

AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO CHRISTIAN  
MEDITATION  
WITH STUDENTS:  
Let's Pray Together

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



## Opening Remarks

Dear Catholic Educators,

In recent years Ontario's Catholic Schools have been journeying into the prayer of Christian Meditation with energy and enthusiasm. Our Ontario Catholic Bishops are embracing this prayer practice alongside our Catholic educators and students. The Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) is pleased to work with the Ontario Catholic Bishops and Ontario Catholic School boards, in collaboration with the Canadian Christian Meditation Community, and offer this resource to support the prayer of Christian Meditation as it enters your classrooms and/or grows in your school communities.

Inspiration to begin to introduce the prayer of Christian Meditation in the province has come from two primary sources. These include: The World Community for Christian Meditation and its Director, Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB (<http://wccm.org/content/laurence-freeman-osb>) and the Christian Meditation practice of Catholic schools in Townsville, Australia as led by Ernie Christie and Dr. Cathy Day (<https://www.tsv.catholic.org.au/diocese/ministries/christian-meditation/>). Their witness and teachings have given tremendous support to our provincial Christian Meditation journey.

Provincially, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board has been a leader as this prayer grows and begins to enter many of our Catholic classrooms. They have created a video which gives a lovely portrait of Christian Meditation in the classroom that is available in several languages. To view the BHNCD SB video on titled 'Something is Growing' please click here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2CK8h3E9f0>

In Ontario, we are witnessing the beautiful impact that this prayer of stillness, simplicity and silence is having on all participants. It holds the potential to deepen ones relationship with God and to nurture the growth of our Catholic faith. As a result, ICE invites you to explore this resource and to consider this invitation to the prayer of Christian Meditation for yourself and your students. The opportunity to learn about the prayer of Christian Meditation and its history will unfold through the resource, as well as practical suggestions and methods for implementation with students.

May the discovery and committed practice of Christian Meditation bring you peace and joy.

Blessings to you on the journey!

## What is Christian Meditation?

Christian Meditation is a way of becoming present to God and entering into a prayer of the heart. Christian meditation helps us enter into the actual experience of praying and enables us to fully attend to God while we pray. Christian Meditation is about being, rather than doing. When we pray through meditation, we move from mental prayer (prayer of the mind) to a deeper level, the heart (the prayer of the heart). It is an acknowledgement that the Spirit dwells within us and that we need to be quiet and still to listen to the Spirit.

Christian Meditation requires Stillness, Silence and Simplicity (the 3 S's) and invites the use and repetition of a prayer word or mantra. The word recommended to use is: **ma-ra-na-tha**, which means "Come Lord" or "Come Lord Jesus". Repetition of the sacred word allows us to quiet our minds to make our hearts available to God.

Above all, one can be assured that Christian Meditation is a meaningful and authentic way to pray.

## Quotations and remarks about Christian Meditation:

"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

"Abide in me as I abide in you." John 15:4

Bishop Gerard Bergie of St. Catharine's Diocese explains: "To me meditation is simply just resting in the arms of our loving saviour, and I think that image of Jesus hugging the children, meditation provides that, a time for them to be hugged and one with their God."

"One of the things that is wonderful about Christian Meditation is that when you close your eyes, you really are in your own chapel." And "Meditation (is), the encounter with Christ in silent prayer in the silence of our heart."  
Bishop Douglas Crosby, Hamilton Diocese

"We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence."  
St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

"We should seek not so much to pray but to become prayer." St. Francis of Assisi

"God's first language is Silence. Everything else is a translation." Thomas Keating

"That is the conviction we must come to in our meditation, that the darkness cannot quench the light."  
John Main, OSB

The wonderful beauty of prayer is that the opening of our heart is as natural as the opening of a flower."  
John Main, OSB

"Our hearts are restless until they rest in you." St. Augustine

A grade 2 student describes meditation in the following way: "Meditation is like giving a hug to yourself and getting in touch with the awesomeness of God's love."

Kindergarten students feel "that Jesus is in our hearts" and feel "graceful" when they meditate.

A Catholic Elementary school principal highlights: "Christian Meditation establishes a calming school nature, we are seeing our students who have anxiety and personal trauma seeking out the opportunity to meditate because it invites them to be connected with God.

## Christian Meditation for Educators: Where to Begin?

It is important to begin with experience. The most powerful way to encounter Christian Meditation is to actually meditate. As Catholic Educators we are invited to this beautiful prayer. It is our lived experience; accompanied by God's grace, that will guide our Christian Meditation journey and grow our practice. Through commitment to this prayer we can come to deeper understanding of the practice and then authentically share it with our classrooms and schools. So, begin by meditating. Consider using the instructions below to guide your meditation time.

