

# Spirituality News

**From the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth Spiritual Formation Team**



**Summer 2025**



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In our society all sorts of helps are given to us to grow intellectually. Not so many are given to us to grow spiritually. To find and become familiar with our spirit, the centre of our personal identity, is to begin to live from the power of that centre; no longer blown around by every wind that happens to ruffle the surface, we learn to be rooted in ourselves.

Growth needs planting and rooting and it also needs cultivation. Meditation, because of its highly practical orientation, leads us day in and day out to cultivate the life of the spirit, to return to that rootedness in our centre.

***The Way of Unknowing:***  
***John Main***

# Visio Divina



Visio Divina is a beautiful, ancient form of prayer that invites us to encounter the divine through images. It's a contemplative practice, similar to Lectio Divina (divine reading), but instead of using scripture, you use images or art to guide your thoughts and connect with God.

In essence, Visio Divina is about wearing 'God-glasses' to see the world through a lens that reveals deeper truths and invites God to speak directly to your heart. It's about being open to the visible helping the invisible to arise, perhaps in a profound way.

You can choose any visual element as a tool for meditation; anything that resonates: sacred images, photos, paintings, icons; anything that helps us to connect with the divine and to view life through a sacred lens, perhaps uncovering something new. All of life then becomes hallowed ground.

Visio Divina can be practiced individually, with a prayer partner or in a small group.

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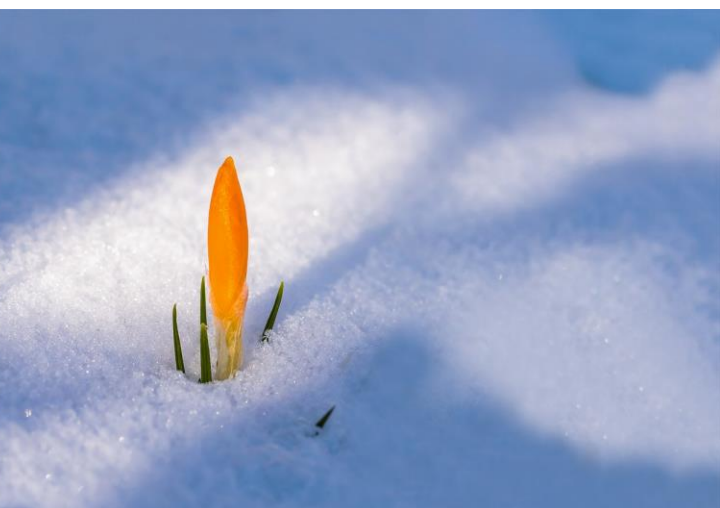
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can be practiced  
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Firstly, though, and as a bit of a warm up (for those who might not have prayed this way before), you might cast your eye over the eight images on the previous pages. Slowly and gently let your eyes move around from one to the other....and notice which (if any) you feel drawn to. Does one particular image attract you?

After a short while, try to settle on one.

- Relax and gaze at it. All around it: the shapes, the colours, the feel, the detail.
- Perhaps ponder why you're attracted to it.
- Is the image saying something to you?
- Does it, can it, in some way, reflect 'where you are' or perhaps something in your day so far? Something from yesterday?
- Just breathe and notice; be open....
- Let the thoughts arise and let God be involved.
- After a little while – maybe just a few minutes - move your concentration and gaze away from your chosen image and ponder what (if anything) came up for you.
- You might want to have a chat with God about it.
- You might choose to make a note of/journal anything that felt significant – if anything did.

**You might want to try these simple steps:**

- Settle in a comfortable place without distraction – and relax. Close your eyes and focus on your breath.
- When you're ready, open your eyes, and gaze at the whole image. Notice shapes, colours, lighting, detail, foreground, background.
- What draws your attention? Are you being lured by God to a treasure that's just for you?
- Ponder the part of the picture that has drawn your attention
- How is God speaking to you?
- Why do you think God drew your attention to this particular part?
- Is a message conveyed that relates to your life today?
- Do you perhaps sense an invitation – or hear a call?
- Is a memory aroused?
- Allow these thoughts to descend into your heart.
- What emotion is evoked?
- What word describes your inner stirring as you embrace this feeling?
- Allow God's communication to touch you deeply.
- Respond to God.
- Share any yearnings or desires that have arisen.
- Now turn to silence. Simply rest in communion with God. Savour the stillness. Be soothed by Love.

