

Restoration Ministries

October 2011

He Restores My Soul



Dear Friends,

During September I spent twelve days in Trosly, France, the birthplace of L'Arche. I have been in the company of Jean Vanier and a gathering of long term L'Arche assistants from different countries in the world. We were reflecting together on the first twelve chapters from the Gospel of St. John. While I was giving some input, it was also so good to be in that sacred space and to receive from the wisdom and deep spirituality of others, especially Jean. At the very outset we were reminded that the whole of the Gospel begins with communion, and that the desire of the Word made flesh is to bring humanity to that place of communion, of wanting people to come together in love, to recognise that we are part of the beloved community. For me, that is the most radical gospel call of all. The Gospel of the beloved disciple is about the journey of Jesus and also about ours. The challenge, as it has always been for us in Restoration Ministries, is to keep on keeping on and to be aware that we are part of the story. Perhaps the only pre-requisite to being part of the story is that, in however small a way, we have picked up the vocation to be-loved. Once you know, with a deep humility, that you are beloved, then you can't help but be involved. It is this willingness to be part of the story, this trickle of peacemaking, this life of Jesus welling up into life in all its fullness and flowing out that is the hope, not only for the island of Ireland, but for every place of anguish, weariness and conflict in the world.

The birth of Restoration Ministries was a critical point for us back in 1988 and, since then, there will have been many other similar challenges, both in personal journeys and in our life together as 'Friends' of this ministry. We are now, as you know, on the very cusp of the next one! In a few weeks we will be moving out from Restoration House, the place that has been our home since the very beginning, and mine for the last 34 years. What a blessed 'inn' it has been for countless pilgrims. We are sad to leave but excited about the next stage of the journey. On one level we have no option. Where the freedom of choice enters is in our response to moving on. We are deeply grateful to have been given a temporary 'inn' by Fr. Eddie O'Donnell at St. Brigid's, 38 Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6FP. In this rather strange time, we need you with us as fellow travellers who are still seized by vision and who still have a desire to be part of the story. Please support us in whatever way you can. We will produce a newsletter about four times each year. **If you still want to receive it and to remain on our list of Friends could you please let us know? And if you can receive it by e-mail we would be very grateful.** Thank you for all that you have contributed over the years in terms of your prayer, your finance, your presence and your time. No stage of the journey would have been possible without you – and I still believe that the best is yet to be. If we believe that we are in this for the long haul, then that long haul (to quote Jean Vanier) is to “believe in this friendship of Jesus and that we can work towards building a body of church, of humanity where we reveal to each other our beauty and where we uplift each other.” This summer I was introduced to a song, the refrain of which stays with me constantly:

*So I leave my boats behind,
leave them on familiar shores
Set my heart upon the deep;
follow you again, my Lord.*

Dear friends, beloved, let us be going.

Ruth