

Society of the Sacred Cross, Tymawr Convent

My turning, my conversion, is to the crucified.
His cross is my glory, with it my brow is signed,
in it my mind rejoices, by it my life is directed,
and my death is made dear.

William of St Thierry

18th February 2026
Ash Wednesday

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings from all at Tymawr.

As the days lengthen it is a joy to have the light creep into chapel at Morning Prayer and still be with us at Evening Prayer. And, on this day, we enter the season of Lent: the long period of preparation of our hearts, as William of St Thierry says, 'my turning, my conversion'. During his visit as Warden last week, Bishop Rowan spoke of penitence "as a way of life, a habit and a virtue". Every day we ask for forgiveness as we say the Lord's Prayer. This act of penitence is our freedom, the freedom to admit that we need to ask for forgiveness, and to be honest about ourselves, without fear. Referencing St. Augustine, + Rowan said that being good is not a static reality but a process of learning. The freedom to be who we are made to be, stems from our ability to learn to see what is Real and the difference between truth and self. This freedom of being means that we can be corrected and set right and so allow the truth to impact, enlarge and enrich us. This freedom allows us to be confronted by a Truth that we do not possess or control. We can live in this freedom because there is the possibility of restoration and recreation. We can leave perfection and forgiveness to God. This is the nature of who we are and the shape of our relationship with God. Penitence therefore is the disposition of our heart that says, "I do not have to be right, and if I am wrong, then this is not the end of the story." The 'good life' is essentially responsive. To be good is to answer to something that is good and calls me to goodness. St John of the Cross speaks of this process of being who we truly are, this process of transformation into Love, as a process of surrender. We are invited to surrender the idea that we ought to be in control of ourselves and of the story, and to only want the gift that is God, who is already flowing towards us. Once we know that it is possible to be free, then there is room for others and so for communion. When we come together at the celebration of the Eucharist we start with an act of repentance, we clear the space of obstacles that stand between self and other. We come to discover freedom, and so live an act of enlargement. Repentance is part of our exposure to holiness. When we attend to the Real we know something of holiness. This is the process of the Eucharist.

Repentance is a restorative process. We are restored to reality and our place in creation. We are given a fresh openness and honesty for the sake of humility. Repentance has a place in mission because the Good News is that we are forgiven, that we have the freedom to admit failure and to trust that we can be restored. How liberating! There is divine freedom that is not going to be denied. And it is this divine freedom which provides our future. The habit of penitence is a witness to the truth that God is free and more than I can imagine or contain. It exposes us to Grace and it resists our accumulated lies. It allows us to "lay down the burden of self-justification." The distinction between being penitent and impenitent is "the barbed wire in the middle of our hearts" again quoting Bishop Rowan.



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This was the centre piece on our Chancel step for the Feast of the Baptism of Christ when we welcomed the young adults (aged 18-30) who lived in Michaelgarth for a 4-day silent Retreat guided by the Revd. Janet Bone and Carla McDonald. Our hope was to enable young adults who are serious in their faith to grow in their discipleship. We had six participants, two were new to us and four already knew Tymawr. Their engagement and their response were deep and, as we could see from their faces and comments, a time of real intimacy. As one person said, "This has been the best experience of my life." We hope to see them again later in the year. For now, they have returned to their studies, work and discernment.

Looking back over the last few months, and the fullness and wealth of gifts in person and in kind the community has received, this image of an oasis spoke strongly of a place that is rich in resources amid the desert of our world. A place whose focus is Christ, our well, and the source of our lives. A place from which we give thanks to God for his loving presence and generous abundance.

We thank everyone who sent us cards and gifts at Christmas. And also thank you for your very generous response to the call for funds for the Access Appeal. This work is beginning to look like a real possibility.

Prayer for peace

Almighty Father,
You are the Lord of history,
and we place in your hands the distress of our times.

Do not allow war cries and threats to triumph,
but enlighten us that we may recognise the human family
across the world as one family.

Welcome those who have died,
comfort those who mourn,
be with refugees and those driven from their homes,
heal the wounds of those injured in body and soul
and be close to all who seek to aid them.

