



Catholic Spirituality Network

CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY NETWORK

NEWSLETTER EDITION 8

NOVEMBER 2019

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



The November Newsletter offers an opportunity for me to send good wishes to each of you. In recent months we have sadly lost two members who have significantly shaped CSN through their passion for spirituality and commitment to the flourishing of the Network. Both Fr David Elder and Bishop Brian Noble served on the Executive. Their energy and guidance over the years, their generosity and availability and unique presence to our community, will long be remembered.

The Executive Committee has been busy planning for the Conference 2020 with Christopher Chapman as our speaker on the theme of Come to the Waters, welcoming Julie McCann as our liturgist. I do hope that many of you will feel inspired to join us and to advertise the Conference among fellow pilgrims.

It is good to hear news of CSN days taking place around the country, providing opportunities to awaken ownership of the spiritual life with all its challenges and blessings. There is also encouraging progress being made in connecting CSN with the network of the Bishops' Spirituality Committee. Thanks to all who are pursuing these developments; there is a growing sense of something new and rich unfolding.

Wishing you all the blessings of the forthcoming Season of Advent and continued fruitfulness in ministry as the year draws to a close...

Shirley Taylor

CSN CONFERENCE 2020 COME TO THE WATERS

"Holiness is boldness... How often we are tempted to keep close to the shore! Yet the Lord calls us to put out into the deep and let down our nets." Gaudete et Exsultate 129-130

Our 2020 Conference, **Come to the Waters**, takes place 20 – 22 March 2020 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. It will be led by **Christopher Chapman**, well known retreat-giver, author, spiritual guide and friend to CSN.

In *Laudato Si'* and *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis challenges the Church to dare a new form of holiness that redraws our relationship with the created world and one another. In **Come to the Waters** we will explore how we open ourselves afresh to the flow of the Spirit. The waters of God are deep beyond measure, dangerous, yet creative, still, but always in movement. Drawing from the Bible, the words of Pope Francis, and poets and teachers within the Christian spiritual tradition, Christopher will help us explore the risks, challenges and opportunities of expressing forms of holiness fit for our times.



We are also delighted to welcome, for the first time, **Julie McCann** as liturgist. Julie is an associate of the Iona Community and former Iona Abbey musician. Now a play therapist working with adopted children, she was a school teacher for many years, developing the liturgical life of children and young people. Julie has written a book, *Spiritual Garments*, to support the preparation of liturgies over the year. She delights in drawing beautiful sounds out of people who thought singing was not for them!

Workshops will form part of the Conference.

Booking information is available now:

<http://csn.retreats.org.uk/conference.php>



Catholic Spirituality Network

Bishop Brian Noble RIP



A faithful member of CSN, for many years a member of the Executive, Bishop Brian Noble will continue to hold a special place in the hearts and memories of Catholics throughout England, Wales and beyond.

His death touches the heart of CSN in a particular way, as his gentle spirit welcomed, empowered and affirmed

members over the years. Always ready to listen, to give time, to encourage and to receive others with humility, Bishop Brian's capacity to meet others means that we honour him as friend, priest, spiritual guide, source of creativity and of inspiration.

We appreciate Bishops Brian's significant commitment and contribution to CSN over the decades, always interested in our progress, generous in opening up conversation and in keeping us connected to the flow of spiritual development within the Church.

We honour his work in the spirituality group of the Bishops' Commission, contributing significantly to the growth of spirituality among the hierarchy and many parishes in England and Wales through the publication of 'Do You Love Me?' We honour his care for the spiritual journey of those who are ageing: for his encouragement, insight and support.

Mindful of the recent feast of All Saints and All Souls, we give thanks for Bishop Brian's life and mission, for his spirit and wisdom. We pray that he will be counted among those who shine out as friends of God for all eternity.

In gratitude for all he was and all that he inspired in us, we pray: *Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen*

Shirley Taylor

Fr David Elder RIP

David was a huge presence in our Network. He has been a part of it for the whole of my time as a member, and I will miss his supportive presence at Conference and regular contact through mailings.



David was a measured, thoughtful person and brought wisdom to many discussions at AGMs and other gatherings. His gentle humour drew people together and he was always ready to embrace new ideas and give his support. So many members sent memories of David – from early days of the Network, through to his Executive Committee days and to these last years. All show a committed and generous man with hidden gifts and talents.

Paul King shared an early memory of David's warm and supportive presence, during a 30 day retreat he made at Grayshott Cenacle with Kathleen Lyons, whilst discerning his move into the Catholic Church. He spoke of a tabernacle made from a tree trunk in a special prayer room – made, he thought, by David. Oona Mohan also remembered him from the beginning days of the National Retreat Movement (NRM), as we were then. She remembered working with him when she was in community with Elizabeth Smyth. Others wrote or called and spoke of his generosity, wisdom and sense of community.

