
WCCM-USA

UPDATE AND NEWS

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LOVE IS EVERYTHING - *Chicagoland Retreat*



*“In the evening of life, we will be judged
on love alone.”*

— St. John of the Cross

The Chicagoland WCCM group hosted a summer retreat at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, IL. The retreat, August 22-24, was attended by 37 meditators from IL, IN, MI, and MN. Led by Kevin Maksym, WCCM-USA group leader and teacher, the focus of the weekend was on striving to live as a community of love always, especially in difficult times. The teachings of Hadewijch of Antwerp among other mystics, as well as Kevin’s personal sharing,

brought inspiration and much food for thought. Silence was observed as well as ample time for personal reflection. We had time to listen for God’s voice speaking to each one of us personally.

“If we are absolutely grounded in the absolute love of God which protects us from nothing even as it sustains us in all things, then we can face all things in courage and tenderness and touch the hurting places in others and in ourselves with love.” —James Finley

We prayed psalms together, shared outdoor contemplative walks, and practiced yoga. We shared meals together, some in silence. We, of course, had many opportunities for group meditation. Our early morning and evening prayers and meditations took place in the serenity of the Carmelite Chapel. At the close of our retreat, we were led in a group circle prayer that encapsulated the spirit of the entire weekend. As we each took our turn and invited our neighbor to join hands we prayed:

“Put your hand in my hand . . . together we are
the light and love of the world.”

Though the weekend is long over, the unifying spirit of God in each of us remains.

“Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.”

Rasa Narbutaitis, Chicagoland meditator

Save the Date!

Into The Silence

April 12 thru April 18, 2026

Nazareth Retreat Center

Nazareth, KY (near Louisville)

Our speaker for this silent retreat will be Kelly Deutsch, Founder and CEO of Spiritual Wanderlust, an organization that WCCM-USA has partnered with the past two years.

Thoughts on an Essential Teaching Weekend (ETW)

by Pat King

Approximately 15 years ago I volunteered to organize an Essential Teaching Workshop (then called “The School for Teachers”) to be held here in Houston. As often happens in volunteer organizations, you do something once and it is yours forever. So it has been for me and the School. The School has evolved in those 15 years, the focus now more on sharing than teaching, our venue has changed several times; different members of the community have pitched in to help with the various roles, but the experience has essentially remained the same — that of a spirit filled time of community.

The School for Teachers came into being in Florence, Italy in 1997. It was developed to address the problem of a growing demand/interest throughout the world in contemplative prayer and the limited number of teachers within the World Community. Fr. John had died in 1982 and Fr. Laurence, though highly gifted, could only cover so much territory. The group in Florence made the wise decision to address this shortage by choosing to train our own teachers from within, perhaps recalling Fr. John’s often stated advice “The best teacher is your own experience”.

The next problem they faced, given that Fr. John had said “that everything you need to know about meditation can be written on the back of a postage stamp” was what to teach. Here, I think, the authors showed their genius by design-

ing a curriculum fitted to a weekend retreat setting that respected the simplicity of the teaching while providing the essential aspects of that teaching. The School has evolved over the years but those four key elements: the basics of the teaching passed on by John Main, an overview of the mystical Christian tradition, a survey of the personal, psychological stages of the journey and the role of the meditation group, are still the foundations of the curriculum.

Matched with the talks on the four elements mentioned above are periods of meditation, group discussion, sharing of experiences, and an exchange of ideas about spreading the practice of meditation. During these sessions community is formed and spiritual friendships begun. On Saturday evening there is a social time. In Houston, this means snacks, wine, and a game of some kind.

I have truly been blessed by my participation in these many workshops. It is a time to reinvigorate your practice, to learn about Fr. John and his predecessors in our Christian contemplative tradition, and to relax and grow in the community of other meditators. I encourage all who have not attended the School to reward themselves with the experience and those who have, to return as often as they can.

**The WCCM Essential Teaching Weekend
was held on June 20-22, of this year
at the Ruah Center in Houston!**



Marco Svoboda, Winnie and Joe in Tucson, AZ

Joseph R. Doerfer

March 22, 1938 – September 22, 2025

We remember Joe Doerfer and his wife, Winnie, who for so many years provided the WCCM bookstore at events, maintained Medio Media in Tucson, AZ where books, CDs, tapes could be ordered. His meeting in San Francisco, CA in 1998 at a JMS with Fr Laurence and Fr Thomas Keating began his journey of contemplative living. Joe was a gentle person, a friend to everyone, who gave generously and inspired others to find joy in service, reflection and love of family. Joe was preceded in death by his wife, Winnie, who faithfully provided the laughter and hard work of “being the bookstore”. We were blessed to know them. They will be missed.

Condolences and memories can be sent to MaryJo:
mjc1801@me.com.

From Our US National Coordinator



Dear Friends,

Christian meditation is precious to me.

I felt this again when I gave a talk on my journey of faith to the church I recently began to serve as pastor. I spoke about my embrace of contemplative prayer, discovery of meditation as taught by Fr John Main, and vows as an oblate to WCCM. But since Fr John said, "It seems to be impossible to convince people about meditation by mere talk," I ended the time by teaching the audience how to meditate.

Our this year's Annual Appeal seeks your support of WCCM-USA so we may continue to teach and nurture the practice of Christian meditation. Our community has been active in this work!

