If I were to sum up our annual oblate retreat in one word that word would be JOY ( yes ! in capital letters ) It was such a joy to meet up again with old friends and to meet in person those friends whom previously we had only known as tiny images on our screens ( There’s so much more to us than the digital “eye “ can begin to perceive ! ) It was pure joy to spend time together in silence and then in- between times to pray and reflect together. It was especially helpful, I thought, to do our lectio together in small breakout groups and to stay in those groups for each of the three sessions. It enabled us to attend to each other at ever deeper levels and to be increasingly open and honest together and that was profoundly helpful. Of course, it was nothing but joy to receive and accompany our four novices as they made their full oblation during our Eucharist on Sunday. Their offering of themselves to the service of God through WCCM was such a significant moment for them and for all of us as we, too, re-affirmed our baptismal promises. And then for me it was a great privilege and pure joy to be invited to celebrate our contemplative Eucharist together on Sunday. For a long time now I have bemoaned the wordiness of our standard ( anglican ) liturgies. For me they have become so deadening. To be able to slow things down, to let go of the barrage of words, to include pauses for reflection, to introduce silences which allowed us to savour the moment, to be still, to pray and to remember our Lord’s presence with us..for me this is how it should be and it gave me more joy than words could ever express. To cap it all there was for me an additional joy..I was greeted by the Sisters at the Kairos Centre with absolute delight ! For them I was tangible proof that with God all things are possible, even women priests, for heaven’s sake !! praise God indeed. It was fitting that we danced our way out at the end of the service to the song, “ You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace..” Our special thanks must go to Angela, Julia and Janet for all they did, and do, to nurture and strengthen the bonds between us and to build up the community of love to which we are so very privileged to belong. It was such a lovely weekend. Thankyou ! Jude x