# Discover Retreats at Ampleforth Abbey

Come and See

"Who is there here who longs for life?" (RB, Prol. 15)



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AMPLEFORTH ABBEY







# The Herald's Guide to Retreats

*Olenka Hamilton* profiles some of the best places to rest, reset and reflect in this guide to the UK's leading Catholic retreats

# Ampleforth Abbey Ampleforth, Yorkshire

Founded in 1802, Ampleforth Abbey is home to the largest Benedictine community in the UK, who run a seasonal retreat programme throughout the year, providing a variety of opportunities for spiritual nourishment in the beautiful stillness of Ampleforth. For 2022, familiar favourites return such as Fr Bede's Beach Prayer Walks, and Fr Wulstan's Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality, while new themes are explored in Anji Dowson's Women of the Kingdom, a new series from Abbot Robert Igo, and much more.

Students and university groups are particularly welcome at Ampleforth, with a number of organised retreats catering to their needs. This year, Fr Kevin will be leading a Monastic Experience retreat, inviting 18–35-year-olds to take some time to renew and re-engage with life. For university groups and societies, a safe, welcoming space can be found, allowing for connection and community, with Durham, Leeds and York among many participating universities.

Independent retreat guests are also welcome, with rooms available in their three guesthouses (The Archway, The Guesthouse, and newly renovated The Grange) and flexible pricing and meal options to suit everyone. Guests are invited to make their stay their own, with the option to join the community in prayer, eat with other retreatants, and experience meditative walks through the valley.

Enquiries and bookings can be made by contacting the team at hospitality@ampleforth.org.uk or by calling 01439 766087.

# Craig Lodge Family House of Prayer Argyll, Scotland

Originally a hunting lodge, Craig Lodge became a family house of prayer after its owners, the MacFarlane-Barrow family, encountered Our Lady in the small village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. "This family pilgrimage changed everything," say Calum and Mary-Anne MacFarlane-Barrow. "Craig Lodge became a house of prayer. Everything that we do at Craig Lodge is in honour of Mary, the Queen of Peace."

Craig Lodge specialises in providing retreats for families and young people. They invite "pilgrims" or retreatants to join them in prayer: the Rosary, Divine Office, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Praise and Worship and the Way of the Cross. Guests can either "make their own retreat", or join for a particular retreat event.

The grounds, which are in the heart of Glen Orchy, are surrounded by hills and mountains, with a selection of rooms, both indoor and outdoor, in which to discover God's presence. The extensive grounds include the "Mary's Meals" shed where the famous homelessness charity was founded. Guests are encouraged to fast with the family on Wednesdays and Fridays. *craiglodge.org* 

# **Douai Abbey** Nr Thatcham, Berkshire

The Benedictine Douai Abbey has been based near Thatcham in rural Berkshire since 1903, when the monks came over from the monastery of St Edmund's, in Douai, Flanders, driven away as a result of anti-clerical legislation. Today the abbey has a very busy programme of retreats, workshops, courses and day-schools which offer the opportunity for spiritual and personal development. The focus is generally on spirituality, theology, scripture, history and ministry, and guests are welcome all year round.

Music is a huge part of life at the abbey and plays a part in the retreat experience. "Soul Journey with JS Bach for Easter" and "Holv is the True light – exploring the holy in British music" are two examples of retreats directly inspired by the monks' love and knowledge of music. Other retreats on offer include the "Monastic Experience Weekend" which is aimed at men aged 18-40, and particularly but not exclusively those considering a vocation. Day reflections cost £25 per person, while weekend retreats are £160 per person. douaiabbey.org.uk

# **Dowry House** Walsingham, Norfolk

Dowry House is a historical building full of character. Dating back to pre-Reformation days, it is low-ceilinged and "higgledy piggledy" in nature, which "makes it a joy for the adventurous and the collection of nooks and crannies are a delight to those who like



surprises," says the website, which also says that the building boasts "a beautiful chapel, cosy sitting rooms, Marian library, a peaceful cloister garden and very comfortable beds!".

In the heart of Walsingham, the house is located just a mile from the national shrine and basilica of Our Lady. "We see her as our model and we want to help other people to grow in that freedom and joy," says Sister Theresa, a former nurse who runs retreats at the Dowry House along with her fellow sisters.