In January, we hosted an online meditation for the Los

Angeles fires that drew hundreds from around the world. This led to our leadership of an Earth Crisis Forum, "Bearing Witness," in July, in which a panel of speakers explored how we might live with wonder and lament amid the loss that comes with climate change. We promoted Meditation with Children at the Religious Education Congress in Anaheim, CA, offered online events across the year, and held in-person events in Texas, Florida, Ohio, and Chicago. We also supported the publication of a *Meditatio Journal*, Trauma: **Meditation as a Healing Response**, by US meditator, Tim Kelly.

Your support is invaluable to continuing this work. Please respond to our Annual Appeal as you are able.

Much grace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt".

Reflections and Voices from Retreats held this year

My First National Gathering

The Rev. Curtis Metzger

Eight years ago I started a meditation group at my parish, and subsequent to that I discovered WCCM and I requested that our prayer group be listed with the WCCM website, just in case anyone in the area wanted to learn about Christian meditation and join our group. I ended up having a nice zoom chat with Matt Reeves (National Coordinator) and learning more about WCCM.

Since then, I have joined various zoom meetings, meditations, and classes. About a year ago Matt asked me to consider being the New England Coordinator. I am now a retired Episcopal priest, so I felt I had the time to take this on; and, after prayer, it felt like a prompting from the Spirit to say yes to this little ministry.

Zoom meetings and gatherings are all well and good, and boy did we ever learn during COVID what a wonderful lifeline they could be, and how good they can be for meditation groups. That being said, there is something qualitatively different about being in person together—especially for several days in a retreat. The weekend of October 10-12 was the first time I was able to go to a WCCM gathering in person—the national gathering in Cleveland. It was so great to meet people I had only seen on a screen. The multiple meditation times together, the morning and evening prayer, the conversations around meal tables, the small group discussions and sharings, the reminder that

we are part of a worldwide community, the sharing of life and meditation stories over coffee, etc.—well, it was all so very good. A big thanks to Bill Hobbs, a fellow meditator and also the director of the Jesuit Retreat Center where we met, and the team that organized the retreat. *Blessings on you all!*

A Day Retreat at Marywood Retreat Center, FL March 12, 2025; Velma McDonald and Gene Bebeau

"From the meditations, sound bath, lunch, and walk to Emmaus, it was an enlightenment...Since the retreat I have made the time to meditate twice daily, but I know each day is a beginning."

"I was in peace fellowshiping with God."

"I have always taken the time to communicate with God but now I just let go, let God and listen more."

"The day was organized with a comfortable pace and healthy nourishment, and the sound bath was a great treat."

"Praying and sharing with such a dedicated group of meditators was inspirational. *God bless you all.*"

Silent Retreat Oct 20-25, Houston, TX

"It was wonderfully refreshing! The community and structure held me in loving friendship."

"The teachings of our meditation have always been clear: Intension leading to attention of our mantra brings awareness and with grace transformation. This

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UPCOMING & CURRENT EVENTS

Save the Date!

WCCM-USA Zoom Christmas Gathering

December 14, 6:00 PM Central Time

Patrick King (patrickking50@gmail.com)

Approaches to Meditation with Children

Six Weeks to Sharing a Lifetime Gift

Every Tuesday beginning January 6-February 10, 2026

(Times for East and West Coast coming) via ZOOM

For info: Patricia Moore-Pastides (moorepastides@gmail.com)

Into the Silence Retreat

April 12-18, 2026

Nazareth Retreat Center

(Information and registration to come)

Currently Meeting Monthly

Monthly First Monday Compline via Zoom

Every First Monday of the Month

Bill Hobbs (bhobbs@jesuitretreatcenter.org) - East Coast

Patrice Jones (pvjharris1@gmail.com) - West Coast

For further information contact:

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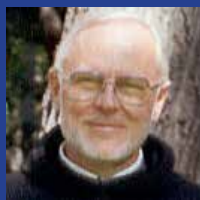
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NEWSLETTER

For article submissions,
please contact Sharon@
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**We appreciate your support of the publication of
this newsletter. Online donations are welcome.**

<https://wccm-usa.org>



**“The journey is the journey beyond self,
beyond limitation, into the limitless
love of God.”**

**JOHN MAIN OSB
The Way of Unknowing**

Reflections from A Silent Retreat (cont'd)

beautiful silent retreat gave us the opportunity to experience the fruits of a most demanding and rigorous practice many of us have experienced. For that we give thanks to all that made this retreat so special."

"It was a week of community, stillness and silence that added an extra log to the fire of daily practice, and the intention to remain awake in daily life. Thank you to all of my companions!"

"From the main gate entrance, I was in awe. The majesty of the buildings and the interior decor, the well maintained grounds, the grotto, the labyrinth, the trails, the squirrels, the birds. I joke that the gauge of a good retreat center, is the number of benches you find outdoors. Villa de Matel did not disappoint. The serenity of the external environment was enhanced by the numerous indoor spaces, that lent themselves to silence and contemplation — the icon rooms, the adoration chapel and the main chapel with its Jubilee Door. God was present."

(Haiku's) You call me into Silence
Into your arms I surrender a while
Your presence is my reward

Readings speak of sin
In the silence, we feel love
The Fruit of the Spirit

Leaving self behind
fear, anxiety and grief
Transformed by Silence

Let fear bubble up within
Sit with it awhile
Watch it fall away into the light

Three chimes here we go
Where did those monkeys come from
Three chimes, we did it

Kim Nataraja
Teaches us MA-RA-NA-THA
Transformed by the Word

Longing prayerfully
We sit in silence- waiting
Slowly awareness