

# LORETO SPIRITUALITY CENTRE NEWSLETTER

January 2024



## WELCOME to our Winter/Spring edition of the Loreto Spirituality Centre News.

A very happy New Year to you all! We hope that 2024 will bring peace to our hearts, our homes and to the world around us.

In our troubled times, when nothing feels secure and the future is uncertain, it is easy to lose ourselves and our orientation in life. We have just celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany, and seen how the Magi, losing sight momentarily of the Star, found themselves in the palace of Herod. Only when they set off on their journey again, the Star led them to Jesus, where they rejoiced with 'exceeding great joy' (Mt 2:10), and having left their gifts, they returned home 'by another road'. Their encounter with Jesus had given them clarity as to the way forward, had met the longings of their heart, brought order to their ideas, and focused their aims. They came in tumult, but went home in peace.

This is so often, in our experience, the journey made by people who come on a retreat. Some time away provides them with a space where they can hear God. And once we listen intently to God, we see everything differently and go home another way.

Pope Francis has dedicated 2024 a year of Prayer, in preparation for the Jubilee year in 2025, bearing the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope'. We are very mindful of the role that a Spirituality Centre can play in this invitation, and hope that some of you will take advantage of the opportunities that these centres offer across the country, as well as online.

Over the last year, as well as our usual Preached and Individually Guided retreats, we offered some themed events to cater for a wider population in our changing times. The 'Finding Life in an Era of Change' weekend proved very popular. It offered time and space for quiet reflection, and gentle, mindful body movement to promote healing, a healthy balance and self-care. Our *Visio Divina* retreat encouraged those who enjoy photography to reflect on God in all that they see through the lens of their camera or phone. *Space to Grieve* offered those recently bereaved to come together, share their stories, and support each other through a difficult time, through prayer and companionship.

These retreats will be offered again in 2024. We will also hold a weekend on Discernment, reflecting on how we make choices in life, using the vision and writings of Mary Ward to help us. Other events will include a retreat using Poetry to inspire our prayer, and another using the methods of Bibliodrama to engage with the Gospel scenes.

Loreto Days of Prayer have also proved popular, for local – and not so local – people. Some have travelled far to come for a few hours of space and prayer on a Saturday, in the middle of a busy life. These days will continue.

New ways to travel 'home' begin within, in prayerful encounter with Christ, where we rejoice with 'exceeding great joy'. In the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius invites us to 'the Task of Consolation' (224).

A retreat encourages us to return home to respond to this invitation, as Pilgrims of Hope who address the needs of our times. Our own hope is that Loreto Centre, in some small way, can contribute to this in our own world.

**Our prayer for the year ahead, may be an echo of that of one of Ignatius' closest companions, Pierre Favre.**

With great devotion and new depth of feeling,  
I hope and beg, O God, that it finally be given me  
To be the servant and minister of Christ the  
consoler,  
The minister of Christ the redeemer,  
The minister of Christ the healer,  
The liberator, the enricher, the strengthener.  
To be able through you to help many –  
To console, liberate and give them courage;  
To bring them light not only for their spirit  
But also for their bodies,  
And bring as well other helps to the soul and body  
Of each and every one of my neighbours.

*(from the Memoriale [151])*

*For more information,  
and other events,  
please see our website  
or contact the Centre  
for a programme.*

## The Staff - We would like to introduce to you new members of staff



I began my career with Conwy Borough County Council in 1979 as an apprentice joiner and completed my apprenticeship and advanced craft certificate in 1983. I then continued to work for the local authority for the next 33 years.

Initially I was a joiner working as part of a team. I was then promoted to assistant supervisor, then supervisor and eventually progressing to assistant manager. In 2013 I decided to move to a new role with a local building firm, Hall and Jones; I was employed there for 10 years as a Project manager.

As my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday approached I decided I wanted to work less hours and was fortunate to become aware of the vacancy at the Loreto Centre. I started in June 2023 as the Gardener/handyman; this role has since altered and I am now the site manager over both the centre and the house. I can honestly say I love my new job and wished I had joined earlier. I particularly like chatting to the retreatants, when permitted, and helping people.

