

On February 10, 2015 Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB spoke to 240 Catholic educators from the Diocese of Hamilton at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Waterdown, Ontario on the topic of Christian Meditation and Christian Meditation with Children. The day was sponsored by the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board in partnership with the Diocese of Hamilton's Catholic Education Partnership and the World Community for Christian Meditation. Bishop Douglas Crosby O.M.I., D.D. of Hamilton Diocese welcomed those attending and spoke of the great hunger for prayer in our world today.

The teachings presented throughout the day were recorded and broken down into 27 sections with the intent of inviting viewers to go deeper in their experience of faith. This booklet includes a chapter heading for each section of the DVD along with a summary of the teaching, a scripture reading (lectio) that can be used as an introduction to the teaching, and questions for personal reflection and/or discussion.

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**Christian Meditation with  
Fr. Laurence Freeman O.S.B.  
February 10, 2015**

**1. Introduction (0:00-0:12)**

**2. Bishop Crosby of the Diocese of Hamilton – Welcome (0:13-0:50)**

**Lectio - Romans 8:26-18**

*“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”*

**Teaching**

*The hunger for prayer is great. Christian meditation is a fundamental form of prayer.*

**Reflection Questions**

*Where do you see a hunger for prayer?*

*What do you perceive are the internal influences (spiritual/ psychological) for this hunger?*

*What do you perceive are the external influences (cultural/social) for this hunger?*

**3. Fr. Laurence Preface (9:24 – 13:01)**

**Lectio - John 15:16**

*“You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.”*

**Teaching**

*We are experiencing a flowering of the seeds of meditation.*

**Reflection Questions**

*Where do you see a flowering of spiritual growth and renewal in your school community?*

*How has Christian meditation helped plant the seeds of spiritual growth?*

*What other prayer experiences and actions in your school have contributed to this growth?*

*What can I/we do to care for, sustain and expand this flowering?*

#### **4. The Holy Spirit As Teacher (13:02 - 14:07; 14:08 – 17:02)**

##### **Lectio - John 14:26**

*“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”*

##### **Teaching**

*The teacher among us is the Spirit.*

##### **Reflection Questions**

*What prevents us from trusting the Holy Spirit guiding the experience of Christian meditation in our classroom/school?*

*How do I see my role as teacher participating in the prayer experience of Christian meditation with students/colleagues?*

*“You can get through anything without knowing very much.” – What role does intuition or inner knowing play in your teaching and learning experience?*

#### **5. The Way of Spiritual Knowledge (17:03 - 19:45)**

##### **Lectio - Romans 8:26**

*“For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.”*

##### **Teaching**

*There is a form of knowledge that arises from a deep place within that transforms our thoughts, minds and relationships.*

##### **Reflection Questions**

*What examples can you sight in your own experience of deep knowing?*

*How has this deep knowing shaped your experience of wellbeing?*

## **6. Meditation as Tradition of Christian Prayer (19:46 - 26:01)**

### **Lectio - Luke 17:20-21**

*"You cannot tell by observation when the Kingdom of God comes. There will be no saying, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" for in fact the Kingdom of God is within you."*

### **Teaching**

*Meditation is part of the wisdom tradition in humanity. We have lost touch with God inside ourselves. Meditation is a way to rediscover God within.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What do you believe people are seeking that draws them to meditation?*

*How do you believe the experience of meditation draws us closer to God and helps us rediscover God within us?*

## **7. A New Way of Being Disciples in the Church and Modern World in A Secular Age (26:02 - 27:25)**

### **Lectio - 1 John 4:8**

*"Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."*

### **Teaching**

*The church has a new kind of relationship to the world, becoming a presence that is everywhere.*

*In 1965 Pope Paul VI proclaimed *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions. Paragraph 2 speaks to different religions outside of Christianity with specific reference to Hinduism and Buddhism. "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself."*

## **Reflection Questions**

*What is the Church saying about its relationship with other religions and its relationship to the world in this statement?*

*What do you perceive to be a deep longing people are seeking in today's world?*

*How can I/we, in concrete ways, be a contemplative presence in the modern secular world?*

