



‘being filled with the Holy Spirit’

“No one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord” writes Pope Francis in *The Joy of the Gospel*. This is a powerful reminder especially for those of us who care for the sick and their carers, and accompany people regardless of age, in their journey to God - are we not all in need of companionship and joy? I am reminded of a joyful experience from seeing ‘Dance for Life’ * a contemplative dance based on Luke 1:26-56, choreographed to the music ‘Joy’ and performed by Chelsey Finlayson, Sheryllyn Boyd and Hermione Purvis from North Warwickshire College. This came about because of Claire Duncan, their dance tutor,

who wanted to do something for the Pastoral Care Project. Her three students had never heard of the story of the Visitation or the Holy Spirit yet their willingness to tell the story through dance meant they had to read, understand and enter into the gospel story before taking on the three roles of Mary, Elizabeth and the Holy Spirit. It was very moving to see how beautifully they expressed the greeting between Mary and Elizabeth, and Elizabeth being filled with the Holy Spirit. They involved everyone in the dance by passing on swatches of blue fabric (Holy Spirit) to those present – unknowingly evangelising. (*story Ann Review 2011-12 www.pastoralcareproject.org.uk.)

Young people and children are very much part of the Pastoral Care Project because as one parent at an assembly on Friday said to me “dementia affects the whole family.” This last year has seen an increase of young people directly volunteering their time and skills - Victoria Caldwell, a graduate and three sixth form students. I wrote about Victoria in the May issue of *Catholic Today* and I would like to mention here the joy brought by Melissa Pearce, a young professional who was drawn to the Pastoral Care Project as she searched for potential volunteer placements where her gifts, skills would be best put to use. After working for six years as a lay chaplain in a Catholic sixth form college, and also training in spiritual accompaniment, she felt a desire to continue working in the field of pastoral care. Her skills and chaplaincy experience was greatly appreciated as she assisted with the ‘HeARTs and Minds’ volunteer project enabling three students from St Thomas More Sixth Form College, Nuneaton to visit Aldersgate Methodist Housing Association assisted living care home. There has been a gentle sense of the Holy Spirit at work within the home - friendships blossomed and the HeARTS and Minds visiting programme progressed - a programme focusing on the faith needs of the community mainly through art.

One example was the eagerness of many residents to meet together and have some input into the design of a Prayer Intention Box. On completion a short service followed. Melissa was willing to use her gift of sign language to assist those with hearing impairment; this added another dimension to the Lord’s Prayer and the concluding hymn which the residents found very moving. What followed over the weeks was remarkable as residents, staff and visitors used the prayer box for their own intentions. A reminder that one small act of love can help people rediscover joy. Volunteering with the Pastoral Care Project is an experience where like the volunteers mentioned above, you can use your gifts and creativity to make the ‘Joy of the Gospel’ real and active; making a difference to families whose loved one may have dementia. We are a small charity and would love to hear from you if you are willing to give a number of hours or days or sponsor someone else to develop our specific resources. Perhaps you have experience in ministry, design, or would like hold an awareness fundraising event or to promote our resources in your workplace, school or parish. Please contact me: Frances Molloy, Project Manager, Pastoral Care Project, St George’s House, Gerards Way, Coleshill B46 3FG.