The sisters especially encourage those who are going through difficult periods in their lives or periods of transition to come and make use of the space and quiet with the aim of finding some clarity.

The sisters run a range of retreats, including youth retreats and silent retreats throughout the pilgrim season from March to December. Popular retreats are on the topic of "emotions and discernment", or "how do you make sense of your feelings", explains Sister Theresa, and "on the fullness of love" which is an opportunity for married or single people, nuns or priests to talk about "how to grow in emotional maturity".

dowryhouse.org.uk

# Iona House of Prayer Iona, Scotland

The Catholic House of Prayer, lona, also known as Cnoc a' Chalmain, which means "Hill of the dove" in Gaelic, is the only place on the island where Mass is celebrated regularly. It was officially opened in 1997 by Archbishop Keith O'Brien on the 1400th anniversary of St Columba's death on Iona.

Cnoc a' Chalmain welcomes people of all faiths and none to provide a peaceful place of prayer for pilgrims in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the most beautiful and serene location.

Accommodation includes a choice of single and double rooms, with bed, breakfast and supper costing £75 per person per day. Bed and breakfast only is available at £50 per person per day. It takes about two and a half hours to reach lona from Oban, travelling by ferry to Mull, then by road across Mull to the lona ferry at Fionnphort. *catholic-iona.com* 

# Society of the Sacred Heart Brecon, Mid-Wales

Meaning "beautiful, holy glade", Llannerchwen in the Brecon Beacons was originally a farmholding which first became a place of silence and prayer in the 1960s when it was bought by a Reverend Shapland and his wife. The couple built two alpine cottages and converted a cowshed into a small chapel before retiring in 1979.

Members of the Society of the Sacred Heart have been at Llannerchwen ever since, having moved there after Joan Scott, one of the sisters, had a two-year experience living as a hermit, which led her to recognise "the need for a place where people > from all walks of life could have the opportunity for a time of solitude and silence, receiving spiritual accompaniment if desired".

Retreats can be booked online and accommodation comprises several individual cabins as well as other retreat rooms adapted so each guest has their own selfcontained space. *llannerchwen.org.uk/home* 

# St Beuno's Denbighshire, North Wales

St Beuno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre is the Jesuits in Britain's retreat centre, located in rural Wales, with views of the Vale of Clwyd and Snowdonia. The building was originally St Beuno's College, built in 1848 as a place for Jesuits to study theology when Stonyhurst College, the original Jesuit college, ran out of capacity.

The centre offers a huge number of different retreats and courses and attracts guests from all over the world. Among retreats on offer are individually guided retreats which last for between two and eight days, as well as themed retreats such as "Finding God in the Garden" and "Finding God in Yoga". They also run beginner and budget retreats. *pathwaystogod.org/org/st-beunos* 

# St Mary's Monastery, Kinnoull Perth, Scotland

St Mary's Monastery, Kinnoull, Perth is home to the Redemptorists of Scotland, and functions as a community, ecumenical retreat house and Centre of Spirituality, offering a full programme of courses and retreats all year round.

The impressive neo-gothic building, which has views of the Grampian mountains, opened in 1869, when the Redemptorists first came to Scotland. The church was dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. It was the first Catholic monastery to be built since the Reformation and was from the beginning used extensively by the Scottish bishops for their clergy retreats.

St Mary's is still very much devoted to the tradition of offering retreats and has been refurbished recently; it can now take up to 36 residential guests and 50 day guests at a time. They run a popular Holy Week retreat each year, which starts on the Monday of Holy Week and ends on the morning of Holy Saturday, at the price of £425 per person, as well as a Lenten retreat and others. *kinnoullmonastery.co.uk/retreats* 



# The Friars, Aylesford Priory Maidstone, Kent

Set in the heart of Kent, The Friars at Aylesford Priory is an ancient religious house of the Order of Carmelites dating back to the 13th century. Large groups come on pilgrimage from May to October to pray at the historic Shrine to Our Lady, which has been a traditional pilgrimage spot for travellers since medieval times. It is called The Friars because it originally offered hospitality and accommodation for travellers to Canterbury.

