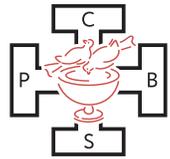


Benedictine Oblates of
The World Community for
Christian Meditation



**THE GRATEFUL ART OF LECTIO,
Laurence Freeman OSB – WCCM Director,
Prior of Bonnevaux**

*Every time
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ourselves.*

JOHN MAIN
«Community of Love»



Rothko Chapel, Houston TX, USA (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

The essential elements of the Oblate Path in our community will be familiar to you: the daily practice of meditation (John Main advised ‘a minimum of two periods’); a form of the Divine Office which punctuates the day with short, ‘strong moments’ of scripture and prayer, regular Lectio Divina, participating in the life of the community and sharing in its work and mission. The stages of formation – enquirer, postulant and novice lead up to full oblation, with the help of a mentor and an oblate cell. They are designed to develop these life-giving practices as freely embraced, liberating daily disciplines.

I was recently reminded of the wisdom of the 16th century Benedictine abbot known as Blossius by a novice who sent me this extract on Lectio from Blossius’ short book ‘Mirror for Monks’ which I share with you now.

The opening words remind us of the difference between leisure and laziness, between, for example, empty-minded, distracted internet browsing and a ‘holy kind of rest’. Paraphrase: don’t worry about doing nothing as long as you do nothing with full attention.

The World
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for Christian
Meditation



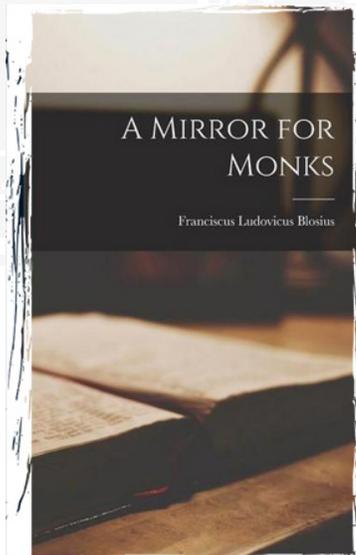
He says not to worry if you can't remember everything you read: you will still benefit from the purifying cleansing of the mind as it works and prepares you better for meditation.

During Lectio, feel free to pass back and forth between attentive reading and moments of prayer. There are many forms of prayer, and the free spirit can play with them all during Lectio. This will prepare us better in the meditation times for the greater simplicity and steady deepening of the mantra.

Persevere to the end – which is endless. It will help you conclude each Lectio with a renewed sense of thankfulness.

As Br. David Steindl-Rast says: 'we are not grateful because we are happy, but we are happy because we are grateful.' This pure thankfulness of heart is the true fruit of all prayer in all situations.

Laurence



From: Blossius: A Mirror for monks

Avoid idle pursuits—especially those that are unproductive or fruitless. Don't be surprised by this advice. Guard against laziness that leads to vice; though, know that not all idleness is harmful. There is a holy kind of rest: when the

soul, focused entirely on God, withdraws from worldly distractions and enters a deep, interior stillness. In such moments, embraced by the presence of the Beloved, this "idleness" becomes sacred. If God grants you this grace,

you will find peace and spiritual profit in such rest.

Outside of that, always occupy yourself with something meaningful: read, meditate, pray, or engage in necessary and serious tasks. If you devote yourself sincerely to studying the Scriptures, you will be deeply comforted and your heart will grow strong in your desire for God.

To receive such grace, commit yourself wisely and willingly to reading. But read not for curiosity, intellectual pride, or rhetorical elegance. Read to grow in the love of God, to find consolation, and to profit your soul. Do not be discouraged if you forget much of what you read or hear. Like a vessel frequently rinsed with fresh water remains clean even if it doesn't retain it, so too does a soul benefit from the regular flow of spiritual teaching, even if much slips away. What matters is that your heart is open and receptive. Your spiritual growth does not depend primarily on how much doctrine you can remember, but on how deeply its truths take root in your heart. Let the words of Scripture form within you a pure soul and a willing spirit, ready to do the will of God.

Read with intention—not randomly or carelessly. Move between prayer and reading, and then back again, so that weariness does not set in. This alternation refreshes the soul and increases the fruitfulness of both practices. Short prayers during reading can also be beneficial—let your heart reach toward God with holy desires. Remain faithful and persistent in prayer—keep knocking, and God will surely open the door and give you what you truly need. And do not forget to thank Him for the gifts already received, for gratitude purifies the heart and keeps it close to God.

*Franciscus Ludovicus
Blossius
(1506-1566)*



**From Marie
Louise Schmidt –
International Oblate
Co-Ordinator**

*“We believe that the Divine
presence is everywhere...”*

RB ch.19

Dear sisters and brothers

I can't believe that it is over two years since I became the International Oblate Coordinator.

It's been a wonderful gift to be able to serve our Oblate Community in this way.

The new structure with the introduction of Regional Coordinators seems to work very well.

A revised Oblate Formation Guide is about to be ready. Mary Meyer (Paraguay), Eileen Dutt and Janet Robbins (UK) have been key to this work being done. They have spent hours going through every detail with much love and consideration.

The Bonnevaux Prayer Book has also been reviewed for minor corrections thanks to Dorothy Wood (Canada) This new edition is now available on the Oblate Website (oblates.wccm.org/v2019/news-from-the-oblate-community/bonnevaux-daily-prayer)

And not to forget our weekly Benedicts Well online. Please feel welcome to come to 'Benedict's Well' by sending an email to wccmbenedictswell@gmail.com. We will then send you the weekly Zoom link. If you would like to watch previous sessions of Benedict's Well, you can find them on the Benedict's Well YouTube page.

