

Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
Archdiocese of Southwark

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IN THIS ISSUE

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IN CHRIST

**Together in Christ, Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity
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EDITORIAL

Already autumn has come upon us, yet, the Joy of the Gospel promises us a different feel. It promises us a Joy that is warm, sharing, life-changing and enlightening. As the church follows Francis' focus on proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom, He also calls for a time of Mercy and forgiveness. We are asked to witness to our Faith in our families, towns, with other churches and other faiths. The Jubilee year of Mercy has a far-reaching desire to resolve past differences between East and West.

Desmond Miller tells us more about Orthodox Catholic traditions and challenges.

Canon Bill Clements finishes his new book describing how he has changed and the need to listen to God and become "whom God meant you to be..."

The 19th year of Lark in the Park has become a National movement with two locations in Southwark.

Already our Churches Together groups are preparing for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2016. Some background material is offered here.

Thérèse Vanier's Prayer was used at her graveside following her Catholic requiem in 2014 at Canterbury Cathedral, the heart of the Anglican Communion.

Michael

Extract from 'A Priest's Tale'

CONCLUSION

After fifty-three years of service in the Archdiocese of Southwark, I retired, aged 87, in February 2009, and am now living at Coloma Court, West Wickham. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph, when their Teacher Training College was closed, sought God's guidance in prayer as to how they could best use the site, and decided that this purpose-built Care Home for Old People would best fulfil a great and increasing need in the world today. I am now confined to a wheelchair, but am being well looked after, and, thank God, still able to celebrate Mass daily.

Within the Catholic Church there is continuity, combined with steady growth and change. So it has been with me, as I look back over the years and see the same person gradually growing and changing. So, what has happened to the very 'un-ecumenical bird' who, as a small boy, refused to say the Lord's Prayer with non-Catholic children, and, as a young priest, refused to pray publicly with fellow clergy? Family, schools, church, Civil Service, Royal Navy, seminary and the various parishes in which I have served have all played their part, and thus, as you will have seen from reading this book, I have gradually become more and more involved in work for Christianity Unity, and more recently I have had a go at establishing relations with people of other faiths. I think that the two greatest influences for **change** in me have been the Royal Navy and the Second Vatican Council.

The Royal Navy: David Gamble, whom I knew in Cape Town, said that the Navy had been good for me. Otherwise, he said, I might have been 'a bit of a prig'. It was certainly a culture shock after my fairly sheltered life up till then. It opened me to a wider world.

The Second Vatican Council: Pope John XXIII, when he called the Council in 1963, spoke of "opening the windows of the Church to the Holy Spirit". And he certainly did that. Four of the Council documents specially inspired me:— those on the Sacred Liturgy, on Divine Inspiration, on Ecumenism, and on the Church in the Modern World.

And so the very ‘un-ecumenical bird’ has changed. In my work for Christian Unity I have learned a few lessons which I should like to share with you.

Unity from strength. Those who work for unity must feel firm, confident and secure in their own faiths. Blessed John Henry Newman said that what he wanted was “lay people, not ignorant, not disputatious, but who knew their religion, who entered into it, who knew where they stood, what they held and what they did not hold.” The better we know and can express our beliefs and our feelings, the more likely we are to understand each other, to reach agreement on essentials and to accept, with tranquillity and joy, great variety in non-essentials. It is ignorance that breeds insecurity, and makes us feel threatened by the differing beliefs and practices of other people.

Tension: Work for unity can involve tensions, sacrifice, and sometimes even *suffering*. On the one hand is my faith in the teaching of my own Church; on the other hand is my desire to work for unity. They are like two poles, seeming to pull me apart. The truth lies in reconciling those two poles. Unity is a mystery.

Honesty and Openness: We must be prepared to be very honest with each other, able to say how we feel about God, about our beliefs and about each other. It is not enough to say what we believe; we have to say how we feel. And we must be able to listen, to hear, understand and sympathise with the feelings, as well as the beliefs, of others. Why all this emphasis on feelings? Because we have inherited our divisions; they are ‘in our blood’ They may be irrational, but they are there. We have deep-rooted traditions, family loyalties, emotional attachment to old ways. We have inherited stories of past persecution, hatred and injustice, sometimes within living memory, sometimes very real, even today. These feelings need to be brought to the surface and recognized, before they can be overcome. Uncomfortable, but it has to be done.