***Settle in a  
comfortable  
place without  
distraction –  
and relax.***



Let's finish with some words from Richard Rohr: *"Authentic God experience always expands your seeing and never constricts it. ... In God you do not include less and less; you always see and love more and more."*

**Richard Rohr 'The Universal Christ'**

***Sarah van Wely***



# Carmelite Secular Order

Influences for our choices come from many directions. I grew up in the west of Ireland where our parish church had a statue of Thérèse of Lisieux. I was fascinated by her, not least that she died at the age of twenty-four and was hidden for nine years in an enclosed Carmelite convent, dying unknown to the world at large. Her little Way of Surrender and Confidence and her last words, "I go to Him with confidence and Love," have always inspired me.

Moving on, I was introduced to the works of St John of the Cross when I was a nun in a teaching order. I did not find him easy reading at first, but was drawn to his poetry, and the Spiritual Canticle opened for me the love song between God and the soul:

*Where have you hidden, Beloved,  
and left me moaning?  
You fled like the stag after wounding me;  
I went out calling you, but you were gone.*

John brought me into the mystery of God's presence, hidden in the depths of our hearts and lives and his words, "*I have neither guide nor light except that which burns in my heart*" resounded deep within me, and still do; as do the words from Hosea Ch 2: v14 '*I will now allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her*'.

After leaving the convent and getting married, I discovered the Carmelite Secular Order in 1988 when my sister Penelope, who was already a member, told me about the Community. There was a priory in Wincanton with several Carmelite friars and I joined the Secular Order based there, directed by one of the friars. It was, and has been, a wonderful discovery of belonging to an Order whose saints have inspired so many of us. St Teresa of Avila, Saint Therese of Lisieux, St John of the Cross, St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, St Elizabeth of the Trinity and countless others have become



close friends and mentors in the spiritual life, above all in their love for Jesus, their persevering prayer and insights into the Scriptures, their struggles in the midst of suffering, darkness and despair and their love for all of creation '*where there is no love, put love and you will draw out love*' (letter 26: John of the Cross).

Being a Secular Order Carmelite gives one a structure to one's daily life. We commit ourselves to personal prayer, daily Mass if possible, Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church, spiritual reading and monthly meetings with our local communities. Once a year we have a retreat given by one of our Carmelite friars and we meet on a regional basis also once a year, which is an opportunity to meet up

***Being a Secular  
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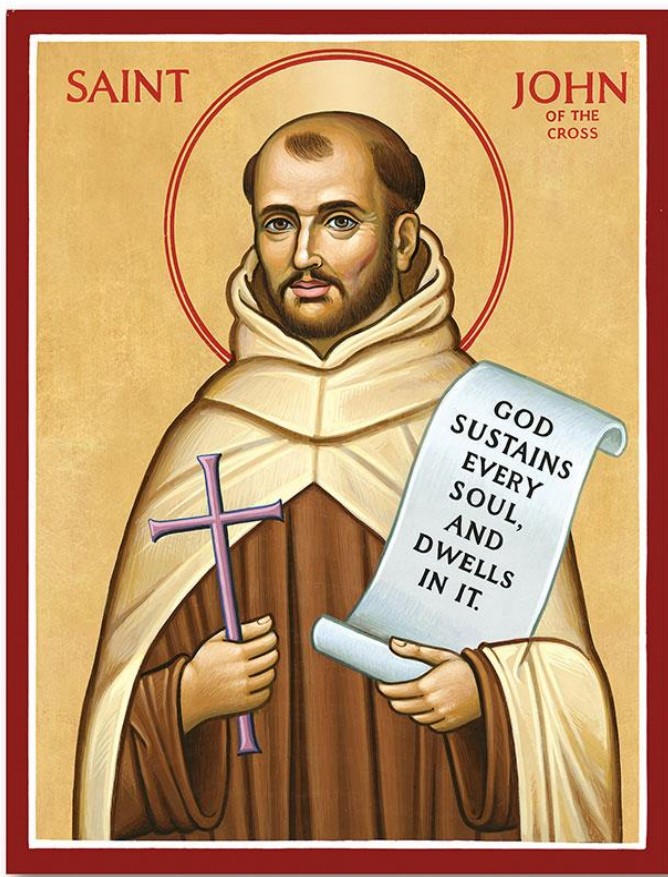
with communities from other parts of the area in which we live.