## Christian Meditation Instructions

The following steps are adapted from the Canadian Christian Meditation Community website:

<http://www.wccm-canada.ca/>

When you enter into meditation time:

- 1) Sit still and upright with your back straight.
- 2) Place both your feet flat on the floor or legs crossed if sitting on the floor.
- 3) Place your hands in your lap facing either upwards or downwards.
- 4) Gently close your eyes.
- 5) Be aware of your normal breathing pattern for a minute or two as you clear your mind.
- 6) Silently, interiorly, begin to say your sacred prayer word or mantra "ma-ra-na-tha" in four equal syllables.
- 7) Listen to the sound of your sacred word as you say it, slowly, intently and continuously.
- 8) If thoughts come, keep returning to simply saying the word.
- 9) Maintain this stillness for the entire period of the meditation.

**A Note on the Mantra-** Fr. John Main recommended using the word 'maranatha' as the sacred prayer word or mantra. It is an Aramaic word Jesus spoke meaning, 'Come Lord' found in the scriptures (1 Cor. 16:22, Rev. 22:20). Because it is in a foreign language it tends not to conjure up images during meditation as we sit in stillness and silence allowing the Spirit who dwells within to speak in our hearts.

**Use of the Prayer Chime-** Many find it helpful to be guided in their meditation time through the use of a prayer chime and timer. Doing so allows the individual (or group) not to be concerned with the passage of time which can be a distraction from meditation. The World Community for Christian Meditation has an excellent app for this purpose. It can be downloaded here: <http://wccm.org/content/wccm-app-2-android-devices>

## Christian Meditation Knowledge: A Rich History to Discover

For many people, the experience of Christian Meditation will leave them to wonder how they have come so far in their life without knowing about it. The joy and fruits of the meditation prayer time can naturally lead to self-directed learning and inquiry about its origins and its context. What follows is a very brief sketch of the origins of Christian Meditation. More detailed information is available in the 'Resource' section of this guide, see the PowerPoint: ['The Roots of Christian Meditation as Taught by John Main, OSB'](#). In addition, you can visit: <http://wccm.org/> to help further this learning journey and/or consult some of the suggested resources listed at the back of this guide.

## A Brief Historical Background of Christian Meditation

Christian Meditation is an ancient form of prayer that we are rediscovering in the western world. It dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. At this time there were groups of Christian men and women who fled what they deemed an increasingly more distracting life and settled in the desert. They desired to live lives fully dedicated to God in prayer through solitude, simplicity and community.

In the 4th century, St. John Cassian went into the desert of Egypt to sit at the feet of the Christian Hermits to learn about prayer and living an authentic Christian life. Eventually, he became a Desert Father and wrote instructions to his followers to repeat a mantra during prayer and throughout the day so that “one’s whole life becomes prayer”. Cassian stressed that this practice led to the silence of “pure” prayer, contemplative prayer where words and images are not used.

John Main was an Irish Benedictine monk who helped laypersons discover the tradition of Christian meditation in the 1970s. Fr. John discovered John Cassian’s practice of teaching others to use a mantra to meditate. In 1977, Fr. John was invited to Montreal by the Archbishop of Montreal to establish a small Benedictine community dedicated to the practice and teaching of Christian Meditation.

This community in Montreal became the origin of an ecumenical network of Christian meditation groups that eventually became the World Community for Christian Meditation. In 1982, Fr. John Main died, but, his work and leadership has been carried on by one of his former students, Fr. Laurence Freeman, a Benedictine monk from England. Fr. Laurence Freeman is the current director of the World Community for Christian Meditation. He is committed to continuing John Main’s vision of restoring a contemplative dimension to the everyday life of the Church and Christians around the world.

## The Fruits of Christian Meditation – Benefits for Adults and Children

- All people can meditate. Meditation deepens our personal relationship with God. It can initiate deep faith conversations that bring people closer to God.
- People have a natural capacity for contemplation and they are capable of experiencing the presence of God through prayer.
- Meditation leads to increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance.
- Meditation increases the desire to build community with others.
- People who engage in Christian Meditation often share it with others. For adults, this may mean sharing the practice with family, colleagues/classrooms and friends. Children who engage in Christian Meditation at school often share their faith with their parents. They bring home their meditative practice and teach it to their parents and siblings. Thus, Christian Meditation can help bridge faith between home and school in a simple and experiential way.
- Christian Meditation offers an antidote to help balance the fast-paced digital world that we live in.

## Christian Meditation and Mindfulness

Christian Meditation is not mindfulness, it is prayer. It is about being more aware and present through the grace of God. The following chart has been developed to enable a better understanding of this.

