



Dear Meditators

A Contemplative Christianity

Fr Laurence's message in the latest newsletter speaks of a contemplative Christianity in which the wisdom of the young complements the wisdom of the elders.

There is no single brand of Christianity. It is not an ideology. It allows truth to emerge. It does not compete; it completes. But with all the institutional baggage and social upheaval to contend with, how can the spiritual tides of the Holy Spirit be released? Not by a church that conforms to the corporate model and wastes its energy on the trivia of religious politics. What Bonnevaux has been teaching me in the last few months is a collaboration between the generations. It is not about reaching out to young people but listening to the young people who come here. Collaboration between experience and innocence generates different streams of wisdom. The world needs both, one specializing in risk and the other in forgiveness and recovery.

The complete message can be found in the attached International Newsletter.

Nativity Church Meditation Group Holds Retreat



The Nativity Church meditation group organised a retreat in November 2019 which enabled participants to explore creative ways to contemplate. Siew Hoon, a non-Catholic Christian at the retreat expressed: 'The retreat introduced new ways to meditate, e.g. walking meditation, meditation with nature. I especially enjoyed the meditation with nature because you can see God everywhere in nature. It is His creation after all. It brings me closer to God.' Another retreatant, Paul Gomes, affirmed: 'Having attended many retreats, I find this retreat very enlightening and touches one's soul. The body prayer, walking in the garden, rosary prayer, adoration, and clay moulding was a great way to bring my soul closer to God.'

The theme of the retreat was *In Stillness, We Wait for Jesus*. Sr Cecily led a deeper reflection on 'Who am I?', 'Who is Jesus for me?' and 'Who am I called to be?' The sessions prompted the retreatants to look within and open their seeking hearts to desire a deeper relationship with God.

Formation for Leaders and Teachers

40 participants from 11 countries, including 7 from Singapore, attended the School Retreat and the Essential Teaching Presenters Workshop from 3 to 13 November 2019 at Stella Maris Retreat Centre, Penang. The Workshop grounded the participants in the essential teaching of WCCM, provided training in presenting the teaching, and explored new ways of presenting it. The programme imbued the Singapore

participants with zeal and confidence to share the teaching. When the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) (St Joseph) wanted to introduce meditation to their students, the team of seven readily agreed to co-lead the sessions with James Loh. Their reflections on their Penang experience and their report on the CHIJ programme are attached.

Celebrating the Life of Our Oldest Meditator

Mary Teresa Chung June Moi, at the age of 106, was definitely the oldest member of the Singapore meditation community!

She began to meditate in 1992 when her daughter, Rebecca, gathered a group of friends to meditate together, at their apartment in Marine Crescent. (Rebecca had learned to meditate during a talk given by Fr Laurence Freeman at Holy Family Church and then meditated for a year with a weekly group at the old Emmaus House at Holy Family.) For almost nine years this group continued to meet at the home of Rebecca and her mother. Each week Mary made the members welcome, and provided dinner for them after the meditation. Eating dinner together was a strong bonding experience. The group became very tightly-knit, so that its members were strengthened and encouraged to grow as meditators.



One memorable occasion was in the mid-nineties, when Peter Ng wanted to showcase a typical home meditation group to Cardinal Jean Margeot from Mauritius who was in Singapore to attend a retreat to be given by Father William Meninger OCSO. Mary was delighted and overwhelmed to welcome a real-live Cardinal to her home!

In 2000 the newly-built Holy Family Church with a beautifully furnished Meditation Room opened and the Marine Crescent group was invited to move there. With this move to Holy Family Mary found it a little too difficult to continue meditating with the group. Thereafter she meditated at home with Rebecca, remaining alert and able to meditate for several years after.

She passed away peacefully at home on 30 November 2019. Many of the original home group members and the existing members from Holy Family were present at her wake to bid her a fond farewell, gathering around her coffin to meditate with her for 20 minutes. Many remember her for her generous hospitality and her quiet faithful presence in the weekly group.

A meditator from the original group recalls: 'Because of Aunty's hearing problem, we would have to pat her knee to signal her, at the start and again when meditation ended. Aunty was always looking forward to our weekly meditations. She kept busy planning the weekly menu for our makan after meditation. She was very kind hearted, she warmly welcomed the old and new members, and all of us really loved her. She remembered our birthdays and cooked something special for the birthday girl.'

WCCM Retreats

Fr Laurence will lead the annual WCCM Lent and Holy Week Retreats at Bonnevaux this year. The traditional Monte Oliveto Retreat will be held in July. These retreats are always spiritually nourishing. For those interested to attend, the particulars can be found at the respective links below.

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Lent Retreat: | THE TIGHTROPE OF MODERATION | http://tiny.cc/LentBonnevaux |
| Holy Week Retreat: | LEAVING FEAR BEHIND | http://tiny.cc/HolyWeek |
| Silent Retreat: | THE WISDOM OF THE YOUNG | http://tiny.cc/MonteOliveto20 |

In the peace of Christ,



PETER NG

Our Penang Experience

~ Personal Reflections ~



(Back L-R)
Lee Kin Kit, Herman Santoso,
Kushnin Tan, Fr Laurence Freeman.
(Front L-R)
Angela Lim, Diana Tan, Elaine Tan,
Josephine Lee.

