

Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent

13th August 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings from all at Tymawr.

What a glorious summer we have had - yes, not enough water for the earth, but nonetheless abundance in other ways. The plum trees are dripping; the meadows have been covered with a mist of butterflies; the apple trees are laden. Such a contrast to the tragic state of our world, where others are starving and being dispossessed at every level of their being. Violation of the body of God's people and the created environment. We are members of this very body and it is we who are both the cause and object of the suffering.

Over the past few months I have been so aware of the Body of the Community. As you all know, these past months have been a time of going out and coming in. In January we moved out of the convent to Michaelgarth so that the ground source heating system and the renovations to the Guest wing might be accomplished. The four months at Michaelgarth were a blessing. Each one of us profited from the space and change in different ways. There was a gentleness about the rhythm. We watched the spring unfold before our eyes. All our senses were feasted. I think too we were able to be with each other in a new way, neither segregated by the demands of the life or the spaces of the building. What perhaps some of us had feared – the closeness - became a friend and a gift. Holy Week was led by Bishop Dominic and was also gentle. As we stood around the Easter candle at the end of Easter Day we were aware of a deep communion between us.

The beginning of May announced change: it was time to return from Michaelgarth to the convent and to open our doors to friends and strangers. The returning to the 'ordinary' was in front of us, save for the fact that we returned to only part of the building. The heating system was by and large complete. The improvements to the Guest Wing were underway, but not complete until the end of June. So that we might once more welcome guests, we decided to offer accommodation at Michaelgarth (bed and breakfast) and provide main meals in the refectory. The Chapel has remained in use throughout. Nonetheless, the move back into the convent demanded enormous amounts of cleaning and re-organising... a big 'thank you' must go to Companion Neil for the innumerable hours of window cleaning, hoovering, furniture moving and curtain hanging. By the middle of July, we were finally ready to welcome guests back into the guest wing of the convent, now equipped with new showers, toilets and kitchenette.

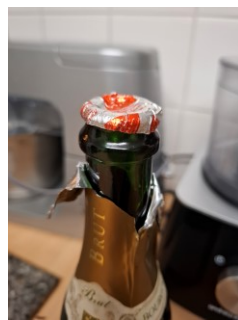
The BIG project is more or less complete. What seemed daunting and impossible two years ago, has been achieved. We have been blessed with a good team of professionals: MJS Energy for the ground source, William Powell Building contractors for the Guest Wing work, SolarSense for the solar panel array and Graham Frecknall Architects. A big 'thank you' too, must go to Revd. Jean Prosser, our chaplain, who has attentively and rigorously managed and overseen all this work. Thank you. We are grateful to those who lent us 'stop-gap money' whilst we negotiated the sale of the barns. Our new neighbours, a family with two children, are now getting ready to move in. Thank you to all who contributed money for the execution of this project and who trusted that it would happen!

Whilst all that work was germinating over the last two years, so too was a final commitment. On June 7th we had the joy of celebrating the solemn vows of Sr. Joanna Ruth. Whilst Ruth is already Sr. Joanna's baptismal name. she chose to include it in her religious name because the story of Ruth and Naomi was significant in her discernment and her commitment to Jesus, in this place, under this Rule and with these women. Sr. Joanna Ruth was radiant on the day and her radiance penetrated all our hearts so that the day was full of light and joy. Given her first profession had been circumscribed by Covid, this celebration was celebrated by people from all stages of her life journey, making for a big

Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent

crowd! We are thankful for God's fidelity to Tymawr in bringing forth new life and we walk trusting that His Will be fulfilled in this place.

Sr. Joanna Ruth



Champagne,
the milk of life!

Cooks for Sr. Joanna
Ruth's Profession



A week later the community gathered again and welcomed Megan as she made her first commitment to an exploration of a life here at Tymawr. She was clothed on the 13th June. This too was a joyous occasion.

Since the doors of the community opened once more, we have not stopped welcoming old and new friends. In June we also hosted the Oblates' retreat led by Bishop Robert Attwell. The retreat ended with the Oblation of Sharon Roberts and the renewal of their commitment by all the Oblates present. The theme of the retreat was 'Recalibrating the Heart'. The days were thick with prayer and sharing. Then on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul we welcomed Anne Griffith as an Associate of the community. The Associates gathered on Zoom in June for fellowship and the exchange of news. All of this was another experience of the Body of Christ present here within the community.