Being immersed in the Scriptures and life of the church, getting to know and love our Carmelite saints, who have gone before us and those hidden among us, has been a continuing joy and inspiration and I wake each morning thanking the Lord for bringing me into the Order and giving me Love, Life and Light. I am more and more aware as I get older and can do physically less and less that prayer is truly the fulcrum that lifts the world into the heart of God. Le point vièrge are the praying hands as one author framed it. We can just BE where we are in the presence of the Beloved; *'in Him we live and move and have our being'*, and in his Love we are centred with our feet on earth and our hearts in heaven. Alleluia!

**Caroline Dawnay**



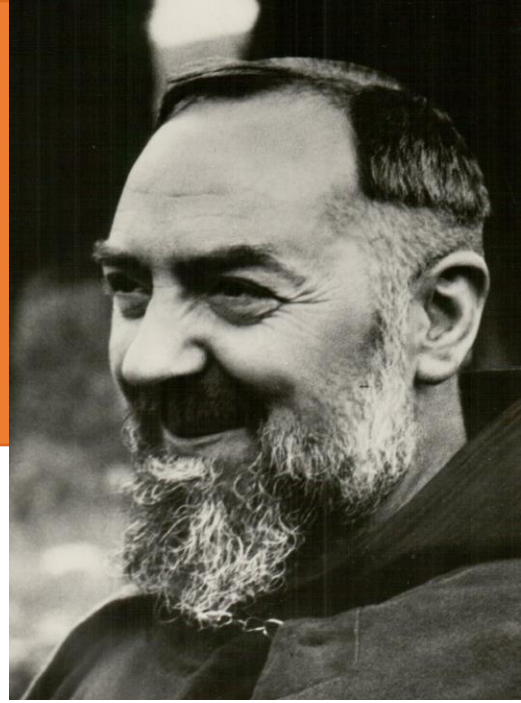
*We commit ourselves to personal prayer, daily Mass if possible, Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church, spiritual reading and monthly meetings with our local communities..*



# Prayerful Pause

*"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."*

**Ephesians 6:18**



## **Padre Pio: Healing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, I thank you for loving me.  
I thank you for sending your Son,  
Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the world to save and to set me free.  
I trust in your power and grace that sustain and restore me.

Loving Father,  
touch me now with your healing hands,  
for I believe that your will is for me to be well in mind, body, soul and spirit.  
Cover me with the most precious blood of your Son,  
Our Lord, Jesus Christ from the top of my head to the soles of my feet.  
Cast out anything that should not be in me.  
Root out any unhealthy and abnormal cells.  
Open any blocked arteries or veins and rebuild and replenish any damaged areas.  
Remove all inflammation and cleanse any infection  
by the power of Jesus' precious blood.  
Let the fire of your healing love pass through my entire body  
to heal and make new any diseased areas  
so that my body will function  
the way you created it to function.  
Touch also my mind and my emotions,  
even the deepest recesses of my heart.

Saturate my entire being with your presence, love, joy and peace  
and draw me ever closer to you every moment of my life.  
And Father, fill me with your Holy Spirit  
and empower me to do your works  
so that my life will bring glory and honour to your holy name.  
I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.