Mindfulness	Christian Meditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rooted in Buddhist practice</li> <li>• Technique</li> <li>• Mind activity</li> <li>• Attention is on self (time limited)</li> <li>• Focus on the present</li> <li>• Measurable results focus (self-regulation, calming)</li> <li>• Way of preparing for meditation by calming the mind and harmonizing mind and body</li> <li>• Benefits include reducing stress, self-regulation, increased self-knowledge and acceptance, increases sense of well-being and harmony, increases the desire to build community with others, calmness, enhances learning</li> <li>• Transactional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rooted in our Christian Tradition</li> <li>• Surrender - contemplation is not the result of a well-honed technique but of grace.</li> <li>• “Pure prayer” of the heart</li> <li>• Attention is coming off yourself (leaving the self behind)</li> <li>• Focus on the present</li> <li>• Faithfulness and trust focus</li> <li>• Produces mindfulness – makes you more aware, mindful</li> <li>• Benefits include reducing stress, self-regulation, increased self-knowledge and acceptance, increases sense of well-being and harmony, increases the desire to build community with others, calmness, enhances learning</li> <li>• Fruits – “But the <b>fruit of the Spirit</b> is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5: 22)</li> <li>• Transformational</li> </ul>

## Christian Meditation and the School Community

Our Ontario schools are on different journeys when it comes to introducing Christian Meditation into our communities. It is important that we don't 'surprise' anyone with Christian Meditation (including: school staff, parish staff, parents and students). Rather, we can share the practice and invite them into the journey with us.

If you are not the school administrator, approach your school administrator first. Explain that you would like to bring this prayer practice into your classroom and school with their support. In addition, you may add that you would like to share it with your colleagues. Offer to co-lead (with their assistance) a 'teaching' Christian Meditation prayer at your next meeting or gathering. Allow time for all to meditate and ask the administrator to share the Christian Meditation vision for your class and/or the school. The following 'Role of the Principal' suggestions might be useful for conversation and planning.

### Role of the Principal: Introducing Christian Meditation with Children

- As you would for any new program in the school, introduce the concept to the various stakeholders within your community before you begin Christian Meditation with Children (CMWC).
- Start by introducing the program to your staff. Begin by asking if anyone has any prior knowledge or experience with Christian Meditation. Draw on the experience from your lead teacher.
- After introducing Christian Meditation to your staff, invite those staff interested to begin the prayer process with their class.
- Send home a letter (see sample in the resource section of this guide) and introduce it to your parent council. It is easier to introduce meditation to children when other adults in the community are supportive.
- To set the tone for its importance and to help staff and parents feel more comfortable with Christian Meditation, begin using the practice regularly to open staff meetings and council meetings (e.g., begin with two minutes of Christian Meditation and increase over time).
- Have a discussion with the staff involved around the consistency of the experience in your building (e.g., timing, setting, resources, prayer centre, etc.). Take the pulse of what is working well and offer suggestions / support to your staff so they can make adjustments that will enhance the routine and experience for students.
- Encourage staff to share their experience with their colleagues (e.g., formally at a staff meeting or bring it up in conversation in the staff room).
- Invite interested teachers to visit the lead teacher's classroom to experience Christian Meditation.
- Participate in classroom meditations regularly. Let the students see your willingness to be with them as they pray. Ask them questions to demonstrate your heightened interest in the experience. If possible, be a part of the debriefing process.
- Check in with staff regularly to see how the experience of Christian Meditation is going. Celebrate and encourage the practice.

## Putting Christian Meditation in Context: Prayer is a part of our Catholic Religion Curriculum

Prayer plays a fundamental role in Ontario’s Catholic schools. It is specifically linked to our Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and our elementary and secondary Religious Education Curriculum’s. These documents are available on the Institute for Catholic Education’s website: <http://iceont.ca/>.

### Elementary Religious Education Curriculum: Praying Strand links to Christian Meditation

PRIMARY			
Expectation	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Hope Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek intimacy with God and celebrate communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship</li> </ul>		
Fundamental Concepts	PR1 - God’s universal call to prayer and our human response PR2 - <i>The Way of Prayer: Forms and Expressions of Prayer</i>		
Big Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prayer is a gift from God which draws every person into a person relationship with the living and true God. (Grade 1)</li> <li>➤ Prayer has many forms and expressions found in Scripture and Tradition – blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise, vocal, meditative, and contemplative. (Grade 2)</li> <li>➤ Through symbols, sacraments, images, architecture and silence we are drawn to Christ and through prayer communicate with God. (Grade 3)</li> </ul>		

