



WCCM

Newsletter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

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The Call to Be Real

IN A WORLD IN CRISIS, FR LAURENCE REFLECTS ON HOW A CONTEMPLATIVE LIFESTYLE CAN AWAKE OUR 'INNER MONK'



Facing page from the Gospel of St John, early 9th century (photo by Laurence Freeman)

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Leaves & Friends

A letter from Laurence Freeman OSB

Since I have found the love of the
Friend, This world and the next to me
are one. No longer do I mourn or cloud
my heart Because truth's voice is heard
And I am at my own wedding

(Yunus Emre)

Like mystics in all traditions, Yunus Emre, the 13th century Sufi and contemporary of Rumi, had many break-downs. Each one led him to a new and vaster break-through, a journey which he celebrates across the centuries in beautiful lyrical love poetry addressed to God – and to himself. Many of his poems end with a message addressed to himself by name. This is perhaps to remind us of his belief that God – the 'Friend' – is inseparable and unimaginable apart from the human being who has fallen in love with Him. For Yunus, God is the You and the I: *'You are the end and everything between, My way is from You and to You, My tongue speaks to You and within You, And yet my hand can't touch you, This knowledge amazes me.'*

It might amaze us today in our secularised world to read such unashamedly passionate declarations of love for God. We should more likely expect a God who is absent or has died or a believer enduring a Dark Night of the soul. I thought of this great shift recently while talking to a young person who was going through a painful breakdown of trust and faith in life. When, after a long silence, I heard the quiet question, 'what's the point?', I felt the depth of disillusionment and disappointment it revealed. Whatever I or anyone might reply to this – one could say that breakdown leads to breakthrough, that everything is passing – would sound like a hollow platitude, false encouragement. But whatever might be said, we don't learn the meaning of things through words. It is only in the heart's conversion,



Bonnevaux (photo by Laurence Freeman)

the unexpected arrival of new hope, or even in the dark humour that can bring light, that we are convinced that there is a point. Not a point that has to be expressed convincingly; more like a point of arrival which is at the same time the point of departure.

John Main once used the mathematical definition of a point to describe the interior journey made in the kind of solitude that can rarely be shared with anyone, but which can open, unexpectedly, at the darkest moment, into dawn. He said that a mathematical point has location – that is, it exists and can be identified – but it has no magnitude – meaning it cannot be measured or objectified. Is a point then like the 'singularity' we hear a lot about today, which will arrive when computers take over and we, supposedly, become their pets or carers? The experts in AI from whom I have learned do not seem to find this fear convincing because they consider it a mistake to call the technology, however amazing it may be, 'intelligent'.

What's the point?

A point contains everything. In fact, I saw it briefly, like Henry Vaughan, the poet the other night. Many of you

I saw eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and
endless light,
All calm as it was bright,
And round beneath it, Time in hours,
day, years,
Driv'n by the spheres
Like a vast shadow moved;
in which the world
And all her train were hurled

reading this may have seen or glimpsed the greater meaning or point of something that was causing you anxiety. Then, like me, you may have failed to write it down before it began to fade and become a confused or distant memory. It is not only commentaries that fail to convince us that 'there is a point' in things, but even memory loses its power to recall everything that happens in time. But even a fleeting insight can still be a thread of hope – more than just an insubstantial wish – a real hope that *there is a point* where all things stream back into the same source from which they took existence. All opposites, contraries, riddles, conundrums and absurdities, all that can be explained and that remains inexplicable beyond the reach of the mind, everything finds its way back to the point of everything,

the point of unity. Although we long for this point to exist, we may also fear it just as we fear the idea of a black hole or a singularity where even our identity is consumed. There is always a price to pay for the discovery of meaning.

We tell children that it is rude to point at someone with their finger because it seems accusatory or aggressive. So, let's think of *pointing*, finding meaning, in another way. We like to keep a sharp point on a pencil we are writing with or on the tip of a tool we are using. If we read a story or watch a movie we expect it to have a point, otherwise we feel we have wasted our time. Finding a point or meaning is deeply satisfying. Finding there is no point is frightening. If we have spent years working for something and then find it undermined and rejected by others, we feel as deep a sadness as the young person disappointed when life fails them for the first time. It is the worst kind of emptiness.