# I heard a Siskin in My Garden

The Merlin App on my phone told me that there was a Siskin singing in my garden. I had to look up a picture of a Siskin to find out what it looked like.

This beautiful bird, created by God, has probably always graced my garden, but its presence was unnoticed by me because I never spent long enough listening to the identity recording on my phone. I always thought I knew what birds it would identify, so why wait for anything new!

A long period of pain and forced inactivity has made this a metaphor for my life. To be grounded as an injured bird might lead to death. Being grounded as child of God, has led me to a new language of life. I don't know what God wants to show me; I have never waited around long enough to find out.

Any gift or talent I might ever have been given has been stripped away during this time and I have learnt new, spiritually positive meanings for lack of

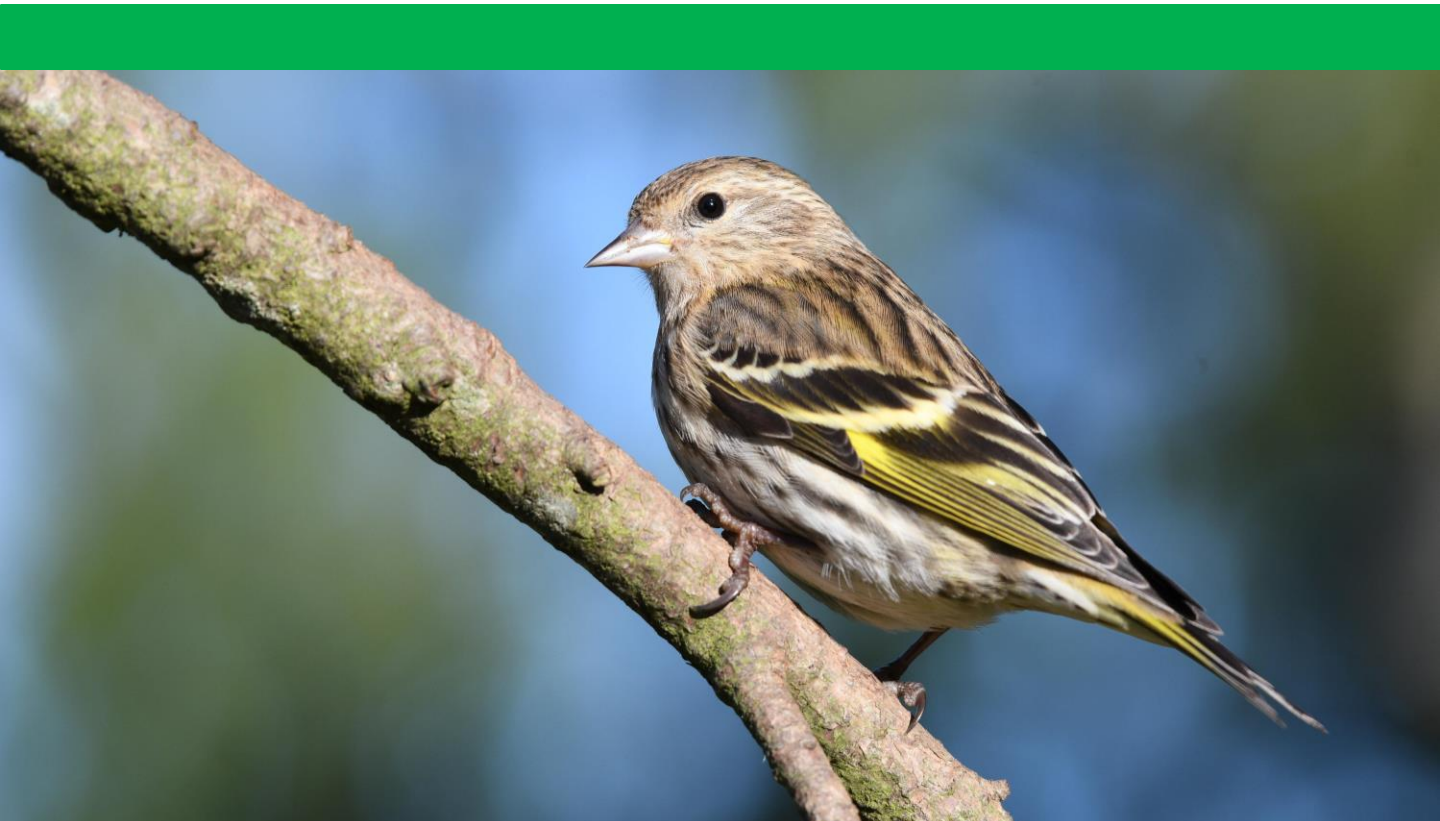
independence, lack of control and complete inactivity. I fight against it, but I have no choice but to trust in God, accept his timing, listen and wait.