JUNIOR			
Expectation	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Hope Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek intimacy with God and celebrate communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship;</li> <li>Appreciate the gift of the common prayers of the Church and how they teach us to pray;</li> <li>Incorporate Sacred Scripture into their prayer life as a reflective form of prayer that reveals the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.</li> </ul>		
Fundamental Concepts	PR1 - God’s universal call to prayer and our human response PR2 - <i>The Way of Prayer: Forms and Expressions of Prayer</i>		
Big Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prayer has many forms and expressions found in Scripture and Tradition – blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise, vocal, meditative, and contemplative. (Grade 4)</li> <li>➤ Prayer has three major expressions found in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, each with their own unique characteristics: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. (Grade 5)</li> <li>➤ The life of prayer requires the development of habits which reflect the spirit and example of Jesus’ life of prayer. (Grade 6)</li> </ul>		

INTERMEDIATE		
Expectation	Grade 7	Grade 8
Hope Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Seek intimacy with God and celebrate communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship;</li> <li>❖ Appreciate the gift of the common prayers of the Church and how they teach us to pray;</li> <li>❖ Incorporate Sacred Scripture and other forms of prayer into their prayer life;</li> <li>❖ Turn to Christ’s gift of the Our Father as a model for prayer and the saints as a model for a life of prayer;</li> </ul>	

	❖ Reflect on the whole of the Liturgical year of the Church as an unfolding of the story of our salvation, made known through symbol, Word, ritual action and prayer.
Fundamental Concepts	PR1 - God's universal call to prayer and our human response PR2 - <i>The Way of Prayer: Forms and Expressions of Prayer</i>
Big Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prayer has many forms and expressions found in Scripture and Tradition – blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise, vocal, meditative, and contemplative. (Grade 7)</li> <li>➤ Jesus taught his disciples how to pray to God through his example (i.e. seeking solitude, humility and confidence, praying from the heart). (Grade 8)</li> </ul>

## Secondary Religious Education Curriculum

Christian Meditation can be linked directly to the Big Ideas that guide the Secondary Religious Education Curriculum. In particular, *Celebrating in the Faith Community* and *Theological Reflection* (page 6). In addition, Christian Meditation can be linked to each grade in Secondary Religious Education, see chart below.

Grade and Course	Page	Strand	Specific Expectation
Grade 9 Discipleship and Culture HRE10	89	PS Prayer and Sacramental Life	<p>PS1.3 defend the value of a variety of prayer forms (including traditional forms such as retreats, the Rosary, Litanies, Eucharistic Adoration, etc) as opportunities to encounter God's grace that is necessary for living a life of faith in contemporary society.</p> <p>Teacher Prompt: Christian Meditation can be considered a form of prayer. Explain why it is important to allow ourselves to be quiet with our own thoughts and intentions.</p>
Grade 10 Christ and Culture HRE20	118	PS Prayer and Sacramental Life	<p>PS1.2 identify and access the importance of Christian Meditation (e.g lectio divina, contemplation, Taize, Examen, using one's imagination, Jesus prayer, spiritual writings, icons) in deepening one's relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Teacher prompt: What is the role of prayer? What is meant by Christian meditation? What are the different types of Christian meditation? Which method of meditation is most attractive and why?</p>
Grade 11 Faith and Culture: World Religion, HRE 30 Open	153	PS Prayer and Sacramental Life	<p>PS3.2 compare the practice of prayer, meditation, fasting, sacrifice and pilgrimage within various religions and access their importance for the expression of one's spirituality</p>

Grade 11 Faith and Culture: World Religion, HRE 3M University/College	184	PS Prayer and Sacramental Life	PS2.2 explain various ways in which people encounter the sacred in life (in nature, prayer, meditation, key life events, in an encounter with others).
Grade 12 Church and Culture, HRE4O Open	208	PS Prayer and Sacramental Life	PS1.2 summarize the three traditional expressions of prayer in the Church that draw us close to God: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplation, and the five traditional forms of prayer: blessing/adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise; explain the benefit of fasting with prayer.
Grade 12 Church and Culture, HRE4M University/College	245	PS Prayer and Sacramental Life	PS1.5 describe how Christian communities and families can become “schools for prayer of the heart” within contemporary society, joyfully keeping the Holy Trinity at the centre of our lives in support of each other (e.g., family Rosary, grace before meals, prayers before bed, practising Christian Meditation with a prayer group; also describe how prayer is a battle, where distraction, dryness, lack of faith, and acedia (apathy) can be overcome by God’s grace and persevering in love.

