



## *Dear Meditators*

### **A New Chapter**

The WCCM Singapore community is 28 years old this year. We started in February 1988 when Fr Laurence Freeman first gave a talk on meditation at the Church of the Holy Family. Patricia and I then started our first weekly meditation group there. We now have 35 meditation groups in Singapore. Two out of three parishes have at least one meditation group. Fr Laurence's recent visit in March and April 2016 opens a new chapter in the growth and development of our Singapore community.

WCCM's mission worldwide in sharing the gift of meditation has two dimensions – INREACH into the Christian world and OUTREACH into secular society. Fr Laurence's visit touches both dimensions.

### **Inreach**

The Milestone's retreat on 12-13 March was a powerful inreach programme. It drew 750 participants, of which about 400 were new to our meditation. I have attached a report on the retreat that was published in the Catholic News and sharing by two long-time meditators in our community. The audio recordings of the retreat talks are available online on SoundCloud. Details on how to access the talks can be found on page 2.

Over the weekend of 16-17 April, Fr Laurence preached at all five masses at the Church of the Holy Family and led the congregation in meditation after Holy Communion. The priests of the parish are keen to incorporate into the weekend masses two periods of meditation – two minutes before mass begins and five minutes after communion. I think this is a significant development for two reasons. Firstly, we are contributing to a more contemplative celebration of the Eucharist. Secondly, this is a way meditation can enter into the mainstream of the life of the parish.

We hope we will have the opportunity to replicate this experience at other parishes.



## Outreach

In the area of outreach, Fr Laurence gave a public talk on Contemplative Healthcare to about 500 participants. The talk was organised by Sengkang Health on 4 March 2016. Earlier that day he conducted a practice session on meditation. Sengkang Health management wants the hospital to be different in terms of the quality of care and attention for the patient and the clinician. They wish to encourage the practice of meditation and mindfulness by the management, staff and clinicians.

On 12 April, Fr Laurence spoke on the same theme of contemplative healthcare at Mount Alvernia Hospital and Assisi Hospice.

University education and business is another area of focus in our outreach. Fr Laurence and I taught a class of 28 students in an elective course on Meditation and Leadership at the Singapore Management University (SMU). We also conducted a two-day workshop at the Nanyang School of Business of Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and a half-day programme for the staff of the National University of Singapore (NUS) School of Business.

All these exciting developments in both inreach and outreach remind us to remain rooted in our regular practice of meditation which will keep us always centred in the Lord.

May the Risen Lord bless you and your loved ones with joy and peace.



PETER NG

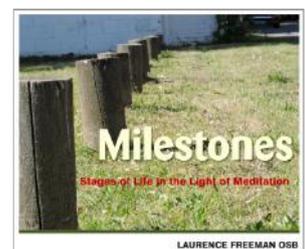


## Listen to the talks on Milestones

These talks offer deep insights into the meaning of life's journey and inspire us to review our direction.

The audio recording of the recent Milestones retreat is now available online at <https://soundcloud.com/wccm/sets/milestones-retreat>. You can listen to the recording or download individual tracks (mouse over the individual track and click on ).

Fr Laurence also spoke on the same topic at the Meditatio Centre in London in 2015. The recording is available on CD. To order, please email [wccmsingaporemail@gmail.com](mailto:wccmsingaporemail@gmail.com)



# Milestones

## how meditation can help people through life's stages

Catholic News [3 April 2016]

Spiritual maturing and growth requires an ongoing transcendence of the ego. Meditation helps to achieve that so one can experience one's true self in God through Jesus. This was one important message that Benedictine monk Fr Laurence Freeman shared with more than 700 people who attended a meditation retreat on March 12 and 13. The Singapore chapter of The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) organised the retreat held in Catholic Junior College. Fr Laurence, WCCM director, last led a meditation retreat in Singapore in November 2014 themed The Eight Big Problems of Life.

For the March 12-13 retreat, titled Milestones: Stages of Life in the Light of Meditation, the Benedictine monk began with an introduction to the meditation process. Meditation, he said, is a way of prayer in which the mind and the heart become one. 'Through silence, stillness and simplicity, we let go of words, thoughts and images and enter into the silence of God.'