Patience: Because religious feelings are so deep, we can hurt each other, even without meaning to do so. This can lead to setbacks, and we may feel tempted to give up our efforts and to run back into the fold. Great patience is demanded, and we have to remind ourselves that unity is God’s will, and our job is to work away at it.

Recognising Goodness: We are meeting with people who sincerely love God, and are seeking, like us, to do his will. We must recognise their genuine love of God, their sincerity and their earnest seeking after truth; recognise, too, not only that we believe much in common, but that they have things to teach us. Our own faith can be deepened by our contact with them, and thus our own search for truth can deepen and widen. I once publicly thanked John Cribb, a sincere Baptist minister, for helping me to understand my own faith better. It was the example of Muslims at prayer which helped Charles de Foucauld to return to the practice of his own Catholic faith.

Communication: Any work for unity is Good News, to be spread abroad. It's not just for a few enthusiasts; it's God's will for everyone. But we should be honest; admitting failures, disappointments and frustrations as well as proclaiming successes. Sometimes members of our own congregation may accuse us of watering down the faith. We have to go on communicating; patiently explaining ourselves over and over again.

Study: There have been various Agreed Statements between experts from the different Christian Churches and with those of other faiths; the fruit of immense labour, seeking common ground. They have asked for a considered response from all of us. It would be a pity if all their work was ignored or wasted.

Prayer: We should see our work for unity as a journey towards God. Prayer is listening to God, as he speaks to us in the depth of our hearts, but also in and through other people and events. Unity is a mystery. How it can be achieved is known only to God. Yet it can be achieved, because it is his will. But we shall never keep going, and never achieve the goal, without prayer. It's difficult to be honest with ourselves. But, as Blessed John Henry Newman said, "In this life, to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." When you think about it, most of what I have learned, and listed above, is about LISTENING to God and to one another. Winston Churchill said "Jaw, jaw is better than War, war". My list can apply to all relationships among Christians, but also to our dialogue with non-Christian religions. In chapter eighteen I have described our first efforts at dialogue with Muslims, Jews and Buddhists.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council spoke with respect of Hinduism and Buddhism, and said that the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is good and holy in them. The Church also, they said, has a right regard for Muslims, with whom we have much in common. They acknowledged, too, that God's plan for our salvation began with the Jewish patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament. Yet, they said, the Catholic Church proclaims, and is duty bound to proclaim, without *fail*, CHRIST, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

So in Birchington, we agreed to start by just listening, not by discussing or arguing, or even comparing, but just listening. There may be some young people (and even not so young) who have read my book, and may be wondering what to do with their lives. "Be whom God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire" said Saint Catherine of Siena, quoted by the Bishop of London at the wedding of Prince William to Catherine Middleton. He was speaking of the vocation of marriage. But each and every one of us has a vocation, a call from God in which we can best find fulfilment and happiness; we are called to be husbands or wives, fathers, mothers or single persons, princes, priests, doctors, lawyers, nurses, carpenters, bricklayers, or whatever occupation you may name, and called to put our whole hearts into whatever God has called us to be and to do. In his own time, Saint John Bosco said that God was calling many boys to the priesthood, but that they were saying "No". Perhaps that is still true of young people today. If you think that, perhaps, God is calling you to the priesthood or to the religious life, I would ask you not to dismiss the idea, but to pray about it, as you seek to discern what is God's will for YOU.

Canon William Clements, KHS

Copies of "A Priest's Tale" are available from Mgr Gerry Ewing, Holy Ghost Parish Office, 27 Nightingale Sq., London SW12 8QJ for £10.00. All proceeds will go to support the Southwark Clergy Support Fund

BIDDING PRAYERS FOR UNITY

In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people, so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighed down by various needs, for all humanity, and the salvation of the world.