As you have been informed, we (a small planning team) are planning an Oblate Retreat at Bonnevaux Sept 9-14. Places at Bonnevaux are limited, but it will be possible to book accommodation outside Bonnevaux – and it will also be a hybrid retreat. So somehow or another everybody should be able to join, and we hope

to see as many of you as possible in whichever way is possible. You will get more information soon via your National Oblate Coordinator (NOC).

Let me end by praying for our community as a whole and for a good recovery for Fr. Laurence.

**Editorial, Care:
A Healing Act of
Attentive Love
Andrew McAlister
(Australian oblate,
editor, Via Vitae)**



“Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ, for he said: ‘I was sick and you visited me’ (Matt 25:36), and, ‘What you did for one of these least brethren you did for me’ (Matt 25:40) (Rule, Chapter 36, ‘The Sick Brethren’)

Hello, and welcome to the first Via Vitae for 2025. Perhaps you have been following Fr. Laurence's recent writings, found both on the social media site Medium and in the first WCCM International Newsletter for 2025. In these, Laurence shares his fondness for the Rothko Chapel (see above), which just happened to be near the hospital in Houston where Fr. Laurence stayed for his recent medical treatment.

It is good news indeed that Laurence's treatment has been successful. In his words:

I would like to pass on the good news my doctor gave me the day before yesterday. He told me that the treatment I have received has achieved its goals. No further treatment is necessary. Good news takes time to process too, but believe me, life feels lighter with it. I will now take time to get back into the holistic rhythm of prayer, work and reading which has sustained me for many years but is much harder to sustain during illness and medical treatment (from ‘The Gift of Gratitude’, on

Reading through Laurence's reflections on his time of treatment, along with the contributions that came from others for this Via Vitae edition, I was very much drawn to the themes of silence and care.

In the reflection provided for us by Deborah Coulthard, Deborah quotes Rothko: "silence is accurate". I was struck by this simple statement. If you have read Laurence's description of the chapel, this statement rings deep; helped along further by Deborah's reflection.

In his experience of the chapel, Laurence writes that there "silence comprehends you". When silence is silence, that is when it is accurate, the event that it is can comfort, can en-wonder, and render us known. The holy ground of a silence accurate, one that 'gets us', is indeed sacred and cannot be stepped on with thoughts – until of course we do, at which point our filtered experience of silence has betrayed the accuracy of silence itself.

It is significant that the word accurate has its roots in the Latin 'ad accūrāre', which means 'to care'. If silence is to be accurate, then it must also be full of care.

In his Medium reflections, Laurence reflects on the nature of care. When care is accurate enough, that is, when it is attentive and personal enough, then this is when care becomes healing. And in this careful healing, no matter the circumstance, silence faithfully abides.

Tomasz Zontek, in his reflection, shares with us what a pilgrimage of becoming care looks like. From suffering, grace makes compassion. In our careful, attentive acts, we are healed to be a part of the healing of others. God wastes nothing. Tomasz has asked us for help on this pilgrimage. Tomasz has also shared with us some wonderful photos and a poem.

Robert McLaughlin shares something of his own pilgrimage of meditation, a journey away and back again. His story is the story of many of us as we move through life with responsibilities that have little time for a meditation gong. And yet, circumstances can have us

finding again and appreciating anew what we forgot: that meditation is indeed a gift, one freely given by a God who knows just what we need; a God who waits always as the fullness of attentive care.

Albert & Maria Zakharovy's contribution to this edition, a reflection given during this year's Bonnevaux Easter Sunday service, reminds us that our practice is a dying into silence that can only bear real fruit in the ordinary here and now of life. Care can only care here and now.

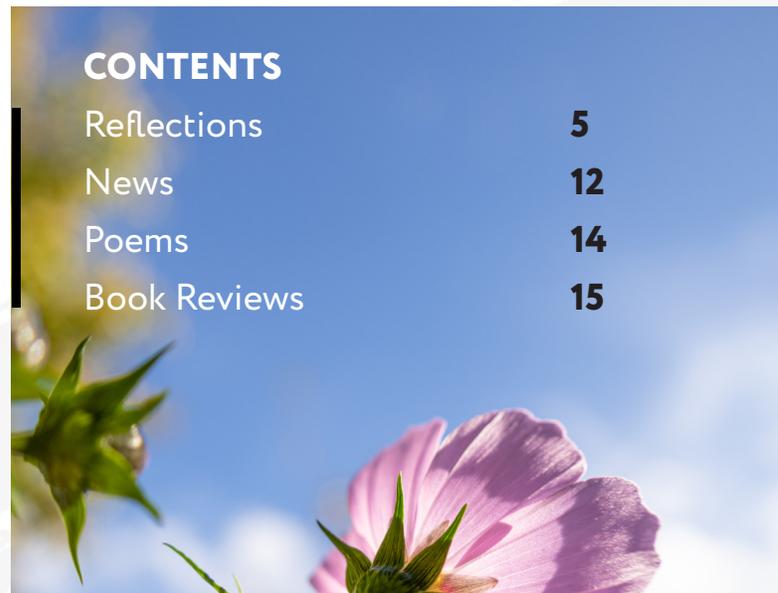
Of course, as oblates of the WCCM, our daily practice does not stop at meditation. Laurence's own contribution to this edition is an affirmation of this. Our times of Lectio and Office are both prayer in themselves and serve to prepare us for meditation. Surely our daily round of meditation, Office, and Lectio is indeed self-care that moves our whole humanity into the accurate and ordinary silence of the risen Christ.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this first Via Vitae for 2025. Thank you, Marie Louise, for your greetings, news, and poetry. Thank you, Stefan Reynolds, for the poem. Thank you, Paul Taylor and Vernon Chandler, for the book reviews. Any contributions to our next edition can be sent along to myself via andrewcmcalister@gmail.com. I am looking forward to them.