It is hugely uncomfortable for me not to fix things which I would have considered needed to be done, but this brings a freedom in seeing that either someone else will do them or they weren't essential anyway.

I am watching this working out in my garden. Will this rose survive if I don't disentangle it from the plant which is choking it? We will find out when it either does or doesn't come back next year. I trust that God knows what His plan is for the rose, as he does for my recovery. How much? How long?

Never before has the prayer 'Patient Trust' held such meaning for me.

***Chris Bryden***



# Patient Trust



Above all, trust in the slow work of God.  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything  
to reach the end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way  
to something unknown, something new.  
And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through  
some stages of instability -  
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;  
your ideas mature gradually - let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances  
acting on your own good will)  
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.

*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ*

***Give Our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.***



# Synodal Signposts

As a lifelong reader of T.S. Eliot, some phrases from his work stick in my mind like a mantra, and I mull over them from time to time and find new interpretations and nuances which suit the present time. I recently penned a theological essay using as my starting point the killer one-liner from Sweeney Agonistes : *'I gotta use words when I talk to you'* and reflected on familiar words in our faith life which tend to downplay the ministry of lay people.... *'ordination'*, *'ontological change'*, *'solemn promises of obedience'* as pledged at ordination, whilst lay people are simply expected to *'do what Father says'*, and seem to be systematically excluded from full participation in decision making, governance and pastoral ministry.

I now offer some familiar words, 21st century expressions which I think might resonate with readers of all ages and status.

## Counting the Days

'Counting the Days' to a child usually means looking forward to a birthday or marking off the number of *'sleeps'* on an Advent Calendar before Christmas. Adults, too, count down the days to great events, or even prosaic ones like pay day when they can go to the supermarket confident that the debit/credit card will not be rejected at the checkout. For the Church's lay faithful and for many who have walked away from the institution which failed them, the Synod and its ongoing development may well offer some significant entries in their faith diary.

## 'Restore Factory Settings' and 'Software Upgrade'

The reality in many parishes is that most priests recognise that they do not have all the gifts and skills to support a community of missionary disciples. Others, however, exhibit a form of *'clero fascism'* which deadens the spirit and empties the pews. It is fair to acknowledge that the lay faithful do not presume that their calling as members of *'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people'* (1 Peter 2:9), entitles them to

preside at Eucharist and minister the sacraments. They do, however, wish to share in these roles in ways which are appropriate to them. Sacramental theology is not set in stone and mandated ministries now include lay presiders at Liturgies of Word and Communion, authorised officiants at marriage ceremonies and presiders at funerals. These roles would have been unimaginable in a Church with an abundance of ordained priests.

So, in suggesting words as a metaphor for future developments in ministry to the People of God, I would offer words used by the communications industry – *'Restore Factory Settings'* and *'Software Upgrade'*. In this case, the settings would be the dual drivers of Vatican II – resourcing (back to the sources) and aggiornamento (bringing up to date). Like the varied gifts listed by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators and speakers in tongues), here is an opportunity for contemporary laity and clergy to model their ministry, values and conduct on these earlier ambassadors for the Kingdom. As an official affirmation of their work of communion and mission, the late Pope Francis mandated the inclusion of women within the instituted ministries





of acolyte and lector and raised the status of the Catechist. He also extended the right of women to speak and to vote at the synodal gathering of 2024, after which, perhaps, ministry might be further diversified to include female deacons and nonstipendiary priests who work part-time hours as priests whilst continuing in their secular employment.

