



Catholic Spirituality Network

CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY NETWORK

NEWSLETTER EDITION 15 SUMMER 2023

SEND MY ROOTS RAIN

21-23 JUNE 2024

We are pleased to announce news of our 2024 Conference **SEND MY ROOTS RAIN**. The Conference will be led by an old friend of CSN, Christopher Chapman. Chris has led day events in the past and he also guided us through one of our online Conferences during the pandemic, but he has not led an in-person residential Conference for us before, and we are delighted that he has agreed.

SEND MY ROOTS RAIN will be a residential event based at **NODDFA SPIRITUALITY CENTRE**. The Conference will take place over a weekend and at midsummer. Noddfa is a beautiful house nestled between the mountains and the sea at Penmaenmawr in North Wales.

The Executive has made the decision not to return to the Hayes Conference Centre for the time being. It is taking time for our Conference numbers to recover (which incurs more financial risk) so planning a smaller Conference at one of our own retreat centres seems a good way forward for now.

We have booked the whole of Noddfa for the Conference, but numbers will be limited – so we suggest ‘early bird’ booking when Margaret alerts us that booking is open!

Christopher Chapman is a spiritual director, retreat



leader, teacher and writer. Chris was the Spirituality Adviser for the Anglican Diocese of Southwark for a number of years. He is currently an associate tutor for St Augustine's College of Theology and a guest director at St Beuno's.

‘Towards a way of life’

In this 2024 Conference Chris will help us renew our spiritual life and daily discipleship, following on from our previous explorations of everyday spirituality and hope. The aim will be **refreshment**, whatever ministry we are involved in and whatever the hardships of our day-to-day life may be. Chris says:

Send my Roots Rain will explore ways of allowing the water of the Spirit to soak down to our roots. Our roots lie in our formation and experience – and above all in relationship with our life-giving God.

But our roots can become dry. In caring for others, we can neglect to look after ourselves. Yet we remain disciples, called to the intimacy of companionship with Christ and continued growth in the Spirit. Our spiritual, physical and emotional health matters to God, who calls each one by name.

www.csnretreats.org.uk/conference.php



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PASSIONIST SPIRITUALITY REFLECTION

The Last Leaf – Hope



“The last leaf, clinging to the branch, refusing to let go...through wind and rain, and blowing snow. That is determination and hope...”

There is a famous short story titled *The Last Leaf*, written by O. Henry. It is the story of Johnsy, a poor young girl, who is seriously ill with pneumonia. She believes that when the ivy vine on the wall outside her window loses all its leaves, she will also die. One night there is a big storm and strong wind – she knows that all the leaves will fall with the wind, and she will die too. But, to her surprise, when she opens the window, she sees that there is one last leaf holding onto the vine for several days. In a twist of the story, we realise that it was her old artist neighbour, Behrman, who gave her hope by painting this realistic last leaf on the wall. Johnsy recovers, but Behrman, who caught pneumonia while painting the leaf all night in the rain and the cold, dies.

The story is so striking because we can see the reflection of Jesus and the Cross in Behrman, the artist who goes into the storm to paint the masterpiece of the 'last leaf' on the wall. The 'last leaf' is the hope Jesus brings into our lives, who offers His very Self to give us hope.

THE CROSS IS THE MASTERPIECE JESUS PAINTED IN OUR HEARTS THAT WE MAY HAVE LIFE AND HOPE. WHEN EVERYTHING AROUND US WITHERS AND FALLS, ONE LEAF REMAINS ALWAYS IN JESUS' PRESENCE.

For us Passionists, apart from celebrating a feast to Mary to honour her sharing the Passion of Jesus, we also celebrate a feast linking Mary to the Resurrection. The title which this feast gives to Mary is Our Lady of Holy Hope or Mary, Mother of Hope. Here we link Holy Saturday to find a deeper meaning to this title. Mary, together with the other disciples, had a period of waiting: an 'in between time' from the Good Friday sadness of the death of our Saviour and the beautiful light of His resurrection on Easter Sunday morning.



For Mary, as her Son dies on the Cross, everything in her life withers and falls. But there is one gift she holds on to, which is the gift of hope. She sees the 'last leaf' holding on to the vine. This 'in between time' then is the place where we go from the negative sufferings of life to reach out to a positive transformation of life in the future.

Fr Tomy Rockey CP

Thank you to Fr Tomy for this evocative description of Hope as the Last Leaf painted by the master artist, Jesus.



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CONFERENCE REPORT 2023



This was my first time joining the Catholic Spirituality Network for their annual Conference and it was their first time gathering in person since the pandemic. We could even say this in-person Conference was the fruit of hope incubated in the dark days of Covid-19.