## **8. The Monastic Movement (27:26 - 29:54)**

### **Lectio - Ephesians 1:17-19**

*"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints."*

### **Teaching**

*The early 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century monastic movement of the Desert Fathers and Mothers originally consisted of lay people seeking a way of living the gospel more deeply. They represent what we are experiencing today.*

## **Reflection Questions**

*What signs do you see in your school/parish community of people hungering for a deeper personal experience of what our faith really means?*

*What are the challenges facing me/us in experiencing this deeper faith experience?*

*What are the opportunities for me/us experiencing this deeper faith?*

## **9. Reconnecting Religion and Spirituality, Belief and Faith (29:55 – 36:50)**

### **Lectio - Ephesians 3: 16-17**

*"I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love."*

### **Teaching**

*We live in a culture and age where faith and belief are split. More people are associating with spirituality and distancing themselves from religion. Our belief system needs to be related to the experience of faith. What reconnects faith and belief, especially among young people, is experience.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*Many people today call themselves spiritual but not religious. One poll in the U.S. showed 75% of millennials (age 18-35) identify with the phrase "I am spiritual but not religious." Why do you think people are saying this?*

*How do you see Christian meditation helping to connect the two for our youth and others?*

*What concrete actions can I/we take to help connect spirituality and religion?*

## **10. The Place of Contemplation in the Christian Life (36:51 - 37:45)**

### **Lectio - Luke 5:15-16**

*"But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray."*

### **Teaching**

*Jesus integrated times of silent prayer into his busy life.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What external and internal forces prevent me from integrating contemplative prayer into my/our lives?*

*What time(s) would help assist in entering silent prayer during my busy day?*

## **11. The Gospel Story of Martha and Mary: The Active and Contemplative Life (37:46 - 49:43)**

### **Lectio - Luke 10:38-42**

*"Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the*

*Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."*

### **Teaching**

*Distraction is a viral problem in our culture. Mary represents the human condition through her experience of anger, projection of anger and the inability to cope which are all symptoms of stress. There are two halves to the human soul – being and doing; contemplation and action. Being comes before doing. We need time for both to have a balanced view and relationship to life. We need to do something to respect and maintain the balance between being and doing.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What are the visible signs of our culture/system bias towards action?  
When have you experienced a cultural/system value for a contemplative approach to things?*

*What current distractions are in my life that prevents a balance of being and doing?*

*What daily practice(s) can I establish to pay more attention to my being?*

## **12. Historical Split Between Theology and Contemplation (49:44 – 54:03)**

### **Lectio - Zachariah 2:13**

*"Let all be silent before the Lord, for he is awakening and coming from his holy dwelling."*

### **Teaching**

*The split between theology (the study of, explanation of God) and contemplation (the inner experience of God) began around the 12<sup>th</sup> century. There was suspicion around contemplation among laity during the Reformation and consequently remained within monastery walls. In many ways this suspicious approach toward contemplation has damaged our culture and children over time. With a primary focus on beliefs, many today are turning to eastern religions and New Age to find contemplative experience. We need to rediscover our Christian contemplative tradition and remember the place of contemplation in human life.*

## **Reflection Questions**

*Why do you suppose some today are suspicious of Christian meditation and other contemplative forms of prayer?*

*What is your experience of Christian meditation and other contemplative forms of prayer?*

*How can we help people rediscover the Christian contemplative tradition and its place in today's world?*

## **13. Contemplation As A Gift Within Us (54:04 – 57:54)**

### **Lectio - 1 Corinthians 3:16**

*"Surely you know that you are God's temple, where the Spirit of God dwells."*

### **Teaching**

*God has placed the gift of contemplation within us. Why we can teach meditation to children/others and why they can teach us is because the Spirit is praying within us.*

## **Reflection Questions**

*What are you hoping or longing for in your experience of prayer?*

*What do you suppose others are looking for in their experience of prayer?*

*How does meditation or other forms of contemplative prayer help provide more meaning in your life?*

*What impact does it have on your relationships with family, friends, colleagues, the global community?*