They host various retreats including a "grief and loss" weekend for people who have experienced a bereavement. "We grieve, remember, hope and give thanks for our loved ones in the light of the Resurrection Jesus," they say. Other retreats include Easter and Advent retreats, the "Our Lady of Mount Carmel" retreat, which is a two-day reflection on Mary in the Carmelite tradition through scripture and art, and the "Little Flower" retreat, which is a reflection of the love and mercy of God through the writings of St Thérèse. The average cost is £205 for a single ticket. Pilgrimages, parish days and all-night vigils are also a regular feature of life at The Friars. thefriars.org.uk

# Worth Abbey Retreat Centre Worth, West Sussex

The Worth Abbey Retreat Centre (formerly The Open Cloister) offers a programme of weekend and midweek retreats, all distinctly Benedictine in flavour, open to both men and women and people of all faiths and none.

Retreats include the "Time Out" retreat which is self-led, the "Easter Triduum", as well as a "Finding Stillness" retreat, which shows participants "how stillness and stability can be ways of opening up to God and living life at a deeper level". This retreat includes teachings in lectio divina as well as an opportunity to have a one-to-one meeting with a monk. Otherwise, retreatants take up the rhythm of the monastic day, join the monks for prayer and explore the 500-acre grounds at their will. A new addition to the programme is the Tai Chi and Christian meditation retreat, which makes a comeback having last been run at the abbey 20 years ago.

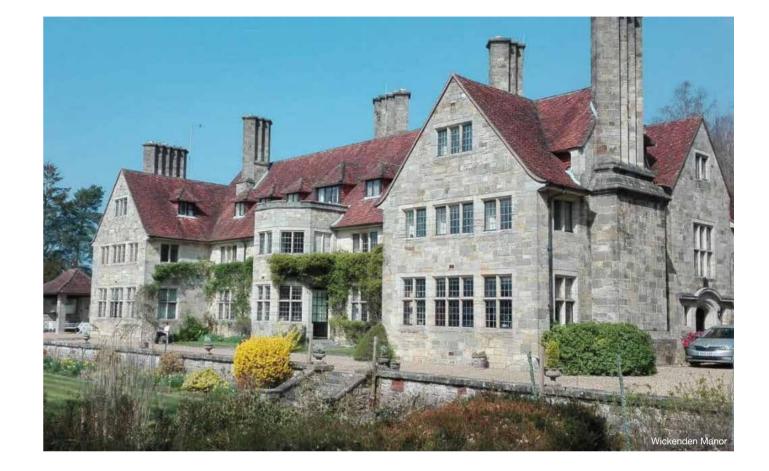
Father Peter Williams, who runs the programme, has been a monk at Worth Abbey for 27 years, 20 of which were spent being the chaplain at Worth School. Retreats cost around £90 per night, usually lasting two nights, although guests of the "Time Out" retreats can stay for up to five days. *worthabbey.net/visiting/retreats* 

# More recommended retreat centres in the UK

Belmont Abbey, Herefordshire Buckfast Abbey, Devon Christian Heritage Centre, Stonyhurst, Clitheroe Urban Oasis, Sisters of St Andrew, Blackheath, London The Kairos Centre, Roehampton Minsteracres Retreat Centre, Northumberland Minster Abbey, Kent Walsingham House

Abbotswick, Brentwood Boarbank Hall, Cumbria The Briery Retreat Centre, Yorkshire Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality, Oxford

St Augustine's Benedictine Abbey, Chilworth St Joseph's Prayer Centre, Liverpool St Winefride's Guest House, Holywell, North Wales



# Sustenance for mind and body

The opportunity to restore spiritual sanity should be a vital part of Catholic life, says Joanna Bogle

When I was at school, the announcement of the annual Lenten retreat was awaited with some pleasure. It was a one-day event, held at various stages for the various year groups, and its main attraction was that for a full day there would be no lessons, and we would be allowed to go out of bounds. The school – St Philomena's in Carshalton, which still flourishes – had and still has the most beautiful grounds, including a grotto and a lake, both of which were of course normally banned to us for safety reasons. But when on retreat we were meant to be spending the day in

quiet reflection, so were allowed to roam freely.

The grotto was reputed to have a secret tunnel – that led to oh. I don't know, the staircase in the library where the school's ghost was said to lurk - and the lake was sometimes marshy, sometimes dry, according to the weather and the local water table. But it all felt slightly holy because there was a statue of Our Lady and it was very peaceful and cut off from the general hurly-burly of school life. And it all sealed into my mind the connection between going on retreat and being somewhere rather beautiful, a connection that has remained.