If someone speaks too confidently about what they claim to be *the point*, the meaning or purpose, their very intensity may be why we remain unconvinced. True conviction is hard to transmit. We may also feel resentful to be told with too much certainty what the truth is when we haven't begun to feel it yet for ourselves. Better, as the great teachers understood, is not to point jabbingly but to gesture towards it with an open sweep of the hand and invite us to follow their glance so that others will recognise it for themselves. 'Come and see', Jesus invited his first disciples.

The loss of meaning or sense of purpose in a whole culture may happen when, for example, God and transcendence have disappeared. The social pointlessness soon seeps into the despair people feel about their personal life. Never before our time, perhaps, has the general population – we are talking



Bonnevaux Labyrinth (photo by Laurence Freeman)

of a global phenomenon – been so disappointed by the hope we placed in progress. We wonder what the meaning of all the economic and technological growth is, the medical breakthroughs and the wonders of the cosmos revealed through the most advanced telescopes that almost convince us we are seeing the origin of all things take place across thousands of light years. Wonderful. Amazing. Beautiful, even. But what's the point when we see simultaneously, the self-destructive insanity of civilised nations, genocide conducted with technical precision for the purpose of 'self-defence', the brazen denial of self-evident facts and the brainwashing of whole populations, the disappearing of dissidents, the obscenities of excessive wealth mocking the victims of starvation and homelessness.

Wisdom's Well

'For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' (*Hab 2:14*). This prophecy not only urges us to believe that the hope for the salvation of the world lies in the greatest number of wise people, it also quietly assumes that, despite the failures undermining this hope, it remains the destiny and

the point of human existence to know the glory of God. Glory is endlessly overflowing fullness. We are also meant to know that we are known by God, the foundational Being of love. How can we say how many wise people are needed or measure how their knowing spreads and multiplies? Yet, this hope insists that we work without attachment to visible results or productivity, that is work *faithfully* to raise the level of contemplative consciousness in all the wisdom traditions and their followers.

Each of these sacred traditions is a well of pure water that a part of humanity can drink from. Wisdom comes from the same point of origin that we can only gesture towards, not define. It passes over all frontiers and is not even blocked, as is most human communication, by differences of language. Over millennia, there have been special guardians of these sources of wisdom who were usually marginal people on the boundaries of power and status, including artists, prophets and visionaries. And among them, forming one of the great transcultural and trans-historical phenomena of human societies, were the monks. These monastics were men and women dedicated as a first life-priority to the practice of contemplation and

the dissemination of wisdom. They preferred silence to talking lies or nonsense. The first examples of this lifestyle may have been the shamans of the earliest migratory human groups. By 600 BC, monks were established in the cultures of the Indian sub-continent and formed part of the great surge of evolutionary consciousness called the Axial Age – the era of the Upanishads, the Hebrew prophets, the Buddha, Confucius and Plato. In this period, human consciousness awakened to itself in a definitive way and perceived for the first time that it was destined for fulfilment and perfection.

Jesus is seen by his disciples as the flowering of this stage of human evolution. The Christian monastic movement that he inspired was committed to the purity of his teaching and the transformative awareness of his interior risen presence. As happened with the Sufis in Islam centuries later, the development of religious structures and divisions based on the founder's teaching created a mystical rather than a merely institutional movement. Monks or Sufis did not claim to be special – we are each special – but they were touched by an undeniable direct consciousness of the divine. In the eyes of the conventional world, they seemed indeed a little 'touched', a bit mad or weird, and sometimes they were. Monks were useless but essential,

Mad with the madness of those who know, free with the freedom of the spirit, filled with essential bliss, established in the mystery of the non-dual. (*Upanishad*)

Free from all sense of otherness, his heart filled with the unique experience of the Self, fully and forever awake.

(*John Main, Community of Love*)

Their teaching and even the imperfect performance of their ascetical practice proved to be an antidote to the

corruption of religious institutions. In our time it is valuable as a subculture counterforce to fundamentalism and extremism. Monastics were only human and had their own faults. Often their institutions lost their initial fervour and were sucked into the crude values of greed and power that tend to dominate every society. But with some inner force, they managed to renew and recreate themselves, not only through *renunciation* of conventional lifestyles like marriage and social management, but above all through a fervent commitment to the full *integration* of all that is human. If they renounced the world, it was because they loved it once they had seen its radiant core of creative love and beauty. However much monasticism might fail, it only needed one monk alone in a cave to renew the process and, whoever that might be,

The self-reinvention of monasticism has an essential role to play in restoring a pure religious consciousness to society

integration would take precedence over mere renunciation. All we need to renounce, after all, is whatever blocks the great integration into essential unity. Like marriage, monasticism is the great affirmation of the essential goodness of a nevertheless flawed and suffering humanity. The monk's insertion into the *nowness* of God is the source of his resilience. As Meister Eckhart knew, 'the Father gives birth to his only begotten Son in a perpetual present: God is creating the world now.'

