

Early in the morning, in the heart of Derbyshire, Mary Colwell, known to many for her commitment to understanding and care for our natural world, will be inviting a group of conference-goers to step out into the stillness and chill of an April dawn and simply to listen. You might imagine them there, waiting for the sound that has long been linked with a sense of expectancy and the hope of new life. In a miraculous instant, multiplied soon with song upon song, the dawn chorus begins: the start of a new day and an opportunity to reflect within it on our place in this vibrant living world.

It is because of her respect for and understanding of the best in our natural world that the Catholic Network for Retreats and Spirituality (CNRS) has invited Mary Colwell to lead us in our annual weekend conference at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick from 19 to 21 April. CNRS is the Catholic body within the ecumenical network of the Retreat Association. One of the contributions of CNRS to ecumenical life and sharing in Britain is to organise a series of annual conferences to which all are welcome. This gathering is an opportunity to deepen our own understanding of an incarnate God whom we believe to be an integral part of our world and our lives.

The CNRS membership includes women

The nature of faith

At a forthcoming gathering, participants will explore how to live fully and harmoniously in Creation, as **Tom McGuinness** explains

and men who are searching for real meaning in the patterns of God's life with us. The membership also includes a significant number of people whose full or part-time ministry is in accompanying others in retreat and spiritual journeying in residential or daily life settings. All are aware that our grounded, lived experience is part of the vocabulary of God's communication with us. Within it we hope to sense the guiding of God's good spirit towards integration and joy and also to recognise the destructive patterns that lead away from such wholeness and integrity.

We are more and more aware in our own days that an important part of our lived experience is expressed in responsibility for our beautiful but fragile world. Underlying

this exploration is a real question about what kind of God we are presupposing in the work of spiritual accompaniment and how we recognise the Christ of Resurrection in the face of global disintegration, tragedy and so many seemingly shifting certainties. As the once comfortable boundaries of climatic and natural resources become increasingly threatened, how possible is it for good people not simply to face up to such challenge but to live life to the full in the way of Christ who already brings the fullness of life?

A previous Swanwick conference led us to look at the sky and the incredible intricacy of galaxies, as *Tablet* columnist Br Guy Consolmagno SJ helped us explore our relationship to this universe and our understanding of God at the heart of it. On

RENEWAL FOR MINISTRY AT DALGAN PARK

IMU Institute, Dalgan Park, Navan, Ireland

PROGRAMME 2013/2014

The Renewal for Ministry Programmes at Dalgan Park offer the opportunity for personal growth and renewal in a welcoming and supportive environment to those who are engaged in Christian ministry. They also provide space for those who are in transition in ministry to pause and reflect on the call of the next stage of life. Together these programmes provide a substantial sabbatical renewal opportunity, offering:

- Holistic renewal in a multicultural community of women and men;
- The opportunity to develop a more contemplative approach to life;
- Individual accompaniment on the journey of self-renewal;
- Up-dating in Scripture and Theology;
- Space for rest and relaxation in a lovely parkland setting;
- An emphasis on environmental concern and care for the earth;
- Opportunities to visit ancient sites such as Newgrange, Glendalough, Clonmacnoise, Aran Islands, etc;

Autumn Term

The Faith and Mission Renewal Programme 16 September - 13 December 2013

This is a twelve-week residential renewal programme. Its principal aim is to provide an opportunity for personal/spiritual renewal. It has been found to be very helpful both for those who are looking for sabbatical renewal and for those returning from or preparing for, mission overseas or at home.

Winter/Spring Term

The Growth for Ministry Renewal Programme

20 January - 20 April 2014

This residential programme supports participants in the ongoing process of their personal/spiritual growth. The primary focus of the programme will be on facilitating self-transcendence in relationship with and service to others.

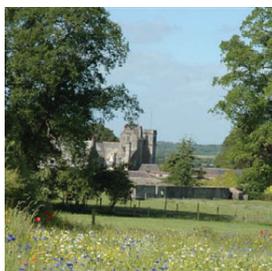
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Franciscan Retreat

On the Franciscan island of Barbana, Grado, Gorizia, Italy

11 - 20 Sept 2013



Staying with the Franciscan friars in their Domus Mariae retreat house overlooking the Lagoon of Grado, in the largely unexplored region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, lying between Venice and Trieste. With excursions to Grado, Aquileia and Udine.