I'm Michelle, I started working here at the Loreto Centre last July, following many years working in retail. I grew up in Ireland and actually attended a Loreto School in Dublin. I am enjoying working here and have met some lovely people in my time here.



### Growing Tomatoes from tomato seeds:



Squeeze a tomato onto a piece of kitchen roll, so that the juice soaks through and the seeds remain. Wait until the seeds are dry, then place the whole sheet, with the seeds, onto a tray and cover with compost. Keep moist, and in a couple of months, the seeds will germinate and grow into new tomatoes.

The ones on this photo were taken from the Green Zebra Tomatoes, but you can do the same with any kind. Chris grows several types, year after year, and uses them for his salads and chutneys.



### What our Retreatants say . . .

#### Finding Life in an era of change

*Anne led us through the weekend using various mindfulness techniques, including adapted Tai Chi, meditations, sand play, a reflective walk, energy work and circle dancing. The weekend closed with a simple ceremony recognising the shared experiences and with some useful advice for future work and suggestions for developing connections.*

*We had the opportunity to avail of the peaceful and spacious surroundings of the Loreto Centre. The sessions were non-denominational, the atmosphere light-hearted and supportive, and we were free to share and participate as we wished.*

*Our accommodation was comfortable and spotlessly clean and we were served balanced, nutritious and generous meals. There was also an opportunity to socialise in the evening which many of us enjoyed.*  
Geraldine

*Many thanks to Kate, Ewa and Una for leading us through the Space to Grieve Retreat. There was plenty of tears and laughter. I would recommend it to anyone who has lost a loved one.* Paul

*If you are wondering if the 'Visio Divina' retreat might be for you, but you think your photos/snaps aren't 'up to standard', then please believe this blurb. Our cameras ranged from smartphone to compact to SLR cameras. You really **don't** need to be a 'good' photographer, just willing to take some time out in a beautiful place, to stop, slow-down, breathe, look, marvel at the wonders of God all around us. Steve's daily input and fascinating technical insights contributed to our noticing God and God's invitations to us more clearly. There was a mixture of individual and group time, times of silence and conversation. I'm delighted I accepted the invitation to this retreat and can definitely recommend it.* Barbara

In the coming months . . .

### Individually Guided Retreats

8 - 12 April 4 Day

8 - 17 April 8 Day

24 - 27 May Long weekend silent individually guided retreat with workshops on prayer.

2 - 9 June 6 Day

11 - 18 July 8 Day

29 July - 7 August 8 Day

### Preached Retreats

9 - 16 May

**Reflecting on the Graces of our Vocation**

with Fr Richard Reid CSsR

3 - 10 July

**Encountering Jesus anew through the Gospels**

With Fr John Farrell OP

18 - 25 July

**Praying with the Mystics across the Ages**

With Fr Brendan Comerford SJ

## Lent and Holy Week

26 February - 1 March **Lenten Triduum:**

**When the Desert is not of our making or choice**, with Fr Dermot Power

27 - 31 March **Holy Week Retreat**

with Michael Barnes SJ and Loreto Centre Team

## Weekend for Religious

31 May - 2 June Ecotheology and the Vows

Led by Gemma Simmonds CJ

(NB A 6 day IGR has been programmed to follow this weekend, for those who wish)

## Living Theology Summer School

28 - 30 June with Karen Eliassen, Michael Barnes SJ, Josette Zammit-Mangion IBVM and Ethna Regan CHF

## Loreto Days of Prayer 2024

**Loreto Days will take place on the following Saturdays in 2024:**

6 January, 17 February, 16 March, 27 April, 25 May, 15 June, 14 September,  
16 November, 7 December

10am coffee for a 10.30 start, and ending at 3.30pm with tea for those who wish.

No need to book, just come along and bring a friend!

**We need your help . . .**

These are difficult times for many and all of us have been badly affected by Covid and the financial crisis. We would like to welcome everyone to Loreto Centre including those who cannot afford the full cost of an event. We have a small bursary fund and would like to add to this so that those who need can avail of it. Any donation towards this fund, however small, will be gratefully received. You can do this by cheque or bank transfer and if you are a tax payer you can gift aid your donation. If you would like to make a donation towards the upkeep of the Centre that would also be very welcome.

