

## Annunciation Trust Residentials (or 'The Golden Glory Weekends')

When we meet together for 24 hours twice each year, the shape of our encounter is simple.

What there is *not* is agenda, pressure of time, conformity or competition.

What there *is* is good food, good wine and ale, silence, space, mutual respect and conversation.

We meet at noon or thereabouts on Saturday, renew greetings or meet some for the first time, orientate rooms and beds, then gather for soup and bread and cheese. News is exchanged, journeys reflected on; thus the conversation is sourced, and flows on, meandering along the bed of experience and dream, trickling through imponderables long pondered, cascading over books read or hearts warmed; gushing with ideas and gleanings, flowing through chaos and calm...

We settle in comfortable chairs, competing only with dog and cats for space! Some minutes of silence, centring down, being in the present moment. One by one, with as long as each needs, we tell our story. This is my space. Others listen, encourage, ask that catalytic question that sparks and energises, or promotes pauses pregnant with reflection and refocusing, or comfortable silence. The conversation darts and flows. One thing leads to another. Depths are fathomed. God is here. God's Spirit is with us.

Later a cup of tea, a glass of wine, or a jug of ale ('Golden Glory' has become a favourite!) and it's another's turn. Maybe half an hour, or an hour and a half, who knows? Where am I? What's been going on? Where's God in this? Where is energy flowing? What dreams am I dreaming? What sparks of ideas that can be safely voiced and teased out without justification or judgement?

A simple but wholesome supper together, with more relaxed meandering conversation, becomes a lingering meal-event of the Mediterranean variety. Shared eating and drinking becomes the context for community - as much a relational as a gastronomic experience.

After supper perhaps some time in quiet, savouring the moment before another shares their story or uses their time how they will.

A nightcap, and then to bed and some individual space before gathering again informally over an ad hoc breakfast; a breath of fresh air, a walk with the dog maybe, and then back to those comfy sofas for another's turn.

And so the pattern continues through coffee and lunch, with another's opportunity after lunch if necessary, or some reflection on the past day-and-a-half, some planning of future dates, or just some more spirit-filled space to bathe in; refreshed before the journey home.