Throughout history, monastics and their diverse subcultures have testified to a recovered innocence of the human whenever we awaken to the present moment. They have not achieved this by blowing their own horns but by following their unique inward call,

battling their own demons, confessing their imperfections and perpetually starting again.

Superficially (especially through the lens of the media), it looks today as if monasticism is shrinking into insignificance. Monasteries are closing. Their traditional works often appear irrelevant. It looks as if it has become a curiosity rather than a serious player on the human stage. What is its influence on the way the world is heading? It is seen not as a detached engagement with the world but more often as a renunciation or escape from the world, even as an act of personal despair. Its point needs to be rediscovered, however, which is to highlight the great unity that humanity and the world belong to and that nothing can destroy.

New Holiness

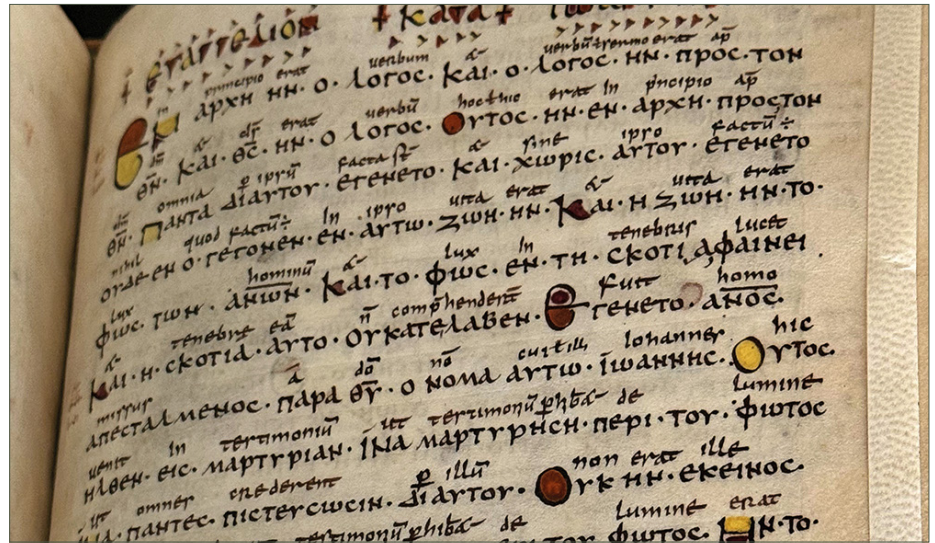
We are undergoing a huge collision between religion and culture. The speed of change has left religion behind, knocked off its pedestal, dazed at its loss of power and wondering how to re-invent itself. The self-reinvention of monasticism has an essential role to play in restoring a pure religious consciousness to society. As the scholar Von Hugel said, there are three elements of religion. The institutional and the intellectual are essential, but without the influence of the third element – the mystical – they will dysfunction and fail. Monasticism has no greater responsibility than to protect the primacy of the mystical in ways that nothing else can convincingly do. We are not converted by reading commentaries but by direct experience and, for the monastic, 'experience is the teacher'.

A rediscovery of the monk needs to emerge from the chaos we are in. Thomas Merton said that 'monasticism is a problem and a scandal' and so we cannot expect that the new

monasticism required in our time will be the product of public relations and marketing. It will emerge from the margins and will surprise, disappoint and shock. Individually, monastics react to overwhelming social complexity and meaninglessness at the very point in time when the majority fear that 'there is no point in it at all'. The power of simplicity is not released just by making cuts or publicity-seeking renunciation. Over time, it is found in the continuous, full-time monastic search for God as the great Unity in harmony with the fundamental rhythms and patterns of life. It is a simple way of living with clear and faithful priorities continuously renewed in the face of repeated defeats and failures.

