

A Quiet Day at St Michael's Convent, Ham Common, led by Rev. Richard Sewell

On Tuesday 4 October, the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, Richard led a small group of parishioners on a quiet day in St Michael's Convent home to Community of the Sisters of the Church (CSC) founded in 1870. The Convent enjoys a beautiful position on the edge of Ham Common, has comfortably furnished rooms, a Chapel and a library and, along with an extensive walled garden, is entirely conducive to a day of peace and 'unwind'.

Are some of us frightened of quiet/silence? When we're within silent space, do we feel we should be 'doing' something? Should we be making space for quiet in our lives? Can quiet/silence be used constructively and, if so, how?

I think these are the sorts of questions which come to many of us and the experience of a day like Tuesday, for which Richard in his introduction read short passages from a book by Benignus O'Rourke *Finding Your Hidden Treasure*, went a long way in helping us come to terms with some of them. I quote from the book:

'... I perceived the silence was not simply an absence of noise, but that the silence had substance. It was not an absence of something but a presence of something. The silence had a density, a richness, and it began to pervade me. The silence around began to come and meet the silence in me.

All of a sudden I perceived that the silence was a presence. At the heart of the silence there was Him who is all stillness, all peace, all poise..'

Between Richard's helpful words at the start, his readings and summing up at the end of our day, we joined the Sisters for a short Eucharist and were otherwise free to handle the time as we wished. Six hours passed all too quickly but we found them rich hours and when we left it was with a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunity to shut out a noisy world for a short while and find stillness in ourselves.