## **14. Prayer As A Wheel (57:55 - 1:01:30)**

### **Lectio - 1 Corinthians 2:16**

*"For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."*

### **Teaching**



*There are many different forms of prayer – sacramental, intercessory, devotional, rosary, liturgy of the hours, Ignatian, meditation, lectio divina to name a few. These are the spokes. Whatever form we practice, it is Christ centred. This is the hub. We find stillness in the centre of the wheel that produces movement/activity.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What forms of prayer am I/we as a school community most comfortable with?*

*Does my prayer experience integrate stillness in my life?*

*What action or attentive direction has emerged from my times of being centred?*

## **15. How Meditation Relates to Jesus' Teaching on Prayer (1:01:30 – 1:07:29)**

### **Lectio - Matthew 6:6**

*"But when you pray go into your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father, who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you."*

### **Teaching**

Jesus teaches us the following on prayer: interiority, silence, calming the mind, being centred and being in the present moment. His teaching on prayer is contemplative.

### **Reflection Questions**

*Given Jesus' teaching on contemplative prayer, how can contemplative prayer help us with new ways of seeing and being present with others in our home, workplace, world?*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Century Christian theologian Origen said, "We do not pray in order to receive benefits from God but in order to be like God." What do you believe he was saying about prayer? How does this impact our approach to prayer today?*

## **16. A Hunger for Centredness (1:05:54 – 1:07:30)**

### **Lectio - Matthew 6:33**

*"But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

### **Teaching**

Many hunger for centredness in our fragmented world. We need to intervene in young people's lives to give them the ability to be real rather than living in the virtual world.

### **Reflection Questions**

*What evidence do you see of a broken, fragmented world, which we live in?*

*Why do you suppose that people are hungering for more centredness in their lives or a longing to be more whole, more connected?*

*How can we create opportunities for children, youth and/or others to be more authentically connected to the real world vs. the virtual world in their daily living?*

### **17. Jesus As A Teacher of Contemplation (1:07:31 – 1:09:12)**

#### **Lectio - Matthew 6:34**

*"So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."*

#### **Teaching**

*Contemplation is about being in the present moment. Jesus was a teacher of contemplation.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What are your early memories of prayer growing up?*

*How has that experience of prayer changed over the years?*

*Jesus' teaching on prayer included interior silence, calmness of mind, the freedom to be mindful or to pay attention, and being in the present moment. Where have you experienced these teachings in your parish, home and/or school?*

### **18. Origen on Prayer (1:09:13 – 1:11:32)**

#### **Lectio - Ephesians 3:17-19**

*"...And that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup>I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

## **Teaching**

*Origen's teaching on prayer – "We do not pray in order to receive benefits from God but in order to be like God." "Prayer calms the mind, reduces sin (shrinks the ego) and produces good deeds." Prayer transforms us.*

## **Reflection Questions**

*What are your thoughts about Origen's definition of prayer?*

*What do you believe Origen is saying about the nature of prayer?*

*What experiences of prayer can you reflect on that has led to calmness of mind, taking attention off the self and/or led to paying attention to others in need?*

## **19. The Gift of Meditating with Children (1:11:32- 1:14:30)**

**Lectio** - Luke 6:38

*"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."*

## **Teaching**

*We will give children a gift of inestimable value if we meditate with them and they will give us a gift of inestimable value in return.*

## **Reflection Questions**

*What examples can you provide that children like to meditate?*

*How does a child's way of seeing or being contemplative differ from adults?*

*What gifts have you witnessed being received in meditating with children?*

## **20. Q&A – How to Teach Meditation (1:14:35 – 1:21:06)**

**Lectio** - Psalm 46:10

*"Be still and know that I am God"*

## **Teaching**

*Meditation is an incarnational way of praying. It is not mental prayer but prayer of the heart. It is as natural to the Spirit as breathing is to the body.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*How would you describe Christian meditation as prayer to others not familiar with it?*