[GIRM, n 69]

Within the Southwark Commission the question of how many parishes include a bidding prayer for unity; other Christian leaders; or for the Christian Church universally and locally in their Bidding Prayers (and how often) has been raised. Although such prayer was encouraged by the Principles and Norms on Ecumenism back in the 1990s, probably it is rarely done.

Public prayer for other Christians, living or dead, and for the needs and intentions of other Churches and ecclesial communities and their spiritual heads may be offered during the litanies and other invocations of a liturgical service, but not during the Eucharistic Anaphora. Ancient Christian liturgical and ecclesiastical tradition permits the specific mention in the Eucharistic Anaphora only of the names of persons who are in full communion with the Church celebrating the Eucharist. [121]

More recently, the Agreed Statement of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission

for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) called “*Growing Together in Unity and Mission – Building on 40 years of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue*” (2007) says in paragraph 103:

We encourage Anglicans and Roman Catholics to pray for the local bishop of the other church as well as for their own bishop, and for God’s blessing on their co-operation wherever possible in their leadership of the local churches’ mission. We welcome the growing Anglican custom of including in the prayers of the faithful a prayer for the Pope, and we invite Roman Catholics to pray regularly for the Archbishop of Canterbury and the leaders of the Anglican Communion.

We are hoping that you might tell us the set-up in your parish. It might need those who prepare Bidding Prayers to include these thoughts and to ask those from other denominations whether they pray for the Pope and for Ecumenism in their prayers.

One solution among others would be a resource holding simple petitions suitable for monthly or seasonal use so those responsible for preparing intercessions have a ready-made prayer to take or adapt. We really want your contributions to this and whether other denominations in your locality offer something for us to learn.

You can send examples or comments to the Together in Christ email address.

Canon John O’Toole

A Festival of Eastern Catholic Churches

In our last issue the Editor brought to our attention the establishment of the Personal Parish of Saint Alphonsa to serve Syro-Malabar Catholics within the Preston area with the exclusive use of St Ignatius Church and the Personal Parish of Saints Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Euphrasia in the Blackpool Deanery to serve Syro-Malabar Catholics in the rest of the Diocese of Lancaster. It so happened that I was privileged to attend a celebration of the Holy Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family, Duke Street, London on 1st August this year as part of the Festival of Eastern Catholic Churches organized by the Society of St John Chrysostom. The Festival brought together seventy clergy and faithful from various Catholic Churches of both East and West.

The Qurbana – the ‘Holy Offering’ or ‘Holy Sacrifice’ – is the Eucharist as celebrated according to the traditions of Syriac Christianity. It was I am pleased to say in English. It varies from the Latin rite in that they have four scripture readings, one each from the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Epistles of St Paul and of course the Gospel, and four recitations of the ‘Holy, holy, holy ...’. With the support of a small Indian choir and traditional musical instruments it was very prayerful. Further details of the eastern Syriac Rite and the complex history of the eastern rites may be found at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Syrian_Rite

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is in full communion with the Catholic Church. Its members known as the *Saint Thomas Christians*, or *Syrian Christians* or *Nasrani* (meaning ‘Christian’ – derived from ‘Nazareth’), are a community of Christians from Kerala, India. It is the largest of the Nasrani denominations with around 4.6 million believers and traces its origins to St Thomas the Apostle who is thought to have arrived in India in A.D. 52. It follows the East Syrian Rite liturgy, traditionally attributed to saints Addai and Mari, dating back to third century Edessa. It is one of the *sui iuris* Eastern Catholic Churches within the Catholic communion of twenty-three churches. It is the second largest Eastern Catholic Church, the largest being the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and one of the two Eastern Catholic Churches from India, the other being the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church which follows the West Syrian Rite liturgy.

Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut on 20 May 1498. The Portuguese found no Christians in the country except on the Malabar Coast (Kerala). The St Thomas Christians were friendly to Portuguese missionaries at first, but later due to differences concerning the liturgy and an attempt to introduce the Latin Rite customs and ecclesiastical administration led to a division. The St Thomas Christians resisted the Latinization process, were branded as heretical and consequently the once united Church in full communion with the East Syrian Patriarch ended up in various denominations.

