

Hope in Times of Trauma

Over 90 people gathered at Ushaw College to listen to Bishop John Wilson reflect on ways in which prayer and spirituality had helped him and others deal with trauma and tragedy.

Bishop John is an Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster—and titular Bishop of Lindisfarne. He was previously a priest of the Leeds Diocese and was Administrator there when a teacher, Ann Maguire, was murdered at Corpus Christi School. When he arrived in Westminster, he was also called to support the family and school of a little boy, Oisín, who had been murdered by his mother who then committed suicide. His area of the Diocese included the Grenfell Tower which was the scene of 72 deaths in June 2017.

Very tragic situations to which Bishop John was called and knew he had to try to bring consolation and hope.

One thing he spoke of was the power of presence—simply being alongside others even when words are difficult, if not impossible. He recalled sitting on the grass next to a firefighter taking a break from working in the Tower and licking an ice-lolly and eventually the firefighter saying “The fire was the worst I have ever experienced... it melted my helmet”. A simple sentence that conveys so much of the horror of the immediacy of the event. But, Bishop John reminded us, the pain goes on and one of the important gifts we can offer is opportunities for people to gather and remember. He quoted from a book by Alan Everett, an Anglican priest also involved in the care of those caught up in the disaster and its aftermath.

‘My experience of sacramental healing came four weeks after the fire, at the local Catholic Church: St Francis of Assisi. Although invited to robe by the parish priest, I had no liturgical responsibilities, and for that I was grateful. As an Anglican, I could not receive Holy Communion, but the celebrant, Bishop John Wilson, laid his hand on my head and blessed me. Exhausted, needy, overwhelmed, as yet in no position to process what I had witnessed and shared with others, I experienced in that simple action a profound affirmation of God’s love.’ (*After the Fire*, p 112)

This reminds us of the beauty and power of what we can offer—through the sacramental ministry of the Church but even in simply having our churches open and available for people to light candles—to be listened to—to come as they are “exhausted, needy and overwhelmed” and find peace.

Bishop John had high praise for the teachers at Corpus Christi School and the schools and churches that served Grenfell Tower. St Francis of Assisi school in particular lost pupils and was relocated to a local secondary school which simply opened its doors to them—even to children turning up in pyjamas which was all they had left. He cited one small girl, aged around 6, who told him the day after the fire that her house had burned down. She had with her a “Trunki” suitcase which her classmates and others had filled with clothes and toys.

As well as Bishop John’s talk, a selection of workshops was on offer—including one that picked up on the theme of the importance of silence by Lynn Bassett, a palliative care chaplain who had studied this and shared her insights and times of silence with her workshop group. Dr Dave Bramley and Fr Stephen Watson offered a session on “Finding God in A&E” - looking at how faith helps them and those they serve in the Air Ambulance and A&E Department. Linda Longstaff offered a moving session on stillbirth and neonatal deaths and Julia Firbank and Margaret Kindlen led a Death Café session. Chris Smith led a workshop on ‘Grief, Courage and Hope’ talking about the stages and emotions that people go through when grieving. The final option of “The Art of Dying Well” was with Kathryn.



At the end of the day, Bishop John took questions and then led us in a time of prayer—helping us to be aware of things that had challenged us or raised up an issue and to invite the Holy Spirit to enfold us and heal us... and then to look at what had

blessed us through the day. ✚

The Bishops of England and Wales have announced that 2020 is to be a Year of the Word—with the theme, “The God who speaks.”

The Year will actually be soft-launched on 30 September, the Feast of St Jerome who translated the Bible into the everyday language of the time (Latin). It then takes off fully on the First Sunday of Advent. We have time in hand but this just flags up the opportunities it will offer for those who will be starting to plan ahead! More information in coming months!



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Upcoming Events in the Diocese and Local Centres

Centre for Prayer and Mission

Icon Painting (Writing) Workshop/ Retreats

As usual, there will be two workshops:

The first is with Catherine Ferguson in **Spring Week: starting 27th May for 5 days.** Boards are already prepared.

The second with Sr Annette - **July 20-27th** Includes board preparation.

Both workshops are open to beginners as well as the more experienced.

You may want to secure these dates in your diary. Further details in due course for those who are interested.

*For further information or to book please contact
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DIocese of Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR SPIRITUALITY

THE MISSION TO ACCOMPANY

with Bill Huebsch



"Journeys of accompaniment" help people to "read their own story; to adhere freely and responsibly to one's baptismal call; to recognize the desire to belong and contribute to the life of the community."

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SATURDAY 18 MAY 2019
9.45am—3.30pm
St Mary's Catholic School
Benton Park Road
Newcastle Upon Tyne NE7 7PE
REFRESHMENT & LUNCH DONATION £10.00

TO BOOK PLEASE VISIT:
<https://billhuebsch.eventbrite.co.uk> or telephone 0191 243 3302

Minsteracres

Wednesday 10 April, 10.00am – 5.00pm;

Walking Retreat: Enjoy a walk of seven to ten miles through beautiful countryside.

Thursday 18 (6.30pm) – Sunday 21 April (2.00pm);

Holy Week Retreat:

Time for reflection and the opportunity to take part in the ceremonies of Holy Week.

Monday 6 May;

Open Day:

Spend a full day at Minsteracres exploring our House and Grounds with exhibitions, tours, reflection, tea, coffee and good home cooking.

Wednesday 8 May, 10.00am - 4.00pm;

Day of Prayer:

Led by Sr Rosarie Spence RSM, spend a day experiencing different ways of praying along with time for quiet personal prayer.

Friday 10 (7.00pm) - Sunday 12 May (2.00pm);

Our Relationship with Nature - The Challenge to Christians:

Spend a thought provoking weekend with Mary Colwell examining what it is to be a Christian in today's world.

*For further information or to book please contact
Minsteracres Retreat Centre
01434 673248 | info@minsteracres.org*

Ushaw College

Lent - Times of Reflection

Wednesday 10 April 2.00pm - 4.00pm

*For further information or to book please contact
Ushaw College
0191 334 5119 | meet@ushaw.org*

God's Gifts of Love and Mercy



On Boxing Day last year, Sr Wendy Beckett died. One of her great gifts was to use art to open up religious ideas to a wider audience.

In her book, "The Gaze of Love", Sr Wendy uses this painting of the "Woman taken in adultery" by Guercino which you might like to use as a meditation between now and Easter. It is the Gospel for the Fifth Sunday of Lent but it depicts a great example of what God's love and mercy—which reached its pinnacle on the Cross—looked like during Jesus' earthly ministry. There is obviously the gaze of Jesus... of love but also of something more... What do you see as you gaze?

Another detail Sr Wendy points out are the hands—the gestures—the pointing—the holding—the "holding myself together". Which would be your hands?

Simply sit with the painting and allow it to speak to you of God's love and mercy for the woman- and of his love and mercy for you.