## Christian Meditation with Students: Classroom Tips

Educators know their students best! Below are some general tips that may be of support during your meditation prayer time. You can also consider the materials available to you through the resource section of this guide and consult colleagues for ‘best practice’ tips.

- Offer students a brief lesson about Christian Meditation as a form of prayer. Suggestion: share answers that respond to the 5 W’s to provide a basic understanding.
- Create and post a how-to guide for Christian Meditation that you can use to review the prayer structure.
- If using the Christian Meditation CD (‘Time for Prayer’) with primary and junior students, post the song lyrics, the students may enjoy singing along to help enable their transition in and out of meditation time. *A Note on the CD – many teachers feel it is an excellent resource. The tracks guide their classroom meditation time. It is available from Medio Media. [www.mediomedia.com](http://www.mediomedia.com)*
- Create a ‘Do NOT Disturb - We’re Meditating’ sign to hang on the classroom door.
- Consider allowing students a ‘practice’ meditation before the first ‘real’ meditation so that they know what to expect during the actual meditation time. It will ease nerves and concerns about the prayer time (e.g. I don’t want to close my eyes in front of my friends).
- Start with a minimal amount of time, try 1-2 minutes. Be comfortable with that duration of time before attempting to increase it.
- Review expectations of this prayer and co-construct Christian Meditation goals for the classroom. Include how many times a week the class will meditate (ideally, every day) and how long the meditation time might build up to (some suggest 1 minute per year of life).

- Determine the time of day that Christian Meditation is best suited to in your classroom and stick to it so that it becomes an ingrained part of the routine. Many teachers and students enjoy meditation most after the final break/recess of the day.
- Allow students to take ownership of the meditation time by taking turns to do special jobs (e.g., setting up the prayer space, bringing in a special object for the prayer space from home, hanging the meditation sign on the door, turning off the lights, saying a prayer, setting up or playing the CD (if using) and turning on/off the prayer candle).
- Review the reason for saying the mantra in language your students will understand.
- Allow students time to share their experience by posing some guiding questions. They can reflect on this verbally in a sacred conversation or independently through a journal or pictures.
- Remember: there is no good or bad prayer experience – when we meditate we are gathered in God’s name, graced by God.

## Christian Meditation with Students...

Looks Like . . .	Feels Like . . .	Sounds Like . . .
<p>Children and adults <u>sitting completely still gathered in a prayer circle or community</u> with their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eyes gently closed</li> <li>• backs straight</li> <li>• shoulders back</li> <li>• feet flat on the ground if using chairs or legs crossed if sitting on the floor</li> <li>• hands relaxed comfortably on lap with palms facing up or down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discipline</li> <li>• hard work to avoid distractions</li> <li>• lots of effort and hard work in the beginning, but an easy form of prayer with more practice</li> <li>• a special form of prayer</li> <li>• a special time with Jesus</li> <li>• calming to be present to the Spirit and Christ</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Open Our Hearts</i> playing on a CD at the start and children joining in singing</li> <li>• a few deep breaths at the start</li> <li>• <b>continued silence</b> while repeating the mantra</li> <li>• <i>‘ma-ra-na-tha’</i> in your mind</li> <li>• <i>We Call on You</i> playing on CD at the conclusion and children joining in singing</li> <li>• For some classes, there may be a soft singing of the songs at the start and conclusion</li> </ul>
DOES NOT Look Like...	DOES NOT Feel Like...	DOES NOT Sound Like...
<p>Children and adults <u>sitting around just anywhere</u> with their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eyes open</li> <li>• backs and shoulders slouched</li> <li>• heads down</li> <li>• arms or legs outstretched</li> <li>• hands fidgeting or playing with items that are distractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a visualization of a beach or other scene</li> <li>• wasted time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• noises from movements and fidgeting</li> <li>• whispering voices or talking</li> <li>• continued loud deep breathing</li> <li>• throat-clearing noises</li> <li>• repetition of the mantra out loud</li> </ul>

## Meeting Challenges

- Meditation is a discipline and the practice can be difficult. Do not give up!
- Do not stop the meditation to attend to issues of restlessness. Wait until afterwards to gently respond to any questions or concerns the children may have and allow them to tell you what would help them maintain the quiet.
- Some students might initially need some specific modification. Place students who have difficulty settling into meditation near good role models, or change where they meditate ( e.g., sit on a chair instead of the floor).
- If a child is unable to participate due to behavioural or other needs and chooses to remove himself/herself from the meditation, then let the child leave the circle. Provide time and encouragement for the child to join in when ready to meditate.
- Remind students to return to the mantra if they are feeling distracted. This strategy will benefit many in the class.
- A worthwhile debriefing activity is to have children share the things they feel interfere with being able to meditate. Discuss how moving about, looking around, making noises and fidgeting with items is distracting and makes meditation harder work and less enjoyable.

