

The Benefits of Going on a Retreat

Sr. Delores Hannon, RSM.



Why did you decide to go on the Sabbatical?

I was in a time of transition and knew I needed time and space to reflect on my life journey and what the next chapters might be. I knew I needed to distance myself from my daily life. I loved the idea of coming to Baggot Street for this time of reflection, relaxation, and prayer. And fun!

Was this your first visit to Ireland/Baggot Street?

I have been to Ireland and Baggot Street several times. It was great to have it as a home base. For me, I loved having the keys to Baggot Street. Having the keys underlines that it is my place and our place.

How important was it for you to spend time in Catherine's House?

It centered me more on Catherine's life. Having the time and space to walk around the house and stay awhile in places that are part of Catherine's life story. I loved having the opportunity to walk down to the chapel at night and spend time in the quiet.



What did you learn about yourself on the retreat?

I can enjoy not having to run around juggling a dozen activities.

What challenges did you encounter? Surprises?

I laughed at myself about wanting a full schedule with itemized lists of all we were going to do, when it was going to be done, and what I needed to do to prepare! Surprise! It was great to not have that hectic of a schedule.

How has your Sabbatical experience supported your overall spiritual growth and development?

I have prayed with the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy more. To me, they are one of the inspirations of many of Catherine's actions that the Sisters of Mercy are living today. In the US, we focus on the Critical Concerns; I needed to understand that they come from the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. I also loved Catherine's letters. They contain much wisdom, plus everyday life. I saw the humour in Catherine – even on the days that were not great. She became more human to me. Someone I want to have a chat with!

What did you do in your free time while in Ireland? What particular day trips stuck out for you?

Part of our experience was visiting Coolock House. It was a peaceful spot for me. The next time I am in Ireland, I would love to stay there for a few days. I can't capture in words the feeling of welcome in that space. I have been before and have always loved Glendalough. For me, it is holy ground. The day we went, it was perfect weather for walking in the woods and by the lake. I have also been there in the rain and loved it.

Although not part of the program, we did a bus trip to the Cliffs of Moher on a Sunday. It was a lovely trip, but it helped me realize that I did not need to rush around and go to tourist spots. I didn't come for the tourist experience.

I loved walking in Dublin. I had many great chats with people pushing their strollers and/or walking their dogs. It felt like it was coming home to me. I saw faces and heard phrases that brought the faces of my family to mind. I often reflect on my high school self, who would never believe strolling around Ireland with a cup of coffee or a pint. How blessed I am!



One of the best parts of the trip were the people. I was part of a wonderful group of women who shared laughter and joy. Who listened with care and compassion to each other's stories. They are a delightful collection of Catherine's daughters. The Irish sisters explained rugby to me, and I tried to understand some of what was happening. It is a tough game. American football is not as tough. It was a privilege to be with them.

The people who welcome you to Baggot Street are an outstanding collection of people who are there to welcome and care for you. Sister Phil's line was "Welcome to Grandma's Home." That was true at every turn. Everyone wanted you to feel that you were home, and I willingly and lovingly made it home for me.

Sr. Delores (Dee) Hannon, RSM, attended the Sabbatical retreat at Mercy International Association in October 2023. The Sabbatical Retreat 2024 will run from Sunday, September 1st, 2024, to Friday, September 27th, 2024.

For more information on Mercy International Association's retreat programme, please visit, www.mercyworld.org/our-centre/programmes/