CONTEMPLATIVE WALK *Angela Lim*

The retreat was a good experience for me. What I liked and benefited from significantly was the Contemplative Walk. It was a very simple, deliberate, slow walk yet it helped me to get myself ready spiritually and physically for the actual meditation. I enjoyed and learned much from this retreat.

MEDITATING AS A COMMUNITY *Diana Tan*

What started as a 'zealous curiosity' about a silent retreat became a deeply enriching experience of meditating with a community. It's amazing to be meditating in total silence and stillness with 40 participants from 11 countries for 7 days, in 8 sittings of 30 minutes each day. The harmony of meditating together has a profoundly felt invisible 'energy' of the presence of God, flowing in the rhythm of love. As scripture says, 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Mt 18:20)' It was a very humbling, memorable and truly awesome experience.

DIRECTION *Elaine Tan*

On the first evening Fr Laurence asked what we were looking for, and my answer was Direction. I have been with the meditation community for over seven years and many a time I felt like giving up meditation, but it was always the community that kept me going back. I have learned to 'let go' and not 'give up'. Even to 'let go of letting go', as Fr Laurence so wisely said. I had time to reflect on what God wants of me. The answer to that is, to persevere and be faithful. To be a disciple with 100 per cent commitment, and to aim for fidelity, not success.

THE EXPERIENCE *Herman Santoso*

The School Retreat was my first experience of a totally silent retreat. I was a bit curious and worried whether I could go through it. Fr Laurence encouraged us to avoid conversation with others and to give full attention to our meditation. I took this lightly thinking I knew it very well already. But with eight meditation sessions per day of 30 minutes each, I became a beginner again. My back ached, my mind was distracted, and I kept asking when the session would end. This made me feel quite down, but something happened on the fourth day where I experienced total serenity in mind, spirit and body. It's like I was totally released from my worries, anxieties, and just felt peace. Although I may not experience it again, it gives me strength to commit to meditating twice a day and to teaching others.

THE JOY OF MEDITATION *Josephine Lee*

The daily rhythm of meditation, contemplative walks, talks by Fr Laurence, conversations with my spiritual companion, and personal reflection helped me realise that coming to the centre of my being and slowing down to rest in the silence was a joy itself. The Lord filled me with His – as in William Blake's poem that Fr Laurence shared:

*He who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.*

As long as we remain faithful to our meditation practice, everyday life is lived 'in eternity's sunrise'.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SPIRITUAL COMPANION *Kushnin Tan*

Having eight meditation sessions a day was a 'powerful' experience for me. Being in total silence (not able to express some feelings in words) amplified the whole mental and spiritual experience, to the point that I

experienced highs and lows almost simultaneously. I was very glad to have the chance, once a day, to talk with a spiritual companion who was an experienced counsellor and a long-time meditator. This daily conversation, kept me mentally balanced and spiritually grounded on Christ Jesus. Without it, I might have jumped off the railing onto the cliff rocks below, with the feeling that 'God loves me so much, I won't be harmed by anything'. That was one of the high feelings I had!

ESSENTIAL TEACHING PRESENTERS WORKSHOP *Lee Kin Kit*

The Essential Teaching Workshop has helped me to ground myself in the regular practice of meditation and also to see that sharing the gift of meditation is a natural consequence of receiving the gift. In his opening address, Fr Laurence reflected on the symbol of the WCCM explaining that the two doves (representing contemplation and action) rested on the chalice of Christ's love. The purpose of the workshop was to bring the fruits of contemplation to the Church and to the world through us. Many of us found this workshop enriching and we have indeed discovered new talents, gifts, and confidence in sharing the gift of meditation with others.

Sharing Christian Meditation at CHIJ (St Joseph's)

A team of eight meditators shared the gift of meditation with a cohort of 300 Secondary 2 students from CHIJ St Joseph's Convent (SJC) on 7 and 9 January at the Civil Service Club, Loyang. The sessions were held during their Secondary 2 Level Camp. The cohort consisted of 20 to 25 per cent Catholics with the rest from various other faiths.

SJC is keen to promote meditation in the long term so that their students learn a contemplative practice which they can embrace to balance their social media hobbies. The sharing was conducted in four sessions over two evenings, with two sessions taking place sequentially each evening. Each session catered to a group of 75 students and there were two periods of meditation per session (three and seven minutes respectively). The presentation content was the same for all the sessions while the team took turns to lead and engage the students. The students were introduced to the universal practice of meditation and how this spiritual practice is relevant to their young lives. They also learned how to meditate.

SJC has invited the team to re-visit the school later in Term 1 2020 to continue planting the seed and sharing the gift of meditation with the students. On this development, James Loh (Vice President of WCCM Singapore) shared the following message with the team: 'We can continue as a team to cultivate greater contemplative awareness in our Church and community.' All of us in the team have been truly blessed by this project of sharing.

