

He restores my soul

Dear Friends

Sometimes, as people of faith, we forget what it is to celebrate. It's as if we shouldn't show that we're enjoying ourselves too much, in case people wouldn't take us seriously. Those of our travelling companions who express their faith through the Catholic tradition have much to teach the rest of us in this regard. It is as if you allow more readily your spirituality to pervade the whole of life, so that there is no aspect of living that is not sacred and therefore no aspect that cannot be celebrated. Jesus, whose mission was the most serious, the most costly, the most risky the world has ever seen or ever will see, knew how to celebrate and loved to do so, especially in unlikely situations and with those who were different. The gospels are full of stories about sharing meals, about invitations to dinner, about exercising hospitality. The invitation and the feast were signs of the Kingdom. In the ancient Middle East, if someone was fleeing from an enemy and came across an encampment, it was incumbent upon the host to take him in and while he was his guest the enemy could not touch him. The enemy could be encircling the camp, but while the person was under the protection of his host, even though they could see him, they were powerless to harm him. No matter who he was or what he was fleeing from, once under the host's umbrella of welcome, he was treated as an honoured guest. It's a little picture of how God welcomes us. So we find; *"You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings."*

That is who we are or seek to be in Restoration Ministries, a place of restoration and reconciliation where people who are weary from their journey through life, who are feeling lost, or lonely, or without a sense of belonging, who have a broken self-image or have broken relationships with others, or who feel actively pursued by hatred or

despair can enter and find rest and peace and healing. To treat such as these, (which is really all of us at one point or another in our journey through life) as honoured guests, is not a nice little extra suggestion, a postscript to the gospel message. It is right at its very centre, its core.

And when this begins to happen, then we become a place of celebration and community. Sometimes we find it much easier to commiserate with the wounded than to rejoice in their restoration. Perhaps that is because we can commiserate from a certain position of superiority, albeit subconscious. But to truly celebrate over another's success or recovery requires a very special kind of unselfishness and humility. When people truly share their sorrows and joys in an atmosphere of loving and forgiving trust and friendship, then there we find a little glimpse of the beloved community.



Hospitality is not so much a task as a way of living out our lives and of sharing ourselves. It is something we learn as we open ourselves to God and to each other. Gradually it becomes a habit, an integral part of who we are. It calls us to grow ever more deeply into a gentleness and a sweetness of spirit that emits something of the fragrance of Jesus. And the surprising thing is that, as we seek to be bearers of blessing to others we find that we ourselves are blessed. *"You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing."*

There are countless people all around us and right across our ravaged, anguished world whose 'cups' are empty today, who know nothing about being welcomed, let alone being treated as honoured guests. Maybe it's time for us to prepare a few 'banquets' – in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Ruth

Far Away Friends



My name is Claire Besnyoe – an unusual name for Ireland. I met and married my Hungarian husband in Vienna where I worked for more than 30 years. I retired and came home to Co. Galway, and that is where Oak House, and our friendship with Restoration Ministries began. A small group of friends met in my kitchen over a cup of tea and our thoughts turned to the ministry of healing. Rather than set out alone and unprepared, we decided to seek out others who were travelling the same path. Ruth Patterson welcomed the Galway pilgrims, she fed us and sheltered us, but above all she listened and encouraged us.

Ruth has been our Godmother ever since 1994. She has led us in retreat; she has inspired us, taught us and advised us, and ministered to us. Restoration Ministries with its bright garden, the flowered chintzes, the cheerful kitchen, its atmosphere of warmth and hope is among our grateful memories. Most important is the spiritual sustenance and the welcome that Ruth and Restora-

tion Ministries offer. Our response to them is one of loving respect and trust. Many are the times when we have sought their advice. Oak House is not a place but the pre-reformation name we have chosen for our Christian fellowship. We are dedicated to healing in all its many facets, recognising that wounded spirits need healing as much as hurting bodies. Over the years we have come to see the importance of building bridges between the Churches, and between communities. We believe that friendships are the stepping-stones to healing. God's love and our love are the medicine that heals.

Fr Gerry Reynolds led our recent retreat. His theme was unity in Christ. He fired our thoughts by his teaching. With heightened courage we embarked on an inter-church celebration of faith and worship during the octave of Christian Unity. This was the first such service in many years in the parish of Ballinasloe. To our joy and surprise our prayers and the prayers of a wide circle of friends were most richly honoured – the church was full, the singing was soul-lifting and the sermon enlightening.

At Oak House we meet twice in the month for prayer and Bible study and then with an invited speaker. Each year we organise a pilgrimage, a retreat, a service of healing and wholeness and an 'outreach' event. Our mission statement says that we promote cross border visits, we offer hospitality and fellowship and we seek the good will of the churches. Oak House is proud to count Restoration Ministries as their friend and we extend our affection and gratitude to all who contribute to their vision of ministry, the remarkable Restoration team.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Ruth will be speaking on Thought for the Day - Radio Ulster on:
Tuesday 28th March
Wednesday 29th March
Thursday 30th March



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Monthly Meeting

Monday 27 March

at

8.00 pm

Open House
Every
Wednesday

12 - 2.00 p.m.
All welcome