

HEALTH AND SALVATION WEEKS 2011 AT BOARBANK HALL, CUMBRIA

RETREATS FOR CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE WORKERS



This is the fourth year that we have run Health and Salvation retreats for healthcare workers at Boarbank, with two events this year, in January and in November. The theme was 'Ethical Dilemmas', and we explored this through talks and discussions, in the context of shared prayer, meals and social activities. As usual, we celebrated Morning, Evening and Night Prayer and Mass daily, joining the Boarbank community where

possible, but celebrating our own Masses together as a group. Fr David Ryder and Fr David Egan kindly acted as chaplains for the weeks; we are very grateful to them and all the priests in the group for saying Mass and preaching. It was particularly nice this year to celebrate together a Mass for the sick for which members of the Community and patients from Marymount joined us.

The groups included GPs, nurses, consultants and hospital chaplains and hospital administrators, both lay and religious, with speakers including senior doctors and non-medical theologians and philosophers, sharing among them an enormous wealth of experience. Guests, patients and outside visitors joined us for some of the talks. As usual, the atmosphere was very special: old friendships were renewed and new ones developed within a lovely combination of serious conversation, prayer and reflection and ebullient fun.

Scriptural reflection was provided by Fr Dixie Taylor's talk 'Making decisions in Scripture', which discussed the relationship between the text of Scripture and the person of Jesus, and explored the nature of Jesus' authority and the derivative nature of the authority of the community of the Church. Sr Margaret Atkins spoke on 'Practical judgements', setting decisions in the context of practical wisdom and the other virtues and also of prayer. Further philosophical grounding was provided in January by and Professor Luke Gormally, former Director of the Linacre Centre, and the recent winner of the 2010 Paul Ramsey Award for excellence in bioethics, who looked at end of life issues, and in November by Fr Adrian Towers, a former Director of the Linacre Centre and lecturer in Moral Theology at Ushaw, who explored the nature of the human person from a Christian perspective.

A practitioner's approach to care at the end of life was presented by Dr Liz Toy, a consultant oncologist, in January, and by Dr Karen Groves, a palliative care consultant, in November. In this way we were enabled to bring together the concrete reality of the types of decisions that healthcare workers are making, exemplified in some thought-provoking case studies, with the principles on which to make them. These principles included the proper purposes of medicine and the point and implications of the prohibition on intentional killing. We were also given very helpful food for

reflection about social attitudes to facing death and the importance of helping people to plan for their own deaths, including the spiritual aspects of this.

In January, Dr Terry Billington, a Dominican Sister and experienced GP gave us a lucid and comprehensive survey of the range of ethical issues a GP may face, including the organisation of appointments, disputes between a young patient's parents, and the patients' responsibility for appreciating the cost of their treatments. In November, Dr Aurelia McCann, a general hospital consultant, looked at ethical dilemmas on the basis of her wide experience, in Rumania as well as England, and presented a very interesting case about consent to treatment. Finally, Dr Eileen Reilly, a consultant gynaecologist, joined in November by her colleagues Connie Wood and Denise Doherty, explained up-to-date natural methods for understanding human fertility, including the relatively new and little known successes of natural reproductive technology or 'naprotechnology'. They showed how this method aimed to treat the causes not just the symptoms of infertility, and how learning to understand the way their fertility works can empower women, safeguard their general health and improve their relationships.

In addition to the talks and discussions, we also watched films (in January, the Danny Boyle film 'Millions', in which an innocent little Catholic boy - with his more wordly-wise elder brother- is



confronted with the dilemma of how to dispose of a vast sum of money, and in November the classic 'Local Hero', a light hearted look at an oil company trying to take over a remote Scottish village). In January a big group of us managed a wonderful walk to Alcock Tarn above Grasmere, returning via Rydal lake (a lovely sequence of photos can be seen at: <http://gallery.me.com/moffo/100044> - many thanks indeed to John). A smaller group went on a shorter walk from Grasmere and a third on a car tour of the Lakes, going as far as Keswick and

Cleator Moor (and arriving back, looking radiant but a little sheepish, just in time for the 'confiteor' in the group's Mass!). In November the walkers made the most of unseasonably good weather to walk around Easedale Tarn, joining one of the group who had been visiting Grasmere for tea in the garden centre.

The afternoons and evenings provided time to visit Grange and Cartmel, to relax and be quiet, to engage in some highly competitive games of table tennis, to partake of tea and home-made cakes, and to continue the discussions of issues raised in the talks. In the evenings, we had Compline with the Community (in January around the fire, with the staircase packed to the top!). On the last evening we invited members of the Boarbank Community to join us for a buffet and continuing conversation. It was a great joy to welcome back so many old friends to these weeks, and to welcome several new participants. We hope and pray that they will be rested and restored for the

difficult and valuable work that they do, and that the friendships fostered here may continue to support them through the year.

THE HEALTH AND SALVATION WEEKS IN 2012 ARE ON THE THEME OF 'THE SPIRITUAL CARE OF THE SICK'. THE NOVEMBER DATES ARE 12TH-17TH NOVEMBER IT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY GOOD TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG CATHOLIC NURSES AND DOCTORS WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM THE SUPPORT OF THE FRIENDSHIPS AND DISCUSSIONS THAT OUR WEEKS OFFER.

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