*What was your initial experience of Christian meditation?*

*Has it changed over time? If so, how?*

## **21. Q&A – Meditation and Mental Health (1:21:40 – 1:31:20)**

**Lectio** - John 14:27

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”*

### **Teaching**

*Meditation is a natural way of allowing self-healing to take place especially in a supportive environment. The earlier we intervene in children mental suffering, the sooner their memories and hurts can be released as they experience the presence of God within. Referrals to professionals need to be made if a serious case arises, similar to other contexts in which the teacher becomes aware.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What role can Christian meditation play in creating a supportive environment?*

*What has been your experience of students with mental health issues and the practice of meditation?*

*Under what conditions would you refer a student for professional help around mental health issues?*

## **22. Q&A - Meditation and Vocation (1:31: 58 – 1:35:48)**

**Lectio** - 1 Corinthians 13:12

*“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”*

### **Teaching**

*Self-knowledge is the knowledge we have of God's knowledge of us.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*Vocation in its broader context is about understanding yourself. What contemplative practices (e.g., a walk in nature, meditation) have brought you closer to your self-understanding?*

*How has self-knowledge shaped your relationship with God?*

*How can you be more intentional in growing in self-knowledge?*

## **23. Q&A - What Makes Christian Meditation Christian? (1:35:53 – 1:40:48)**

### **Lectio - Matthew 18:20**

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."*

### **Teaching**

*What makes our meditation Christian is our faith in Christ (the experience of Christ in relationship, not just belief), our lineage (historical, theological and scriptural tradition), and the support of other Christians as the body of Christ.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What is your experience of Christ in prayer?*

*What saint(s) inspire you to live out your Christian faith? Why?*

*When and under what circumstances have you deeply experienced Christ's presence with others?*

## **24. Q&A - Difference Between Faith and Practice in Relationship to Christian Meditation (1:40:53 – 1:47:20)**

### **Lectio - Galatians 2:20**

*"It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

### **Teaching**

*The purpose of all prayer practices is to prepare and lead us into continuous prayer so that our whole life becomes an integrated web of prayer (e.g., going to work, exercising, taking a walk is done in a prayerful way).*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What prayer practices would help me experience my daily routines at home, work, and activities within the community in a prayerful way?*

*What are the external and internal challenges of integrating Christian meditation as a discipline into a daily practice?*

*Describe an experience of becoming aware of the Spirit working within you.*

### **25. Q&A – How Does Christian Meditation Get Integrated into Parishes?** (1:47:21 – 1:50:45)

#### **Lectio - Acts 2:46-47**

*“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people...”*

#### **Teaching**

*Christian meditation groups in parishes help create a contemplative space in the life of the parish and serve as a faithful witness.*

### **Reflection Questions**

*What is my experience of contemplative prayer in my current or past parish(s)?*

*What value do you see in starting a Christian meditation group in your parish?*

*How might the idea of starting a Christian meditation group be brought to the pastor and pastoral team within a parish?*

### **26. Meditating With Others (1:50:46 – 1:51:38)**

#### **Lectio - Romans 1:11-12**

*“For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.”*

## **Teaching**

*Meditating with others is a powerful support for our own practice.*

## **Reflection Questions**

*Who has most influenced your prayer life? Why?*

*What prayer experience have you found most supportive in your journey of faith?*

*Where and under what circumstances has this journey been enriched by your prayer practice?*

## **27. Meditating Regularly (1:51:49 - 1:52:50)**

### **Lectio - Jeremiah 29:11**

*"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."*

## **Teaching**

*One of the gifts of meditating regularly is wakening in you the sense of continuous prayer and the continuous presence of Christ in our lives.*

## **Reflection Questions**

## **28. Active and Contemplative Balance (1:52:51 – 1:54:20)**

### **Lectio - Mark 6:31**

*He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.*

## **Teaching**

*When we meditate we switch over from the active mode to the contemplative mode which balances us and puts us back in touch with the centre.*

## **Reflection Questions**

*What are the internal and external factors that contribute to imbalance my life?*

*What do I currently do to stay in touch with the centre of my being?*

*What changes will I make to balance my active and contemplative way of being in the world?*