Over the two-day retreat, he spoke about how meditation can accompany people through the stages of life. He saw the milestones of childhood, adulthood, old age and death as also stages of faith development. 'Jesus teaches us that in order to follow Him as His disciples, we have to leave our self behind. Unless we become like little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. So, our spiritual maturing and growth require an ongoing transcendence of our ego and the experience of our true self in God through Jesus,' Fr Laurence said.

He said that in moving from childhood to adulthood, people lose their original innocence as their ego develops. 'We actually move into a 'childish' stage where we are dominated by our ego, controlled by our desires and fantasies of happiness, and unable to accept disappointment or suffering. So if one can learn to meditate early in life - although those fantasies, consumerist tendencies, and self-preoccupations may still form - these will not have such a strong grip over one's consciousness, he added.

'When we meditate, we let go of our self-preoccupation by shifting our attention away from our thoughts and desires and giving our attention to the presence of Christ dwelling within us. The prayer of faith and trust in the practice of meditation restores us to our original innocence and childlikeness,' he said.



In the final milestone of life, which is death, Fr Laurence proposed that faith in the resurrection is what gives ultimate meaning to our life. 'Death for the Christian is not the end. Death can be a transformation of our being into eternal life. We learn to believe in the resurrection when in this life we have experienced the dying to our ego and rising to our true self in Christ,' he said. Fr Laurence cited his teacher, the late Benedictine monk Fr John Main, as saying that meditation is like one's first death, the death of the ego, and prepares one for physical death by a radical letting go of the ego. Seen in this light, one can then understand the words of St Paul, who asked, 'O death, where is thy sting?'

Newcomer to meditation Michael Tan said he felt heartened to begin practising meditation after the retreat experience. 'I came to the retreat because I wanted to learn something new, and I found the talks very invigorating,' he said.

Mr Wang Kok Wing, who has been practising meditation for the past 16 years, said he felt encouraged as this retreat not only revealed new insights but also rekindled old ones. 'These insights help me to appreciate my relationship with God even more and goad me on to deepen this relationship,' he shared.

## **'in loss one gains'** Ho Ai Jit

Listening to Fr Laurence speak on Milestones leads me to reflect on my growth and maturing as a meditator.

This statement resonates: *To mature is to become more contemplative, and that means to learn to let go of our dependency on things that serve our ego identity, our idea of fulfilment or happiness.*

The meditation practice of the last 3½ years has led me to let go of a sense of loss – the loss of a spouse of 35 years. Each time one meditates, one is being with Christ's indwelling Spirit. So one is not alone, one is not lonely. In loss, one gains. And the deeper love gained makes it possible to accept the loss with grace and be content in poverty. One learns too to fear death less. Meditation liberates one from fears to grow spiritually.

As I practise my meditation, I began to sense, at first almost imperceptibly, a growing kindness towards myself in the way I meet daily life. Pre-meditation, for example, I would be quite judgemental should someone I have been mentoring fail to meet expectations. Perhaps as a natural consequence of the work of the twice-daily meditation, I now give feedback more patiently, with a lighter touch – getting the job done yet without expending negative energy. So through meditation, we learn to let go of things egoistical in relationships with self and others. Out of kindness to self, flows conscious kindness to others. Meditation liberates one from self-centredness to grow spiritually.

## **'regained perfect love and trust in God'** Cecilia

At the retreat Fr Laurence said that some of us may have a true experience of God in our childhood, but in later life this experience is overlaid by other teachings, and we lose touch with our innate wisdom. I was reminded of something that happened when I was young.

One morning when I was about seven years old, I was sitting on the doorstep of our home in Siglap. I was looking down the slope of the big garden, towards the greenery of potted plants and shrubs. A gentle breeze caressed my face. I felt a moment of being totally cared for and protected, surrounded by a great and unconditional love.

I did not know of course that this was really an experience of God! As I grew older, I learned to pray the rosary and other devotional prayers. Prayer became a way to make things happen the way I wanted. Before exams especially, I would pray very very hard! It was like trying to work a magic charm.

Years later, I came to Meditation. I began to let go of my idea of prayer as a way to get God to give me what I wanted. I now have faith that God will give me everything I need, without my having to ask and 'pray hard' for it. My prayer is the time of meditation, a time of being in relationship with him.

In this mature stage of my spiritual journey, I have rediscovered the joy of just sitting in his presence. I have regained the perfect love and trust in God, in his unconditional, all-protecting care, that he had revealed to me in my innocent childhood.