which was the first monastery in Europe founded in AD 361. The hospitable Abbot Christophe guided us through the monastery and then gave an inspiring introduction to *Lectio Divina*.

The Academy programme includes three of these residential weeks, which we consider essential elements of the learning process, alongside the online teachings and tutoring.

This first experience confirmed our initial hopes. Spending time together in person proved to be a remarkable opportunity for the students to connect, foster deeper relationships, and engage in meaningful discussions. At the Academy, we believe that education goes beyond mere information transfer. It is intricately connected to one's inner experience, facilitating the integration of knowledge, personal growth, a holistic understanding of oneself and the world, and dialogue. Our students had the chance to experience all of this during both the formal and informal parts of the programme. Together, they embarked on a transformative journey that combines individual exploration with collective support.

The second cohort of students is scheduled to start in March 2025. Class schedules will be designed to accommodate students from Asia and Australia especially. If you are interested in par-

ticipating, please email us at academy@wccm.org and we will be happy to put you on a waiting list.

THE STUDENTS SPEAK

"I am very enthusiastic about the Academy. Ivana Noble's class on God as Creator and creation, Sean Hagan's class on contemplative practice and its meaning for our own professional stability, as well as the course on the roots of Christian mysticism, complement each other very well and have had a great influence on my daily work and prayer. The meetings with my tutor are absolutely wonderful, providing spiritual direction for my whole life."
(Pia Freyschmidt-Paul, from Germany)

"What a privilege it is to be part of The Academy, and especially of the first cohort! The initiation in Bonnevaux was a unique experience. It provided an opportunity to make essential and effortless connections with the other students and to create companionship and solidarity – sometimes even unspoken – among us. It accelerated the process in the academic classes of challenging first the unlearning and consequent emergence of new learning. I am most struck by the depth and breadth of the participation of the teachers, fellow students, Academy Director, Vladimir Volrab, and each individual tutor. I am so grateful to be one of the first thirty-five."
(Michele Jodhan, from Trinidad)



The Space Between Words:

How to read the Bible and other Sacred Texts

Online Series led by Laurence Freeman starting on 25th September

For more information visit <https://wccm-int.org/scpseries>

News & Articles

Earth Crisis Forums – Meditation and Hope

BY JIM GREEN

“When I visit remote indigenous communities, the children recognise me, and they come and hug me. I’m sure I can do something for these children, I can give them hope. I can give them the motivation to keep on resisting - defending their land, defending the environment. This is what motivates me, this is where I get my energy - from the children.”

These are the words of Barto Macuxi, one of the indigenous people living in the northern highlands of Brazil. Barto, an artist and an environmental activist, stood for election as a senator to represent the state of Roraima in last year’s elections. He was addressing about 60 meditators from around the world, all sitting in their neat Zoom boxes on each other’s screens, all united in rapt attention to everything that this compelling speaker was saying. For Barto had been talking about the destruction of the natural environment in the place where he was born and now works, the disintegration of his people’s way of life, and of the genocide which has been casually but relentlessly allowed to continue in this remote part of his country. Tears were shed as he spoke and – as the large group later shared together – these tears are not only the necessary grieving for what we have done to our precious Earth and to each other, they are also the first steps in our journey towards healing and change.

This was the third in a series of Earth Crisis Forums (ECFs), held in February of this year, facilitated by Meditatio and offered as part of its *Earth Crisis: Climate and Ecology* outreach initiative. The first ECF had been hosted from the UK in May of 2022, with the aim of determining the level of people’s interest in what



seemed to us (a small organising group of WCCM members) a fundamental question: “On an Earth where climate emergency, habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity and rampant social injustice seem to threaten all forms of life, what role is there for those who practise contemplation?”

The forum drew attendees from all over the world. Since then, there have been two further events, one hosted by New Zealand with Australia, and one by Brazil. People have made passionate contributions and it is clear that the opportunity to share and learn, to grieve and hope together is greatly welcomed. Such has been the level of enthusiasm that an open blog space has been created where the conversations can continue. A dedicated online meditation group is also being set up.

Our organising group has always thought of the *Earth Crisis Forum* as a continuing virtual roadshow. We are hoping to host around three ECFs every year, with each one featuring a different part of the world. If you or any members of

your national community have an interest in making a presentation reflecting the experiences and issues where you live, please do get in touch. We would love to hear from you and to help every part of our global community make its voice heard and play its part in what the visionary Thomas Berry – author of *The Dream of the Earth* and self-described “geologian” – has rightly called *The Great Work*.

Meditatio is also keen to establish an Earth Crisis Co-ordinator within each national meditation community. The tasks and responsibilities of this volunteer role would not be onerous. It would mainly involve communication and liaison, encouraging awareness of the global ecological crisis, and supporting the development of a contemplative response within that country’s meditation community. Please get in touch if you’d like to know more: meditatio@wccm.org.

For more information visit the *Earth Crisis: Climate and Ecology* page: https://wccm-int.org/med_eccm

News & Articles

Spanish artist Odnoder installs a sculpture of the *Ascending Christ* in the Barn at Bonnevaux



Photo: from video by Proyecto Citron (<https://www.proyectocitron.com/>)

Bonnevaux received a special gift during Holy Week – a sculpture representing the Ascension of Christ, which was installed at the Barn. The piece was created by Odnoder, the artistic name of Spanish architect and artist Pablo Redondo, who attended the Holy Week retreat with a group of Spanish meditators, including National Coordinator John Siska.

Odnoder came to Bonnevaux last year and chose the piece of oak which, after months of work, was to become *Ascending Christ*, his vision of Christ ascending into heaven.

