

**Theme:** "We experience a deep desire within to live a deep encounter with God through lives transformed by silence, solitude, communal discernment and by joyfully living all the other Essential Elements."

### **Background information**

We here in Belfast are a community of 8 Contemplative Sisters, (one sister resides in a Nursing Home). Two Sisters are from Sri Lanka, presently Sr. Regina is in Sri Lanka because her Visa has expired and she is preparing to apply for another Visa from there. At this point we do not know whether Regina will be successful or not in getting it.

Due to diminishment in both the Contemplative and Apostolic communities our building has undergone major renovations in order to facilitate both communities living under one roof.

However, we continue to share some space but have our own separate life styles.

Due to diminishment and personal needs of sisters we have employed Care-Givers which brings its own changes into our community.

### **Question 1. How do we live our life in the present realities of today?**

1. Due to smaller numbers, living together can be more challenging with the poverty of aging.
2. More time for prayer, greater trust in Him who answers all our needs and who knows them better than we do. Conscious of our diminishment and pondering what the Lord is saying to us through this reality.
3. Living in the Present Moment and being aware of God's presence
4. Working on relationships in community
5. Witness to people who come and pray in our Oratory - a reciprocal relationship as they witness to us too.
6. Living within a structure is helpful in enabling us to work towards a balanced lifestyle and leading to personal growth, (balance between a life of prayer, work, free time and relaxation)
7. Living out the Vows daily as much as we are able.
8. Zeal - praying for the ministries of our Apostolic sisters.
9. Conscious of the Care of the Earth -recycling, etc.

### **Question 2. How do you live out Community Life?**

1. Within the community we try and act in a sisterly way by supporting one another be it through happy or challenging times. These include the visiting and care of our sister in the Nursing Home and keeping her informed.
2. We aim at being a community of prayer, joy and of faith - sharing *Lectio Divina* together as a community, the Divine office, respecting silence and days of recollection monthly.
3. We are very conscious of praying for the ministries of our Apostolic sisters - our Vow of Zeal - and praying for the many needs of the people in our wider community who request prayers either by writing, telephoning or coming personally
4. Unity in diversity - try to respect each person's point of view
5. Spirit of Hospitality/welcome to all our friends and benefactors
6. Ongoing communication within community in order to strengthen our bonds and relationships with one another
7. Fostering an atmosphere of silence which can be a challenge.
8. The Enclosure, being lived out differently today, enables to be attentive to the voice of the Spirit.