With love, Andrew

CONTENTS

Reflections	5
News	12
Poems	14
Book Reviews	15



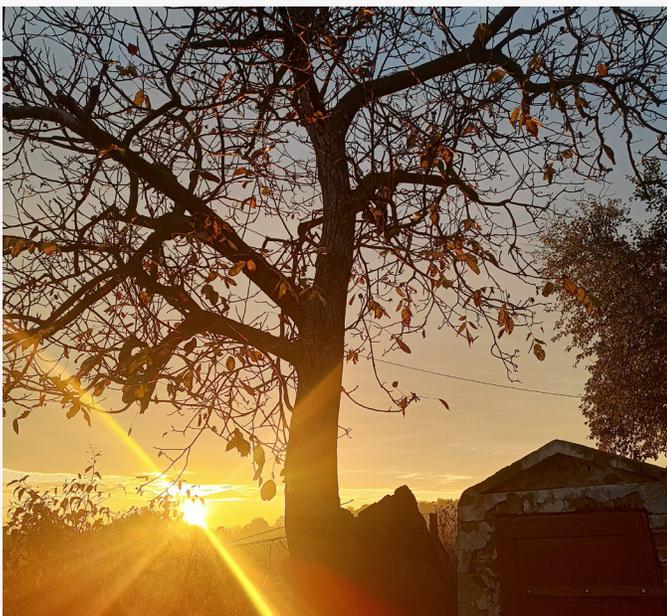
**From Laurence Freeman
(Sensing God, 82)**



Photo: Laurence Freeman, Ireland

Trouble means conflict and conflict means division. Division frequently means violence. A heightened level of awareness can prevent this sequence from unfolding and allow us to make the right decision to be truthful even when this carries a high cost. The truth will set you free. When meditators experience this incremental liberation from fear and evasion, they more readily come out into the open to say what they really mean. And they stand on the side of those in need rather than merely on the side of those who will be the likely winners in a conflict.

**From John Main
(Community of Love, 184)**



If it is true, as St. Benedict tells us, that we must keep death always before our eyes it seems to me that the way of meditation is the supremely natural way to do it. Every time we sit down to meditate we die and so enter more fully into life. Every time we get up and return to the ordinary responsibilities and challenges of life – in family, relationships or at work – we deepen the essential integration of ourselves. It is that integration which is the basis of all the meaning and purpose of life.

REFLECTIONS

**Betesda Hermitage -
By Tomasz Zontek, WCCM Oblate,
Poland**



“A kind of hunger for reality is enclosed in dreaming, a kind of pretension that obligates reality, grows imperceptibly into a liability and claim, a bill of indebtedness that demands to be covered.

We renounced our dreams of a fortress long ago, but then years later someone turned up who grasped it, took it seriously, someone naive and faithful in his soul, who took it literally, at face value, took it into his hand like a simple, unproblematic thing. I saw him, I spoke with him. He had unbelievably azure eyes, created not for looking but only for turning endlessly blue in daydreams”.

Bruno Schulz¹

Bruno was a Polish Jew living on the territory of today's Ukraine. He was murdered at the end of the World War II by Nazi Germans during an escape

¹ Bruno Schulz. *Collected Stories. The republic of dreams.* Translated by Madeline G. Levine.. Northwestern University Press 2018

attempt. His dream about the world of poetry has been with me since childhood. My name is Tomasz, I am 35 years old and I am an oblate in our Community. Tomasz (Thomas) means the twin, which means the same as anybody else. Five years ago, me and my wife Isabel bought 1.5 hectares of land – a dwelling, a field and a forest. I remember when, resigned, I whispered: “You, Lord, take care of it” and at that moment I came across an advertisement for the sale of the dwelling. The owner was a postman named Fanciszek Papież, who lived to be 101 years old.

Franciszek was affected by terror... He fled from the slaughter of the Polish population during World War II. I am writing about life during the times of terror, which is still threatening us. My wife and myself also came through hell... Addiction, depression, psychiatric hospitals. Now I am a husband, I meditate, and I have a dream. A dream about a dwelling and a hermitage. We live in the east of Poland. The future is uncertain, but we do not give up building a world of peace.

Meditation has become a way for me – a way of transforming suffering, which has been with us, our families, communities and bodies for generations. I share the gift our Community has given me wherever

I can. In our dwelling we would like to create a place of retreat. A place of work and meditation. I own a lot of land, we have created a garden, an orchard and a chicken coop... I feel and I know that there is a need of places



which propose a different mode of life - one based on the production of one's own food – of life in harmony with nature and life of work for the local community which welcomed us. We do everything ourselves. I have been going to Sweden for many years, and I learnt to work, construct and create there. I am writing this short article among construction dust – together with my father and my brother we are renovating the house. The hermitage will be in a pre-war log barn. An outdoor kitchen and part of the building foundation are already completed.

During our stay in Sweden this year we managed to purchase a caravan. It will serve as a temporary house for volunteers, which, we hope, will appear in the spring.

