

Oasis of Silence



*St. Hilda's Priory,
Whitby*

2026

**Come to me,
all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.
You will find rest for your souls.**

(Matthew 11,28)

The Oasis of Silence programme at St. Hilda's Priory offers space and stillness to seek God with loving awareness in the present moment. It offers a variety of opportunities to make retreats of different lengths in a peaceful and welcoming environment, away from our busy everyday lives.

It is for everyone seeking stillness and silence and who is interested in getting to know or to deepening the practice of contemplative prayer.

"There are many techniques leading to contemplative prayer," the Jesuit priest, Franz Jalics SJ (1927 – 2021) used to say, "I teach only one of them." We keep to the form and the dynamics of his method (also known as the Gries Path) in this retreat programme. Through a deepening awareness of the reality of the present moment by focusing on our breathing, our hands and His Name we are led to an increasingly deeper encounter with Jesus Christ.

One day retreat courses

Oasis of Silence

This retreat is offered on Saturdays (usually) once a month. Everyone is welcome. The guided meditations in the morning help both beginner and those with more experience to leave the business of their lives and become aware of the presence of God in the present moment.

Proposed dates – please check and register !

10th January	23rd May	19th September
17th February (<i>Tuesday!</i>)	20th June	24th October
7th March	11th July	14th November
		12th December

Arrivals from 9.30 for a 10 am start. The day finishes before **4.30 pm**

The day starts with gently guided meditations which become increasingly more silent over the morning. We enjoy a simple lunch (soup/roll) together in shared silence. Time is available for individual conversations with the retreat guide. The afternoon session begins with a reflection on Scripture before times spent in meditation or else out in the quiet of the Priory gardens and countryside around. The retreat is drawn to a close reflecting back on the day.

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Whilst everyone is welcome and their needs cared for, those who are just setting out in this form of prayer may find the four day retreat a slower and gentler way into exploring contemplative prayer practice.

As this retreat is becoming a regular meeting point for fellow contemplatives we begin with a cuppa on arrival - and a chance to catch up with others before the 10 am start.

You are very welcome to make a weekend of it by using the Priory bed and breakfast possibilities. However, please note that the prices to be expected are standard prices, NOT retreat rates.

4 day retreat courses

Tasting the Silence

Spring retreat: Thursday 28th – Sunday 31st May 2026

Autumn retreat: Monday 26th – Thursday 29th October 2026

This short form of contemplative retreat offers the possibility to move towards contemplative prayer and to taste spending an extended time in silence.

The path we take in these days is clearly led and is very simple. We stay in silence and remain before God in silent meditation as a group as well as individually outside in nature.

These days of prayer are a school of awareness: listening, looking, alert and open with all our senses to the here and now. What is important is to be willing to remain lovingly alert to the silence and to be open to God's presence in each moment wherever you are. To facilitate this, we ask participants to switch off their mobile, not to read and not to pursue any other form of activity other than what is offered during the retreat.

The course begins with the evening meal at 6.30 and ends after lunch on the final day.

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10 day retreat course

Silent contemplative retreat

Monday 29th June to Thursday 9th July 2026

This retreat course is the one primarily conceived and developed by Franz Jalics SJ. It invites to a long and intensive time of silence, a school of awareness leading to the Jesus prayer. The only prerequisite for this form of retreat is a true longing to be one with God in prayer, and a normal state of mental resilience.

The courses are usually accompanied by two retreat guides and it is important for participants to allow themselves to be led by these guides for the duration of the retreat.

After an initial introductory period the daily schedule invites to several hours of silent meditation as a group, the opportunity to take part in the Eucharist whenever possible, and up to an hour of light manual work (either in the house or in the garden). We remain in silence during the whole retreat.

We invite participants to open themselves to God at all times by being fully aware of each present moment. Apart from the guided meditations, time spent outside in nature is an integral component. Another is our request for mobiles to be switched off and to refrain from other activities, such as reading, artwork etc. Individual accompaniment by a retreat guide in 1 to 1 conversations is also an important part of the retreat. Particularly at the beginning of the retreat, there will also be times of sharing in the group when the retreat guide asks how the various exercises in contemplative prayer are going. The Eucharist is offered whenever possible.