David had that special gift of empowering an individual, helping them to realise that with God all is possible. The numbers at his funeral give testament to the position he had in the Diocese and the parishes in which he served. Bishop Brian Noble, Tom McGuinness SJ, Magdalen Lawler, Helen Bamber and Mary Nono were pleased to represent CSN there.

Alongside his family and close friends, we will miss his physical presence I know, but David will always be with us as we seek the way ahead in the Network.

May he rest in peace – and rise in glory

Margaret Palladino



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Making Room for God - being open to the 'always' of God, with St John of the Cross'. Report on a CSN Day held at the Urban Oasis in Lewisham, led by Christopher Chapman.



It was a treat to experience a midsummer CSN Quiet Day led by Christopher Chapman, care of the wonderful hospitality of the Sisters of St Andrew in Lewisham. Chris opened his talk by describing his ambivalent relationship with St John of the Cross,

and how he had found his studies through the years of the work of St John of the Cross to be the most difficult but the most rewarding.

A favourite word of John of the Cross is 'always' which, rather than something static, becomes in John's usage something fluid, active, flowing like a river, the 'here' and 'now' of life and creativity. Instead of the 'always' of having everything controlled, we can be open to the 'always' of the mystery of what lies beyond the limits we put around our lives.

Chris gave us a life history of St John of the Cross (1542-1591), who became a Carmelite priest and with Teresa of Avila sought to make reforms, but for his trouble was imprisoned for nine months in a dark cell by members of his own order. The impact on his life and writings of his deep contemplation on darkness during this time gave birth to his concept 'Nada' (nothing) for 'Todo' (all) i.e. to reach satisfaction in all, desire satisfaction in nothing. If we open ourselves, we will receive the flow of God 'if it is given room' (1 Dark Night 10.6).

Chris described how until he read John, he didn't appreciate that God seeks us – God goes out to meet those who seek him:

'... if anyone is seeking God,

the Beloved is seeking

that person much more'

(Living Flame of Love 3. 27-28)

In the poem, *Dark Night*, John uses the phrase 'in darkness and secure' - two words that don't usually go together. It is the darkness and the night that can guide and draw lover and beloved together. So at the very time when we feel we can't manage things or don't understand the passage of our lives, we have access to a greater security.

For John, faith is trust. We cannot reach new territory if we don't abandon familiar roads to take those that are unknown. Chris wondered if we have lost sight of the 'adventure' of this journey in moving beyond what we know. In the face of questions we cannot unravel, it can feel like we are engulfed in darkness, but God would take us beyond our fearful or damaged limits into a deeper relationship through trust.

Chris generously illustrated some of John's insights by sharing stories from his own life. One in which he experienced the deeper security that comes from letting go when learning to swim and trusting in the buoyancy as he moved beyond his fear. In another, Chris described how he was partnered with someone in a blindfold exercise. His vulnerability and need to trust fostered a sense of closeness and the growth of relationship.

St John of the Cross shows us that at some level invitations come from within, sometimes uncomfortably e.g. we feel restless, or the need for prayer. But this is precisely where God dwells:

'...you yourself are his dwelling and his secret room and his hiding place ... God is never absent. Do not go in pursuit of him outside yourself.' (Canticle 1. 7-8)

Chris summed up the message of St John of the Cross by inviting us to make room for the 'always' of God. We can do this by being attentive, receptive, co-operating with the movement of God's Spirit as we discern it. We can let go of trying to wholly manage or comprehend our experience by embracing mystery in our lives. It is in darkness we are held secure.



Thank you to Chris, St John of the Cross, the Sisters of St Andrew and to CSN for a wonderful day.

Susan Daniell

Susan is an Affiliate member of the Retreat Association. We are grateful to her for such a full account of the CSN day held in June 2019, and hope it will serve as a reminder of the Day for those who were there, and a 'taster' for the 2020 Conference for those who weren't!



Catholic Spirituality Network

GRASS-ROOTS SPIRITUALITY

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL – PARISH STUDY GROUP



In November 2018, I offered sessions on **the Joy of the Gospel**, a study course formulated by Paula Gooder, to the parishes around as a way of sharing faith in small groups. Having had a real joy in working through **Do you love me?**

from the Bishops' Conference with several groups a couple of years earlier, I was a little reluctant to change the format but equally hopeful that a new approach would also appeal.

I was further encouraged by a quote from Bishop Steven Croft, who was the Anglican representative at the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelisation for the writing of the document **Evangelii Gaudium**, in which he said: *"We need to return to the Gospel, to recover joy, to see the church again as a company of missionary disciples, and to proclaim the faith with compassion, with confidence and with creativity to a new generation"*. I thought this is what we are about! We had our first group meeting in December and then met every two weeks, finishing in mid- February 2019.

Was it a valuable exercise? Judging by the comments as we finished, it certainly was. The first meeting was an informal one where we got to chat a little and I lent a book to each person. Over the weeks that followed, we looked at returning to the joy of the Gospel and the joy of evangelising; being a Church which goes forth; discerning what runs counter to God's plan and particular challenges along the way; proclaiming the Gospel and growing in maturity of faith; making the Kingdom present in the world and finally going forth as Spirit-filled evangelizers. Each session began with a time for *lectio divina*, related to the passages from the document for that session, and ended with a short time of prayer.