I try to share my project on YouTube – I own a camera, and a microphone and record texts connected with meditation, creating a small community. I worked in a puppet theatre as an acoustician – hence my love of the arts. Arts will be an important element of our





hermitage. My wife Isabel paints and currently she is studying art therapy. I write, draw, create and record short films.

As work progresses, we feel that something in us is being healed. With the replacement of each beam, I experience a surge of life. I used to be homeless...I lived in the land of death ... I am still thinking about



those on the margins of society sentenced to oblivion. The answer to addiction is spirituality. The answer to the condition of being dead while alive is love. The place we are constructing will be open to those who lost hope – especially to those addicted to alcohol and drugs.

The meaning of reality is sacrifice. And sacrificing. That is why we want to pass what we are creating here to people who also sacrifice their life to contemplation and work centred on healing. Malwina and Mirka from the Polish WCCM community established a fund half a year ago. After visiting Bonnevaux this summer with my wife Isabel, we are convinced of our wish that the

dwelling we construct be transferred to the community and people who want to continue the project. This is a distant future. At the moment we are working to make our vision a reality.



Now I would like to appeal for your support. If you share our dream with us – we ask for your help. It is very hard to finance such a big project of one's own work only, especially when having health problems.

Betesda Hermitage website:

pustelniabetesda.blogspot.com

Tomasz's YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/@oblat/videos

If you would like to email Tomasz:

tomaszzontek11@gmail.com



Photos: Tomasz Zontek, Poland



What's In A Gift? - Robert McLaughlin, WCCM Postulant, United Kingdom

Often those who meditate recognise that somehow, they have received a gift that has been brought to them as a blessing from God. I was fortunate enough to have received this gift as a young adult and like many gifts I actively engage with it for a while. As my life got caught up in the whirlwind of professional training, marriage, mortgages, possessions and children I became detached from the gift and overwhelmed by the idea that I had no time for meditation as it seemed too self-indulgent and out of context with real life.

However, the gift of meditation had planted in me a spiritual connection that supported and nourished me throughout my busy years and had not left me. I may not have consciously connected with it much for many years, but the gift had been received and was active within me.

My hunger for God was always directing my spiritual journey and led me to always work hard and try my best for the benefit of others. After a lot of Church hopping, personal challenges and reading I came to realise that

my personal goodness was of no value to God. God did not need me to be his perfect child as he loved me anyway. I became thirsty and hungry for a deeper awareness, connection

and experience of God.

During the Covid pandemic I spent very little time with other Christians and spiritual people. With this absence of others, I was left alone with God and I rediscovered the gift that had been given to me.

On checking out John Main on the Internet, I discovered that WCCM had blossomed all over the world during my 40 years in the wilderness and a group existed near me that I could go to. I quickly learnt about the Oblate pathway and am now being mentored on my postulate journey.

I'm interested in cultivating this gift that allows us all to share in the presence of the Divine, creative God of love.

I'm writing this piece because I am trying to explore my relationship to the gift of meditation as I walk the path, hopefully towards becoming a novice.

At Christmas my wife and I received the gift of a waffle maker. We both instantly agreed that it was yet another electrical kitchen gadget that we had no need of. It seems highly ungrateful to respond to a gift in this way and we are now caught up in the dilemma of how to dispose of the gift and what would we say to the gift giver if they realise that we didn't want their gift.

Gifts are best received when we recognise that we have a need for them. Our materialistic world is full of gadgets that appeal to that spiritual emptiness that wants to be filled. Meditation helps us know that you are all we need, Lord. Your presence is fulfilment.

A gift becomes precious to the giver and the recipient when we have cultivated true connection and gratitude. During the work of meditation, we experience connection and gratitude with the Divine. A gift has no meaning unless it generates some connectiveness. Honest joy or disappointment can provide an opportunity to be closer or more connected with others. The gift of meditation teaches us to be intentional about our time with God



and others. As we spend time with God, we become more present to others. Meditation is the gift that keeps on giving.

Stay gifted and be a gift to others.

Photo: Albert Zakharov, Ukraine, Lviv WCCM group

Aldi (Summer 2024) - Deborah Coulthard, WCCM Oblate, Australia

In an Aldi shop, I noticed that even children were speaking quietly. People were padding through the aisles, trolleys gliding, choices being made, ponderings. I realised there was no muzak. Muzak is meant to make us cheerful and worry-free, so we spend more. Here was a rare absence of noise and distraction. As refreshing as that was, it is not what is meant by Silence in spiritual teachings. You might wonder how books can be written on meditation or Silence. What is there to say about no noise? The answer is that in quietening the thinking mind, we can open the way to many riches, things that are not of our direct making. Silence is not an absence of noise but a different language and not one that we can understand with our rational mind.

The Silence that is pointed to in all the world's religions is an expression of the one and only Love. This gets us closer to writing that book. God is Love, therefore, the books on Silence and meditation are books about God. That could still be a very short book perhaps, as what can we say about God? Now, we are getting closer to seeing why we need Silence. How often do we say "Oh, this thing is too hard to put into words. I can't describe it. It's beyond words?" We can all recognise that the most meaningful and profound things in life, cannot really be talked about. Again, why write a book? Well, we all need pointers and a mud map to get out of our heads and into our hearts.

Why do we need to get out of heads? Don't take my word for it. Ask yourself whether the highlights in your

life have been due to great thoughts, or when you were surprised by joy (as per title of C S Lewis's book)? We are surprised by forces outside of ourselves that take our breath away. It could be intimacy, beauty, birth or death.