Simone Weil saw the need for a 'new holiness'. It would be 'without precedent' and 'almost equivalent to a new revelation of the universe and of human destiny...the exposure of a large portion of truth and beauty hitherto concealed under a thick layer of dust.' Like Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 'religionless Christianity', her prophetic phrase inaugurated a new era in Christian identity, heralding a new order appearing out of chaos.

St Benedict says there are different kinds of monks, some of which he approved of more than others. The new monk demanded by our time shares the essential characteristics of all previous expressions of the monastic archetype. This archetype, which we have hidden within us, awaiting the moment to make itself felt, is a perpetual prototype. It is never completed in time. Its essential components are self-evident: simplicity achieved through integration not only by reduction and renunciation; an irresistible impulse towards the unitive state; an inescapable longing to love God authentically; the desire to be taught; an orientation towards experience rather than knowledge; a love for innocence.



Manuscript from the exhibition *Words on the Wave: Ireland and St. Gallen in Early Medieval Europe*

These are seeds planted deep in the human person, waiting for their moment of 'eclosion' or hatching. If they are indeed the elements of the monk-archetype unfolding through human evolution, then, at least potentially, we are all monks. But, as always in nature, everything doesn't happen at the same time. There are some in whom this eclosion begins to be felt, maybe at a very early stage in their personal development. In earlier cultures this spiritual awareness could be seen in a child, even to an advanced degree as today we recognise a musical or mathematical prodigy. Often after inner struggles, it feels like being pulled by an inner gravity into the absolute by the simple and the ever-present source. It often led the individual to choose an external form of life that was clearly 'monastic'. Today that outward form of life is much rarer, but the birthing and initiation of the inner monk is no less real and insistent. The 'new monks' of our time will be those who have, after effort and training, built a contemplative practice in their daily life which becomes a priority and without it they no longer feel truly themselves.

Being faithful to contemplative practice means resisting the temptation to be superficial, to waste one's precious

time on matters of fleeting importance or satisfaction. Our whole culture is an embodiment of this temptation to be trivial, played out continuously in the media and retail stores that demand our attention. Benedict describes the awakening of the monk from this stupor of superficiality as like being touched by a question from God, direct from the ground of being. The transformative question is simple: 'who is the person who longs for life and many days to enjoy their prosperity? What can be sweeter to us, dearest brothers and sisters, than this voice of the Lord inviting us?' The struggle for the monk within is to discriminate between the temptation to illusion and the call to be real.

New contemplatives

Contemplatives are those in whom this discrimination has at least begun. Contemplative practice first awakens the monk archetype in us all. It then leads us deeper into the experience of Being, through simplicity into nonduality, all the time grounding us ever more in reality. It is this way of life we seek when we seek happiness. It is life itself and is proven by the delight it gives us in the well-being of all

beings. It cannot be bought and sold, commodified or instrumentalised, or even turned into a lifestyle choice we take on today and leave tomorrow. It shows what simplicity really means. Nothing can compare with it, which is why it is impossible to describe but easy to recognise simplicity. It shapes the way we think, making us wary of esoteric language and all complexity. It purifies our feelings, helping us to recognise what it is we actually feel. It also influences how we live, avoiding luxury and waste and the addictive desire for more than we need.

Simplicity is one of the hallmarks of contemplation. So is its close companion, silence. Silence has many degrees, and we pass through them as we follow our practice. It becomes increasingly simple, non-judgemental and less and less self-reflective. We cannot truly speak about silence because words and thoughts enmesh us in multiplicity. In this sense, silence has no message for the world. Let people make of it what they can. Yet, it takes us ever deeper into the mystery of the Trinity of Being, into the primal Word generated from the Father's eternal silence.

And so, the world needs to recover contemplation, and contemplatives are meant to disseminate the wisdom of contemplation. This they do more by example than words and more by stillness than busyness. Contemplatives who hear the call and attune to it become the monks needed to embody this wisdom. I said as much to the retreat for WCCM Oblates in Bonnevaux recently. John Main received the first oblate of this community nearly fifty years ago and it has grown across time and space as a quiet force and sign of change. I was telling the oblates I felt they were the new monks.