## Questions Young People may Ask:

### **Can we lie down while we meditate?**

**Response:** When we lie down, our bodies may feel it is time to rest or sleep. That is why we sit upright, so that we can stay alert, repeat the mantra, and pay attention to God's presence.

### **Why do I have to keep my eyes closed?**

**Response:** Keeping our eyes lightly closed helps us to keep from being distracted by things around us.

### **Why do we have to be so still?**

**Response:** When our bodies are still, it helps our minds to be still too, so that we can pay attention to saying the mantra.

### **Why do we say the mantra?**

**Response:** We say the mantra continuously to keep focused during our time of meditation. It helps us keep other things out of our minds.

### **Why do we say 'maranatha'?**

**Response:** The word 'maranatha' is from the language that Jesus spoke, and it was considered a special word. It means "Come Lord Jesus".

### **What if someone makes a noise and I have to see what's going on?**

**Response:** There will always be noises of some sort, so you just have to keep your eyes closed even if you are curious to see what's going on. What's going on will usually just end up being a distraction.

**What should I do if someone (or something) distracts me?**

**Response:** Keep saying the mantra; really listen to it inside your heart, and try not to give the distraction any of your attention.

**What if I can't help making noises or moving around while we're in the meditation circle?**

**Response:** Well, see if you can remember that you are a friend to the others in the circle, and friends help each other. When we meditate together, it is important that each person be still and quiet, not just for themselves, but for the others too.

## Christian Meditation with Children – Debriefing Questions

### Open-Ended Questions

1. How did you feel while you were participating in Christian Meditation?
2. How do you feel after you meditate?
3. What do you like about meditating?
4. What do you find challenging about Christian Meditation?
5. What does Christian Meditation mean to you?
6. What could you tell others about Christian Meditation?

### Guiding Questions

1. How does Christian Meditation help you learn more about yourself?
2. How does Christian Meditation help you learn more about your faith?
3. How does Christian Meditation help your relationship with God?
4. How does repeating the mantra help you meditate?

### Response to Parent or Community Inquiries:

- Christian Meditation is an ancient form of prayer that was practiced by the Desert Fathers and Mothers of Egypt during the third to the fifth centuries.
- It does not replace other forms of prayer or reading scripture or sacraments. It can enrich other forms of prayer.
- Christian Meditation aligns with the Religious Education Curriculum. See the appropriate section in this resource or consult the Institute for Catholic Education website. <https://iceont.ca/ontario-catholic-curriculum/>
- Meditation is experiential. We need to experience meditation to start to understand it. Ask your children to share their experience of Christian Meditation and try to meditate with your children at home. As you know, children make excellent teachers!

## Christian Meditation: Final Remarks

*"I think what surprised me the most is just how much the students crave it on a daily basis, so we build it into our schedule. When I do up our agenda board in the morning it's there, but sometimes we get busy and the kids will stop me and say, "Hey miss, are we going to do our meditation today?"*

**Teacher, Grade 4, Brant Haldimand Norfolk**

*"A beautiful imagery I have seen and I've heard is that there is a storm on the sea and the boat is being buffeted but if you go down to the bottom of the sea, it is still and calm and so what we need to do is help people to go within and find the Lord who is deep within and be at peace and that way there can be a storm around them but they will still be at peace and it will help them just deal with life in a way that is very Christ-like."*

**Bishop Gerard Bergie, St. Catharines Diocese**

# Resource Section: Support Materials for the Implementation of Christian Meditation with Students

## Resource 1

### Sample Community Letters for use prior to the Introduction of Christian Meditation

#### Option One

Date

Dear Parent(s)/Guardians,

In our busy world, children are bombarded at an early age with noise, stimuli, and a message to keep busy. Our consistent fast pace can detract from our ability to guide each student to become “a discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mysteries of God’s presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living.” One of the ways to achieve this is by teaching students the practice of Christian Meditation.

Christian Meditation is a form of prayer used by monks dating back to the third to fifth centuries. In Christian Meditation we open ourselves to the presence of the Spirit of Jesus active in our hearts, our lives and all of creation. Christian Meditation helps us to learn about ourselves in God. Although it might appear that nothing is happening during the time of prayer, gradually life begins to change. This change is best described in St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians which states that, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22)

Some of our teachers will be practicing Christian Meditation as a form of prayer in their classrooms. I encourage you to speak to your child about his/her Christian Meditation prayer experience. Please contact me with your questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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Teacher

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Principal

## Option Two

Date

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Part of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations is to develop, *“A discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mysteries of God’s presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living”*. In our busy world, we think one of the ways to achieve this is by teaching students the practice of Christian Meditation.