Our days together were spent in the Hayes Conference Centre nestled in the beautiful Derbyshire landscape. The conference theme was **Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Hope** and the keynote speaker and facilitator was Dr Clare Watkins from the University of Roehampton. The gathered group was thoughtfully ministered to by liturgist, Regula Hug from the Sisters of St Andrew, who enabled us to celebrate God's compassionate embrace and love. Regula was ably assisted by Shirley Taylor and Mary Nono from the CSN Committee. Each day ran smoothly thanks to the constant attentiveness of the organising team.



From the get-go I was made to feel welcome, and this feeling of hospitality grew as I was actively adopted hour by hour into the group. About thirty people convened from across the country, all eager to meet together at an in-person event after such a long time of gathering 'virtually' from our home spaces. An additional source of joy and networking was the CSN Sustainability Sale, an opportunity to raise funds but also to share valuable resources for the Christian journey.

Clare led us on a journey of discovery. She responded sensitively to the spirit and energy within the group who were eager to share their responses to the themes she had thoughtfully chosen for us. We wove in and out of theology, personal experience, scripture, psychology, politics and a wonderful selection of poetry, all the time picking up the threads that would help reveal the essence of hope.

As I ponder my Conference notes, my overwhelming conclusion is that for us as Christians, 'hope' is so much more than a feeling. It is a feeling but its source, its energetic nature is no other than God. God is our hope. Hope then, can be pictured as God's presence in our heart and mind: the power and strength of God actively drawing us home. Hope is in and from God. We can live more deeply in the here and now, and we can be safe in the darkness, because of the hope we have in God.

As the Conference drew towards an end, the eschatological theme of 'now' and 'not yet' was like a bookend to all our reflections. As St Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, now we see only a reflection as in a mirror but then we shall see face to face. Or to put it another way, hope is the 'now' of the 'not yet' of our joy fulfilled, the beatific vision. As we gathered together in the final Eucharistic celebration there was a real foretaste of this hope that binds us together in Christ Jesus. I for one left with renewed hope singing in my heart.

Catherine O'Riordan is an integrative psychotherapist based in Nottingham. We were pleased to welcome Catherine and a number of other first-timers and new friends at our Conference this year! Many thanks to Catherine for providing us with this report.



Catholic Spirituality Network

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Summertime is proving to be a time of abundance. There is something precious in acknowledging the generosity of spirit of those who journey with us as part of the story of CSN in these times. The changing patterns of our membership are making themselves evident; we are not who we were in the beginning and yet there is a distinct thirst for the renewal that spirituality enables in the face of the challenges of this era.

We experienced an immensely fruitful conference at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick this March with Clare Watkins and have recently secured Christopher Chapman for our 2024 Conference, taking place over the weekend of 21-23 June at Noddfa Spirituality Centre.

Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Hope in March 2023 with Clare offered us time to revisit our longing to be people of hope, to risk the wisdom of embracing hopelessness, to find hope in the ordinariness of living and to be courageous as we enter into the depths of God both here and for eternity.

Creative spaces emerged for conversation and encounter, not least through the inspiring liturgies led by Regula Hug and members of the Executive. It feels appropriate to thank all who participated, and to affirm that gathering for Conferences allows us to revitalise our journey, to welcome new members and to discover a direction of travel as people rooted in spiritual living.



If we trust in a call to invite others to walk this path, our collective task is one of offering a personal invitation to those we meet to join us as CSN and to add their voice and experience as the way ahead unfolds. Please do use your networks to share links and experiences of our network, including this newsletter.

In addition, we will have our online AGM in early September on Zoom. We are still finalising the date and Margaret will send more information out nearer the time.

Finally, my thoughts are caught up in Paul's Prayer of Ephesians 3.20 –

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.



Shirley Taylor

SAVE THE DATE!



CSN Conference 2024

Send my roots rain



Keynote speaker: Christopher Chapman
Liturgist: Avril Baigent

21 - 23 June 2024
Noddfa Spirituality Centre
www.csnretreats.org.uk



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EVENTS

RETREAT ASSOCIATION SUMMER EVENT 2023

23 June 2023, 10 am – 4.30 pm
The Royal Foundation of St Katharine
Guest Speaker: Richard Carter
**The Still Centre: Searching for Peace
in the midst of the world.**
<https://www.retreats.org.uk/summer-event-2023>

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES NETWORK CONFERENCE 2023

7-11 August 2023
Hinsley Hall, Leeds
Nick Helm & Gemma Simmonds CJ
Living & Giving the Exercises Today
<https://www.spiritualexercisesnetwork.uk/conference2023/>

CSN CONFERENCE 2024

SEND MY ROOTS RAIN
21-23 JUNE 2024
NEW VENUE: Noddfa Spirituality Centre
SPEAKER: Christopher Chapman
www.csnretreats.org.uk/conference.php

A POEM TO LIVE BY

Sometimes it
is all right not
to be afraid;
to forget,
to open wide
the windows
on the night
and lean out,
listening, to
the stars.

from *Understanding*
by Kenneth Steven



Catholic Spirituality Network

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