In the Rule, oblates are boys placed in



Celtic Cross (photo by Laurence Freeman)

the monastery to be educated and raised in community until they make their own decision about staying or leaving. Later in monastic history, oblates became individuals normally living outside the cloister but 'associated' – at a safe distance – from the monks and their life. Many kinds of oblates developed over the centuries because the Benedictine spirit is instinctively inclusive and prefers to find ways of belonging rather than excluding. With the decline of the institutional monasticism, which evolved long after Benedict and throughout the medieval period, a sense of crisis has arrived. It is called a crisis of vocations, but if what I have been saying has any point to it, there is no crisis in the numbers feeling called to serious contemplative life or expressing their own 'monk within' by living the essentials of monasticism.

John Main and Bede Griffiths and others trained in traditional monasticism saw the oblate path as the obvious way to give the monastic charism a new channel, to become a new spring in the desert of modern life. They do not take 'vows' involving chastity, poverty and obedience in the conventional way but their Benedictine promises of obedience, stability and conversion are still made after serious

formation and mentoring as a sacred life-commitment.

If the only major difference between the new and old monk, at least in the Catholic church, is the question of sexual abstinence, we have the same dilemma in monasticism as in the ordination of priests. The conclusion is that celibacy is the non-negotiable priority. The extinction of the Shakers in American society was caused by this same inability to adjust to the times. Where strong contemplative practice, however, is central and essential to individual formation and life in community, then marriage and raising a family, different forms of single life or full celibacy all become authentic options. The 'new monk' is not a diluted version of the kind of clericalized monk whose numbers are drastically reducing today but a new manifesting of a timeless archetype. Without a re-imagining of a new frame and meaning of monasticism in our time, it will continue to lose its point; and the world will be denied a necessary source of grace and wisdom.

Celtic inspiration

Or is it so new? Benedict's monks, like the earliest monks of the Christian

tradition, were not clerics, though priests were respected and included. Contemplatives cannot be stopped from forming communities on the margins of the institutions, just as you cannot prevent musicians from forming a band, a chorus, a quartet or an orchestra. Where the Spirit is, there is liberty.

The form of Christianity that took shape in the Celtic world between the fourth and twelfth centuries, most notably, and with rich diversity in Ireland, testify to this unified diversity. Celtic Christianity was distinct: not a separated church but a unique expression of the gospel in a culture of depth and rich creativity. Nor should we see it as insular or isolated when we remember the countless groups of itinerant Irish monks who took the Word and established monasteries in new places far from home.

Before it was absorbed into the

Roman model, Celtic Christianity was a monastic church. Bishops were needed and respected but usually were members of the monastery, not part of an extended hierarchy. The monastery was not like the fortress model that developed in the millennium after Benedict, based on a closed cloister with a one-way flap valve. The Celtic cloister was more of a two-way gate valve. The monastery was not a single large building but an assembly of dwellings, comprising ascetics and families arranged in concentric circles with a sacred focus on the original site of the founder. The more ascetically inclined formed a distinct group, but all members, in whatever circle of practice, were called 'monks'.

The John Main Seminar in November 2025, 'Integral Christianity', will be hosted in the Church of Balally, Dublin, by the WCCM community in Ireland to explore the inspiration of the Celtic

church for our time. The Balally parish community will be welcoming us, and we will be able to see first-hand what a contemplative parish on this model might look like for the future. Please join us in person or online.

When we get the point of anything, we have a new opportunity to expand our sense of meaning and purpose in many directions. With use, the point becomes sharper and generates hope. And hope always strengthens the growth of unity. The unified state of consciousness is not a dream of false peace. It develops as personal conversion turns chaos into order. Eventually, everyone and everything is drawn to into that 'great ring of pure and endless light'.

With much love,

Laurence

Academy

Graduation and Growth: WCCM Academy's pioneering cohort

The final residential week of the first WCCM Academy cohort took place at Bonnevaux at the end of May. Twenty-six students from various countries completed a two-year journey of theological education, interfaith dialogue, and exploration of contemporary challenges, all grounded in the experience of meditation. More than a dozen teachers – including Laurence Freeman, Rowan Williams, and Cynthia Bourgeault—guided the students toward a deeper understanding of what it means to live contemplatively in today's world. The two-year programme proved transformative, as was reflected in the students' final projects, which were both



inspiring and full of promise. The second cohort is now underway, and applications for the third cohort will open soon. This new group will follow a schedule adapted

to participants from the Americas, Europe, and Africa. For more information about the WCCM Academy, please visit wccm.org/academy.