Amongst our many guests over these last three months, we welcomed four ordinands from Llandaff diocese who made their pre-ordination retreat at Michaelgarth. Whilst they were in silence and had their own programme, the fact that they came to worship with us in the chapel created a bond between us. We hope that they will return to this particular well over the years to come. Several 'cell' groups have come to stay in the convent and Michaelgarth this summer, each relaying how nourishing the space was for them. Whilst the groups staying with the community are very diverse, ranging from retreats to circle dance groups, all are fed. Offering this living space is a way that we can undergird the life and work of the Church and be a part of Christ's work of reconciliation in the world.

It has been a joy to welcome Alongsider Claire (for nine months), Ali for five weeks whilst she undertook a 30-day retreat (whilst attending the Offices and doing the laundry!!!), and now we have Amanda with us for four weeks and Sylvia for six weeks. Each person brings their story, their gifts and their hopes . . . And we have been pleased to welcome back Edi, Beth and Heather who lived Alongside last autumn. It is good to hear the ongoing story of their journey with Christ.

Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent

In July, the community inclusive of Oblates and Associates made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St David with + Rowan - an Icon of St. David and the writings of Walter Hilton (+1395). This was a deep and moving experience journeying to Jerusalem within our hearts, and experiencing the beauty of St David's with our bodies! Once more I was struck by the density of prayer over the three days we had together.



"Spiritually interpreted, Jerusalem is the vision of peace, and symbolises contemplation in the perfect love of God. For contemplation is nothing other than the vision of Jesus, who is our true Peace. ..."

The beginning of this high road that you must travel is reformation in faith, which, as I have already said, is grounded in humility, faith, and the laws of the church. .. If you wish to make swift and substantial progress along this road, you must constantly bear in mind two things, humility and love. That is, I am nothing, and I only want one thing. ... Humility says, 'I am nothing, I have nothing.' Love says, 'I desire one thing only, which is Jesus.' When deftly touched by the finger of reason, these two strings, secured by the thought of Jesus, make sweet harmony in the harp of the soul, for the lower you strike on one, the higher the sound on the other. Under the influence of humility, the less you feel that you are or possess, the greater will be your love and longing for Jesus. I am not speaking merely of the kind of humility that a soul feels at the sight of its own sin or weakness, or of the sorrows of this life, or when it sees the better lives of other Christians; for although this kind of humility is sound and wholesome, it is still of an elementary and worldly type, not pure, gentle, and perfect. I am speaking rather of the humility that a soul feels by grace as it contemplates the infinite Being and wondrous goodness of Jesus.... This is perfect humility, for in comparison to Jesus, who is All, you are nothing. You should also realise that you possess nothing, like a vessel that stands empty, incapable of filling itself; for however many good works you perform, spiritual or bodily, you have nothing until you feel the love of Jesus within you. . It is this precious liquor alone that can fill your soul, and no other. And since this alone is so precious and noble, you must realise that whatever you may have or achieve is of no value or satisfaction without the love of Jesus. Put everything else behind you and forget it; only then can you have what is best of all."

Walter Hilton (+1395) *The Ladder of Perfection* trans. Leo Sherley-Price (1957) The Penguin Classics, Book Two Chapter 21 (abridged)

St Non's Well



St Non's Cell



Icon of Dewi Ddyfrwr
by Sara Prosser



Meanwhile, members of the community have been on holiday or attended formation courses. Megan joined other novices at Hilfield Friary for an inter-novitiate introduction to eco-theology; Sr. Joanna Ruth completed her two-year online course 'An introduction to theology' with Sarum College. The whole community was invited for a day out to Holy Cross Abbey in Whitland...a day of sharing and fellowship with our Cistercian Sisters. +

Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent

Rowan has faithfully nourished the community each month with teaching, preaching and listening: opening up conversation between us, between us and Scripture, and with Jesus deep within our hearts.

Are you exhausted yet with the multiplicity and diversity of encounter that has happened in the last few months? and I am only recording a fraction! And the daily work continues on the land and in the house. Like everywhere else, the drought has caused havoc in the garden rhythms, everything is in a hurry to set seed. Nonetheless, we are very fortunate to have plentiful soft and hard fruit crops. The freezers are full, jams are being made and chutneys will come in due season! We are thankful to all the volunteers that come to help, especially the volunteers from Gwent Wild Life Trust, who turn up once a week in all weathers. The hedges planted four years ago are beginning to have real body around the estate.

Next week we shall welcome 30 religious from all over Europe attending a biannual Interdenominational conference, hosted by SSC. This is exciting for us and promises to be interesting...more anon.