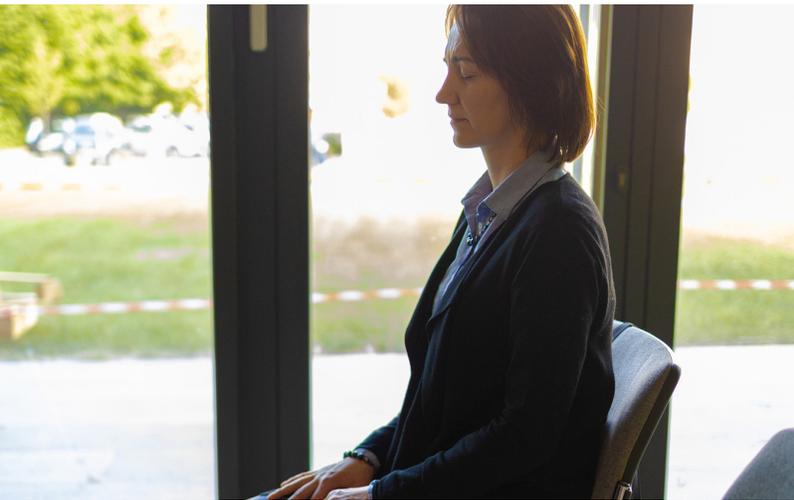
Benedictine sister Joan Chittister reminds us of Benedict's clear words about God being within us to be realised, not outside of us to be stumbled upon. It is not a game of hide and seek. It is simply a matter of opening our eyes to the light that drives out the darkness within us. She stresses that the harder we seek, the more distance we create between ourselves and God. What do we do about the distance? Understand it isn't there. We are not separate from God, nor are we one with God. Chittister says it's the sun and its light, the ocean and the wave, the singer and the song. Not one. Not two.' This is hard for our thinking minds to grasp as the mind stands back from something to observe it; thus, making it falsely separate.

There is nothing wrong with our adult minds and bodies, but we need to be conscious of where to place our attention. We pray for God's will to be done. Our 'to do' lists are fine, as long as we remember the Ground of our Being. Rest there when things get hard. Worship there when things go well. Benedict teaches us to know who we are and what our lives are meant to garner. Chittister says the irony of this humility is that it leads us to the knowledge of our own greatness; that we are

made for God.

Benedict tells us the God-life is never-ending, unremitting, a totally absorbing enterprise. God is intent on it; so must we be. I find it enormously reassuring that Benedict tells us it is not perfection that leads us to entering the Kingdom, it is perseverance.

Benedictine monk and leader of the Christian meditation movement, Laurence Freeman writes books about Silence. He teaches us how to leave behind



the illusory and painful state of egoism that has us feel responsible human creatures, making fantasies, daydreams and goals that rely on our own efforts to fulfil. No sooner is a goal achieved, than we create another one. Nothing we do alone, gives us peace or fulfilment. How do you make this move from self-centred egoism into full being and true selfhood? Freeman says: Be silent. Be still. Stillness brings us awareness of wholeness. Let go of anxieties as Jesus implores. It is so easy if we trust. My own experience is that it is fear that gets in the way. Fear and trust are opposites. To trust means to let go.

Another Benedictine, Esther De Waal has recently written a new book on Letting Go. She is now at the age where there is no choice about it. She has let go of her lovely house and its garden, all the neighbours and her ability to enjoy many activities. We are always being asked to let go. It is fear that has us try to hold on.

Just before his fatal accident, the monk Thomas Merton wrote: “Our real journey in life is interior; it is a matter of growth, deepening, and of an even greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts”. He knew that it was important we do not undertake a project of self-transformation but quieten ourselves in order to hear the still voice within.

The interiority to which all these teachers refer does not exclude being active in the world, but it does mean not putting too much of our attention onto matters in the exterior. Where our attention goes, our energy follows. We need to keep our feet in the Ground of our Being. Ironically, holding still at our centre makes us more compassionate toward the other and more able to be emotionally available. God gives us infinite resources.

I walked to the shops with a teacher today. He had me look under many rocks, dissect small seeds and then walk backwards on the footpath. He is completely without self-regard, does not think of tomorrow nor yesterday. He is the present moment. Back home at lunch, I asked him to pray thanks for the food. For various

reasons, he has had no religious education (as yet). He pressed his hands together, closed his eyes and said “God, I love you and you are beautiful.” It left me with little to add. I told him that I also tell God I love him. My four year old teacher, Henry, said ‘and do you tell him he is beautiful as well?’ There is an innate knowing. During our wild walk



to the shops, I was mindful of the wisdom of the child as the entry to the Kingdom.

All of these words are pointing to the language of Silence. In my own profession of psychoanalysis, we are taught that there are various points in life that have their own healthy form of madness. Childhood and a mother's time with a new infant are two such times. Both of these are seen as times to be not taken seriously. We wait for a child to grow up to become 'sensible'. Mothers refer to 'baby brain' and her fogginess or other worldliness is seen as temporary impairment. We can view these times as bringing us to that thin air, that border country where we are closer to our God selves than ever. It is a complete reversal of the common paradigm.

As the painter Rothko said, 'Silence is accurate.' Jesus' teachings were nothing if not radical. We could summarise his invitation to leave everything behind and follow him as instruction to leave behind the thinking mind; use it to help ourselves drive or bake a cake but don't listen to our cognitive selves in order to find fulfilment or wholeness.

Silence is a language beyond words and a reflection of the immensity of God. It shows us Eternity and before that, we can only bow our heads in prayer and thanksgiving.

