



Catholic Spirituality Network

CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY NETWORK

NEWSLETTER EDITION 14 AUTUMN 2022

Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Hope *Opening spaces for conversation and encounter*



Mon 20 – Wed 22 March 2023

We are pleased to announce news of our 2023 Conference **Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Hope** taking place **in-person** at the peaceful and hospitable Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Please note the change from our usual weekend format due to availability of dates. We hope everyone who usually comes will be able to make it, and that the new dates may enable some who can't manage weekends to attend as well!

We are grateful to Dr Clare Watkins from Roehampton University who has agreed to be our keynote speaker. Thanks to Clare for sending us the following Conference statement:

At a time in our world when much seems difficult, desperate, distressing and even hopeless, this Conference invites us to take time to rest in the great gift of hope that lies at the heart of our faith. For all that this is indeed such a great gift, it is often one of the most difficult for us to receive, to understand, and to shape our lives by.

Part of the reason for this might be that we look to the wrong places to receive such hope. The narratives of hopelessness confront us daily on the 'big stage' of world news: environmental crises, economic hardships and injustices, political strife and corruption. Perhaps Christian hope, as a counter to these stories, is rather to be found in the smaller, so-called 'ordinary places' of human living.

In this Conference we will explore this Christian 'hope-in-ordinary' – through Scripture, prayer and theological reflections, and through the discernment of ordinary lives of faith – our own and those of others whose stories we will discover. In this way we will encounter afresh that gift and living of hope which, in its very everydayness, can transform our often despairing and hopeless world.



Dr Clare Watkins is Reader in Ecclesiology and Practical Theology at the University of Roehampton. A Roman Catholic, lay-woman theologian, committed to teaching and research in the areas of ecclesiology,

sacramental and practical theology, Clare has a particular concern for working in ways that contribute to the integration of academic theology and faith practice, for the good of both. Her research brings together theological and spiritual traditions, with participative qualitative research of faith practices 'on the ground'.

Clare is the author of *Living Baptism: Called out of the Ordinary* (DLT, 2006), and, most recently, *Disclosing Church: an ecclesiology learned through conversations in practice*. (Routledge, 2020).

As always, the Conference will include well-planned liturgies to help us reflect on the theme. Further information will follow on who our liturgist will be this time...

Please contact Margaret in the office to book: catholicspiritualitynetwork@gmail.com or go to our website for a booking form: www.csnretreats.org.uk/conference.php



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CELEBRATING A JUBILEE



In a quiet corner of Ilkley, on the edge of Ilkley Moor, lies the Briery Retreat & Conference Centre. Established by the Sisters of the Cross

& Passion, the Briery is one of the longest-running retreat centres and this year celebrates its Platinum Jubilee as a place of spiritual renewal where those who come can find God in an atmosphere of love, prayer, healing and peace.

Purchased in 1952 from a retired Bradford wool merchant at the request of Rt Rev John Carmel Heenan, Bishop of Leeds, the Sisters of the Cross & Passion converted the house into a Retreat Centre. 1952 was a significant year for the Sisters as it coincided with the centenary of the founding of the Congregation by Elizabeth Prout. Initially the Briery was for women and girls only, complementing Myddleton Lodge at the other side of the Ilkley valley, which had been established as a Passionist retreat house for men and boys.

Mother Madeleine McHenry was appointed to look after the Briery. In the early days money was scarce and volunteers worked alongside core staff. The original chapel was a converted garage and was often full to the brim. There was little heating to warm the house and the retreatants slept in dormitory style rooms with a shared bathroom. Despite the basic amenities the support was tremendous. In 1958 it is recorded that 2457 retreatants passed through the Briery! Mother Madeleine made a request to the Congregation for a new chapel, dining room and single bedrooms, and in the mid-60s building work began. In 1967 Rt Rev Gordon Wheeler consecrated the Chapel and in 1969 he blessed the new dining room and accommodation building.

In 1970 Mother Madeleine passed away. A pupil wrote in a Yorkshire newspaper, 'To many of us she

was that bright dependable star of a grey childhood'.

In response to the Second Vatican Council, the retreat ministry with its broadened facilities also opened its doors to a wider ecumenical community. Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists regularly enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the Briery for their retreats and conferences.

