



Between Friday 10th and Sunday 12th October 2008 I took part in the EBP annual retreat at Llangasty, near Brecon in Wales.

I felt like we were truly retreating from the world, from the hubbub of city life, as we made our way along ever narrower country lanes until we arrived at our destination. Although we'd only travelled for about an hour and a half outside Bristol, this felt remote and set apart from the rest of life – an oasis in time and space.

Set next to a large lake and surrounded by jagged mountainous terrain, Llangasty's spell set to work on me as soon as I arrived. I felt calmed and humbled by the landscape. It felt like hallowed ground, sacred space, encouraging us to tread lightly, speak softly, and succumb to its pace, in tune with the weather and the changing of the seasons.

I felt the daily offices and services provided a prayerful cocoon of warmth and friendship in which to commune together. The silence observed in the mornings allowed me to look within and without, and reflect. The meditations led by Canon Ivor were insightful and challenging, but most of all funny, realistic and original. He spoke to my mind and my imagination on many aspects of how we approach God and Church, our life and our bodies, and gave me confidence to follow my own faith convictions and experiences, while still feeling part of the whole.

On the Sunday morning I decided to walk up the mountain which overlooked the retreat house. A steep muddy path led directly up one side, and not another soul walked there that morning. When I set off, a thick covering of fog lay across the land. It was eerie as I journeyed upwards, not knowing where the path might lead. Eventually the path rose above the fog, but it was not until I reached the very top that the fog began to clear and reveal the spectacular panoramic views of mountains, valleys and the lake. I lay on my back at the top of the mountain, looking out at the view and up at the sky. As I lay there my fear, like the fog, dissipated, and I didn't feel alone. I felt able to rest a while on top of this mountain, and I didn't want to come down, because I felt more peaceful, unjudged and contented than I have done in ages.