*Photos: Albert Zakharov, Ukraine,
Lviv WCCM group*

Return to True Life - Albert & Maria Zakharov, Ukrainian NOCs

This year on Easter Sunday, we were invited to comment on Scripture at the Bonnevaux Contemplative Mass. We would like to share our reflections on the everyday dimension of the mystery of the Resurrection, towards which our daily meditation leads us.

"Since you have been brought back to true life with

Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him." (Colossians 3:1-4)

In this English translation of the letter to the Colossians, the Resurrection — both Christ's and ours, and therefore shared — is described as a "return to true life". We need a special understanding of this great theological concept in the very simple and everyday, deeply personal dimension of our lives.

Many religious people perceive the Resurrection as something majestic, purely religious, and distant from their own moment of "here and now." In doing so, we ourselves create a gap between us and the Divine Presence, a gap that makes it impossible to practice Listening to Reality, Rooting ourselves in Reality, and the continual Transformation by what is real. Thus, we are called to simplify everything — to become as simple and open as God Himself is: utterly simple, everyday, and profoundly present in all things.

Scripture reminds us that we need to seek "the things that are above" — where everything is saturated with the presence of "the One Who Is," the presence of Christ. How wonderful it is that meditation teaches us to see Heaven not as something "above the world," but rather "within and at the depths of the world"! Is this not the very emphasis that sounds in the Rule of St. Benedict, especially in the chapter about the practice of contemplative awareness in the work of the cellarer?

The wisdom of Benedict teaches that the personal commitment of one who serves the community — even in the kitchen — grows into the art of seeing everyday things as sacred vessels of a heavenly liturgy celebrated through mindful life. Any earthly thing becomes

heavenly when we are present and open to the One who is the Presence itself. Then, the bush of our daily affairs begins to burn with the fire of divine-human presence, making the material world shining.

Teilhard de Chardin said that Spirit is a “shining matter”. Everything we touch in our daily tasks calls for our deep attention. But first and foremost, we must awaken this attention within ourselves and recognize how much deeper it is than our ego, and how intimately it connects us to every other living being in the world. Then all things will shine with heavenly light and become a space “where Christ is.”

Each day, in meditation and in what happens to us after it, we die into the silence of God’s presence and rise again — returning to true life. Yet this whole process quietly and naturally sprouts us like a grain into a fuller existence in dynamic unity with the whole Universe and with the One who is the heart and depth of every living being. If we stay on this path, we daily unveil the mystery of our Self and of that Presence which has led us from the beginning and will lead us eternally onward into an endless horizon of transformation. This is The Way — as one character from a famous sci-fi series put it.

Christ is Risen! May the presence of the Risen Christ — the One we seek and the One who seeks us — reveal itself to us in ever deeper and more realistic ways:

🌸 as the fragrance of the blossoming of a new creation that fills every space of our lives;

✨ as the light that unveils both the outer and inner horizons of our journey;

❤️ as the power of love and growth that leads all of us beyond the ego — toward the Other and toward Community.

NEWS

Benedict’s Well Continues, from the Benedict’s Well team



BENEDICT'S WELL
 "PREFER NOTHING TO THE LOVE OF CHRIST"
RULE OF BENEDICT 4:21

MONDAYS 9AM BST
 ZOOM with LIVE STREAMING
<https://www.youtube.com/@benedictswell6373>

Let us drink of the wisdom of St. Benedict and together be the well of love the world can draw from.

Benedict’s Well is an International online meditation and reflection group that meets on Zoom every Monday at 9 a.m. GMT for a total of one hour. The group is hosted by Benedictine Oblates of the World Community for Christian Meditation. It is open to anyone who wants to deepen their meditation practice, has an interest in the monastic tradition and would like the support of a community online for their spiritual journey. Each week, there is a time of silent meditation with a reading to prepare us for meditation and then there is a guest speaker. The group is ecumenical and from all over the world, but united in meditation and the nourishment of shared reflection on their Christian faith journey. A regular speaker is Father Laurence. Over the 3 years



that we have been meeting, many speakers have offered their reflections and wisdom. You may wish to offer your own reflections!

Please feel welcome to come to 'Benedict's Well' by sending an email to wccmbenedictswell@gmail.com We will then send you the weekly Zoom link. If you would like to watch previous sessions of Benedict's Well, you can find them on our YouTube page. Please note we have a period of silent meditation at the beginning of our time together. To view our You Tube page, click [Benedict's Well](#).

News From Campfire in the Heart, by Judi Taylor, Australian WCCM Oblate



Campfire in the Heart campfireintheheart.com.au always welcomes enquiries from those who'd like to volunteer, to be part of the life of the place joining the small resident community there, part of the vision for the place, in the ancient and wondrous setting of the Eastern MacDonnell Ranges, 7km from Alice Springs/ Mbantua, in Central Australia.

Recently a particular opportunity has opened up to volunteer as a *meditator-in-residence*. What does this



Eastern MacDonnell Ranges, Central Australia

involve?

Staying ideally between 2 - 6 months.

Be a spiritual presence to work with and complement the offerings of the mangers there, joining in all aspects of the day-to-day running of the place as need be.

To offer daily times of meditation in the WCCM tradition.

Discern how their particular gifts might best serve Campfire, perhaps in reaching out to the local



The Labyrinth at Campfire In The Heart

community, offering an experience of Christian meditation and/or an invitation to 'come and see' the Campfire site. Maybe offering an introductory session/s or a quiet day. Perhaps in helping put together some guidelines on how to have a self-directed retreat at Campfire. The possibilities are as many as we are.