Cooperative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP  
Account Name: Loreto Sisters-Loreto Centre  
Account No. 65498136  
Sort Code: 08 90 00

Cheques should be made payable to **Loreto Centre** and the details for a bank transfer are as follows:

International Bank a/c number  
GB34 CPBK 0890 0065 4981 36  
Bank Identification Code  
CPBK GB22

## FIRST PROFESSION OF VOWS

On Sunday 10 September 2023, in the Bar Convent in York, I made my first profession of vows as a Mary Ward sister with the Congregation of Jesus. It was a day full of joy and grace and, I'm sure, the beginning of an exciting new adventure with Christ.

My journey began in the Northwest of England. I was born into an Irish Catholic family in the Liverpool Diocese and I attended the local Catholic primary and secondary schools and Sixth Form College. My parents were active participants in parish life so I was often around the church growing up and, as a teenager, I became involved in my own right. I started to run a youth music group in the parish and went to Lourdes with the diocesan pilgrimage each year, later also becoming involved in the Diocesan Pastoral Council. It was natural for me to want to study Theology and I was fortunate enough to be accepted into Oxford to do this, specialising in Biblical Studies.

Oxford was a world away from my previous experiences, which wasn't always easy, but it also opened new horizons for me. The possibility of entering religious life had been there as a child but I now started to think more about careers and the world of work. Straight after university I began work as a Theology teacher and boarding tutor at Prior Park College in Bath. I thought I might stay for a year or two; I ended up there for twenty years! I loved life in the boarding community and ended up as housemistress. Later, I became Academic Head of Sixth Form and finally Senior Deputy Head. It was a wonderful life in a beautiful place. I started to take groups of students to Lourdes with the Clifton Diocese and Catholic Association, led a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and trained as a spiritual director. In many ways I was very happy, but I was increasingly aware of a niggle deep inside which suggested that, whilst this life was good, there might be something more I was being called to do and to be.

I walked parts of the Via Francigena and 'bumped into' St Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits en route. My attraction to this spirituality led me to Mary Ward and I eventually bit the bullet and left Prior Park College in December 2019, becoming a postulant in London in March 2020. Three weeks later, the whole country was in lockdown! It was not a conventional introduction to religious life but in some ways it softened the blow of so much change. I moved to Cambridge and volunteered at the University Chaplaincy for a year, offering support and companionship to international students who couldn't travel home and whose lives had moved almost entirely online. Finally, in September 2021, I moved to Vienna to begin my two-year noviciate.

Having a European Noviciate is relatively new for the Congregation of Jesus but it means that, from the beginning of my religious life, I have been gifted with a deep sense of being part of an international body of woman labouring with Christ in the world. I lived with sisters from Germany, Romania, Slovakia and Czechia and travelled to many different countries during this time. I completed placements in a home for older sisters, a residential homeless project and a young offenders'

prison as well as working in a soup kitchen and giving Bible classes to the English-speaking Catholic community in Vienna. The noviciate is in English but I managed to learn a few words of German along the way.



The whole noviciate community travelled from Vienna to be in York for my vows weekend. They joined sisters from the English CJ and the IBVM, as well as my family and friends. With so many travelling great distances, we took over the guest house at the Bar Convent and were fortunate to be able to enjoy the garden there in the glorious late summer weather. The Mass on Sunday morning was celebrated by Fr Nicholas King SJ, assisted by Fr Dominic O'Toole CSsR and Fr Pablo de Lima. Our intercessions were read in six different languages to reflect our global community and musical accompaniment was provided both by sisters and former colleagues from Prior Park; many parts of my life coming together for this special moment. Of course, there was also a splendid lunch enjoyed by all afterwards in one of the Bar Convent's Conference Rooms.



I have now moved back in the English Province and am currently undertaking the 10-week course in St. Beuno's on Spiritual Direction and Retreat-Giving. After that, who knows . . . I look forward to a new mission and to seeing where these steps on a new path with Christ may lead.

Sr Charlotte Cummins CJ