Retreats

Young Adults Retreat in Bonnevaux: growing a Culture of Care



An international group explored the “different levels of caring”—for oneself, for others, and for the world—during a summer retreat at Bonnevaux from late July to early August. The retreat drew participants from 12 countries and was co-led by Fr Laurence Freeman, Tayna Malaspina, and Fr Patricio Lynch. Days included talks, shared reflection, bodywork, walks in nature, spiritual direction, creativity, music, and dance.

Anne Doutriaux, France

“It was really many discoveries:

meditation through practice, the variety of experiences we had—also with creation. Meeting so many people with different backgrounds, and everyone having something deep to share... together it makes this retreat special. It will definitely be impactful in my life.”

Javier Quinones, Mexico

“It was absolutely fantastic. I would say it was expanding and bonding at the same time. We all come here for one thing—meditation—but there’s a depth we share in common that creates a unique

bond. Although we’re from different ages, nationalities, and languages, we have common roots. We receive so much from Father Laurence and the talks. I leave feeling bigger in spirit.”

Suzana Moreira, Brazil

“From the moment of arriving, I felt peace and the energy of a special place—so much is made in communion with creation. With the theme of care—care for oneself, for others, and for us as part of creation—this has been an extraordinary gift. Hearing other young people from different places and journeys made it a very rich experience.”

Fernanda Fuschino, Venezuela

“It was a beautiful experience I’ll never forget. First, it was healing. Learning the difference between loneliness and solitude was very helpful. In solitude there is my presence; I can feel everything with that. It changes the perspective and heals a lot of inner pain.”

ONLINE: sharing from participants at
<https://wccm-int.org/yngar25>

Indonesia National Conference



The WCCM Indonesia 2025 National Conference was held from 28–31 May in Muntilan, Central Java. With the theme “The Risk of Living Together,” it gathered meditators from Indonesia, and diaspora from Singapore and Timor Leste. Fr Siriakus M. Ndolu, O.Carm, emphasized that conviviality (Ephesians 4:32) is central to our faith and how we embrace the risk of living together.

Books

Laurence Freeman: “wisdom is something that you have to taste and life is a spiritual journey”

Tasting Wisdom - a daily companion for meditation (Canterbury Press Norwich, 160 pages) is the new book by Laurence Freeman that has just been launched. It includes 366 of his reflections and photos. This is a conversation with Fr Laurence about this new publication:

What is the relevance of this book for the world today?

LF - I decided to call this collection *Tasting Wisdom* because wisdom is something that you have to taste, not just think about or write about. It's an experience. The Latin word for wisdom is *sapientia*, which means to taste. *Sapere* is to taste. I hope this book is relevant for anyone who wants to discover that life is a spiritual journey. We often think: “I'm very busy, I have to work, I have to make ends meet, to look after my relationships, my family” and so on. Of course, life has many responsibilities. And we think then we have to squeeze the spiritual journey into that. But actually, we can approach it in a different way: realizing that life is a spiritual journey which has many dimensions. Developing a spiritual practice means allowing something to

enter into your life that will have a slow but steady, continuous, transformative impact on the way you live, the way you feel, and handle all of those many dimensions. The book is designed to help people as a companion, as a friend, not an instruction manual.

What was the original idea behind this book?

LF – The idea came from my “Daily Wisdom” posts, daily emails with an accompanying photo that I have taken. However, the book is something you can put in your pocket. You don't need to be online to read it. You could read it before meditation, after meditation. You could just be sitting on the bus and read it.

Just as with the “Daily Wisdom” emails, there's also a photo of mine accompanying almost every entry. I love photography. I'm not a professional or expert by any means. But occasionally I'm lucky and I put into the book some of the photos that I and other people think are good. The photos are non-verbal, obviously, but they're meant to communicate something of the same experience, being able to see differently.

I hope that this book helps people to begin the inner search with a very simple practice. It starts with a simple description of how we meditate in this tradition which will help people to begin, if that's where they are, and develop a discipline. A discipline can never be imposed from the outside - it won't work. Many people are looking for a discipline that will give order, stability, regularity and peacefulness in their lives. So here's a way of beginning. And we need daily companionship for that. Any meditator knows that it's very valuable and strengthening to meditate with other people, to know that you belong to a community, to a fellowship of people.

Learning to meditate is a day-by-day experience. The nature of this book is that you can dip into it at any time and we're never more than one step away from the path, even if we've wandered off the path for some time. This is really why we put the book together. There are 366 entries. So one year in four you'll have one for every day of a leap year. I hope you find it useful.