In all things embodying the Benedictine values of hospitality, generosity and humility in relationship with those who living at or visiting Campfire

Each person's unique response to the place adds to the creative possibilities we can offer to those coming on retreat and the like

Accommodation is provided, we are calling for expressions of interest among WCCM meditators, both internationally and within Australia, from those who feel called by the spirit of Campfire and see themselves aligned with our Vision. It is an evolving possibility; we welcome your contribution to how it could develop.

Email Judi: taylor.judi@outlook.com

POEMS

**Stupa,
by Tomasz Zontek, Polish Oblate**

Long had I sat at the Master's feet
and when I offered myself completely to Him
I woke up in Him - and He woke up in me.
Now I am burning with sparks in You.
Obedient to the One who Himself wounds and heals
obedient to the One who made all in all
to the One who accomplished each deed of ours.
I am sitting at the Master's feet
and listening deeply to the suffering of the world.
Listening so deeply that I unite with it.
I am sitting at the Master's feet and accept the healing.
The disease crushing me slowly reveals the mystery
through the wounds
Light is granted to those who dwell in darkness and
in the shadow of death.
I will be waiting for you there.
Silent and reconciled.
At the Master's grave.
Amen

**You Wasted Not,
by Anne-Marie Doecke, Australian
Oblate**

Me, myself and I, the drunk
teetering back and forth
in complexity the pain
self-importance leaning
I'm about to throw
plunging into depths of hell
how could I have done that

I'll have another think
cruel I've been to me and yours
without the thought of us
to sleep I must surrender
my life I slept away
until my eyes were opened
you understood and summoned
come into fresh air
breathe the love I am, you are
no drunk is ever wasted
A new drink I am giving
from a well so very deep
first I ask from you
please quench my thirst
worship in the spirit and in truth
I am already present
in the midst of all your fear
and I left myself
and shared, is this not you
you know all I ever did
without condemnation
you understood and summoned
come into fresh air
our thinking and our thanking
the same breath
you wasted not your love on me

Originally, I wrote, "I'll have another drink" but when I sent it to a friend who goes to AA, she said, in the beginning they say, turn away from the first drink, but after that, we need to turn away from the first 'think'.

**Impasse, by Andrew McAlister,
Australian Oblate**

Life is approaching impasse.
What is that?
A position from which there is no escape.
What is happening?

The mind has made a play for too many things.
Too much living as if it were God.

Impasse approaches.
Learn now to let it come.
Are you finally too tired for egoic creations?

Weariness has become blessing.
Grace is here in its own light.
A silent and weary mind cannot move much
from darkness.

Are you too tired now to carry attention away?
Are you at last humble enough?
Maranatha is enough.

Abandon to Love's movement.
Let grace peel your fingers from the grip.
Be in a forgiveness you do not create.

Love is becoming human.
Christ buds in the mind.
Being is where I have always been.

(2011)

On Retreat, by Stefen Reynolds, Irish Oblate

Sometimes we have to go into the great death,
enter the solitude of desert, bereft of stars,
stare up at the dark night with muted breath
and let go of the palaver of our usual tasks.

Sometimes we must close our eyes and ears
to News that's never new and rarely good,
to our fondest hopes, to our legitimate fears
and drama of our emotions not understood.

Leave behind the inner critic, blaming voice
that judges what we should or should not do.

Let go of stress, as if it was really our choice
that created the past we have lived through.

What will we find? Peace in the moment now,
release from the guilt we inflict on ourselves,
sense of hope, Good News that's really Wow!
The ordinary shot through with chiming bells!

A light in the heart that will counter the dark,
water in the desert where flowers will bloom,
grace; where each mundane act plays its part
filling the house with a wondrous perfume.

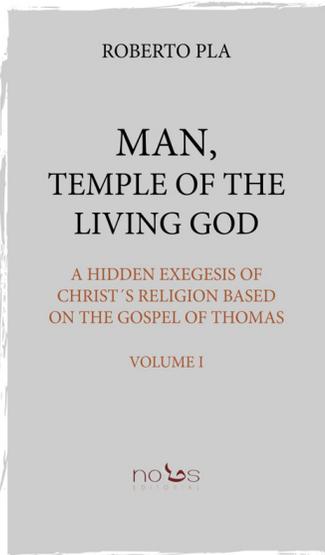
We must go through the night to get to dawn,
through the hollow, broken places of the soul
to find that face we had before we were born,
to find the glue in the cracks is made of gold.

BOOK REVIEWS

Man: Temple Of The Living God (A Hidden Exegesis Of Christ's Religion Based On The Gospel Of Thomas), by Roberto Pla, review by Paul Taylor

When I started reading this book about 3 years ago, I pretty much straight away recognised it was the book I had been looking for, for many years. The author, Roberto Pla, was clearly a contemplative with a deep and profound knowledge of Scripture both Western and Eastern as well as having great insight into the Jewish tradition of Kabbalah. All these traditions were my sources of inspiration too and here was a book that integrated them so wonderfully.

My first encounter with the book happened when I was on retreat at Bonnevaux in 2022. I found it in the bookshop and returned every day I was there to read it. The lady who ran the bookshop recognised my love/obsession for the book and kindly offered to give it to me. Also, while I was there Fr. Laurence introduced me to the man that was responsible for having the book



translated from Spanish to English. His name is Javier Lantero and he lives in Madrid and he has become my good friend - a friendship based, at first, at least, on a shared love of the book. Javier, in fact, told me he was happy to send me (in Australia) as many copies of the book as I needed

for no cost because he realised getting this book to as many people as possible had become one of his key life purposes. He had made a beautiful private edition of it in English, and I have lost count of the number of books he has sent me, but it would be about 40 and these have in turn been sent onto people who I consider seekers of Truth. Nowadays the book is also available on Amazon (in two volumes).

