



Heaven on earth!

Mari Girling, CPW Communications Officer, tells why she keeps coming to CPW

If you have been on a Catholic People's Week before, I hope you too will agree that we are trying to build the Kingdom of Heaven on earth (even if we don't always live up to that ambition).

If you have never tried CPW, I'd like to encourage you to give it a go!

I began attending Catholic People's Weeks twenty years ago, when I was learning how to bring up my small children. I found an accepting, welcoming community, where many people seemed to know each other but where newcomers were embraced and encouraged to join in. They came from all walks of life – poor, well-off, southern, northern, even some from abroad. Some people shared my tastes and interests, others had quite different ones.

We were drawn together by the love of God, and a desire to live better the life of God's people. I also found people who were generous with their time, keen to learn and to share experiences. Above all I found creative liturgy that allowed us to worship God in the Catholic tradition but in an open and often experimental way.

That doesn't mean that everyone at CPW is 'holier than holy'! Like St Augustine, most of us have doubts and fears, although others of us have the sort of faith that might move

mountains. As a group, we like to enjoy ourselves and have fun as well!

Now that my children are older, I am starting to discover the slightly more predictable pleasures of the 18+ weeks, but I don't think I will ever leave behind the excitement of the all-age events where the very young and the very old and all ages in between mill together. Most of my children have been or are still contributing to the Helpers teams, and have a network of supportive friends around the country as a result.

Some highlights from my years of attending CPW: a night hike by moonlight along a flat, frosty Norfolk riverside... a Stations of the Cross created as a labyrinth which we walked in twos and threes... a river of candles reflected from a sea of foil to lead us to evening prayer... an impromptu visit to a Christian CND action with the 20 foot peace banner we had all made... watching parents deal with a difficult or disabled child with grace and love... a delicious cream tea at the end of a companionable afternoon walk... the day the cows came to Mass... "the (in)expert juggler" - one of the many concert items that made me laugh and laugh...

Once I had begun going to CPW, I wished I had known about it earlier. If you think it might be for you, give us a try.