

News from Epiphany Group in the North, 2007

It has been another active year for members of the group in the North. We have run two Weeks of Guided Prayer over the year. Ruth Tait organised the March one in Elgin and surrounding areas. Prayer guides from the Coach House Team were involved in this along with 18 participants. This is quite a growth in numbers and reflects the interest generated by the programme of quiet days or half days being offered by Ruth Tait and Susie Alexander in Alves which have been much appreciated.

In May we offered a second similar week in Inverness area which drew a 12 people. We are aware that there is much work still to be done in communicating the value of these type of retreats in this region where less seems to be known about Ignatian spirituality and so we hope to make more contacts next year to help us in this.

At the Coach House, Kilmuir as well as continuing to offer individually arranged retreats throughout the year, we had 3 specific times set aside when the entire house was in silence. Before Easter, we ran a 6 day Individually Guided Retreat and later on in the year, in late August we ran an 8 day IGR. Lovely autumn weather from Sept 21st to Oct 23rd added to the powerful experience of a residential 30 Day Spiritual Exercises with 3 retreatants. Sea otters, dolphins and red kites all made an appearance! Although previously it has been possible to make a 30day at the Coach House this is the first time we have set aside the whole period solely for people on such a retreat. This proved to be such a significant and profound time that we intend to set aside a 30day period in 2009.

We ran two well attended workshops in June with Fr. Gerry Hughes sj. The topic for the first was 'The roots of peace and violence lie in the human mind and heart. The only people who can do anything about it are those willing to engage minds and hearts: if they do nothing, there is no hope for any of us.' It combined Fr. Gerry's input with prayer and reflection on the challenge and attractiveness of the Gospel in everyday life. The second one was on 'How can we be free?' This provided an opportunity to explore what is 'the Good News' and in so doing helped us glimpse the attractiveness of Christ's gift of freedom. Again it included time for prayer/reflection aimed at enabling us to get in touch with those obstacles within us that can block not only our freedom but our desire for it.

As a group of prayer guides and spiritual directors we have continued with our own training, arranging three days across the year. Our first was led by Fr. Gerry on 'Engaging with the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises'. Our second looked closely at our own practice as guides, working in triads with an observer who gave feedback afterwards. We had all prayed with a passage in advance to share in guide/retreatant sessions - (Mary, Martha at the tomb of Lazarus and Jesus). We also paid attention to the issues that arose for us as guides when we walked alongside another who was experiencing disturbance and questioning God. On our third day we plan to explore some of the issues that arose. One big subject is the tension around keeping the focus on God and what happened in the prayer yet also allowing exploration of human relationships and issues. Are there pointers for us as guides so we can recognise when something is a more a diversion/distraction, or when its an emerging growth point that needs to be given space for God's Spirit to work in?

Joyce and Ruth continue to offer 19th Annotation Retreats and together with Ruth Tait we also are available for spiritual direction and supervision.

Details for the Coach House Kilmuir Trust 2008 programme will shortly be available on our website www.coachhousekilmuir.org

Joyce Ferne, Ruth Flockhart, Ruth Tait