Order *Tasting Wisdom* here:
<https://wccm-int.org/twmm>

Book launch in London

The Meditatio Centre in London hosted the official book launch of *Tasting Wisdom* on 2 September. It was a special evening with a packed conference room and people from around the world joining online. “This is the largest book launch I have ever had,” said Fr Laurence Freeman. Watch the session here: <https://wccm-int.org/twblnch>



Outreach

Meditation supporting Muslim women in Texas

KATHLEEN WELLER LEDS A MEDITATION ONLINE IN PARTERNSHIP WITH THE CENTER FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

An illustration of how meditation can support vulnerable populations is evident in an initiative in the United States. For the past two and a half years, Kathleen Weller has been leading an online meditation group specifically for Muslim women, a collaborative between WCCM USA and The Center For Survivors of Torture (CST) in Austin, Texas.

Kathleen explained that her involvement began after meeting Tim Kelly at a retreat and learning about his work sharing meditation with the CST group.

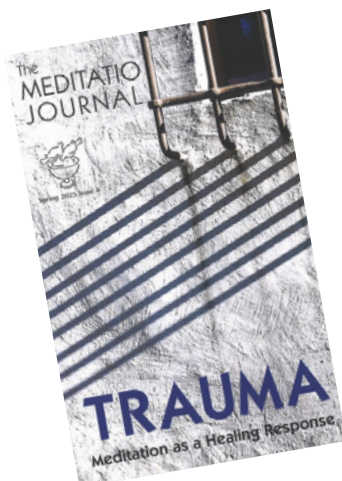
"There was a need for a Muslim Women's Group," Kathleen stated. She added, "Sharing meditation with these women is the highlight of my week." The positive effects are clear, with the women communicating through their caseworkers and interpreters that they experience "more peaceful" feelings. They are encouraged to meditate twice



daily for 20 minutes, using "Bismillah" – meaning 'In the name of Allah' – as their mantra. The group's schedule is adjusted during Ramadan to accommodate their prayer times at the Mosque. Kathleen noted, "It is easy to understand that a meditation practice is helping these women at their point of need."

Her leadership of the group also inspired Kathleen to create a series of paintings depicting Muslim women. These artworks have now safely arrived at CST and will be displayed in their offices. "I am so grateful for this opportunity to serve the refugee population", says Kathleen.

The Meditatio Journal: Trauma



This journal builds on the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) Symposium "Meditation as a Healing Response to Trauma" held in October 2020.

The journal aims to expand the lessons of the Symposium and provide deeper insights into the healing power of mantra-based meditation. The articles offer an understanding of meditation as a healing practice for the adverse effects of trauma on physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. This trauma, which can span generations if left unhealed, often leads to a divided self and fragmenting of body, mind, and spirit. The inner division creates feelings of separation and isolation and interferes with one's ability to relate to others. As a contemplative practice, meditation naturally integrates body, mind, and spirit and restores inner harmony.

Order online here: <https://wccm-int.org/mtj>

In Focus

Tauno Toompuu, from Estonia

THE ESTONIAN NATIONAL COORDINATOR SHARES ON HIS PATH WITH MEDITATION AND THE OBLATE COMMUNITY

*Tauno (right) and his mentor Jim Green*

I am a 46-year-old Lutheran priest and dean in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, as well as an army chaplain in the Estonian Defence Forces. I am a husband to my wife and a father to two boys. I discovered Christian meditation in 2020. Meditation and contemplative spirituality were not entirely unfamiliar to me before that, but the pandemic gave me both the opportunity and motivation to seek renewal in my spiritual life.

I googled the word meditation together with Christian and found the website of the World Community for Christian Meditation (wccm.org). When I read that the community had oblates, I fell in love instantly. I had felt a deep interest in monastic spirituality for at least 20 years

before that, so I contacted the community quickly. Before long, I became a novice and was assigned Jim Green as my mentor.

My novitiate lasted over two years, and it was quite an intense time—full of ups and downs, balancing between confidence and doubt. Jim was a great support. Many times, when I was ready to quit the oblate path, a one-hour Skype conversation with Jim would turn things around, giving me a fresh beginning and spiritual renewal.