Today, a retreat for me – for most of us? – requires at least

an overnight stay in order to offer a real opportunity to get into a rhythm of prayer and reflection and to disconnect from chatter. I remember with particular pleasure arriving at Wickenden Manor, the retreat centre in Sussex run by Opus Dei, in deep snow one Lenten Friday night. There was a warm welcome, a delicious supper, and Evening Praver in the simple, beautiful chapel. Over the next couple of days, the sense of being a guest in an extremely comfortable home jostled agreeably with the gentle discipline of silence: we had reading aloud at meals, no chatting, and some thoughtful and well-presented material for meditation in the chapel, along with the daily ►

Office and of course Mass. The house, with its 1930s manorhouse style and its well-stocked library, gives out a sense of order and quiet assurance - "Agatha Christie but with pravers instead of a murder," as one retreatant later put it - and I soaked myself in some long-delayed reading (Benedict XVI and John Paul II. since you ask) and even finished some embroidery.

But a decent retreat does also include a sense of challenge. Opus Dei is rather good at this: the talks were not mushy, and there was a sense of being reminded about the basics of a healthy Christian life with a dash of vigour. It does us all no harm to be reminded of things like daily prayer, regular confession, dropping in to weekday Mass with reasonable frequency, and so on. I liked the brisk assumption that we would all take part in the afternoon Rosary, and the reminder that this prayer should be a regular part of all our lives – on a bus or train, or on an ordinary weekday.

A different sort of retreat is the type taken as a group, where a team united on a common project takes time out together. Earlier this year, groups from St Patrick's, Soho, serving meals for the homeless, came together for a weekend retreat at Worth Abbey, led by a priest from the Community of St John. Worth is glorious - we loved the chanted Morning and Evening Prayer with the monks in the great church, the hearty Saturday afternoon walk in the countryside and the cheery well-sung Sunday Mass with lots of young families from all around.

Father John Jesus of the Community of St John (CSJ) took us through the Gospel of St Luke, opening up whole new dimensions I had never seen before, much less studied or explored. It was at once intellectually stimulating

and profoundly inspiring. We grew together as a group, deepened friendships already forged through kitchen work at St P's, and found a new sense of common purpose in praying together. The CSJ is one of the new movements in the Church and a sign of immense vigour and hope. Fr JJ, in his grey robes, seemed at home among the Benedictine monks, and all of us relished being out of London and – oh. back to schooldav memories again - in a place of beauty with a lake and a sense of away-from-it-all.

For most of us, monastic life is something rather remote and a retreat is a good way of learning to recognise it as a part of Catholic life. I found it rather satisfying to come across a monk busy at work with a bonfire in a wooded corner of the abbey grounds where this spring new plants will flourish. It was satisfying seeing them all filing into their places for prayer in the dark early morning, and knowing that this was happening day after day. There was something rather powerful about that rhythm of daily prayer and then the Sunday chatter of families gathering after Mass, children jumping about and news being exchanged, all under the

# **66** A decent retreat does include a sense of challenge. It does no harm to be reminded of daily prayer and regular confession

benevolent shadow of the great church that dominates the scene. We had a lengthy vigil of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament on the Saturday evening. I struggled with this - I am so used to being busy and to interspersing my work and activities with cups of tea. It was difficult to enthuse when given the weekend's timetable. But I needed that quiet time, free of diary planning and emails. The Blessed Sacrament brought reverently to the altar, the silence, the peace, all finally opened up the space for prayer – and when things finished with Benediction, it was good to make our way to our beds with a sense of peace.

A retreat isn't really an optional part of Catholic life - it's something that is truly necessary to retain spiritual sanity in an internetobsessed world with its newsdriven sense of drama and its bickering and sniping. And a good retreat isn't a time of self-obsessed me-on-me pondering: it includes challenge and refreshment, drawn from wellsprings of wisdom and soaked in prayer. Ingredients can include a good library (some spiritual classics, plenty of biographies and plenty of history), good food and real coffee, comfortable accommodation, the Offices of the Church and, ideally, access to some outdoor beauty - a shrine or grotto, lake or meadows or just a garden. We may well find, at some stage, that we must spend time with God in less pleasant places, in dinginess or difficulties. loneliness, hardship or worse. We do well to stock on the beauty that He willingly gives us and make use of it to ponder His love and care. CH

For more information on the retreats, visit isilondon. com (Brothers of St John) and worthabbey.net (Worth Abbey) and for Opus Dei retreats contact uk@opusdei.org





The mission of the Society of the Little Flower is to promote devotion to St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Carmelite Nun and Doctor of the Church. Through prayers and donations, friends of St. Thérèse enable Carmelites to continue her "Shower of Roses" in their ministries throughout the world and in their education of young Carmelites.

