

Finding The Rest That Restores: My reflections

On 16th May a group of us set off for the Brecon Beacons to enjoy some rest in the beautiful surroundings of Llangasty Retreat House.

It was a glorious sunny day, not knowing what to expect from the day I packed my Bible and sketch pad. As part of the programme for the day I knew the verse we would be looking at - Matthew 11:28 "come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest". After coffee and tea we gathered in the Chapel for an introduction to the day. Jo Vickery explained the day was for us to connect with God in the quiet and beautiful surroundings of Llangasty House. He suggested we respected each other's personal space and tried to refrain from talking with each other until we met again for lunch.

Not sure at first what I was going to do I sat on the patio looking at the amazing view over the Brecon Beacons. The colours were so vibrant, I felt compelled to sketch the view from where I sat. There was a small church and a large, rather ugly looking tree in the foreground, with the lake and the Brecon hills beyond. After finishing a rough sketch, I decided to walk to the church to take a closer look. I could see a small fishing boat on the lake and decided to sit by the lake and sketch the two men fishing. It was so quiet and picturesque. You could make out the boat through the reeds and the fishermen sat perfectly still just waiting. I then went to the field to sketch the church in more detail. During this time, I felt relaxed and peaceful doing something I enjoyed which usually, I don't get much free time to indulge myself in. Time went by quickly before I knew it was time to head back for lunch.

After lunch we had time to wander again and relax in the surroundings. So much free time, a pure luxury for a busy mum of three children! I set off again revisiting the sketches I had already done and pondering on the bible verse. It dawned on me that the sketches I had drawn told the story of the verses in Mathew 11. The boundaries of the Church depicted the rules and expectations which burdened the religious leaders of the time; Jesus had rebuked the religious leaders for their self-righteousness imposing traditions on the Jewish people which weighed them down and stopped them from forming a relationship with him. The rather ugly sparse tree spoke to me as faith, Jesus had called to the people and religious leaders to take up faith without any burdens by following him. This tree was close to the church, but also free to grow unrestrained and supported by its strong roots, which is like the support given by Jesus when I turn to him in prayer and learn from him.

I then felt a desire to revisit and sketch the tree again. The tree was very sparse at the bottom and this reminded me that at times we feel distant from God and we don't appear to grow in our faith. But as the branches went further up the tree there were areas which were flourishing with a green canopy, showing times when we feel closer to God and our faith is flourishing. It also reminded me that at the times when faith appears to not be growing the foundations or roots of the tree are still there and my faith is supported and firmly grounded. Jesus provides for me even when I do not realise.

During my time at Llangasty, I was able to connect with God through my art work. The creative gift I have been given allows me the opportunity to freely express myself and reconnect with God. Even my sketch of the fishermen on the boat reminds me to wait and try not to rush ahead under my own steam. The Retreat day has reinforced the need for quiet, reflective time where you can just rest and listen to God, a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding day.

Debra Turpin