The course begins on Monday 29th June 2026 with the evening meal at 6.30 pm and finishes on Thursday 9th July 2026 after breakfast.

Oasis of Silence retreat team 2025

Angela Simek (*1958) trained as an Ignatian retreat guide with the Jesuits in Vienna, Austria where she had moved with her husband after studying at Edinburgh university. She started out on the Gries Path of contemplative prayer with P. Franz Jálícs SJ in 2005 and has been giving contemplative retreats (including with P. Jálícs) ever since. She has been living in Whitby since 2019.

Erni Radlmair (*1966) studied English and theology in Vienna, Austria. She has been working as a chaplain in hospitals and hospices throughout her working life. She has been on the Gries Path of contemplative prayer since 2010.

Anne Hoefler(*1944) grew up in Leeds before moving to live in Germany. In 1982, due to illness of her third child, she was led into the healing ministry using the laying on of hands. In 1989 she began practicing contemplative prayer with P. Willigis Jäger, Benedictine monk and Zen master, founder of the Würzburger School of Contemplation and became a certified contemplation teacher. Founder of the Open Hands School of Healing, she offers courses combining contemplative prayer and healing in Germany, Switzerland and Spain.

Sr. Helen Stout (* 1965) is a sister of The Order of the Holy Paraclete at St. Hilda's Priory. She has been in community since 1993, and is responsible for the organization of the retreat house. Without her nothing would work!.....

About St. Hilda's Priory

St. Hilda's Priory at Sneaton Castle, Whitby is the Mother House of an Anglican religious community for women, Order of the Holy Paraclete. The Priory complex here includes a home for the active community, a retreat and conference centre, as well as a home for sisters to be cared for in old age and infirmity.

Guest accommodation consists of 17 en suite rooms, two of which are disabled friendly with wet rooms. All meals will be provided during your stay here. They will be simple and appropriate for time spent mostly in contemplative prayer.

**"Our hope is that all who share our life
may find God among us,
and be renewed
in Body, Mind and Spirit."**

(OHP Rule)

Suggested donations

Our aim is to keep costs for our retreats as low as possible so that anyone who feels called to make them will feel able to do so. Our invitation is to enjoy simple but lovingly cooked fare as well as to help a little either in the house or in the garden. All this enables us to keep costs down. Many thanks for your understanding.

One day retreat (incl. simple lunch): £ 5

Four day retreat (incl. all meals): £ 200

Ten day retreat (incl. all meals): £ 600

- If you can afford to give more, you are most welcome.
- If you need more help to be able to come, just let us know.

We are looking forward to seeing you here at St. Hilda's Priory, Whitby.

More information and registration:

All are welcome to register immediately for the one day retreats.

For the longer retreats (4 day or 10 day retreats) we invite you to fill in a questionnaire as part of your registration for your first retreat course at St. Hilda's Priory. After we have received your answered questionnaire your registration will be confirmed. Please ask for the form when you initially register.

Contact:

Sister Helen Stout

Email: hospitality@ohpwhitby.org.uk

Tel. Nr. 01947 899600

07595 215083

St. Hilda's Priory, Castle Road, Whitby, YO21 3SL

How to get to St. Hilda's Priory:

By car: At the roundabout coming into Whitby on the A 171 (from Guisborough or Pickering) take the 2nd exit (marked Westcliff, Sandsend NOT town centre) and follow the road round. The priory is on the right. Please use the LOWER car park. The retreat house **Margaret Cope Centre** is on your right as you drive down.

Coming from Scarborough, follow the road through Whitby towards Guisborough to the roundabout at the Park and Ride. Take the 3rd exit (with garden centre on right) and follow the road round. The priory is on the right.

By train: There are (infrequent) mainline trains from Middlesbrough to Whitby, with more trains to Scarborough. If you travel to Scarborough, buses (X93 and X94) leave for Whitby every 30 mins from immediately outside the train station to Whitby bus station (next to the train station).

We are happy to pick people up (at pre-arranged times) from the bus / train station.