£1,300 full board and ensuite

British Airways flights Gatwick-Venice

All excursions; All entrance charges

No single room supplements



Details from Retreats Beyond Dover:

retreats@dircon.co.uk

www.retreats.dircon.co.uk

Tel: 0207 379 7273



Birds fly near a statue of an angel holding a cross in Stavropol, Russia. Photo: CNS/Reuters, Eduard Korniyenko

that occasion we looked up at the stars, literally, in the darkness of the night sky. On this occasion we have invited Mary Colwell to draw us to a careful awareness of the delicacy, strength and vulnerability of our own world. We want to focus our attention on the earth – with our feet firmly on the ground.

In “Awakening the Dawn” we hope to explore a spirituality that can help us understand our place in a living world that is still in process of creation. The conference is open to all who have an interest in deepening our understanding of how we share the energy and joy of God’s life in our ever-evolving natural world.

Mary Colwell outlines some of the scope of the weekend:

“We will go on a journey through nature using different scenarios based on real experiences with the natural world. We will explore how our feelings and perceptions are challenged by the natural world from joy to fear, vulnerability to awe, comfort to threat. Where is God in all of these? How can they tell us about who and what we are? For example, we will relive a story about being joyful, moved by beauty and awe. What is that telling us about God? Why do we find nature beautiful? How important is that to our well-being?”

“We will feel vulnerable, exposed to the dangers of being a human being on a planet that is at times ruthless and indifferent to human suffering. Where can we find God then? Vulnerability is a state we try to escape from, but if we allow ourselves to be vulnerable we can release great creativity.

“We will feel superior – rulers with power over nature. How does that distort God in our eyes? Do we always recognise that power brings responsibility? If we lose compassion and empathy with nature, does that reflect in our lives in other ways? We will look for meaning in the ordinariness of nature, the day-to-day comings and goings of everyday creatures and find solace in the normality of life going on around us. Using nature allows us to explore a common experience and to see ourselves in a different light, as part of a global community of life that lives in and by the grace of God.”

We look forward to Mary Colwell’s positive and joyful response to the best signs of God’s life in our world, which will surely

be enhanced by our conference liturgist, Bernadette Farrell, whose beautiful compositions are known and prayed by so many parishes and communities in Britain and throughout the world. Mary Colwell and Bernadette Farrell together will provide a setting for serious reflection, joyful song, creative liturgy and shared prayer, giving all who are able to be there an experience of encouragement and challenge, and a sense of companionship with each other and care for our world. Weaving space for personal prayer and quiet time into the conference days will also be an important ingredient. Spring will be an ideal time to be refreshed by the peaceful grounds of the Hayes Conference Centre.

We intend the conference to have a further role as one catalyst among many for an increasing understanding of the powerful role of church communities in facilitating awareness of our global situation and responsibilities. The tenor of the conference, it is anticipated, will be to offer a sense of enthusiasm and belief in the empowering effects of true justice and clear thinking in the face of great responsibilities for our planet. We are only too aware that our present world situation affects not just our own generation but those who come after us. We plan to address some of these questions together not in dismay but to discover the “more” that we can do.

As Thomas Merton put it:

When we are alone on a starlit night, when by chance we see the migrating birds in autumn descending on a grove of junipers to rest and eat; when we see children in a moment when they are really children, when we know love in our own hearts ... at such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the “newness”, the emptiness and the purity of vision that make themselves evident, all these provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance.

New Seeds of Contemplation, 1961

■ **Tom McGuinness SJ is director of the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow. For full details of Awakening the Dawn, visit <http://cnrs.retreats.org.uk/conference.html>, or see the Retreat Association website www.retreats.org.uk and follow the links to Member Groups and CNRS. CNRS welcomes new members. For more information, telephone the Retreat Association on 01494 433004 or email info@retreats.org.uk.**



DROMANTINE SMA Retreat & Conference Centre

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- Large conference hall and 7 seminar/meeting rooms
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- Chapel & prayer room
- Excellent home cooked food

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- 10-17 May
- 28 May-4 June
- 10-17 June
- 29 Aug-5 September
- 27 Oct-3 Nov

PREACHED RETREATS 2013

- 25-31 March
Holy Week & Easter Triduum
- 28-31 March
Easter Triduum only
- 10-17 May Margaret Silf
“God’s Unfinished Story”
- 28 May-4 June Mossie Kelleher SMA
“With the Lord is full Redemption”
- 10-16 June Brendan Comerford SJ
“Reflections with the Mystics”
- 27 Oct-1 Nov Brendan Comiskey
“Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ”

WORKSHOPS

- 4-7 June Hugh Lagan SMA
“Strength Based Ministry Workshop”
- 6-8 September Fr. Daniel O’Leary
“The Divine Beauty of your human heart “

**Visit our website for further details
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