

## **Nelson 2010**

I was fortunate to be at Tea Pot Valley in Nelson for the South Island Dove Retreat on 17th to 19th September.

God, our Beloved had called, and 70 women had responded to come away.

I had been asked to help welcoming and it was interesting to meet the women arriving. I wasn't staying in. The solitude and silence of my nearby home called me. However, I caught the companionable joy of the women choosing beds and unrolling sleeping bags in shared rooms. There was a wonderful spirit of being together and the excitement of a sleepover. Someone I hadn't seen in over 40 years recognized me from our boarding school days.

Helen Funnell, the Dove National President officially welcomed us and set the scene for our weekend. Helen is amazingly effervescent, warm and witty, and efficient in a very relaxed style. We were made welcome, welcome and welcome some more to our time away to rest at the feet of Jesus.

Helen introduced her National Team of equally talented women and they all ministered to our needs of body and soul in many quiet and miraculous ways over the weekend. Everyone was grateful for their loving ministry to us. How often over the weekend I noted simple acts of kindness from one woman to another. Thank you.

The music team of Judy and Lesley began with Val stepping in until Wilma from Hamilton arrived after weather delays. She had her guitar out and was in action within minutes of entering the room. The music and singing were fantastic all weekend. It flowed over me and saturated my being. There were times of praise and worship, times of ambience music, and even dance music on Saturday night.

Then Terry Modica, the guest speaker from America came forward. I admit that my main motivation to come was to hear her and she exceeded my expectations. First she replaced the word Retreat with Restoration. She spoke of God's desire to restore us, to heal us. We would journey to the healing heart of Jesus.

She introduced 2 images she would use as we journeyed. One metaphor was of the weekend as a mountain climbing process as in the many scriptural stories of mountain experiences including Mt. Tabor and being transfigured and being close to God. The other image connected to the theme of Growth, the parable of the Sower and the soil. This theme was before us visually, beginning with a pot of soil, garden tools and seeds and it changed and grew many times over the next 2 days.

I liked the image of making good soil by composting the layers of my life with layers of The Word of God and the sacraments. So healing, growth and mountain climbing was on offer and I embraced all three. I love hiking and gardening and never say no to healing.

The stepping stones to climb the mountain would be the 4 sets of Mysteries of the Rosary. Terry was easy to listen to, intelligent, very down to earth and practical, very scriptural, full of faith, and humorous. Terry wove the up and down realities of her own story and her love of God through her talks and that made her so real and believable and touched deeply into my story and the authentic me.

She gave 5 talks in all. Terry began with the Joyful Mysteries, bringing them wonderfully alive and we tilled our soil to increase our fertility. I liked her expression of “Joy Robbers” for what prevented us living in Joy. We made our own private list of joy robbers and presented them individually in the 2nd Rite of Reconciliation. It is great to experience enthusiastic participation of this liberating healing sacrament. The sun shone as brightly as the women.

Then it was lunch. Good food is always a highlight and for women, no preparation, no dishes and good company made the mealtimes a real treat.

Saturday afternoon we continued climbing and pruning things that were not life giving as Terry stepped through the Luminous mysteries and breathed new life into them and us.

Then it was time for the sorrowful Mysteries. I remember her phrases, ‘Every cross can be a Resurrection unless maybe it is a cross God didn’t ask us to carry.’ “Let God be God.” A bit more pruning needed for me! A bit more climbing. After an inspiring journey from the Agony to the Crucifixion, we were invited to write down the crosses we were carrying, our heartaches, our burdens, our prayer requests. ‘We cannot endure the sorrowful journey of the cross unless we are centering our prayer life in Jesus.’

During an evening time of Adoration, Fr. Jack carried the monstrance and blessed each person individually. How special and I eagerly let go my folded list into Helen’s basket. Prayer teams were available for prayer and anointing. Wonderful things were happening. The atmosphere was electric. Next day when asked if anyone had experienced healing all hands went up, many put up 2 hands! The Spirit was indeed moving in the weekend.

Sunday dawned bright and sunny and Terry added to the sparkle with the stepping stones of the Glorious Mysteries. By now roses were blooming in the soil, the band played on, songs were sung, the flags were waving, prayers were prayed and anointings of the Spirit abounded.

After lunch my delight was to climb the mountain behind the camp to the crucifix on the hill and look down on the camp and reflect on all the restoration that had taken place in me since Friday night. The fertility of my soil had improved, I had overcome some challenges of my life, and I asked God for fruit to grow abundantly in me.

We concluded with Mass and our thanksgiving was evident. I asked one woman for her impression of the weekend, she said, “Blessings, blessings, blessings.”

I bought the high quality CD’s that the sound and screen technicians made of each session. I knew I would value hearing them again. I have continued to ponder:

- How does my life connect to the mystery of what I hear announced?
- How is my spirit exhilarated when visited by the good news?
- What is born from my dyings?
- Can I rededicate myself and my life to fulfill my purpose?
- What do I need to risk to find Jesus?