

The Path to God Becomes Clearer

by Christine Khor

Returning to Bonnevaux: Centre for Peace in May 2025, after a first visit two years earlier when Fr Laurence Freeman had welcomed us so warmly, I wondered how to respond to his absence. A needless concern! Still recovering from surgery in Texas but clear-eyed and focused as usual, he spoke to us, on Zoom this time, such encouraging words that I was relieved.

Fr Laurence's presence was palpable throughout the WCCM Singapore Bonnevaux Retreat, not least from the five talks by Janet Robbins, Retreat Leader, member of the International Oblate Council, and a Trustee of The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). Indeed, her first talk focused on Fr Laurence's recent fundraising letter, *The Seeds of Contemplation: Our Legacy*. With this letter, she launched into the retreat, spinning one-hour talks over five days at the Barn into a spider's web of wisdom teachings on meditation.

In Talk 1, emphasising three essential keynotes, she said Fr Laurence



invited us on a pilgrimage of hope in the practice of meditation. She advised us not to squander precious energy on little hopes but to live in Christ fully awake, fully aware, and fully alive.

In Talk 2, she reflected on John Main's final letter written 50 years earlier, *Oceans of God*, where he urged disciples to leave the shallows for the depths of Divine presence. As I listened to Janet, I thought: as spiritual beings living a human life, just sweating the small stuff at the shore of life does not do us justice as God's children. Instead, with the gift of meditation, we are fully equipped to meet challenge upon bigger challenge, with no going back. And with the saying of the mantra, there is only one step between us and God.

In Talk 3, she used artist Jyoti Sahi's powerful image of Jesus' intimate embrace of St John (the classic and other interpretations) to pivot us from observing into participating in God's love – if only we could



An intimate moment of prayer



The embrace of Jesus

accept his unconditional love despite our darkest flaws (Judas, Hitler came to my mind). Ironically, the longest journey is from the head to the heart, she quoted the Dalai Lama as saying.

Talk 4 on St Benedict's 12 Steps of Humility, was a timely background to the moving final oblation rites in the Barn on 15 May of Singapore meditator Lee Kin Kit, 47, and Maine resident Don Bouchart, 80. Audrey Lim, 52, was welcomed as a postulant in the oblate community. From the primacy of loving God in Step 1 flows the other guidelines for a good, disciplined life with the fruit of meditation, compassion for others and our own selves.

Talk 5, the final talk, pulled together all the strands of the earlier talks to remind us of the two greatest commandments. First, to love God with our heart, mind, and soul. Second, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

True to WCCM tradition, Janet Robbins plucked wisdom from the bible, popes, prophets, and great teachers outside Christianity. She assembled a jigsaw puzzle of the wide range of human thought and feeling, the simple and the richly complex, all ultimately celebrating God's gift of meditation.

In the tapestry of my life, as evening falls, I deeply appreciate the Bonnevaux pilgrimage to focus on my inner life and let go of the world. In the stillness, I begin to feel more alive than ever. The path to God becomes clearer as I grow calmly and wisely and live with purpose.



The path to God becomes clearer in stillness