

Discipleship Day: Prayer and The Art of Accompaniment

Saturday 15 September saw a great gathering of people from around our Diocese, coming together to be inspired—to share wisdom and insights—and to look ahead to ways in which Partnerships could develop various aspects of discipleship.

The Department for Spirituality helped in the preparation of the Liturgies—which looked at how, in spite of all our obvious weaknesses and failings, we have been chosen to be “branches of the Vine” that is Jesus—and called to bear fruit. The powerful words of Marianne Williamson that Nelson Mandela used resonated with many—recognising our temptation to “play small” and not let the light within us shine to the benefit of others.

We also offered a couple of workshops which were well-attended and gave a mix of serious input and moments of laughter and conversation.

In the morning, we picked up on an image that Pope Francis has used several times—that of prayer and the Christian life being like the diastole and the systole of a heartbeat.

A little research taught us the difference and it gave us a great way in which to look at our personal and our collective prayers.

The diastole is when the heart is at rest—filling with life-giving blood. This is the kind of prayer which is almost prayer for prayer’s sake—just letting the Lord gaze on us in the Blessed Sacrament—or taking joy and rest in the beauty of Creation—any prayer that fills us with the grace and power of God.

The systole is when the heart contracts to pump the oxygenated blood into the body. This is the kind of prayer where we are more active—where the fruits of our prayer flow out to bless us—and others.

These provided a good way to look at the prayers of our Partnerships too. Sometimes, we need to step out of the busy-ness and the to dos and pray for its own sake. This will strengthen our relationships in ways that will help us when it comes to discernment and decisions—and in giving us energy for the actions we discern to be necessary.

In the afternoon, we were bringing more chairs in for the session on “The Art of Accompaniment”! This began with a video of a young girl playing a tune many of us remembered learning to play on the recorder. She was then accompanied by a double bass player—who was in turn accompanied by a cello—violins—flutes—and, ultimately, a whole orchestra and choir belting out “Ode to Joy” before a crowd in Nuremberg!

This opened our thinking up to the many ways in which people participate—how we complement each other as we accompany each other along the way.

An important aspect of accompaniment is listening—*really* listening. This was going to be a challenge with the number we were expecting—even more so with over 45 people in a classroom. Everyone was left amazed by the experience—which sounds so simple but was very profound. One person was the listener—and the other the listenee. There were only two rules—confidentiality (this was only ever going to be between the two of them) and the listener listening... not questioning or offering advice or even seeking clarification—but listening with their ears, their hearts, their minds, their hearts, their souls. After a moment to receive the gift of the listening and being listened to, the roles were reversed. Each person had just two minutes.

We had looked briefly at the story of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus and, after the exercise, the group was asked: “Did you feel your heart burning—warming—as you listened and were listened to?” “Do you feel differently about the person next to you—who may have been a stranger—after sharing that four/ five minutes?” The answer to both was an overwhelming yes.

If you, a group you belong to or your Partnership would like a session exploring either of these—or the Pope’s exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate* which we have used successfully in several places now, do get in touch! 



A time for discussion in the workshops



Focal point John 15
‘I am the vine’

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Upcoming Events in the Diocese and Local Centres

Centre for Prayer and Mission

Ongoing Formation

Tuesday 7pm—9pm

Following Jesus then and now as a disciple. We will continue with this programme which we interrupted to discuss Pope Francis' exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate*—Rejoice and be Glad.

2 Oct. No meeting

9 Oct. Disciples of our times:

Oscar Romero

16 Oct. Thomas Merton

23 Oct. Henri Nouwen

Biblical Scripture

Monday 1.30pm—3.30pm

For those who wish to go deeper into understanding the Word of God. We follow a form of *Lectio Divina* - reading and understanding the Word of God, reflecting and discussing how it touches our lives, praying with words and without words.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Thursday 11 October 1.30pm

We meet every second Thursday of the month to pray together and knit/crochet shawls for sick people, vests and hats for babies in Kenya, pullovers for street boys in Nairobi, hats for seamen, scarves and mitts for the homeless. Newcomers always welcome.

For further information or to book please contact Sr Michael on 0191 5813249 | marymichael.lee7@googlemail.com

Minsteracres

Walking Retreat

Wed 3 October 10am – 5pm

Enjoy a walk of seven to ten miles through the beautiful countryside around Minsteracres, with time for prayer, reflection and sharing of the beauty of creation. You will need suitable walking boots and warm, weatherproof clothing. Please bring a packed lunch. The walk will be led by the Minsteracres team.

Sacred journey themed retreat

Friday 5 Oct 7pm - Sunday 7 Oct 2pm

A weekend of prayer, reflection and nourishment on our life's journey led by the Minsteracres team; for groups from parishes and partnerships. Individuals are also welcome to join in.

Quiet day

Wednesday 17 Oct 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

An opportunity to step aside, listen to God in scripture and enjoy the peace and tranquility at Minsteracres. Coffee and tea are provided. Please bring a packed lunch.

This quiet day will be led by Rosarie Spence RSM

Songs for the journey

Friday 26 Oct 7pm - Sunday 28 Oct 2pm

We all make journeys in life in many different ways. Songs and poems from around the world express this experience and can help us to give meaning to our own spiritual journey. Use song as a way to help you find some space to reflect, while also enjoying the fellowship and fun of learning new songs. Janet invites you to come and sing – “no matter what others tell you, or you tell yourself about your voice!”

“Janet gets the impossible out of us. I never thought I could sing, but I have achieved a life's ambition of singing in a choir. Thank you.” (choir member)

“Janet is an inspirational teacher.” (April 2016 retreatant)

Janet Swan is an experienced choir leader and member of the [Natural Voice Network](#). She leads a number of choirs and events. The emphasis is always on singing in the voice you were born with and building your confidence and love of singing.

For further information or to book please contact Minsteracres Retreat Centre 01434 673248 | info@minsteracres.org



'The Word of The Lord' Newsletter

You can sign up for 'The Word of the Lord', an email newsletter brought to you by the Scripture Working Group at the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. In this newsletter you'll find updates of news, events, resources and developments which we hope you'll find beneficial for your continued engagement with the Bible - whether individually, as a family, as a parish community, or to share the Scriptures more broadly.

You can subscribe <http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/Evangelisation-and-Catechesis/Sacred-Scripture/Scripture-Working-Group-Newsletter-Sign-up/eng-GB> and opt-out at any time.

Prayer Station for October

Our personal lives—as well of the lives of our parishes and Partnerships—and our Church—can often feel messy and confused!

We long for the serenity which we imagine the saints to have had—though, of course, their lives were really not much different from our own—and some were infinitely worse.

It can be soothing to sit with a beautiful image of Mary. She can seem so serene but, as we know, her life was incredibly complicated and full of trials and confusions and the chances are that her moments of deep serenity and calm were few and far between on earth

The image alongside might give us and others comfort—reminding us that Mary “has been there—done that...” and understands the times of pain and suffering. It offers a way of handing to Mary some of the things that “knot us up”.

To use in your home, church or school, you will simply need the prayer station and some crepe bandages or strips of cloth and allow the Spirit to do the rest. ✠



Mary

Undoer of Knots

This painting has been made famous by Pope Francis who used it when he was struggling with knots in his own life.

Take one of the strips of bandage/ cloth.

Quietly tie knots in it to represent the knots in your own life.

When complete, hold it for a while... give yourself permission to name these things and how they have made you feel.

When you feel ready, say a prayer to Mary asking her to help you to unravel the knots.

Then untie them - perhaps praying a Hail Mary with each one - and smooth out the cloth/ bandage.