Send your Holy Spirit over the earth,
the Spirit who defeats division,
who overcomes war.

Now, Lord, please come to our aid,
guide us into the way of peace,
trusting always in Your Word,
Our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever,
Amen.

said in communion with the Sisters at Holy Cross Abbey, Whitland

We welcomed 2026 with a midnight Watch for Peace in our World. Continuing this emphasis, we have decided that throughout Lent we will consciously 'stand at the foot of the cross' and be present to the unrelenting suffering of our world. This is our calling: to be there. To aid us in this renewal of our vocation we will say at Evening Prayer each day and in communion with our Cistercian Sisters at Holy Cross Abbey, Whitland, the following prayer for peace. We invite you to join us.

In early January the community sent Novice Megan forth to Durham and on to the next stage of her life. We were sad to see her leave and thankful for the year we lived together, and for all the sterling work she did in the Archives. Megan is working as a volunteer archivist and librarian at the Herbert Kelly Institute for Anglican Religious Orders under the guidance of the Archivist and Librarian Dr. Scholastica Jacob. Just after Epiphany, Claire, who had been staying with the community for nine months on sabbatical, left to continue her working life. At Candlemas Revd. Dr. Ali Gray was welcomed as an Associate, she will lead the Associate Study Day on June 20th.

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The end of 2025 saw Quiet Days on Bonhoeffer's life and work; the Oblates' Study Day with Fr. George Guiver CR; a Study Day at Belmont Abbey with Michael Casey OCSO; and the Community retreat in November with Revd. Dr. Bonnie Thurston. In the New Year Sisters had individual retreats, either at Michaelgarth or at Whitland Abbey. And throughout the year, we rejoice in the presence and teaching of our Warden, Bishop Rowan Williams, exploring themes such as 'Teach us to pray'; 'The four last things'; 'Full of grace and truth: Christian faith and truth telling' and this last month 'Repentance and Recreation'.

The long break in January and February is always an important time of renewal and of being at home with one another. However, this year we shared the space with roofers (dealing with two major roof leaks), the electrician, the extractor fan cleaner, the environmental health inspector and the lift engineer ... Yes, the building needed an overhaul as well.

Now we are ready to welcome you back to Tymawr and look forward to having you to stay. Please note the various events across the year. And do not forget to bring your friends and families to the Gala Concert with Monmouth Male Voice Choir and Cwmbarn Baroque Choir, at St Woolos Cathedral on 13th June at 7.30pm (details below), sponsored by the Archbishop of Wales, to raise funds for the Access for All Appeal. May it be a gathering of the Tymawr family and a real celebration of our friendship and fellowship in Christ.

In the last week we received news that Oblate Kathleen Fry died in 2025. May her soul rest in peace and rise in glory.

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 Retreat: 10th -13th March 2026** led by Revd. Janet Bone (book quickly if you are interested there are a few places left bookings@tymawrconvent.com)
- **Oblates retreat: 4-6th June 2026** led by Sr. Carol CHN bookings@tymawrconvent.com
- **Gala Concert: 13th June 2026 7.30pm** at St Woolos Cathedral (*see attachment/SSCwebsite or contact sscchaplain@gmail.com to book tickets*)
- **Associates Study Day: 20th June 2026** led by Dr. Ali Gray 'If you are not disturbed by this, then you are not paying attention': *transforming eco-anxiety.* (bookings@tymawrconvent.com)
- **Oblates Study Day: 24th November 2026** led by Revd. Dr. Bonnie Thurston (bookings@tymawrconvent.com)
- **QUIET DAYS 2026**
 - Summer 2026**
 - 2nd May** The Unboundaried Heart: through the eyes of Benedict's Rule (1) speaker to be confirmed
 - 4th July** The Unboundaried Heart: through the eyes of Benedict's Rule (2) Rt Revd. Dominic Walker OGS
 - Autumn 2026** The Unboundaried Heart : through the life and witness of Martin Luther King
 - 5th September** tbc; **3rd October** tbc; **7th November** Professor Anthony Reddie, Regents College, Oxford