So, what is the book about? It is, essentially, an extended commentary on Thomas' Gospel. It is a big book - over 800 pages but I have found if you read one Logion a day (there are 114) and the commentary you will finish it inside 6 months. This is what I did the first time I read it and now I am reading 1 Logion a week with the commentary.

As well as it being a wonderful commentary on The Gospel of Thomas it also connects Thomas's Gospel to all the Gospels and indeed to all the Bible. At the heart of the book is Pla's belief that we all have the seed of Christ in us and that the purpose of all our lives is to bring the potential of this seed to fulfilment.

His writing is subtle, dense, challenging and ultimately very loving. He exhorts us to being very simple and open. The book demands your absolute and finest attention. I personally feel the bookmark that comes with each book and is printed in it in the Amazon copy holds the key to

understanding the book. I say this prayer to myself every day before I begin my daily read. Here it is:

Prayer of Unity by Roberto Pla

Grant us, Lord, the absolute and eternal consciousness of Unity.

May our thoughts, words and deeds be always His thoughts, His words, His deeds.

May the transformation of our consciousness into His not make us feel chosen by Him.

Grant us Lord, to die at last to all attributes, forever.

May nothingness welcome and pacify us.

May Unity not flourish in us but simply be, so that it does not appear stained with our shadow.

Lord, grant that our mind may cease through real or figurative death.

May something in the mind remember, when it ceases that it is unity.

Let the mind know and not forget that, when it ceases, it is You.

Grant us Lord, to know that everything has been given to us from the beginning.

May we be happy with the happiness that we are.

May we know with the knowledge that we are.

May we love with the flame of love that we are.

Grant us, Lord, the one thing you have not yet granted us:

May the Lord recognise the Lord, in the Lord.

Reading from this book has become my daily pre-meditation read each morning. It puts me into a state of receptivity to whatever unfolds in my morning contemplation, meditation and shared lectio divina. I feel so grateful to have found this book and to have found the friendship of Javier Lantero. If you are interested in exploring it yourself this is the website you should visit www.gospelofthomas-interpretation.com and it will give you access to both digital and hard copy versions of the book.

**Opening the Parables,
by M.D. Hayden, reviewed by Vernon
Chandler (Oblate Novice, Ansbach,
Germany)**



For any one of us who spent childhood and/or early adulthood in churches, we are very aware of the parables of Jesus. During church school and vacation Bible school, we had the parables read to us and/or illustrated in colorful pictures upon classroom felt boards. We had children's books that presented the parable stories with both words and illustrations. We listened to hundreds of homilies and sermons in which a parable was used as the scriptural text.

Most of us are very familiar with the parables of Jesus. Or so we might surmise!

But the interpretations of the parables are complex and varied. Many church school teachers, and preachers, have attempted to explain the parables as morality tales, i.e., good vs evil; greed vs generosity; industrious vs sloth; compassion vs vengeance; forgiveness vs resentful, etc. In contrast, the author of *Opening the Parables* suggests that the parables can be a portal to the kingdom of God or at least a crack that provides a glimpse of the kingdom of God. For a parable to lead to an awareness of the kingdom of God, however, a shift in consciousness is required. This «shift» is integral to spiritual awakening, and Jesus' parables are an attempt to bring his listeners to apprehend the spiritual realm and the awesome power and majesty of divine love. Hayden suggests that Jesus used parables to convey spiritual paradox in a manner akin to Buddhist koans, i.e., to shift our consciousness

from left brain logic and reason to right brain intuition and the sensory world of unseen energy.

Indeed, modern neuroscience tells us that it is via right brain function that one senses the energy of love, and Hayden illustrates, throughout the book, that love is the paradoxical message in every parable. She walks the reader through the Gospel parables as she illustrates how each parable provides a window into a loving way of being.

For me, reading *Opening the Parables* raised some challenging ideas and questions, such as these:

Jesus seems to have been so very aware of the kingdom of God (or spiritual realm). But this requires spiritual seeing and spiritual hearing. It is all mysterious and paradoxical.

Along with his use of paradoxical parables, Jesus of Nazareth stressed that one must "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." But what is this kingdom of God?

Might the kingdom of God be an unseen spiritual realm, in and around us, as Hayden asserts, permeated by the awesome and radiant energy of love? Spiritual awakening, or spiritual rebirth, is necessary for one to sense this spiritual realm. Might the parables have been attempts to heal, or cure, spiritual blindness and deafness?

The parable attempts to lead one to a more intuitive or apophatic vision of reality. Hayden points out this is often contradictory to the outward images, symbols, creeds, doctrines, and dogmas of organized religion.

Every parable has at least two meanings, an outer and an inner, a literal and intuitive. It is the intuitive meaning that has the potential of leading one to sense the kingdom of God, a spiritual realm permeated with the energy of unfathomable love. But a parable's hidden meaning can only be grasped by those who are spiritually awakened.

This book promises thought-provoking reading for all Christians: Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestants. I especially appreciated Hayden's references to George Fox and historical Quakerism.

I highly recommend *Opening the Parables* to clergy and laity.

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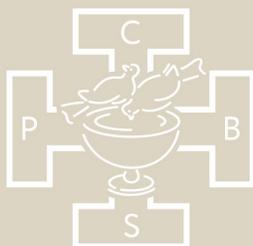
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