So, to conclude with another snippet from T.S. Eliot, this time from his poem *Dry Salvages: (Four Quartets)*

*We had the experience but  
missed the meaning, And  
approach to the meaning  
restores the experience  
In a different form....*

Perhaps this is what the synodal journey will encourage us to do – to approach the meaning of the Lord's teaching for our time and context. We are called, not simply to speak the word of God as ancient, immutable carvings on tablets of stone, but that, as the Body of Christ, we ourselves embody the Word of God, the Logos. Ministry as service through kindness and attentive listening without harsh judgement may provide the best signposts to 'the good life' and days which are counted as having been truly blessed.

***Bridie Stringer***



# Directors' News 1

## Wisdom Centre

Wisdom House, The Abbey, Romsey, Hampshire,  
SO51 8EL, United Kingdom

Centre Manager: Fiona Jenvey

Tel: 01794 830206 Email:

[reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk](mailto:reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk)

## Summer into Autumn Programme 2025

### Rediscovering the Bible for the First Time

Saturday 13 September, 10.00am - 4.00pm

Facilitated by Chris Scott [click here](#)

### Women in Scripture

**Saturday 11 October**

10.00am-4.00pm

Facilitated by Sr Marie Turner DW [click here](#)

For our full Events Programme, please [click here](#)

To book, please email:

[reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk](mailto:reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk) or telephone:  
01794 830206

### Community Café | 12-1.30pm

Our popular monthly 'pop-up' lunch café, serving a choice of either soup and a roll, panini or jacket potato with filling choices; a dessert or fruit; tea or coffee. Please contact us to book your place - suggested donation £6.50 per person. Friday 26th September Friday 24 October \* Please note there is no Community Café in July and August \*

### Creative Café | 1.30-3.30pm

Our friendly, creative mindfulness sessions - a different craft each month. Please contact us to book your place - suggested donation £5.50 per person. Friday 26th September | Drink Coasters [click here](#) Friday 24th October | Leaf Candle Jar [click here](#) \* Please note there is no Creative Café in July and August \*



### Meditation

We continue to hold our weekly in-person meditation every Wednesday evening 7.30pm - 8.30pm. This is free of charge and there is no need to pre-book. If you'd like to know more about our meditation groups or to be added to the meditation mailing list, please contact us by emailing [reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk](mailto:reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk)

**SAVE THE DATE + SAVE THE DATE**

**SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE**

Saturday 22 November 2025

St. Peter's Church, Winchester

# Directors' News 2

## LCSD (London Centre for Spiritual Direction)

### Step into Supervision: Train to Support Other Spiritual Directors

Are you an experienced Spiritual Director who feels called to guide and support others in their ministry? We're excited to offer a rich and practical training opportunity to become a Supervisor - designed to equip you to accompany others with depth, insight, and confidence.

