



**One-Day Retreat
Saturday, March 4, 2017
Ardfert Centre, County Kerry, Ireland
By Caroline Bertozzi**

Dear Diane and Charley:

We had ten people signed up before the day and I had four more walk-ins that morning. Two Moms and one couple. So I had fourteen people, for thirteen children. Two Moms had both lost two sons. They came from all over the county and the children lost ranged in age from 3.5 to 40 with their deaths occurring from the 1970's to just eight weeks ago {January 3rd}.



Causes of death were cancer (3), heart (1), blood clot (1), brain hemorrhage (1), hit by car (1), fall on work site (1), motorbike crash (1), suicide (2), and inherited chromosomal condition (2).

We had two Moms who lost two sons. One who lost her little lad at 3.5 when he was hit by a car (in the 1970's) and then she lost her grown son to a fall when he was volunteering overseas in Belarus (in 2011). The second Mom lost her two boys at 16 (in 2013) and 14 (in 2016) due to inherited chromosomal issues.

The space at the Retreat centre is marvelous. It is perfect for our retreat. We had a large meeting room where we put tables together so we could sit all together, the windows faced the old cathedral and sun streamed in in the afternoon. The little chapel is beautiful and the sun had moved around to that side of the building and was beaming in on the altar and candles during Mass.

Fr. O'Sullivan was WONDERFUL. He even did Prayers of the Faithful that were all focused on loss of a child. He did a beautiful homily talking about his time as pastor of a girl's boarding school {for over 12 years} and a few teen girls who died of cancer while he was there. He said that now, in retirement, the ones that come back to you are those where a child was lost, where you sat with those mothers and fathers. He was very kind and did a great job.



On Monday I e-mailed everyone who had e-mail and thanked them for sharing the day and their stories and their children with us. I told them that we like to keep in touch and explained what we do with their information and if they want to be on the list to let me know. I have nine of them back so far along with some kind comments about the day.

My brother-in-law and nephew were there all day long cooking and serving, clearing away and all of it. They even washed the kitchen floor before they left. I was so proud and grateful for them. My sister stayed until after lunch, helping with prepping lunch.

The food was marvelous too, I wish I had photos. They did homemade veg soup with panini loaves and then mixed sandwiches for lunch - ham, turkey and egg salad. There was tea/coffee and scones available all day. Dinner was Irish comfort food - bacon and cabbage, with white sauce with parsley and mashed potatoes, carrots and parsnips. There was apple pie and cream and banoffee pie for dessert too. Everyone complimented the food and food service. I didn't have to give a thought to it, Richie, Leon and Sandra were fabulous.

Everyone asked if I would do this again next year, so mark your calendars for a trip to Ireland in late September, early October !

I think that's about everything. I TRULY felt lifted up on Saturday, by Nick, I'm sure by Paul, by all of the Emmaus children and the Holy Spirit. There was a lot of spirit there for sure. I feel grateful to have brought the Ministry to Ireland.

Take care.

Love,
Caroline

