



Restoration Ministries

He Restores My Soul

Autumn 2013

Dear Friends,

“I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!”

“In these days Christians need to be at the forefront – on the frontier between the gospel and the abyss. We must be faithful. We are not expected to be discouraged. We must carry the good news in spite of all the storms. So many people have lost the reference points of their boundaries and their history but there is no room for being pessimistic.” Inspirational words of hope from a remarkable man whom I encountered in September of this year while sharing in a retreat in Trosly, France. The nature of his work means that he is in a key position to have an influence on world events. He is all too familiar with current flash-points, with the agonizing over policies and with the anguish of those who, while they have no voice, will be most deeply and directly affected by decisions taken on a national/international level. Here is a man of deep faith and huge humility whose life is a prayer. With quiet conviction he reminded us that when we stand in front of our Creator the only thing that will be important is Matthew 25. The hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned – are the ‘least of these’ to whom Jesus is referring. In them, we see his face. We don’t have to look very far to find the least of these in the communities from which we come and to be alerted to others much farther afield whose plight is brought close to us through media. Discouragement arising out of the enormity of need can quickly produce apathy, but my friend in France would call us to see again that small is beautiful. In little acts of compassion and hidden encounters of mercy we meet and minister to Jesus. Jean Claude for me is a sign of hope that it only takes one person listening and acting with loving obedience to change the world.

Fr Joseph Larsen, one time international chaplain for Faith and Light and dear friend died in August in Holland. His life was spent among the ‘least of these’ in various spheres of ministry in different parts of the world. Age and illness meant that he spent his latter years in an old peoples’ home, but what a ministry he had to so many of us around the world. In his last letter, which someone else had to type for him, he said, “My journey is marked by the symptoms of Parkinson’s disease. This is why I cannot write by hand any more. Added by many other inconveniences. But the heart is still so awake.” Notice he does not say ‘I have Parkinson’s disease.’ By that simple courageous statement he was affirming that he was more than the disease with all its attendant indignities and frustrations. He was still on a journey of greater and greater abandonment to the Beloved and his heart was alert for the slightest whisper from the God who is so in love with him. Joseph Larsen has now stepped across the threshold not to a strange country but rather one whose landmarks are so familiar because he has lived them all of his earthly journey. He continues to be an image bearer of hope.

“Don’t worry about me; I’m going to a party!” Some of the last words on the earthly journey of our beloved friend Maureen Blake who also died in August. Through her profession which was her vocation, Maureen found many ways to minister to the ‘least of these.’ To them she was a source of life as they were to her. In all my encounters with people I have never known anyone who ‘lived’ her death as she did. Letting go, awareness, celebration, the gift of tears and laughter, the unconquerable faith remain as part of her legacy to us. She has simply gone on ahead of us and will ever be an encourager and an icon of hope. Sometimes we ourselves can feel like the ‘least of these’ with little to offer a world in pain. But if small is beautiful then each of us can do some beautiful thing every day and, in doing so can change the world and be a sign of hope. So – peace and courage be yours, my beautiful friends.

Ruth

What has been happening in Restoration Ministries since our last newsletter?

Ruth continues as a member of the Executive for Veritas and with her commitments as an ecumenical Canon. In early September Eilish travelled with Ruth to Ennis where Ruth was speaking to young people and then in the Cathedral to mark the Year of Faith. Later in the month Ruth was in Trosly, France, sharing in a 10 day retreat for long-term L'Arche assistants with Jean Vanier. In October Ruth & Rose were in Moville, Co Donegal for the Year of Faith. Also in October we had a visit from the Focolare community in Belfast. November sees Ruth in Switzerland for a meeting of the L'Arche International Reflective Council as one of four church leaders. That same month she speaks to Women in Faith in Belfast and to school chaplains in Athlone, accompanied by Rose.

Faith and Friendship which was brought in under the umbrella of Restoration Ministries some years ago continues to thrive with a new group in Moira. Ruth and Anne Gibson visited them a few weeks ago. Spiritual Direction is still an important part of Ruth's agenda and hospitality features large. Rose facilitates Wednesday prayer from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm. That, along with our daily prayer at 12 noon and our prayer link, organised by June Pat, provide us with the spiritual 'oxygen' so necessary for everything we seek to do and to be. Through their regular meetings and steady support our Board of Directors give us the confidence of a well-run base and also provide valuable discernment about where we are and where we are going! We have been glad of your positive comments about our new website and hope very soon to be able to update on a regular basis and to provide an opportunity to give donations (which is still the way Restoration Ministries receives its income) via My Donate.



Elizabeth & Irene from Focolare community in Belfast with Ruth.

As you can see, we haven't gone away! I would like you take serious note of the announcements below! Why don't you consider bringing one or two friends with you to our reflection day? We'd love to see you. And, of course, you are always welcome at Harmony Drive. Rose

ADVENT REFLECTION DAY

ST BRIGID'S DERRYVOLGIE
SATURDAY DECEMBER 7, 2013
2.00 PM - 5.00 PM



WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
FACILITATOR:
RUTH PATTERSON

CENTERING PRAYER

EVERY THURSDAY
6.00 PM - 7.00 PM
EDGEHILL COLLEGE
FACILITATOR:
DIANE CLUTTERBUCK

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