After being under Chaldean bishops earlier and under Latin Rite Roman Catholic bishops from 1599,

St Thomas Christians obtained their own dioceses from 1887. They came to be known as the Syro-Malabar Catholics from that point on to differentiate them from the Latin Church Catholics in Kerala. The Syro-Malabar Hierarchy was restored on 21 December 1923.

After the celebration of the Holy Qurbana we broke for lunch and an opportunity to view the ‘Indian Christianity’ Exhibition.

In the afternoon there was a film presentation of *Kerala, the Cradle of Christianity in South Asia: A cultural interface of Religion and Music* followed by another film: *Aramaic, Jesus and India: A connection through language and music*.

Revd Dr Joseph Palackal then gave a talk on *The Syriac Heritage in India: the ancient sacred language of worship and the musical tradition*. Dr Palackal showed how the Christians of India still use the language of Christ brought to them in the first century, along with the Syriac music tradition from the Holy Land and Persia, as well as India’s own languages and music.

Fr Mark Woodruff, Vice Chairman of the Society, said, “Father Joseph has shown us that just as the Latin Roman Catholic Church has spread throughout the world in history, now the Eastern Churches likewise are found everywhere: the global south, north America and Western Europe. This newly shows not only the diversity of Catholic communion, but also that the Eastern Churches are integral to the Catholic Church’s life here, its faith and increasingly its identity. As they grow, too, they are part of a richer presentation to wider

society of Christ's Kingdom. Uniting the patrimony in art, language, liturgy and music from an historic Church with English for the future in a new environment, is vital and teaches us much about how to be the Church in the world."

This was followed by a presentation and appeal from John Newton representing Aid to the Churches in Need with a focus on *The Suffering Eastern Churches*. ACN has an important presence in the Middle East, helping the local Churches to survive and care for those in great need because of the persecution of Christians in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. £1500 was donated.

The day ended with a celebration of Ukranian Catholic Great Vespers of Sunday served by Fr Mark Woodruff.

The Society of St John Chrysostom (founded 1926) promotes greater appreciation of the spiritual, theological and liturgical traditions of Eastern Christendom, works and prays for the unity of the Churches of East and West, and encourages support for the Eastern Churches:

- the Byzantine and Oriental Catholic Churches in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome
- the Orthodox Church
- the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Church of the East.

It was an instructive and enjoyable day.

Desmond Miller

LARK IN THE PARK

Lark in The Park (LITP) was held at Sidcup Place between 25 July and 8 August 2015 for the 19th year. The event is hosted by New Generation Church and supported by Churches Together in Sidcup. The event is a powerful manifestation of the positive synergy of Churches Together in Sidcup and the large army of volunteers from the various churches helped to enrich the occasion. The whole event is a wonderful example of how the different church members can work together, learn from one another and appreciate the common beliefs that bind us together as Christians.

LITP consists of children's clubs from ages naught to fifteen plus, and Over 60s Freedom Club, a Church in the Park and a whole range of evening entertainments for the whole family.

The clubs run from 2:00 to 3:45 pm daily during the event period and the evening entertainment takes place about 8 pm nightly. The children's clubs are tightly controlled and each visitor must register before allowing their child to participate in the clubs. The evening entertainment is in such high demand that attendees must register and obtain an admission ticket for their chosen events. All clubs and entertainment are provided free of charge.

There is entertainment in the main park area each afternoon which is open to all visitors and also provides a respite for parents whose children have joined the clubs. A number of Pastors from the Sidcup Churches mingle with visitors and provide assistance and advice where requested.

The Over 60s Freedom was very popular again this year as it provides great entertainment, an afternoon tea with an amazing array of cakes and refreshments and some pampering facilities such as nail painting, maintenance and gentle massage. Visitors do not have to register for this event so senior citizens can wander in and enjoy some great hospitality.

LITP usually takes place the last week in July and the First week in August. LITP wish to thank all volunteers for the great sacrifice of their time and the diversity they brought to LITP. The next recruitment drive for Volunteers will take place in the first quarter 2016. The following is the experiences of some of our Volunteers from St Lawrence's this year.