Of necessity I have come to see that keeping the groups small – no more than eight – allows the members to get to know each other, form a trusting togetherness and so be able to share more freely. Because this first group knew each other from church, they began early to share sometimes deep experiences, hopes and fears, and this sharing led to a deepening of faith and to an awareness of their place in life as missionary disciples. All in all, it was a very positive experience for each one of us - as Pope Francis says: *"The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus"*.

Sister Teresa Kennedy, PBVM

LOW-COST & LOCAL

On this page members share experiences in their own areas which are low-cost and draw local people together in an exploration of spirituality...

CSN ALL SOULS' DAY WALK

London members led a reflective walk this year on **All Souls' Day**. Participants gathered at All Saints Church, Margaret Street, for an opening prayer. Due to the rain we sheltered inside and were fortuitously accompanied by the organ playing the Fauré Requiem in the background, rehearsing for their service later in the day. We also heard the soprano singing the Pie Jesu. (Some things are best unplanned!) The rain soon stopped and next we visited and quietly sang *'May Flights of Angels Sing Thee to Thy Rest'* outside the stained glass window of All Souls Church, Langham Place. Walking on we came to the Madonna and Child Sculpture by Jacob Epstein in Cavendish Square, and took some time to admire this powerful representation of Mary by a Jewish sculptor. Next we made a quick strike on the Wallace Collection, specifically to see its exquisite 17th century rock crystal sculpture of the Good Shepherd, which comes from either Goa or Sri Lanka. Here we were mindful of the Easter Sunday atrocity in Sri Lanka and of Christ's ongoing love for every soul. After a picnic lunch in Grosvenor Square, we visited the moving memorial to those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack on 9 September 2011. We ended by remembering all the saints and martyrs, entering into the silent adoration at Tyburn Convent, Hyde Park Place. Everyone agreed that this *'urban pilgrimage'* was a memorable way to celebrate All Saints and All Souls.

Walking together is an imaginative way to reclaim the evolving spiritual life of our villages, towns and cities (or fields, woods and mountains!), as well as being very low-cost... There are layers of faith experience everywhere. Why not plan a CSN walk in your local area? There are many places associated with holiness and the spiritual journey, and it is a creative exercise to weave them into a walk. One or two people can make a plan and then lead a walk with a simple opening prayer and some readings for reflection along the way.





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EVENTS

20 – 22 March 2020 CSN Conference

Come to the Waters

see Page 1 for full information

25 January 2020 Former CSN Chair, David Lonsdale, is offering a day on **Words of Life: Poetry and the Spiritual Journey** at the House of Prayer, East Molesey. Not a CSN event, but sure to be an illuminating and worthwhile day.

<http://www.christian-retreat.org/progdayret.html>

CSN DAY

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS, Exploring the Spirituality of the Scriptures.

8 February 2020 Holy Family Centre, Allestree, Derby

Led by **Fr Chris Thomas**. Chris is the Director of the Irenaeus Project in Liverpool. <https://irenaeus.co.uk>

Contact Margaret in the office for further information.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales have dedicated 2020 as a year of focus on the Bible and **The God Who Speaks**.

Find out more:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/events/the-god-who-speaks/>

OPPORTUNITY

It's the time of year when nominations are invited for the Executive Committee of CSN. Please consider offering a period of service on the Committee - it's vital for our continuation as a Network! You can nominate yourself or someone else. You can come back on the Committee if you have been away for more than 3 years. Just let Margaret know on the email address opposite or by phone. Meetings are generally in London but could be elsewhere if needed. Expenses are paid. CSN has to develop and change to be able to survive. Please join us in making this happen!



O Heart of Advent, (Waiting)

O heart of Advent, where you are, your presence is felt in the winter breeze.

O heart of Advent, where you go, you stay with us in our rest.

O heart of Advent, when you come, your love for us is in our hearts.

O heart of Advent, where you stay, your presence is with us as we wait.

O heart of Advent, come to us, as we seek your healing touch.

O heart of Advent, come to us, you're the source of Christian hope.

This time last year CSN members were enjoying late autumn at the Kairos Centre in Roehampton. Thanks to CSN member, Diana Pinchin, for sending in this variation on the O Antiphons which she wrote on our pre-Advent Retreat.

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Executive Committee: Shirley Taylor (Chair), Eamonn Hamilton (Treasurer) Mary Groom, Audrey Hamilton, Fr Chris Thomas.

Thank you to Sister Teresa Kennedy and Michael O'Halloran, who have both stepped down from the Executive this autumn due to change of circumstances. Both have served for a number of years and we are very grateful for their input.

Membership Secretary: Margaret Palladino.

Newsletter & Development: Jill Keegan. *Please send newsletter contributions to the email below.*

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