



JOHN MAIN OSB

John Main (1926-1982) was born in England. As a young man serving in the diplomatic corps in the Far East he was introduced to meditation. A Hindu monk taught him to pray in silence by the repetition of a single word or mantra. As a Christian, he incorporated the saying of the mantra into his daily prayers and gradually John Main says he realized that his twice-daily meditation times were becoming "the real axis" of his life. He decided to enter a Benedictine monastery and some years later, John Main discovered that his experience of the mantra - the repetition of a single word or verse as a way of entering into silence and becoming present to Christ within our heart, was a deeply rooted part of Christian tradition.

In 1975, John Main OSB opened the first Christian Meditation Centre at his monastery in London. He had recovered a simple tradition of silent, contemplative prayer from the teachings of the early Christian monks, the Desert Fathers. It soon became clear to him that this tradition had relevance today not only for monks. He saw it as a way for the renewal of the church and the world. He formed a new monastery in Montreal in the late 1970's and from there the teaching of Christian Meditation has spread around the world. John Main died in Montreal in December 1982.

His teaching continues through the World Community for Christian Meditation, and his books, letters and recordings.

Having at first been introduced to meditation through its universal tradition in the East many years before he had become a monk, he was experientially prepared to recognize the essential Christian expression of the teaching when he encountered it in the Conferences of John Cassian and the Christian medieval tradition in the late sixties. It was not, however, until a few years later that he realized how deeply enriching and universal this approach to contemplation could be in the church at large.

Founding Teachers

At first, he had seen it as a way of monastic renewal. However, through his experience of teaching lay people of all ages and walks of life, at his monastery in London, he understood that here was a simple yet transforming practice of the prayer of the heart that could be followed as a gentle and daily discipline by all disciples of Jesus. John Main's theology of meditation is both Christocentric and profoundly Trinitarian as this prayer shows. He has been aptly called a 'Trinitarian mystic'. Many individual meditators and meditation groups around the world today begin their silent meditation with this short prayer that takes them beyond all words and comprehends the mystery of silence in the experience of the God who is communion in love.

In 1976, shortly after he had begun his public teaching on meditation, John Main composed this prayer for his first set of tapes. Later it was published in his first book "Word into Silence." In few words, it expresses both the essence of the Christian understanding of prayer and the sense that we do not pray in isolation but also as members of the community of the Body of Christ.

The mantra 'maranatha' that was John Main's preferred recommendation to people beginning meditation. It is the oldest Christian prayer (it means 'come, Lord'), in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, used by St Paul at the end of the First Letter to the Corinthians (16:22).

Opening Prayer

"Loving God, open our hearts to the silent presence of the spirit of your Son

Lead us into that mysterious silence where your love is revealed to all who call, 'Maranatha...Come, Lord Jesus'."

By John Main OSB

It has become evident in recent years that meditation, as a way of tolerance and compassion, builds a bridge of the spirit between peoples of different faiths, between rich and poor, and between all those suffering conflict or division. The great social and psychological distresses of modern society call for a deep contemplative response. John Main believed that each human being, whatever their lifestyle, is called to this contemplative path.

See Resource Center for available books and recordings by John Main.

Insert link to resources.

Founding Teachers



Laurence Freeman OSB

Laurence Freeman is one of the world's foremost teachers of meditation. Freeman is a monk of the Olivetan Benedictine Congregation of Monte Oliveto Maggiore and Director of The World Community for Christian Meditation. He was born in England where he was educated by the Benedictines and studied English Literature at Oxford University. Before entering monastic life he had experience with the United Nations, banking and journalism. In the monastery, his spiritual teacher was John Main with whom he studied and whom he helped in the establishment of the first Christian Meditation Centre in London.

In 1977, he went with John Main at the invitation of the Archbishop of Montreal to establish a Benedictine community of monks and laypeople dedicated to the practice and teaching of Christian meditation. Fr. Laurence studied theology at the Université de Montreal and at McGill University. He made his solemn monastic profession in 1979 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1980. After John Main's death in 1982, he continued the work of teaching meditation that had now begun to develop a global community. In 1991, Fr. Laurence returned to England to establish the International Centre of the newly formed World Community for Christian Meditation that is now present in about a hundred countries.

Laurence Freeman is the author of many books and articles, the editor of John Main's works, and a member of the Board of Medio Media, the publishing arm of the World Community. Freeman is also the founder and director of the John Main Centre for Meditation and Inter-religious Dialogue at Georgetown University.

Founding Teachers

He has conducted dialogues and peace initiatives, such as the historic Way of Peace with the Dalai Lama and is active in inter-religious dialogue with other faiths. Freeman is active in encouraging the teaching of Christian meditation to children and students and in the re-appropriation of the contemplative wisdom tradition in the Church and society.

In 2009, Fr. Laurence was appointed Officer of the Order of Canada “for his contributions as spiritual leader and director of the World Community for Christian Meditation and as a proponent of peace and inter-religious dialogue and understanding.

His current work focuses on contemplative outreach to the secular world through the WCCM *Meditatio* Program. This initiative has included Seminars on Meditation and Children; Mental Health; Inter-Religious Dialogue; Addiction; and Business. It encourages the networking of young meditators in the global community and the development of web-based technology to spread a contemplative message.

See Resource Center for available books and recordings by Laurence Freeman.

Insert link to resources.