

## Mary—Woman of Joy

## Daily Email Reflections



The people of Darlington have already had the chance to have a morning of reflection with Mary Woman of Joy and this is to be repeated in Sacriston—so, if you are reading from there or planning to come you may wish to stop reading now!

The theme picks up on the Advent theme we are using this year: Gaudete et Exsultate or Rejoice and be glad! It was natural to turn to the Joyful Mysteries and to reflect on what they tell us about Mary—and about what being a person of joy might look like. It is a fact that the joyful events in Mary's Memories (as Pope Francis calls the Rosary) are all tinged with pain and fear and uncertainty about what God is doing. Mary is a woman of deep joy but is also one whose heart was pierced with agonising sorrow. It raised a question for us in Darlington as to whether her freedom from sin made it easier to accept God's will and so, perhaps not feel the pain as much as others—her will being so in conformity with God's. We realised, though, that she would still have had human emotions and this led us to wonder whether her freedom from ego and selfishness could have actually made the suffering worse as she could not hide behind the defences and behaviours we use to protect ourselves.

If you would like a mini-retreat, you might like to take the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary and ponder each one—sharing the joy but also looking for what was causing suffering of one kind or another in each one.

Mary—and Jesus'—joy was not because they did not face dark times—sometimes they faced horrific ones. It was born of something much deeper. Pope Francis puts it well in his exhortation, Gaudete et Exsultate:

*Hard times may come, when the cross casts its shadow, yet nothing can destroy the supernatural joy that "adapts and changes, but always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.*

This Advent, you might like to gather up the things that give you joy and give thanks for them—storing them up in your soul to give you resilience and joy in the darker times.



*'Truly I am the Lord's Servant. Let everything you have said happen to me.'*

Astonishingly, the daily email reflections from the Department on the gospel for each day have been running for almost six years. They go out to around 350 people and, from feedback are then shared with even more! Some places print upcoming weeks out—others add it to their website and social media—still others use it for small group prayers including one group of "Prayer Pastors" (who support Street Pastors/ Angels) who find it a great way for people of different denominations to pray together.

Over the summer—whilst preparing the Advent resources—we began to wonder about how they might be revamped. A couple of things happened that indicated a slightly different way forward. One was a workshop at the Salford Scripture Festival led by David Ford from Durham University where he spoke of a project run in the Diocese to explore different ways of approaching the scriptures. At the end of the year project, he asked the group what they would find particularly helpful in making the Bible more accessible to Catholics. Overwhelmingly, it was some way of becoming more familiar with the Old Testament. This tied in with a few conversations held elsewhere and so we have decided to continue with the daily email reflections—but using the First Reading as the basis of them. These will sometimes be the Letters from Paul, Peter and others—but also from the Old Testament.

The format will be pretty much the same – a short extract with a few pointers for personal reflection and then a wrap-up at the end.

We would love to hear feedback so do get in touch if you use them!

To sign up, simply contact the Department using the contact details below. You can cancel at any time!



### Contact Details

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# Upcoming Events in the Diocese and Local Centres

DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**  
DEPARTMENT FOR SPIRITUALITY

## A TIME OF REFLECTION WITH MARY



**Saturday 8 December**

Commencing with 10am Mass  
followed by refreshments  
11.00am—1.00pm

St Bede RC Church  
Front Street  
SACRISTON DH7 6AB

*"Truly I am the Lord's servant.  
Let everything you have said  
happen to me."*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT DEPARTMENT FOR SPIRITUALITY  
Telephone 0191 243 3302 | email [spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk)

## Minsteracres

Looking ahead a while but worth getting in your diary!

**Our relationship with nature – the challenge to Christians**  
**10/05/2019 - 12/05/2019 10:00 am - 2:00 pm**  
**Mary Colwell.**

It is no secret that the natural world is under immense environmental pressure. Species are disappearing and resources are being depleted. We have degraded the natural world on all continents. This thought-provoking weekend will examine what it is to be a Christian today, faced with difficult choices and overwhelming problems. Where do we find the joy and sustenance to sustain us to bring about a better world for all of life on earth?

Mary Colwell is an award winning writer and producer of TV and radio programmes on natural history and environmental issues and a regular contributor to 'The Tablet'.

This retreat runs from Friday 10 May at 7pm until Sunday 12 May at 2pm

The Minsteracres Team is also planning themed retreats called **"Daring Disciples"**. This ties in with a lot of work that is happening in our Partnerships and one of these weekends could be a good way to explore what it means for you individually—or with others from your Partnership.

**Dates: 17-19 May, 21-23 June,  
13-15 September, 4-6 October**

*For further information or to book please contact  
Minsteracres Retreat Centre  
01434 673248 | [info@minsteracres.org](mailto:info@minsteracres.org)*

# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**  
DEPARTMENT FOR SPIRITUALITY

## THE MINISTRY OF CONSOLATION: SPIRITUALITY IN TIMES OF TRAUMA

**Saturday 23 March 2019**

Ushaw College  
DURHAM. DH7 7AW



10am refreshments  
for 10.30am start,  
ending 3.30pm

Bishop John Wilson is an Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster who has considerable experience in times of trauma, for example helping in the aftermath of the Grenfell Fire. He comes with a deep awareness of the part prayer and spirituality can play in times of pain and trauma and will share some of his wisdom and insights with us.

Further information or to pre-register please contact:  
Department for Spirituality  
Telephone 0191 243 3302 | email [spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk)

## Lent Resources 2019

### 'God's Gift of Love and Mercy'

Already in preparation and due to be completed before the Christmas break!

This Lent, we will be looking at the ways in which people learned of God's love and mercy throughout the Old Testament—and how this helps us to appreciate it ever more deeply.

The Lent pack and CDs will be available from the Department by 21 January and for download from the website shortly after that.

## Diocesan Festival

**Saturday 22—Sunday 23 June 2019**

## 'On Fire'

Further information available soon.