Carmelite priests, nuns, brothers and sisters serve people in parishes, medical clinics, women's centres, schools, retreat houses, hospitals, catechetical centres, prisons, housing, job and skills development programmes and sacramental celebrations around the world.

Society of the Little Flower, Barclays House, 51 Bishopric, Horsham, RH12 1QJ

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# Awake in the wilderness

Though different in form, each retreat is an encounter with Christ, writes Dom Xavier Perrin

Lent is the annual retreat of the Church. For 40 days, the People of God go into the wilderness. They follow in the steps of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus. If we believe Saint Mark, he had no choice: the Spirit "pushed" him into the wilderness. Thirty years of hidden life and the mystical illumination of his baptism in the Jordan were apparently not enough to prepare him for his public ministry. A season in the desert was needed with its ingredients – those of any retreat: sobriety, solitude and silence; battle with the Enemy; guidance of the Spirit.

## In my room

Because you have an important decision to make, or you feel called to reconsider the orientation of your life; because something in you needs to breathe a deeper breath, or you are in search of inner peace, light and guidance; or simply because you saw an advert, or someone one day invited you and you thought, "Why not?", here you are, somewhere in some sort of countryside. You are given a room, a timetable, a book or two. Your host has just shut the door. You are left with yourself and, in an act of admirable courage, you have even managed to switch off your phone.

How strange to be alone. How frightening, maybe, to be cut off from the noises of city, family and media. How unfamiliar to stay for a few nights in a simple bedroom with a desk and nothing really yours around. For a few days, this will be your wilderness. Don't be afraid. Embrace it, rather. Let yourself be drawn into it and led further on, beyond any well-known ground. A promise of encounter lies at the heart of this sober and silent solitude.

Encounter with yourself, first. Do not be surprised if all sorts of desires, frustrations and worries, a thirst for truth, peace and beauty, the need to love and to be loved, come up in your now inescapable inner world.

All these impressions and feelings happen in you. They are telling you something about yourself, but they are not you. Pass them through the sieve of your discernment. And then, let yourself be led further on your interior journey, to a truer self, probably a simpler and better one than you expected. You might come out of these few days better friends with yourself.

What about the encounter with God? You noticed the Bible put on your desk and you finally decided to open it. Well done! Here is a book that speaks to the heart - I mean: to your true self. These stories of creation and salvation, these judgments and these promises, are all for you. Someone is speaking to you. You realise you have been brought here to live from what comes from His mouth. You are addressed by God: "My daughter. My son." He was the one who invited you, even if you thought the idea came from you.

Word and silence; room and chapel: you quickly learn to move peacefully between these poles of your new space. For the retreat is a space and a time in which God

# **6** Don't be afraid. Embrace it, rather. Let yourself be drawn into it and led further on, beyond any well-known ground

is newly given to you, and you to Him. Love itself has given you rendez-vous.

## On the battlefield

Now, it is not all easy and smooth. You may feel drawn in all sorts of directions, not all of them pious and holy. It may be your sinful self with all its disorders. stubbornness and resistance, or the image of the holy man or woman the tempter is offering to your secret pride. Silence, Word and prayer will become your best allies. Of course, there is also the offer to "speak with someone" - a priest, the retreat giver, someone with a formation in accompaniment. On the battlefield, the soul finds healing by opening itself, by exposing one's struggles to a fraternal soul - sometimes to a fatherly and sacramental presence in the sacrament of reconciliation. You may expect this person, whoever he or she is, to be a good listener, able to be a witness of what is happening in you, to show you a direction when you feel a bit lost, and to challenge you fraternally: "Have you thought of this passage in the Gospel? Why not spend a longer time adoring Jesus in the tabernacle? What conversion are you called to? Trust the presence of the Spirit in your heart. Discover Mary and the Church all around you."

