**Centring in Silence**

For over a year people have been coming to the “Oasis of Silence” at St. Hilda´s Priory in Whitby. A four day “Tasting the Silence” retreat after Easter gently helped a group to appreciate time spent in silence and being introduced to the practice of contemplative prayer, whilst the ten day retreat at the beginning of July was a time of great blessing and deep encounter with Christ for everyone who made it. Even more people have made use of the monthly Saturday retreats, individual days spent listening to God in the present moment, both outside in the Priory gardens or else in prayer in the meditation room.

The programme of contemplative prayer retreats in these varying lengths has been offered by an ecumenical team at the Anglican retreat house in Whitby and has been taken up by many people of various denominations and none. With great joy we have also noted how many who no longer go to church regularly have come and discovered a new encounter with Christ through the contemplative prayer practice offered. Others have come from a Zen-like practice of meditation but have been called in this way to discover the contemplative side of Christianity and to discover their own spiritual heritage anew.

The aim of the “Oasis of Silence” is to share, with whoever would like to, the richness of our Christian tradition, so linked with our own northern heritage through the contemplative practice of the Celtic saints as well as the Medieval mystics of the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and Richard Rolle, let alone the modern contemplative tradition of the many religious houses in North Yorkshire.

Everyone interested in spending time in the silent practice of contemplative prayer is welcome to come to an “Oasis of Silence” in Whitby. It is open and, we hope, helpful to anyone whatever “method” they are familiar with as the focus is always on entering into silence of the present moment and being open to Jesus Christ as the centre of our lives.

Coming, as we do usually, from busy, nosiy lives, most find the guided meditations at the beginning of the retreats helpful to calm what Martin Laird calls “the cocktail party” of the mind and to bring them gently to “rest” in God. Following the suggestions made by the Jesuit, Franz Jalics SJ (1929 – 2021), known as the “Gries Path”, the “Oasis” leads into and centres on the simple form of the Jesus Prayer, listening to the Name of Jesus within us. If other prayer words are preferred, this remains an invitation. What matters is the opportunity to respond to God´s call, to be open to the encounter with God and to take the time to do so.

The four day retreat, “Tasting the Silence”, will be offered again as a mid-week retreat from Monday 23rd to Thursday 26th October 2023. It is designed particularly for anyone who would like to make a contemplative retreat, but is unsure about spending long periods of time in silence.

Our popular one day retreats on Saturdays will be starting again on 14th October 2023 (also 11th November, 16th December). Everyone is welcome - we are all beginners in contemplative prayer!

For further information and registration please contact:
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