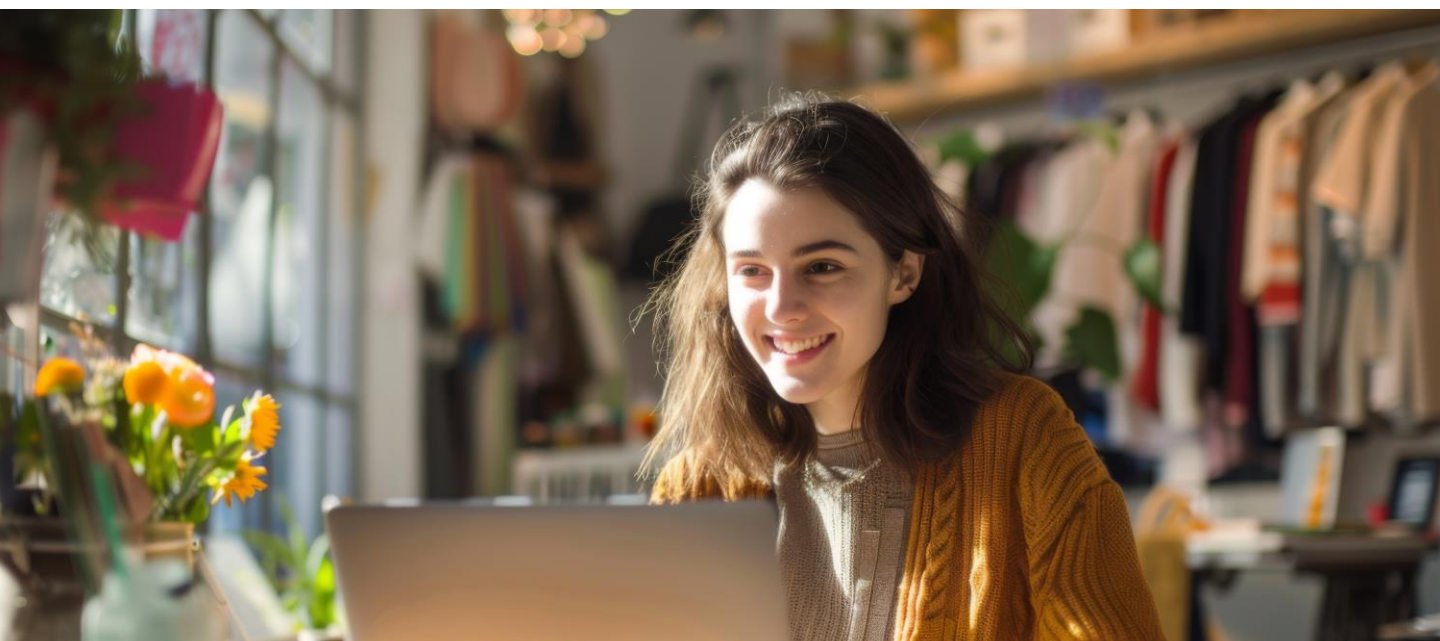
*"Supervision is the place of wisdom and wonder - a sacred space where we hold another's ministry with care, curiosity, and compassion."* **Maureen Conroy, Looking Into the Well: Supervision of Spiritual Directors**

This **interactive and practice-focused** course is for those ready to take the next step in their Spiritual Direction journey. You'll learn how to supervise others through both structured teaching and hands-on experience in a supportive online environment.

**We ask all participants to attend every session**, as each builds on the last. The March date is particularly important, as it gives space to reflect on what you've learned and return with real-world insights.

#### What You'll Explore:

- What supervision is - and why it matters in Spiritual Direction
  - Preparing and contracting with supervisees
  - The essential skills and tasks of a supervisor
  - Areas of focus in supervision
  - Different models and stages of the supervisory journey
  - Creative, reflective approaches to supervision
- 
- **Dates:** Thursday 18 - Saturday 20 September 2025 & Saturday 7 March 2026
  - **Time:** 11.00am - 4.00pm (GMT+1 & GMT)
  - **Venue:** Online via Zoom. Joining details will be provided on booking.
  - **Cost:** £250. Spaces are limited to keep the group interactive and personal.





# Events, Retreats and Resources

## BENEDICTINE

**Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton, Reading**  
English Benedictine Congregation under  
the Patronage of Saint Edmund, King & Martyr.  
[www.douaiabbey.org.uk](http://www.douaiabbey.org.uk)

### **Quarr Abbey, Ryde, Isle of Wight**

A Catholic Benedictine Monastery that offers  
hospitality and a range of activities and events.  
[www.quarrabbey.org](http://www.quarrabbey.org)

### **Worth Abbey, Crawley, East Sussex**

An English Benedictine Monastery. The '*Open Cloister*'  
is the Abbey's programme of weekend and mid-week  
retreats, open to both men and women. The Retreat  
Centre brochure is available online.  
[www.worth.co.uk/retreats/online-retreats](http://www.worth.co.uk/retreats/online-retreats)

