

Tasmanian Report on Annual Silent Retreat

“Christian Meditation and Benedictine Spirituality” -Tasmanian annual silent retreat 5-7th March 2010, presenter Trish Panton, Benedictine Oblate Coordinator of The WCCM



We have had such a blessed weekend - some 30 of our Tasmanian community gathered for our annual silent retreat with Trish to lead us. Our hosts were the Presentation Sisters at Maryknoll Retreat Centre in Blackmans Bay. We enjoyed generous hospitality with beautiful meals offered with love and care and the lovely setting with mature gardens on a small knoll beside the sea. In contemplative silence participants walked the paths down to the wide curve of sandy beach or up to the cliffs, or along a shady bush track following the course of a small rivulet. Our silence was accompanied by vociferous magpies and lapwings, the occasional possum and wallaby and all the sea birds, in cloud and rain, sun and wind - typically Tasmanian. As night fell half a harvest moon crept up over the horizon, Iron Pot lighthouse blinking in sets of three as the night filled with the countless stars melting into the Milky Way.

Teachings from the Rule of Saint Benedict with its interpretation for our lives as lay people today were related to the similarities in the teachings of John Main, OSB and Laurence Freeman, OSB. Before meditating we prayed a shortened form of Liturgy of the Hours from “Benedictine Daily Prayer: A Short Breviary”, (Trish demonstrating to us that we can all chant the psalms (and did, so well, during the retreat) We heard readings from 'Door to Silence' at the beginning and end of each meditation period. Particularly powerful moments were the sessions when Trish guided us in Lectio Divina. She asked the right questions. Following the first session of guided Lectio, we experienced Lectio by ourselves later in the day. With that we became aware of the depth and meaning that we had experienced when we were guided. Our request for another guided session was responded to on Sunday morning. The contemplative sharing by participants of their experience of the weekend revealed how we had been touched to know the unfailing love of God within us. We have been strengthened individually and as a meditation community on our journey to become our true selves, confident and self-forgetful in our capacity for love. The retreat culminated in the Eucharist, celebrated by Fr Aidan, CP, one of the retreatants.

In the peace and love of Christ
Danielle Pacaud