Mike Conway

This was my first year working as a volunteer at LITP. I worked in the Free 60 tent which is the youth venue for ages 11 to 14 years. This club is a hive of activity and is very popular with young people returning each day to enjoy more activities. The club is very well run and has an underlying Christian ethos that is presented in an attractive manner. I met many other volunteers, some of whom give up their annual leave to volunteer at LITP.

Overall, I enjoyed the kindness and generosity of all the volunteers, the relaxing atmosphere, the feeling that nothing was too much trouble for people, the interesting speakers and of course the volunteers who worked so hard in the kitchen preparing delicious free food for all the volunteers.

Angela Lehane

I have been volunteering at LITP for about 5 years. This was the first year I was able to volunteer for the

whole week. I was part of the prayer team, meeting every morning and evening for an hour to pray for LITP, the volunteers, people and events.

I also worked in the Chapel in the afternoons. The Chapel is a creative gathering place for everyone of all faiths and ages. Visitors to the park can take time out to get some advice and information on local services, write down prayer requests, receive prayer for healing and connect with a local church. Every day at 3 pm, over tea and cake, there were Life Stories where a special guest shared their inspiring story about how God had changed their life! There were some new additions to the Chapel this year including a coffee bar (with fresh coffee!), a Future Pod and nail bar for the ladies. It was a privilege to be part of this peaceful sanctuary and witness God's power at work.

At the weekend I helped with Art Attack. This is an event for children of all ages offering a wide range of messy creative fun with many free activities. Great fun!!

I thoroughly enjoyed my week at LITP. There was a relaxed friendly atmosphere as everyone worked together to serve our local community and new friendships were made at the same time.

Mandy Bridges

I offered my services as a volunteer this year for the first time. I worked (if that is the right term) in the registration tent where there were sixteen computer stations to cater for the families wishing to register and book for the variety of events on offer for the children. On occasions during the first week there were lengthy queues but despite this there was a great atmosphere thanks to all volunteers and the children excited about their 'adventure'. The children were catered for in six age ranges and some Mums were surprised they could

leave their charges age five and over and do the weekly shopping or whatever. The security and welfare of the children was paramount. The children could not be collected without the registering adult showing a valid ticket matching that of the child. Others expressed surprise that all the events were free. The toddlers and parents were in another secure area being entertained with bouncy castles, puppets, face painting, art, story time plus the use of other equipment.

New Generation host the event supported by various other churches in Sidcup. I think there were six volunteers from St Lawrence's, but there were many other visitors who attend our church and other families whose children attend St Peter Chanel School

The cost of the event was approximately £80,000 this year and by the end of the event they still have to raise about £10,000. It was an eye opener for me to see the event from the inside and the Christian and financial commitment of the New Generation Church. Although we the parishioners of St Lawrence's follow a different tradition we have more in common than points on which we disagree.

Arthur Maxted

Editor: *LITP is a great example of churches working together to benefit a whole community. Sidcup LITP attracts volunteers from across South London and in past years from churches in Europe, Scandinavia and even America. I expect its sister event in Ramsgate is the same.*

THOUGHTS ON *MISERICORDIAE VULTUS*

Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.
Francis, Bishop of Rome, Servant of the Servants of God.
To all who read this Letter grace, mercy, and peace.

[Précis from Vatican website articles]

“I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father’s love in the world.

We recall the poignant words of Saint John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow:

Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity... The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind,

moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children.

Blessed Paul VI spoke in a similar vein at the closing of the Council:

We prefer to point out how charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council... the old story of the Good Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the Council... a wave of affection and admiration flowed from the Council over the modern world of humanity. Errors were condemned, indeed, because charity demanded this no less than did truth, but for individuals themselves there was only admonition, respect and love. Instead of depressing diagnoses, encouraging remedies; instead of direful predictions, messages of trust issued from the Council to the present-day world. The modern world's values were not only respected but honoured, its efforts approved, its aspirations purified and blessed... Another point we must stress is this: all this rich teaching is channelled in one direction, the service of mankind, of every condition, in every weakness and need.

With these sentiments of gratitude for everything the Church has received, and with a sense of responsibility for the task that lies ahead, we shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides the steps of believers in cooperating with the work of salvation wrought by Christ, lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy.

