



Catholic Spirituality Network

CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY NETWORK

NEWSLETTER EDITION 21

SPRING 2026

RETREAT ASSOCIATION SUMMER EVENT

‘Going Upstream’: integrity and hope in dark days

Monday 22 June 2026

Southwark Cathedral

10.30 am – 3.30 pm

Guest speaker: Dr Mark Oakley

Southwark Cathedral is an Anglican Cathedral on

the south bank of the River Thames.

It is well worth a visit, not least for its Shakespeare window. It has been a place of

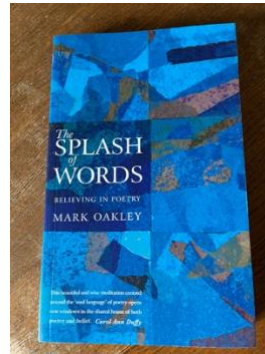


Christian worship for more than a thousand years and was originally the church of an Augustinian priory. This will be the venue for the 2026 Summer Event held by the Retreat Association. Book now to spend the day in this beautiful place and have the chance to hear one of the best speakers in the Church today.

Dr Mark Oakley is one of the patrons of the Retreat Association. He currently serves as Dean of Southwark and



was formerly Chancellor of St Paul’s Cathedral. He is the author of a number of books on poetry and theology and has a strong interest in theatre.



Mark is a wonderful speaker, honest about the issues that face the world and the church, and able to articulate with passion and humour ‘a spirituality for hard times’ in the words of R S Thomas.

Also present on the day will be Alison MacTier, Director of the Retreat Association, and our current Chair, Rev Martin Davies. Long-standing patron, Rev Graham Sparkes will engage Mark in conversation during the afternoon session.

For more information and a booking form: <https://www.retreats.org.uk/summer-event-2026>

As CSN members, we are automatically members of the ecumenical Retreat Association, which aims to help people find ways of exploring and deepening their journey with God through spirituality and prayer. We are glad to support the RA in this important work. Days like this are a great opportunity to join with the wider body and get to know each other better!



Catholic Spirituality Network

Shorelines Conference Report

In Scripture, Genesis tells how God separated land from water, sea from earth. A tidal shoreline, however, is neither one nor the other, but a place of shifting sands, stones and mudflats. At the 2026 CSN Conference, artist Christine Dodd guided us through these changing landscapes, using them as a metaphor for our spiritual life.

First, she led us along shorelines which shift with time and tides. Impermanence is part of life. Though God is our permanent rock, that permanence isn't static but dynamic, and we may encounter God in different ways in different places. Hence the need for discernment and a willingness to be shifted where God wishes to move us. An RNLI poster of a man floating in the water with the message 'FLOAT TO LIVE' resonated with several of us.



Turning to different kinds of shore – sand, rocks, mud – Christine helped us ponder the flotsam (remains of shipwrecks) and jetsam (what's been thrown overboard to lighten the load) of our lives. Like turnstones – wading birds who pick their way through rock and pebble looking for food – we also need to turn things over and ponder what God might be saying to us through them. At other times, however, we may feel as though we're stuck in mud. Then we need to stop struggling, stay still and wait until rescue comes.

From the shore, Christine plunged us into the ocean. One powerful image was Rembrandt's *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee*. But what is dark and deep isn't necessarily dangerous. Faith encourages us to dive into the depths of God and self, though we need to be equipped with such things as desire, openness, courage, and trust. Another illustration was by

South Korean artist Yongsung Kim, *The Hand of God*, which looks from below at Christ standing above us on the water and reaching down to lift us back to the surface. And Christine reminded us that even a calm sea isn't still – nutrients rise from the depths. What feeds us?

In each session we had time to share our thoughts, and Christine gave us resources to further our reflections. The programme included plenty of time to explore the grounds, browse the offerings on the Sustainability Sale tables, and relax on Wednesday evening in Ladywell's beautiful lounge. It was good to meet old friends and make new ones, especially those for whom this was their first CSN Conference.



