

Peaceful Places

In our busy and noisy world it is good to find peaceful places to withdraw to, if only for a short time. Last week I attended a quiet evening at Thicket Priory about eight miles south of York.

The Priory is home to a community of contemplative Carmelite nuns. Apart from one plane that flew overhead the silence was broken only by the sounds of nature, by ducks and other birds which came to the small lake there. It was a lovely and peaceful place to be able to relax and put aside the cares of the day and to place them in God's hands.

I certainly felt very privileged. For many people throughout the world such places do not exist. There are areas where conflict, violence and fear are relentless, where the noise of war rarely subsides. Any moments of silence are precious indeed.

Retreats and quiet evenings can be a great help. They offer an opportunity to stand back and take stock of our lives. They can help us to come closer to God. Even Jesus withdrew at times to quiet and remote places. There are a number of instances of this in the Gospels, as in our reading just now (Luke 4.42-44).

Yet such times are not necessarily excuses to escape the realities of life. They can instead reinvigorate us and allow us to face those realities with renewed strength and resolve.

As we heard in our reading just now Jesus was not allowed to be on his own for long. The crowds soon found him and he returned to his teaching and healing ministry. His time alone helped him in his great task of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

We too are to share in that task in our own lives. Our need to renew our spiritual batteries is even greater. And so we give thanks for those times of quiet that we are granted.

12 May 2017
Kingsley Boulton