

The Belfast Jesuit Centre

Caren Collins looks forward with quiet anticipation to the year ahead at the Belfast Jesuit Centre.



September brings a sense of beginning again: a chance to renew our rhythms of prayer, learning and accompaniment and to welcome both familiar faces and those arriving for the first time. What follows is a glimpse of the year we are preparing to walk together, trusting that the same Spirit who has guided us thus far will continue to weave grace through all that unfolds.

Each Tuesday evening, our *lectio divina* gatherings will once again be an anchor. People, carrying whatever the week has placed in their hands, will sit with the Gospel for the coming Sunday and listen for the word that speaks to them. Over time, this circle has become a small but open community

of faith and friendship, and we look forward to seeing how Scripture will meet us in the seasons ahead.

On Wednesday evenings, our online BJC Book Club will continue its pilgrimage through texts old and new. Whether exploring early Christian writers, contemporary theologians or the lived experience of communities facing conflict and injustice, each book opens a way into deeper reflection and conversation, across screens and time zones.

Our liturgical life will hold its own quiet beauty. Friday lunchtime Mass, followed by light lunch, conversation and song, will remain a place to reconnect and be nourished. The 6.00pm

candlelit Sunday Taizé Mass in St Patrick's, and the warm gathering afterwards in the centre, will continue to offer a welcoming space where prayer and community meet.

Our Year of Ignatian Prayer programme, now in its third year, will welcome a new cohort. Guided by our team of Jesuits and volunteer partners-in-mission, they will enter a slow, attentive journey of noticing: learning to recognise consolation and desolation, to name desire and to discern God's presence in the ordinary. Month by month, a community will form around shared prayer and shared story. This programme has become a steady flame at the centre of our life together, and we look forward to the depth it will bring once more.

The seasons will bring their own invitations. Our Advent and Lent programmes will weave Scripture, poetry, and art into a contemplative preparation for Christmas and Easter; a simple, steady path for anyone seeking to enter deeply into the mystery of these seasons.

Our Faith & Film gatherings on the last Thursday of each month will continue to open windows into courage, conscience, suffering and hope. Through stories that linger long after the credits fade, we will explore the world and the call of God within it. Our journey with *The Chosen* will resume, allowing us to sit with the humanity and mystery of Jesus in a fresh way.

We will also introduce a small programme of prayer and poetry across the year. These sessions will offer a contemplative space where poetry becomes a doorway into prayer, imagination and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Our chaplaincy presence at Ulster

University will continue to offer a steady, compassionate accompaniment to students and staff. Through conversation, pastoral support and shared prayer, we'll accompany the university community in seeking God in the ordinary rhythms of study and life.

The BJC will welcome speakers and groups engaged in peace building, justice and reconciliation, voices that help us see more clearly and respond with compassion. We will continue our support for efforts to establish twinning links between Christian communities in Palestine and those here, working closely with Christians4Palestine and other solidarity groups to ensure that the 'living stones' of the region are heard, honoured and accompanied as they seek a just and lasting peace.

Looking ahead, what matters most is not the number of events but the quality of presence we hope to cultivate. People will gather to pray, to learn, to reflect, to sit with difficult questions, to share stories and to hold silence together. Community will form through the steady accumulation of small, faithful moments.

As we step into this new year, we do so with hope, trusting that God will meet us in familiar rhythms and unexpected places, in conversation and shared prayer, in Scripture and sacrament. The Belfast Jesuit Centre remains a place where people can explore faith with honesty and imagination, where the spiritual life is nurtured through depth and where community grows through the simple act of showing up.

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