### **The Lay Community of St. Benedict (LCSB)**

#### **Lay Benedictines**

The Lay Community of St. Benedict (LCSB) is dedicated  
to the Gospel and the spirituality of St. Benedict.  
Members are married, single, men or women, young  
and old. Includes lay people and those called to  
religious ministry. For daily prayer times click on  
[www.lcsb.uk](http://www.lcsb.uk)

## CARMELITE

### **Carmelite - Order of Discalced**

**Carmelites UK, Carmelite Spirituality Centre,  
Carmelite Priory - Boars Hill, Oxford**

Provides an extensive range of resources such as  
online talks and retreats, lectures, courses, such as  
the *Living Prayer course - a course in contemplative  
prayer and living*.

[www.carmeliteprioryoxford.com](http://www.carmeliteprioryoxford.com)

## JESUIT

**London Centre for Ignatian Spirituality  
Mount Street Jesuit Centre**  
[www.lcsd.org.uk](http://www.lcsd.org.uk)

### **St. Beuno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre, North Wales**

St. Beuno's provides a wide range of Individually  
Guided Retreats including online, themed retreats  
and training courses, such as *Retreat Giving and  
Spiritual Guidance*. It provides courses in Spiritual  
Direction, Spiritual Accompaniment, and Prayer  
Guiding.

[Info@beunos.com](mailto:Info@beunos.com)  
**01745 583444**



### **Sarum College, Salisbury**

Sarum College is an ecumenical Christian institution. It offers a range of day courses, short courses, modules and postgraduate study, such as MA Christian Spirituality. Examples of courses and modules include Foundations and Forms of Christian Spirituality, Spirituality, Health and Wellbeing, Spiritual Development in Context.

[www.sarum.ac.uk](http://www.sarum.ac.uk)

### **Wisdom Centre Retreat and Conference Centre, Romsey**

The Wisdom Centre offers a wide range of day retreats, activities and events.

[www.wisdomhouseromsey.org.uk](http://www.wisdomhouseromsey.org.uk)

### **Catholic Spirituality Network**

Promotes the awareness of retreats and helps people develop their own spiritual life within the Catholic community. It is one of the denominational member groups of the Retreat Association.

[www.csn.retreats.org.uk](http://www.csn.retreats.org.uk)



### **PRAYER RESOURCES**

#### **Centre for Action and Contemplation**

Daily meditations and online courses.

[www.cac.org](http://www.cac.org)

#### **Magnificat**

The Magnificat is a spiritual guide to help you develop your prayer life, grow in your spiritual life, find a way to a more profound love for Christ, and participate in the holy Mass with greater fervour.

[us.magnificat.net/home/discover](http://us.magnificat.net/home/discover)

#### **Pray as You Go**

Pray as You Go, a daily prayer session, designed to go with you wherever you go, to help you pray whenever you find time, but particularly whilst travelling to and from work, study, etc.

It provides a framework for your own prayer, lasts between ten and thirteen minutes and combines music, scripture and some questions for reflection. The style of prayer is based on Ignatian Spirituality.

[pray-as-you-go.org](http://pray-as-you-go.org)

#### **Prego**

Download *Praying with the Sunday Readings* by clicking on this link:

<https://bit.ly/3gB8Bbr>

#### **Sacred Space**

[www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie)

#### **The World Community for Christian Meditation**

Daily reflections and other online opportunities for prayer and meditation.

[www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)

#### **Universalis**

<http://universalis.com>





## Dear *Spirituality News*



### LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS

Please feel free to comment on the contents of *Spirituality News*, suggest topics which you would like to read, or share news.  
[spiritualitynewsletter@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:spiritualitynewsletter@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

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For information about Spiritual Direction, please email:  
[spiritualdirectorsnetwork@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:spiritualdirectorsnetwork@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

**Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth  
Spiritual Formation Team**