Christian Meditation is a form of prayer used by monks dating as far back as the fourth century with St. Anthony of the Desert. The purpose of teaching children Christian Meditation is to impart knowledge about God and to provide first-hand experience of God’s love through the experiential process of “doing” meditation.

Meditation brings about change in those who do it. The change can best be described in St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians, *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”* (Galatians 5:22)

As part of introducing Christian Meditation to children, several of our teachers will be bringing this prayer into their respective classrooms.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. I encourage you to speak with your children about their experience as they begin Christian Meditation prayer in their classroom.

Sincerely,

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Principal

## Resource 2

Sample One Page Christian Meditation Summaries (2) that may be useful for community members with questions about Christian Meditation

# CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

## What is Christian Meditation?

Christian Meditation is a form of prayer that allows us to become present to God. Further, it enables us to fully attend to God while we pray. When we meditate, we move from mental prayer (prayer of the mind) to a deeper level, the heart (the prayer of the heart). Doing so is an acknowledgement that the Spirit dwells within us and that we need to be quiet and still to listen to the Spirit. (Psalm 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God”).

Christian Meditation requires practice, concentration and commitment. It involves the whole person – body, mind and spirit. Meditation can be described as living in the present moment. It requires us to let go of the past and future and come into the reality of the present moment that is also called the kingdom of God, which is within us. The Spirit prays within us, but we have to do our work.

## A Little Glimpse of History

Christian Meditation is not new and it is not a fad! It dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries during the Roman Empire. At the time, some Christian men and women fled from the empire to enter the desert and seek a life of solitude, simplicity and community. St. Anthony of the Desert was one of the first. St. John Cassian followed and wrote instructions to his followers to repeat a mantra during prayer and throughout the day so that “one’s whole life becomes prayer”.

## How to Meditate

The prayer experience of Christian meditation is intended to be one of simplicity (the key being the **3 S** – **simplicity, stillness, silence**). In order to ensure simplicity and fidelity in our practice, it is important to follow the steps as noted below:

1. Sit still and upright with your back straight.
2. Place both feet flat on the floor.
3. Place your hands on your lap facing either upwards or downwards.
4. Close your eyes lightly.
5. Silently, interiorly, begin to say your sacred word (ma-ra-na-tha).
6. Listen to the sound of the sacred word as you say it, gently and continuously.
7. If thoughts and images come, keep returning to simply saying the word.
8. Maintain this stillness for the entire period of the meditation.

*Adapted from The Canadian Christian Meditation Community, <http://www.wccm-canada.ca/>*

## Final Thought:

When it comes to Christian Meditation in your lives you need to:

