

Retreats at Dunblane & Skelmorlie in 2011

On the last week-end in May ten people gathered in Leighton House for the Epiphany Group's final retreat there before the sad closure of Scottish Churches House. The two guides (Cath McManus and Helen Kinloch) and eight retreatants were glad to have the opportunity to listen in the silence to the depths of God's love and invitation into life. For some the week-end was a fruitful first introduction to being on silent retreat. For others there was a sense of sadness at the ending, as well as thankfulness for how this place has so often over the last six years felt imbued with Presence and calling into Love. And this despite the swiftly banging doors, erratic central heating and awkward kitchen for self-catering!

This year our retreat coincided with Dunblane "Fling" week-end with all sorts of activities and pipe bands down by the river. Still retreatants were able to find places to 'be' and to be deeply touched by the beauties of nature and the God of creation.

In September three guides (Margaret Fielding, Helen Kinloch and Alison Moody) and eight retreatants travelled the rather longer road to the Notre Dame Centre in Skelmorlie for a 6 day Ignatian guided retreat. We were generously welcomed by Sister Denise, a supportive and encouraging presence throughout and found the house wonderfully warm and comfortable with plenty of space for rainy days.

Once made, the journey even from the east, is remarkably straight forward and the magnificent setting, looking over the Firth of Clyde to Bute and Arran makes it very worthwhile! For those fortunate enough to have rooms facing the sea, wildness, wonder and tranquillity were all powerfully manifested. During our stay the end of Hurricane Katia made its presence felt whipping up huge waves, spilling sea creatures onto the front lawn, cutting the electricity and setting off an elusive house alarm! A very apt setting in which to contemplate being alongside Jesus in the storm and true to the Gospel, the following days brought flat calm, dolphins and wondrous sunsets over the distant hills. 'Who then is this, who even the wind and the waves obey?'

As organisers we had felt daunted at the prospect of doing all the catering. At least one of us was asking for the grace not to be preoccupied by food! In reality we all three greatly enjoyed working together in the kitchen and around the house and rather than detracting from the experience, it seemed to add another dimension to the giving and receiving, learning and growing of directing retreats.

Although retreatants could come for any number of nights a lot stayed for the full 6 days so there was a sense of the whole house entering more deeply into the silence as the week went on.

We are keen to offer retreats at Skelmorlie again next year.

Dates for 2012:

Monday 23rd July – Monday 30th July

Monday 3rd September – Monday 10th September