The most personal retreat should draw us into the heart of the Church: the community of the believers and the Saints. This wilderness has to become a haven of communion, otherwise it will end being the empty cave of a sterile self-contemplation. It should help you connect anew with the one life of Jesus in his mystical body. Your personal drama will thus be put into its greater context: the fight between darkness and light, won for ever by Jesus on the Cross, and shared with you by an army of brothers and sisters.

### Styles and substance

There are many retreats on offer in many different styles. Spending a few days in the guest house of a monastery will give vou the opportunity to share in the liturgical life of a community of women or men whose silent presence is a powerful witness of Christian life. In a retreat centre, you will benefit from talks and instructions providing you with truths to meditate on and an itinerary for your spiritual journey. In a personally accompanied retreat, especially in the Ignatian tradition, you will find a proper method of spiritual discernment, often tailored to your own needs, path and rhythm.

Forms vary a lot. The substance, though, remains the same: each retreat is an encounter with Christ and, more especially, an experience of the way He leads each of us, and His Church, through His Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus is always the main retreat giver, the inner preacher without whom the outer ones would be of no avail. The Comforter illumines and shows the ways to mercy. The Counsellor often inspires a conversion, suggests a direction, or supports a decision. Always, His work is recognised by an increase of peace in our heart. Impossible situations may remain impossible, my old weaknesses seem desperately incorrigible, but I have received a new light and a new strength. God has become a little more my God. I feel ready to walk a new stretch of my journey to Him. It does not really matter if others do not necessarily notice a big change. CH

Dom Xavier Perrin OSB is the Abbot of Quarr Abbey, Ryde

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We offer residential or day retreats, and groups can lead their own retreat if they wish.



For further information contact Worth Abbey at retreats@worth.org.uk or call 01342 710318. Retreat programme is available here: worth.co.uk

Worth Abbey, Paddockhurst Road, Turners Hill, West Sussex RH10 4SB



# **Kinnoull Monastery**

The Spirituality of True Self-Esteem Fr Jim McManus CSs.R. & Miss Marie Hogg

Monday 28th May - Friday 27th May, 2022 The Gift of Healing & Wholeness. The Healing Ministry in the Church Today Fr. Jim McManus CSs.R.

Monday 30th May - Friday 3rd June, 2022 Protecting and Caring for the Earth Our Common Home Fr Sean McDonagh SSC

Friday 3rd June - 5th June, 2022 A weekend on The Spirituality of True Self-Esteem Fr Jim McManus CSs.R. & Miss Marie Hogg

Monday 6th June - Friday 10th June, 2022 "Jesus and Jonah" A scriptural adventure Fr. Denis McBride, CSs.R.

> Monday 13th June - Monday 20th June, 2022 **Retreat for Religious** Fr. Richard Reid, C.Ss.R.

Individual guests continue to be welcome for reflection, rest and relaxation in our comfortable Centre and extensive grounds in Scotland. Direct trains each day from London and other cities.

For bookings or further information please contact: info@kinnoullmonastery.co.uk Tel +44 (0)1738 624075 St. Mary's Monastery, Hatton Road, Perth. PH2 7BP www.kinnoullmonastery.co.uk



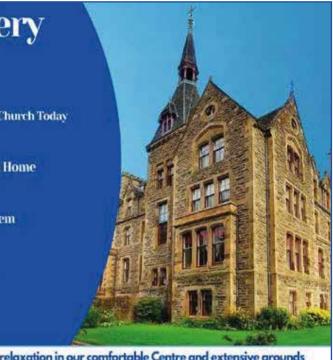
Days of Reflection Sat 25 lune

Sat 2 July led by Euan Tait

Sat 9 July At Home in Bethany led by Barbara Priest

**Residential Retreats** Tues 5 - Fri 8 July Lectio Divina Retreat led by Gervase Holdaway OSB

Fri 22 – Sun 24 July Spirituality of St Bonaventure led by Revd Douglas Dales



# Douai Abbey

A Benedictine monastery in Berkshire

Journeying towards the End of Life led by Peter Bowe OSB & Ann Fulton

Soul Journey with | S Bach - the Holy Spirit

Further details from www.douaiabbey.org.uk