CHRISTINE, MARGARET,
SHIRLEY & MARY

Shirley and Mary led the liturgy which began and ended our days. In the closing Eucharist, led by Tom, we gathered on that mystical shoreline between earth and heaven and offered the fruits of our time together to God who had so richly blessed us.

The welcome from the staff, the simple luxury of our accommodation, and an abundance of good food (including freshly baked cheese scones at breakfast!) all helped to make our stay a time of restoration and refreshment. Thank you to all who brought this Conference into being and made it a nourishing encounter with God and with each other.

Janet Bone



Catholic Spirituality Network



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

CSN's online events from *Saints and Souls* in November, *The Sign of Emmanuel* in Advent, *The Feast of the Presentation* and

continuing on to *St Joseph* in March, have brought many of us together more frequently. *The Feast of the Visitation* will be celebrated on 30 May and *St John the Baptist* on 24 June.

Please book using catholicspiritualitynetwork@gmail.com

We were also blessed with a Lenten/Easter Series led by Magdalen Lawler SND, entitled '*And there were many other women there.*' Sitting with inspiring paintings brought depth to our journey as we walked with the Women of the Gospels through the Passion of Christ and beyond. These gatherings offered a well of rich input, deep sharing and prayer. We look forward to further collaborations with Magdalen in the autumn.

Our recent CSN Conference: *Shorelines*, led by Christine Dodd, used the power of art, images and liturgy to hollow out space for encounter, wisdom and insight in our lives, particularly at the boundaries of experience, where God awaits. The time was rich and full, with the company of several new members alongside seasoned CSN companions.

We thank Sr Marie Grogan FMDM, now stepping down from the CSN Executive, for her dedication over many years and for strengthening our connection with Ladywell Franciscan Retreat Centre in Godalming, Surrey.

We thank you for your membership of CSN in support of exploring the spiritual life. As our world reels from conflict to crisis, we pray for the renewal of God's Spirit for all nations, to become people of God's truth, compassion, service and peace.

Shirley Taylor

Sustainability Sale

The Sale at Conference received very generous contributions from participants. Special thanks to both Magdalen and



Marie-Christine for the abundant amount of books. Eileen won first prize in our exciting Raffle – a beautiful book about Monet with an accompanying poster, and there were many other winners! The Sale provided a great source of reading material and gifts for self or others. Altogether with the Raffle we raised the amazing sum of £300. Thank you all!

AGM 2026

Our 2026 AGM is planned for **Sunday 20 September 2026 at 4 pm**. As in recent years, we will once again be meeting online. This format has served us well in enabling people to attend from wherever they are. Margaret will be in touch with members in advance to provide papers, nominations to the Executive Committee, and notification of the Zoom link.



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EVENTS

SATURDAY 30 MAY
11.00 am – 12.30 pm
Online Celebration of
The Feast of the Visitation



WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE
Online Celebration
Feast of St John the Baptist
2.00 – 3.30 pm

Donations welcome for CSN Events

RETREAT ASSOCIATION SUMMER EVENT

22 June 2026

10.30 am – 3.30 pm

Southwark Cathedral

Guest Speaker: **Dr Mark Oakley**

‘Going Upstream’:

integrity and hope in dark days

Contact the Retreat Association to book.

THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.



Wendell Berry

Catholic Spirituality Network

Executive Committee: Shirley Taylor (Chair), Eamonn Hamilton (Treasurer), Mary Nono, Christine Dodd, Fr Tomy Rockey CP (Passionist Spirituality rep), Jo Alstott (Youth rep), Deacon Keith Ballard, Fr Chris Thomas (Conference of Religious rep), Sr Margaret Mattison (*co-opted*), Fr Oliver Barry OMI (*co-opted*).

Many thanks for all her support to Sr Marie Grogan FMDM, who has now stepped down.

Membership Secretary: Margaret Palladino.

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

Contact: Margaret Palladino, Membership Secretary, Catholic Spirituality Network (CSN), St George’s Cathedral, Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7HY Tel: 07756 864784

catholicspiritualitynetwork@gmail.com

www.csnretreats.org.uk