I think the main reason for my doubt was a sense of unworthiness. Can I really vow to live according to The Rule? I felt too lazy and unstable in my commitments. But then I realized that, as a Lutheran minister, I had forgotten the core teaching of my own tradition—salvation by grace alone. Slowly, I began to understand how contemplative monastic spirituality and the practice of meditation were deepening my awareness of grace and helping me live more fully in it. It began to feel like a natural part of my spiritual life.

In October 2024, I visited Bonnevaux with my mentor Jim and made my Final Oblation there. It was a very special full moon Sunday in a very special place, and I received much encouragement to live the oblate life within my context. I currently

serve as the national coordinator for WCCM in Estonia. We have one meditation group in my home parish. There isn't much to coordinate yet—but that's okay, because I still have a lot of work to do on my own spiritual journey.

I truly enjoy being part of WCCM events, especially Benedict's Well on Monday mornings, and I also enjoy listening to lectures. These days, I prefer to meditate using the Benedictine Daily Prayer book during Lauds and Vespers and try to draw daily inspiration from The Rule.

Recently, a part of The Rule struck me deeply: "The eighth degree of humility is that a monk do nothing except what is commended by the common Rule of the monastery and the example of the elders." With some exceptions, the monk does nothing—and that's good news. You don't need to be exceptionally productive, sacrificial, or creative to live a contemplative life. For me, this means be more and do less, listen more and talk less, see more and express less. The Benedictine spirituality is more about being than doing and its so liberating.

The Oblate Path is challenging and teaching a lot but doable and relaxing as well. And that's why it makes you happy.



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Tel: +44 (0) 20 7278 2070

Editor: Leonardo Corrêa
(leonardo@wccm.org)

Graphic Design: Gerson Laureano

Would you like to contribute to the WCCM Newsletter? Our next deadline is 20 November.

Events & Resources

Five good reasons to join the John Main Seminar in Dublin

THIS YEAR'S EDITION WILL BE HOSTED AT BALALLY PARISH IN DUBLIN FROM 6 TO 9 NOVEMBER

1 — Be with a global community

The Seminar is a true meeting point for our worldwide family. John Main's vision—"Meditation Creates Community" and the "Monastery Without Walls"—comes alive in practice. Nothing compares with being present in person. Yet for those unable to travel, the online option remains a powerful way to follow the Seminar.

2 — Balally Parish

Since 2021, when Fr Jim Caffrey became Parish Priest, Balally has embraced renewal. Together with the Parish Leader Cinzia Angius and the parishioners, he has cultivated a spirit of prayerful hospitality that has made Balally something of a model. It is fitting, then, that this community will host the Seminar, and participants will have the chance to hear their story first-hand and share in the atmosphere they have created.

3 — Experience Irish spirituality

Ireland offers a rare blend of history and living tradition. Dublin's *Book of Kells* and the *Valley of Glendalough* root the contemplative spirit in beauty and silence. Across the country, stone circles, high crosses and *Newgrange* testify to a cosmic imagination. Holy wells still honour



Skellig Michael (Photo © Pilar Martín | Dreamstime.com)

Brigid, while the wild west coast invites awe and reflection. Off Kerry's shore, the monastic island of *Skellig Michael*, where monks once prayed at the edge of the known world, rises dramatically from the sea. Pilgrimage routes such as *Croagh Patrick* remind us that spirituality is a path walked with body and soul. In all this, the Irish sense of story, music and welcome gives the mystical a human face.

4 — Meet the speakers

This year's panel blends wisdom and creativity. Abbot Columba McCann OSB, Dr Jane Williams, Fr Laurence Freeman OSB, Br Colmán N. Ó Clabaigh OSB, Dr Barry White and John F. Deane bring together theology, history, poetry, contemplative

practice and healthcare insight. Their contributions promise a dialogue that bridges past and present, faith and culture, tradition and new discovery.

5 — Listening and speaking

The closing session, "Synodal Gathering: The World Will Be Saved by Consciousness", will be led by Fr Laurence Freeman and Dr Barry White. Following on from the JMS 2024 which reflected on synodality, this gathering offers a unique chance to listen, to speak and to be inspired. Out of silence and stillness comes a wisdom that can help shape the future of our community, guiding us together on the path ahead.

MORE INFO: wccm.org/jms2025

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For all general enquiries about resources, please contact Kate Middleton or Elena Cass
mmi@wccm.org
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