The Jubilee year will close with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on 20 November 2016. On that day, as we seal the Holy Door, we shall be

filled, above all, with a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity for having granted us an extraordinary time of grace. We will entrust the life of the Church, all humanity, and the entire cosmos to the Lordship of Christ, asking him to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future. How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!”

The full text is on the Vatican website/Francis/Apostolic Letters. For those of us working in the Ecumenical field Vatican II was a turning point in the continuing search for Christian Unity. The man-made barriers preventing contact and discussion with other denominations had stifled any real opportunity towards reconciliation. Basically distrust and enmity was preferred to any idea of surrender or any thought of concession from being in the right. The fifty years since then has changed attitudes completely. The guidance of the Holy Spirit fell on that Council and over the people of God so that we can do so much more together and, when we cannot share, each respects the other’s principles. Pray this Jubilee marks the next stage in the Lord’s plan.

Pope Francis has decided to demonstrate his deep wish for Unity by using the lesser title of Bishop of Rome since his election and declared willingness, when he met the Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in November 2014,

that Communion between the two churches would be theologically and legally possible, without preconditions, by quoting Vatican II that Orthodox Churches “have real sacraments and above all, they have the priesthood and Eucharist by virtue of the Apostolic succession”.

In June this year Pope Francis greeted a delegation from the Eastern Orthodox Church, in Rome for the feast day of SS Peter and Paul, with the thought that Catholics and Eastern Orthodox should encounter each other more often, so as to overcome prejudices.

I hope, therefore, that opportunities may increase for meeting each other, for exchange and cooperation among Catholic and Orthodox faithful, in such a way that as we deepen our knowledge and esteem for one another, we may be able to overcome any prejudice and misunderstanding that may remain as a result of our long separation.

He declared his support for the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, adding that ‘the problems which we may encounter in the course of our theological dialogue must not lead us to discouragement or resignation.’

Michael Baldry

Salt of the Earth

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
18-25 January 2016

The 2016 material was prepared for worldwide use by the Christians of Latvia, and adapted by the Britain and Ireland writers group, based around 1 Peter 2:9-10:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Peter's first letter is an encouragement to the newly baptised to live holy lives and to answer the calling shared by all the baptised to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord.

Today, Latvia is a crossroads where Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox regions meet. Because of this unique location, it is home to Christians of many different traditions, but no single one of them is dominant. Gathered together by the Archbishop of Rīga, members of a variety of church communities and projects in Latvia were asked to reflect on the chosen theme and the experience of their work.

The main service is inspired by the verses from Peter's letter and Jesus' metaphors of salt and light which are important cultural themes for Latvia. Each of the days has been prepared by one of the diverse Church communities. The eight Days are linked principally by the experience of being a Christian in Latvia.

Printed copies of the Salt of the Earth pamphlet, which includes daily reflections plus an order of service, from Church House Bookshop, or Norwich Books and Music. For further information see:

<https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2016/>

<https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/WPCU-2016-English-pamphlet.pdf>

Prayer written by Thérèse Vanier – Co-founder L'Arche

May oppressed people and those who oppress them, free each other.

May those who are handicapped, and those who think they are not,
help each other.

May those who need someone to listen,
touch the hearts of those who are too busy.

May the homeless bring joy to those
who open their doors reluctantly.

May the lonely heal those who think they are self sufficient,

May the poor melt the hearts of the rich.

May seekers for truth give life to those
who are satisfied that they have found it.

May the dying who do not wish to die
be comforted by those who find it hard to live.

May the unloved be allowed to unlock
the hearts of those who cannot love.

May prisoners find true freedom and
liberate others from fear.

May those who sleep on the streets share their gentleness
with those who cannot understand them.

May the hungry tear the veil
from the eyes of those who do not hunger after justice.

May those who live without hope, cleanse the hearts of
their brothers and sisters who are afraid to live.

May the weak confound the strong and save them.

May violence be overcome by compassion.

May violence be absorbed by men and women of peace.

May violence succumb to those who are totally vulnerable.