Can I bring to your attention the **Bursary Fund**, which has served people who otherwise could not stay at Tymawr this last year. We need to top up the fund for the coming year. If you can make a pledge, of whatever amount, please contact Kirstie Pope at finance@tymawrconvent.com

Access for All Appeal: now we have achieved our goals to come off oil (bar the cars!) we must turn our hearts and minds to the necessity to make our Chapel inclusive. Would it not be wonderful to reach this goal before the Centenary of the Chapel in 2029? Launching the appeal this January, we set ourselves a two-year target to raise £250,000. To date we have raised about £18,000. Can you help? Do you have ideas about whom we might approach for grants? Please go <https://tymawrconvent.org/access-for-all/> for more details and how to process a donation.

We look forward to seeing you at Tymawr in the near future.

With love and prayers from the Community

M. Katharine SSC

Dates for your diaries

Associates Day: 13th September 2025: 09.30am - 4.30pm **Pilgrimages and our experience of them**
Speaker Revd. Angela Berners Wilson

Holy Cross day 14th September 2025— please let Sr. Elizabeth know if you wish to come to the Eucharist on bookings@tymawrconvent.com

Oblates Study Day: 15th November 2025: 09.30am - 5.30pm with Fr. George Guiver CR

Quiet Days 6th September, 4th October, 8th November 2025 : **Disturbed into Loving**
(see below for details)

Associates Retreat 10th -13th March 2026 with Rev. Janet Bone

Oblates Retreat 4th -6th June 2026 with Sr. Carol CHN

Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent

QUIET DAYS AT TYMAWR CONVENT IN AUTUMN 2025

DISTURBED INTO LOVING

Listening to Wisdom in the life, spirit and teaching of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Each **Quiet Day** begins at 10.00am with coffee (Terce at 9.30am is optional), followed by our speaker for the day and time for rest and prayer before the midday Eucharist. After a 'bring your own' lunch, our speaker will lead the afternoon session, which will end with Vespers at 3.45pm. There is no charge for the day but donations are welcome. Please book your place for each Quiet Day by email to

**SSCchaplain@gmail.com or by post to
The Chaplain, Tymawr Convent, Lydart, Monmouth NP25 4RN.**

Tymawr Convent - We are a small group of women committed to a simple life of contemplative prayer, living a few miles outside Monmouth, South Wales. The convent is situated in 65 acres of gardens, fields and woodlands, which are sustainably managed to produce most of the fruit and vegetables we use. We come from all walks of life and range in age from 30 years to 75 years. Our life is centred on a daily Eucharist and the monastic Offices. We offer hospitality to guests who come on Retreat.

The Society has a large group of Associates, Oblates and Companions who are community through their life of prayer. We also welcome women who wish to explore a calling to a contemplative life of prayer or to deepen their prayer life, to live alongside for a period of discernment and formation. If you are drawn to discover more about any of these ways of participating in this life of prayer, please contact the Reverend Mother by letter or email to

**reverendmother@tymawrconvent.com
Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent, Lydart,
Monmouth NP25 4RN. Registered Charity no. 1135334**

**General enquiries: community@tymawrconvent.com
www.tymawrconvent.org**

September 6th (*Programme already full*)

The Joining of the World and God in Christ with Dr. Eleanor McLaughlin

An exploration of Bonhoeffer's conviction that the world and God are united in Christ, a conviction that informs the spirituality of our everyday lives; and a reflection on how Bonhoeffer's life experience enables us to stay with the unfinished or incomplete aspects of our personal and communal life.

Eleanor McLaughlin teaches theology at Ripon College Cuddesdon; one of her areas of research is the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. She lives in Oxford with her husband Luke and her cat Bertie.

Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent

October 4th

Who is loving us?
with Revd. Dr. Tim Boniface

Reflections on Christ and love in Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Tim Boniface has been Chaplain at Girton College, University of Cambridge since 2020, and also works as a professional jazz musician and composer. He has for many years found both challenge and inspiration in studying the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, especially his writings on the person of Jesus. He has written and taught on a number of aspects of Bonhoeffer's work.

November 8th

Christianity – a religion for slaves?
with Rt. Revd. Martin Shaw

Exploring Bonhoeffer's understanding of the demand of Jesus that we obey his command to follow him and the implication of this in resisting power and possessiveness in our personal and corporate life – even a wake-up call.

Martin Shaw is an assistant Bishop of the diocese of Exeter. Throughout his adult life he has been associated with the Society of St Francis. He regards music as an important part of the journey into the inner life.