“The focus of my work is the resacralization of art. In the art of today as

we know it, and in the Christian religion, the usual symbol is the cross, the crucified Christ. I wanted to go beyond what is habitual and expected, and the idea came to me of creating the Christ ascending into heaven, which is to me the most beautiful image of Christ,” explains Odnoder.

Laurence Freeman reflects: “In order to create peace on earth, we need to find peace within ourselves. And two of the most important ways that we can do that are through meditation and art. To allow the turmoil and the distractions and the conflicts within ourselves gently, firmly, to settle down and to bring the mind to stillness, that is the work

of meditation. It releases this energy of peace within us, into our life, into our relationships, into our work. And the other great means to that peace, closely linked to meditation, is through art. I think this is where Pablo’s gift is so important and beautiful and really part of the vision of Bonnevaux. We are very blessed to receive this deliciously tangible representation of the Ascending Christ.”

Watch a short video showing Odnoder’s artistic process in creating *Ascending Christ* here:

<https://wccm-int.org/podnoder>



Contemplative Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and optional extension to Jordan

2-11 October 2023 - Led by Laurence Freeman

For more information visit <https://wccm-int.org/hland23>



In Focus

Patricio Lynch Pueyrredon, Argentina



"Our real journey in life is interior. It is a matter of growth, deepening, and an ever-greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts."
Thomas Merton

I agree with this marvellous quote. The word "journey" to me evokes an existential meaning. My life and everyone's lives are journeys, and we are on our way, asking questions, looking for meaning, trying to go deep down in our hearts, thirsty for the Divine. I remember expressing to God in front of the Tabernacle many times during my youth: "I'm searching for you, I love you, I need you." There was an infinite desire within my finite life. There was a fire inside and there still is.

I grew up in a Catholic family. My

parents were members of a lay movement within the Church in Argentina with charismatic experience in prayer. From being a little kid, I was surrounded by a sense of belonging, faith, love, and powerful prayer experiences.

Around my thirties, however, I began to feel a strong attraction to contemplative prayer. Feeling a strong need and desire to silence myself and be open to the mystery of God, I went many times to monasteries. I stopped looking for answers outside of myself, desiring cer-

*... our journeys are about
learning to live with
uncertainties*

titudes, and accumulating charismatic experiences. I had the awareness that everything belongs, and all the answers were already given. I believe it is a matter of unfolding this awakening in which we are submerged. I'm coming to the understanding that our journeys are about learning to live with uncertainties and unexpected situations, surrendering to the now in deep acceptance, letting go of attachments and the tendency to want to have everything under control. Our egos, which I call the antique and contemporary cancer of our existence,

are called to let go with tenderness. "And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself (ego), and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

I met the beloved Marina Muller, a WCCM Oblate, in Argentina, and she introduced me to the WCCM and this beautiful stream of grace coming from Desert Mothers and Fathers. At that time, I was in a dark place in my life. I was lost, I didn't know what to do. Two things saved me: dancing the Tango (a story for another day) and, particularly, the daily commitment of repeating the sacred word, in silence and stillness. I can repeat with the psalmist: "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) Christian meditation is crucial in my journey to know God. Now, as a priest, I witness the importance of this gift in today's world. I agree with the famous theologian Karl Rahner, SJ: "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all."

I'm grateful for my charismatic experience of the past. As Merton said, it was part of the creative action of love and grace in my heart, but now I have been brought by this flow to the contemplative practice of Christian meditation, to the school of John Main and Laurence Freeman. Lord, I am ready for the new chapter of this journey.



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Would you like to contribute to the WCCM Newsletter? Our next deadline is 10 August.

Resources

Online Courses

Coming soon:

Meditation and Leadership and Being on the Way

Two WCCM online courses will be published soon. *Meditation and Leadership* is taught by Bertrand Bouhour and Laurence Freeman with prominent guest speakers such as Peter Ng, Angelene Chan, Ray Dalio, Sean Hagan, and others. This course, blends the contemplative path with the values of other-centred leadership. It offers a grounding approach to sustaining healthy leaders. It is based on the class that has become the most popular

elective in the Georgetown McDonough School of Business MBA program. For emerging and established leaders alike, this course offers a rare opportunity to go beyond standard training and experience the bringing together of personal and professional transformation.

The other course, *Being on the Way*, is for meditators seeking to deepen their practice, their understanding of the Christian tradition, and their contemplative

journey. Thanks to meaningful instruction and contemplative practices, participants will be led to a deeper understanding of their own Divinity, thereby coming to know themselves better and God better. This course was written by Stefan Reynolds, a Christian scholar and author who also wrote the *Roots of Christian Mysticism* online course.

Check out our online courses here: <https://wccm.org/courses/>

Books (available at mediomedia.com)

tears come on the way home

By Sini Tuuli



This collection of poems tells the story of an inner journey, through moments of euphoric joy, devastating memories, and quiet reflection, to a place of peace.

Sini is a meditator from Finland and the book is a fruit of her experience of living at Bonnevaux: "A regular writing practice was a much-needed foundation, a lifeline of sorts during my time in Bonnevaux. At times it was as if there were no tangible thoughts at all, and then suddenly, ten new poems appeared from the dark.

Creating a collection of poems in English felt like a leap into the unknown... But certainly one worth taking. I am grateful for this fruitful time of inner growth and the reinforced trust not only in myself but also in all the dear people I was surrounded by at Bonnevaux. It gives me overflowing joy to know these poems have already touched the hearts of many. All I really wish for is that they will continue to do so."

Order this book here:

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