**“Be faithful to your practice and your practice will be faithful to you.”**

... James Finley, author of Merton’s Palace of Nowhere

### **Resource 3: The Roots of Christian Meditation**

**PowerPoint Sample** - <https://iceont.ca/curriculum-educational-practice/>

### **Resource 4: An Introduction to Christian Meditation**

<https://iceont.ca/curriculum-educational-practice/>

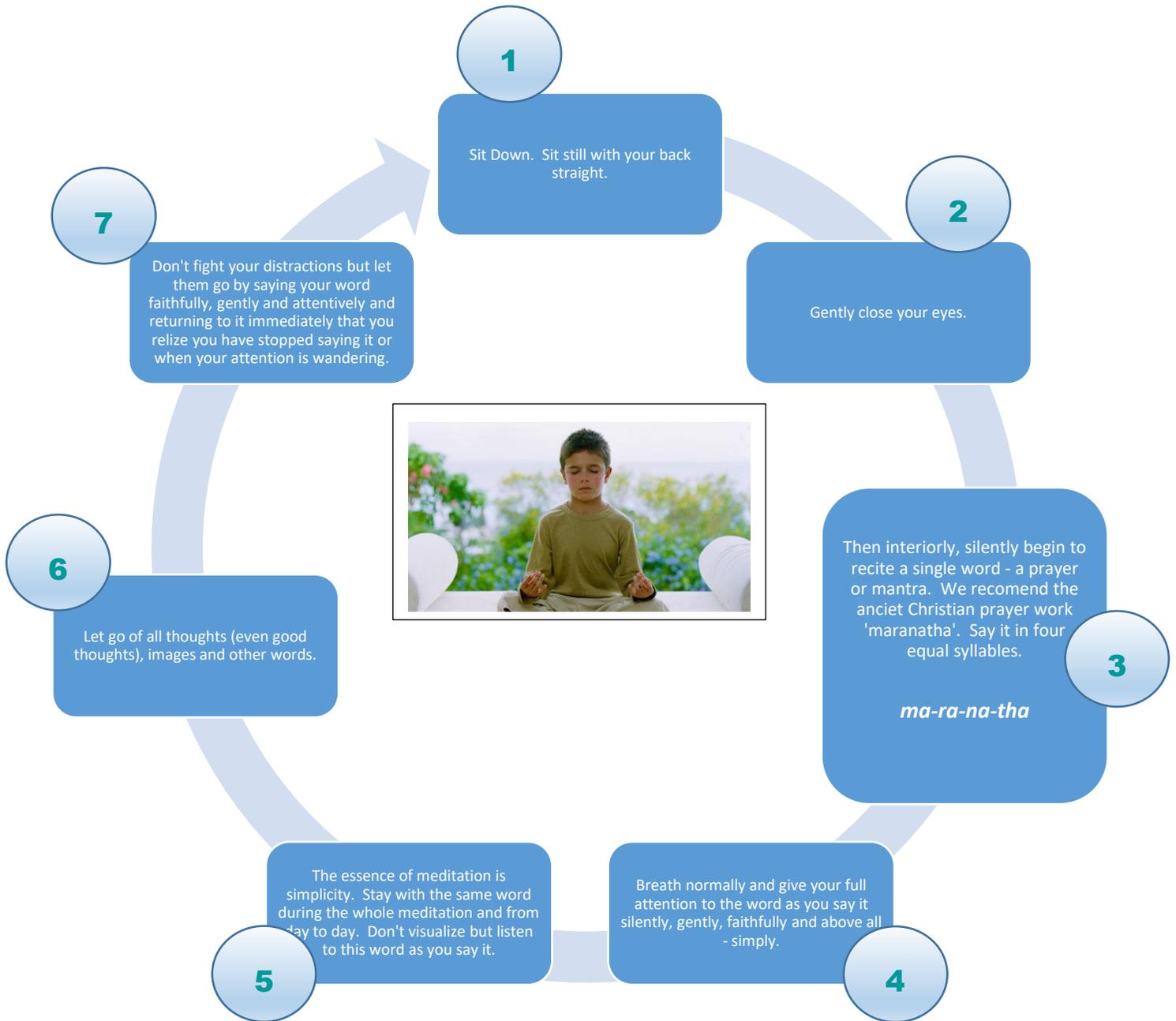
### **Resource 5: Video Link – Bishop Crosby on Christian Meditation**

Most Rev. Bishop Douglas Crosby O.M.I., D.D. Diocese of Hamilton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OUJoG2U2mg>

Resource 6: Teacher Desk/Classroom Poster:

# A Simple Summary of Christian Meditation Practice



*Shhhhhh...*

We are  
meditating



Please come back later.

## Resources Related to Christian Meditation with Children

### *Teachings on Christian Meditation with Fr. Laurence Freeman OSB - DVD and Reflective Guide*

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. The topic covered both 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.

This DVD and companion booklet is divided into 27 chapters suitable as a teaching resource for anyone wishing to learn more about Christian Meditation and deepen their faith experience. Each chapter offers a summary of the teaching by Fr. Laurence Freeman on the DVD, a scripture reading that can be used as an introduction to the teaching, and questions for personal reflection or discussion. It is an excellent resource for staff development, group meetings, workshops or day retreats. To order visit: <http://www.wccm-canada.ca/meditation-with-children>.

### Websites

[www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org) – The World Community for Christian Meditation International Centre

<http://www.wccm-canada.ca/> – Canadian Chapter of The World Community for Christian Meditation

[www.mediomedia.com](http://www.mediomedia.com) – Medio Media distributes the CD entitled *Time for Prayer*

<http://www.cominghome.org.au/> – Coming Home website focused on Christian Meditation for children and young people

<http://www.cominghome.org.au/practice/dsp-default-d.cfm?loadref=136> – Practical Tips for practicing Christian Meditation with Children

<http://www.theschoolofmeditation.org/content/materials-training-teachers-meditate-children> – School of Meditation PDF resources to use with children and staff

### Publications

Ryan, Gregory. *My Happy Heart* (2000). – A picture book to facilitate CMWC in the classroom.

Christie, Ernie. *Coming Home – A Guide to Teaching Christian Meditation to Children* (2016). Medio Media Publications.

WCCM Canada. *Christian Meditation With Children*. Available: [http://media.wix.com/ugd/1e8072\\_215d077d235a49878f9e54db73eeaf3a.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/1e8072_215d077d235a49878f9e54db73eeaf3a.pdf)