

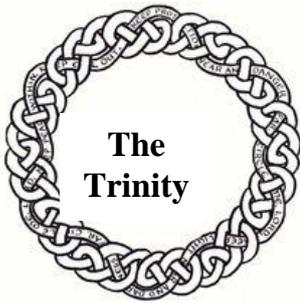
REPORT of PROVINCIAL RETREAT at St Mary's Monastery

25th to 27th April 2017

This was our first Retreat back at Kinnoull after the refurbishment at St Mary's. Anticipating the cold weather forecast, I had packed warm clothing which proved not to be needed. Central Heating, double glazing of the windows in the bedroom, en-suite bathrooms, a secure WiFi system, and a great welcome from the staff at the house ensured our comfort. Needless to say, there was plenty of chatter before the silence commenced after dinner as there were many reunions with old friends.

Our Celtic Heritage, a pattern for Faith in Action, the theme for the Retreat, was led by Sister Ann-Marie Stuart F.J., MA, who insisted on informality and asked us to call her Ann-Marie. She only wore her habit for the 2 Eucharist services held on Wed. and Thurs. mornings. Evening prayer was held on Tues. before dinner, after which the 1st Talk was given – all the talks had colourful illustrations.

'Honing our Capacity for Rapture': This introduced some of the themes in Celtic Spirituality and the image of light in Scripture, and in nature, and Trinity.



Ann-Marie introduced us to the Scottish Franciscan and Theologian John Dun Scotus, 815-877. We were told that we tended to live in the shadows instead of in the centre of the sun, God's light, which can bind us together. Spiritual life and secular are intertwined. We need to find the Living God in this light and pass it on to others. The Celtic Roundel, on the left, has no beginning and no end. The space at the centre is the Trinity, a place of safety.

After the talk we were presented with Points to Consider.

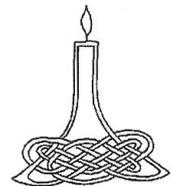
1. What was new to us in this approach to Spiritual Life? 2. What did we find helpful?
2. What did we consider a challenge? 4. If worthwhile action emerges from the stillness at the heart of prayer, what kind of action did the talk suggest to us.

This talk and the response created was followed by the Celtic form of Compline, and so to bed.

Wed am: Morning Prayer, after breakfast, was followed by Talk 2 – **Trinity a Place of Safety.**

We were told to learn to love the Trinity with our heart, our souls, our minds and our strength. This network of relationships is the place of safety from where we may dare to cope with everyday life. John Scotus, who uses the Prologue (John Chap1), does not deny that we are sinful, but he thinks that the concept of Original Sin denies the primacy of the Love of the Living God. To listen to creation without Scripture is to lose the personal intimacy of God's voice and without encountering God in the Book of Creation, we will not be able interpret the Book of Scripture adequately. In the points to consider, we were asked if this kind of spiritual basis would help our faith in action and if a greater knowledge of Celtic Spirituality would help people to cope with today's problems?

Coffee came next followed by the Iona Eucharist – On the altar were placed symbols of creation: A candle, a stone and a pool of water. 'When I needed a neighbour' was the opening hymn and at the end 'You shall go out with Joy', the latter being repeated spontaneously unaccompanied. Ann-Marie commented on our flexibility. Paul Hindle had prepared music for lots of possible hymns and other music to be used during the services and at mealtimes as an aid to maintaining silence. After lunch, the afternoon was free to walk in the lovely grounds.



Between 2pm – 4pm Ann-Marie was available for private talks.

Afternoon tea was at 4pm followed by Evening Prayer with hymns, which led to:

Talk 3 – 'Trinity a Place of Mystery and Intimacy'. Circle me, O God keep faith within, keep doubt out. Trinity demands that rather than try to master the truth we allow truth to master us. There is a desire for clarity. Jesus' appearance on the road to Emaus was puzzling. He looked different, but certain things he did and said identified Him. The divine "brilliance" is at the centre. The Celts fundamental belief is that Trinity is the heart of life, rather than without or beyond life. The Celts would have us believe that we are not created out of nothing, but out of God's endless glory, his light, the essence of the Living God. Without God we would cease to exist. We are woven into the very fabric of Trinity. We need to feed and care for each other.

Reflecting on this talk we were asked how we could help others to cope with doubts and how we coped with doubts? Did we have any suggestions? Did we see ourselves as living within Trinity and what difference this would make for our lives? Could the Celtic perspective of Trinity be used to help to mend our increasingly fractured society? Dinner at 18.30pm was followed by Compline before bed.

Thursday, the final day of the Retreat, saw us packing our belongings and vacating our rooms to allow the staff to prepare for new arrivals. We did not have to strip our beds as we did previously.

Talk 4 – ‘Trinity a place for transformation and a basis for faith in action’ followed Morning Prayer. John Scottus tells us there is a medicine called ‘Divine Grace’ that has the power to restore us. He calls Jesus the Medicine of Grace, which needs to be taken daily. He says that Paradise is not elsewhere; paradise represents the place of the image of God within. Why do we blush or feel guilty when we sin? Is nature itself the witness and does it show its disapproval of evil? We need to avoid disparaging people and try to see the light within others. We all need to be kind to ourselves, to learn to love ourselves and not feel guilty for relaxing after hard work. Jesus needed his time of refreshment and Jesus is the pattern for all of us. He restores the memory of who we actually are and not the false image we create of ourselves. A picture of a hammock in the sun was shown. People vary. Some are early risers and early to bed. Others can be the opposite. There is not a right or a wrong way. Ann-Marie invited comments and questions. She asked us what we had found helpful in the talks.

After a coffee break, we assembled again in the Oratory for the closing Eucharist. At the services, we had all been given the chance to participate as readers. The chairs had been rearranged in a horseshoe so that at the Eucharist we could administer the elements to each other. In her introduction, Ann-Marie had said that she regarded us all as priests, hence the inclusiveness shown during all the services.

The silence ended and before we went for lunch, a vote of thanks and a gift was given to Ann-Marie for leading the Retreat. Pat and Paul Hindle were thanked for their expert organising. The staff of the house came in to receive the collection that had been taken for both the work of the house and for the staff who had looked after us so well. Pat announced the dates booked for the next 3 years.

10th to 12th April 2018, 9th to 11th April 2019, 21st to 23rd April 2020

There was a buzz of conversation over lunch. We got chance to chat with Libbie Crossman, from Brisbane, Australia. Much to my surprise she was a great friend of Norman & Gwenn Wagstaff. Norman had done a 6-month exchange with Revd John Farrant, Rector of St James, Penicuik in 1993.

Celtic Prayers used during the Retreat

I bind unto myself today

the strong name of the Trinity

by invocation of the same

The Three in One and One in Three.

A Circle Prayer taken from

a Stallza of St. Patrick's Breastplate.

The compassing of God be on thee,

the compassing of the God of Life.

The compassing of Christ be on thee,

the compassing of the Christ of Love.

The compassing of the Spirit be on thee,

the compassing of the Spirit of grace.

The compassing of the Three preserve thee,

the compassing of the Three preserve thee.

Amen.

From the Carmina Gadelica.

The Sacred Three be over me,

With my working hands this day.

With people on my way,

With the Labour and the toil,

With the land and with the soil;

With the tools that I take.

With the things that I make,

With the thoughts of my mind,

With the sharing with mankind,

With the love of my heart,

With each one who plays a part,

The Sacred Three be over me.

The Blessing of the Trinity. Amen.

From The Edge of Glory by David Adam.

If you find these prayers helpful then do look for any other books by David Adam.

Glennis Tavener recommended 'Being Disciples' by Rowan Williams