A new team of Sisters came in September 1996 and the following year took on the leadership of the parish retreats. Later this progressed to gathering lay people to lead retreats. As more people requested ensuite accommodation, work began to create facilities for all bedrooms. This was completed in 2020/2021 and has been invaluable for retreatants after the Covid lockdown, enabling the Briery to continue to open and offer a safe and secure retreat house for visitors. IGR retreats and preached retreats continue to thrive as well as themed weekends and day retreats.

Despite being an old Victorian house with its charm and elegance, the Briery is now fully equipped with 'tech' including Wifi, loop systems and the ability to live-stream and record meetings and services in the Conference Rooms and Chapel. And delicious home-cooked food is prepared in the kitchen!

The Friends of the Briery, a group of volunteers, was established in 2016 to help organise events such as the annual Garden Party and other fund-raising and community-building functions. They have been an invaluable resource as they've funded so many extras that make The Briery such a beautiful and comfortable place.

The Briery has moved with the times and continues to adapt to meet the needs of individuals and groups, and its core values remain a reliable constant in our ever-changing world.



Thank you to Sr Susan at the Briery for sharing this account of their work on such a significant anniversary. Find out more: <https://www.briery.org.uk>



Catholic Spirituality Network



PASSIONIST SPIRITUALITY REFLECTION

"The Passionist Charism is something that is caught and not taught!"

This is so true that the charism is first really experienced when we meet a person living it! So in meeting someone living in this tradition, we may feel ourselves drawn in before we can clearly articulate why! We are drawn to this person who derives their spiritual strength from a founder who lived 300 years ago, but whose vision lives on in different cultures and lifestyles. A person who made the journey from young soldier to lay hermit – finally founding a community of priests and brothers, followed later by sisters and lay associates. He is now known as St Paul of the Cross.

At the core of the Passionist charism is keeping alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus. Passionist religious take a 4th vow 'to keep the memory alive', especially by preaching.

Many lay people have adopted our charism as a source of strength and nourishment for their lives and fields of work in service of others. Paul of the Cross had a keen interest in praying that the future would bring unity again to a divided Christian World. Blessed Dominic took the Passionists to England, where the charism blossomed like a plant with many flowers.



May the Passion of Christ be always in our hearts!

Fr Tomy Rocky CP

Thanks to Fr Tomy for this introduction to what the Passionists and their charism are all about...find out more: <https://thepassionists.org/join/associates>

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On the cusp of a new liturgical season, it is good to pause and assess where we find ourselves. The CSN online AGM in September was an experience of affirmation of everything that has been achieved through the commitment and support of all our members. We offer gratitude to the retreat houses and spirituality centres who continue to support our existence, along with the other founding members of The Retreat Association. We are also very grateful to the many individual members who faithfully support us.



We look forward to the *Retreats Handbook* later this year and to the varied opportunities provided by teams and individuals to nurture our spiritual explorations. We are thankful to Chris Thomas for offering the one-day conference online during October, providing further inspiration in *Everyday Spirituality – Finding God in the Ordinary*.

We are grateful to the continuing members of the Executive and offer good wishes to David Tobin IC, who has had to step down from working with us before his move to another ministry. We welcome those newly elected Executive members and representatives who will work alongside us going forward - Sr Marie Grogan FMDM, Ruth Connor and Fr Patrick Hartnett.

It is exciting to be refining preparations for our return to Swanwick for our Conference in March 2023, *Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Hope - opening spaces for conversation and encounter*, with keynote speaker Dr Clare Watkins. We hope that many of you will be able to join us.

www.csnretreats.org.uk/conference.php

Wishing each one a rich and fruitful journey into Advent, drawn by God's light and grace.

www.csnretreats.org.uk/csn-events.php

Shirley Taylor



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RETREAT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE REPORT

A highlight of the year was the online Conference of the Retreat Association which took place in June 2022. Entitled **Living with Courage:**



clasp hands across a divided landscape, the Conference moved online for the first time and brought together a wealth of contributors from home and abroad.

Pádraig Ó Tuama made us all jealous by joining from Patmos, the Greek island in the Aegean Sea where St John wrote the Book of Revelation.

Activist theologian **Ched Myers** zoomed in from California, inspiring us with stories about his context of radical discipleship and restorative justice.

Jane Shaw spoke from Oxford, where she is Professor of the History of Religion, giving an overview of some courageous Christian mystics in the past including Julian of Norwich, George Fox and Evelyn Underhill.

Rachel Mann was in Manchester but joined Pádraig for a fascinating dialogue about courage, along with reading her own very brave poetry.

- *What do you want me to receive?*
- *What do you want me to let go of?*
- *What do you want me to do?*

Questions like these formed the contemplative heart of our liturgy, led from St Katharine’s Foundation in London, as artist **Carol Marples** guided us in participative meditations on what God wants of us, during the beautiful liturgies coordinated by Iona musician, **Alison Adam**.

Our patron **Graham Sparkes** and RA Director **Alison MacTier** hosted the event from St Katharine’s, which gave us all a sense of shared place as well as blessing the multitude of individual places that we joined from!

For a fuller report and photos see:
www.retreats.org.uk/conference

AGM REPORT

Who would have thought that the challenges faced by lockdown could make an AGM something to look forward to rather than just a constitutional essential? When



we were faced with a cancelled residential conference in 2019, we took the decision to hold the AGM on Zoom at a different time in the year. It was a very good decision and one which will continue. I no longer think of the AGM as a chore with a lot of hard work! I very much look forward to the whole experience from the invitation letter right through to the actual event and beyond – it is a real membership experience, and I am sure others look forward to the process as much as I do. This year we were pleased to welcome three new members of the Executive – all volunteers!! Thank you Marie Grogan FMDM, Ruth Connor and Patrick Hartnett.

A highlight of the year was our in-person Conference in Liverpool facilitated by Chris Thomas from the Irenaeus Centre there. We had a chance to offer a repeat of the day conference on Zoom in October too. The message of Everyday Spirituality will echo through the coming years, I am sure.

Our treasurer shared a mixed report – news of a very generous donation from Rosemary Moffatt, but challenges to be addressed in fluctuating membership subscriptions against rising expenditure. The report from the group of the Executive who have been working on our vision and mission, reflected a time of challenge – uncertainty yet hope and willingness to change and trust that God is with us as we seek the way ahead. We were pleased to hear the Retreat Association report from David Tobin, who shared news of a successful live-streamed Conference as well as so much work the RA does on behalf of its member groups in the support of retreats, spiritual direction and the work of retreat centres.

A most important aspect of our AGM is our time of prayer when we remember all our members, past and present. This year we shared the time with the nation as we remembered Queen Elizabeth who died just three days earlier.

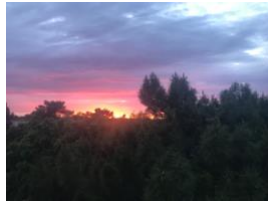
Margaret Palladino



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EVENTS

Advent &
beyond



ADVENT TRIDUUM 2022

LORETO SPIRITUALITY CENTRE, LLANDUDNO
From Darkness to Dawn: praying with
scripture, poetry and music
*led by former chairs of CSN, Tom McGuinness SJ &
Magdalen Lawler SND*
28 November – 2 December
<https://loretocentre.org.uk/retreats-2022/>

Online CSN Advent Day 2022

Dawning Brightness (*Isaiah 60*)
Seeking God's light in the darkness of our living.
Saturday 3 December. 10.30 am – 3.30 pm
Reflection, sharing & prayer – all welcome!
Info: www.csnretreats.org.uk/csn-events.php
Book: catholicspiritualitynetwork@gmail.com

CSN CONFERENCE 2023

ORDINARY LIVES, EXTRAORDINARY HOPE
*Opening spaces for conversation and
encounter*
Speaker: Dr Clare Watkins
Mon- Wed 20-22 March 2023
Hayes Conference Centre, Derbyshire
www.csnretreats.org.uk/conference.php

HOPE



“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all –

Emily Dickinson

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Executive Committee: Shirley Taylor (Chair), Eamonn Hamilton (Treasurer) Mary Groom, Mary Nono, Fr Chris Thomas, Ruth Connor, Sr Marie Grogan FMDM, Sr Magdalen Lawler SND (Conference of Religious rep), Fr Tomy Rockey CP (Passionist Spirituality rep), Jo Alstott (Youth rep), Canon Patrick Hartnett (Bishops' Conference Spirituality Group rep).

Many thanks to Fr David Tobin who has had to leave the Committee this autumn due to relocation.

Membership Secretary: Margaret Palladino.

Newsletter: Jill Keegan. Please send newsletter contributions to the email below.

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