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TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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Greetings and welcome to our October issue, and we are grateful to all contributors.

It is with sadness that we now omit the name of Bishop Charles Henderson as Chair of the Diocesan Commission. We offer our sincere and heartfelt thanks to him for all he has done over many years for the Commission members, their meetings and for Christian unity generally. He has made an outstanding contribution, and we now ask for God's blessing and guidance for him in the future.

We now extend a warm welcome to Rev. Mgr Timothy Galligan as new Chair of the Diocesan Commission, and pray for him and his ministry.

We hope you will gain much inspiration from this issue, and perhaps organize similar activities. "Come and See" described by Canon Clements, is a good idea to promote among local churches wherever possible in our unity journey.

Jon Dal Din has given us a graphic description of the ecumenical meeting in Stuttgart, and we hope we may all be "renewed and exhilarated" and continue to play our part towards a deeper union.

Deacon Neville Gascoigne has shared with us the outstanding events of the Thanet Festival of Hope, and we look forward to hearing about future developments.

"Soul in the City" described by Deacon Michael Baldry is most impressive, in its involvement of so many young people and encouragement to witness to the faith. May Archbishop Kevin McDonald, a great and longstanding worker for Christian Unity, be guided to continue to promote "Soul in the City".

We thank Peter Mitchell for the welcome news of the Kent County Police Chaplains who provide pastoral care where needed. May God bless their efforts.

Canon Clements has kindly supplied a review of Mgr Steele's booklet which we hope will reach a very wide readership. Mgr Steele is a member of the Bishops' Conference Committee for Christian Unity.

A humorous note is supplied by Alfred Kenyon, and welcomed. Thank you, Alfred!

Please do keep material flowing in. Your contributions are greatly valued.

COME AND SEE

There are some fifty churches on the Isle of Thanet, but the majority of the people (about four fifths) do not attend any church regularly. In order to bring the Church and the Community together, we decided to hold a ‘Festival of Hope’ leading to a great outdoor event at Hartsdown Park on Pentecost Sunday afternoon, 2004.

Leading up to this event, each church or village organized local events in the preceding week. In Birchington, we held an event called ‘On the Move’, which involved serving over a thousand *al fresco* free lunches on Friday and Saturday, to the people of the village plus holiday makers. Our aim was not to preach, but just to ‘make our number’ and say “Here we are. How can we help you?”. We decided, after these events, to organize an Open Day at each of our seven churches in turn – not a service, but an opportunity to explain who we are, what we believe and what we do. We called it ‘Come and see’, and printed 500 colour folders to invite people.

The following is the gist of a Talk given by Canon Bill Clements on Saturday, 17th July, in the Church Our Lady and St Benedict, as part of our ‘Come and See’. After the Talk, visitors were invited to walk around the church and sacristy, where vestments, sacred vessels and liturgical books, were displayed.

They then came back to ask questions. Finally, we moved into the Hall, where the Ladies' Circle had provided a lovely tea for everyone, and we all talked together

Men and women look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is good behaviour? What is evil? How do we explain suffering? What happens after death? The other day I listened to an English lady who had become a Buddhist, who spoke eloquently of her beliefs and the practices of her religion, which dates back to 3000 BC. Buddhists seek a state of perfect liberation and supreme illumination, either by their own efforts or by 'something' perhaps God, outside themselves. Hinduism, and later Islam, are religions with aspects of good, and the Catholic Church rejects nothing in them which is good and holy. But the story of the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament is of God's special intervention in human affairs, leading up to, and preparing us for, the coming of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, born of Mary, Jesus is God in a way we can understand. He taught us, and revealed hidden truth about the Father and the Holy Spirit. He offered us the prospect of eternal life. In the end he died on the Cross offering his life for all mankind, and told his followers to 'Go and make disciples of all nations'. He formed a Church.

The Catholic Church goes back to Christ. It has received and guards his teaching, and handed it on down the centuries. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, and nothing contrary to them may be taught. Not all that Christ said was written in the Scriptures, but he did promise to send the Holy Spirit to guide the Church into all truth. The notion that nothing may be taught that is not in the Scriptures (*sola Scriptura*) is an invention of the Reformation era. Christ commanded his followers to make disciples of all the nations. Christianity first came to England with the Roman Invasion, and there were Celtic Christian bishops, priests and people, who were in union with the wider Church. St Augustine, sent by Pope St Gregory, came to bring the Gospel to the English people in 597 AD. St Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, organized a system of dioceses and parishes. It was he who some time before 694 AD., received the vows of St Mildred, who, later, as second Abbess of Minster in Thanet, attended a Council in Kent. For over a thousand years England was a Catholic country.

What strikes you first on entering a Catholic Church is the altar. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and said, "Take and eat; this is my body". And then a cup of wine, saying, "Take and drink, this is the cup of my blood". Then he said, "Do this in memory of me".

The Mass, as we have it today, has come down to us from Christ. We do what he told us to do and believe that He becomes really and truly present, invisibly and sacramentally, and that we offer, not another sacrifice, but the one and only sacrifice of Calvary, made mysteriously, but truly, present. The real, abiding, adorable presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist has always been believed. There is clear witness of this in the writings and sermons of the ancient Fathers of the Church. St Justin, who died in 160 AD., describes the Mass in a way Catholics would recognise. In the West, and here in England for about a thousand years, Mass was celebrated in Latin, but there are, in all, twelve different ancient rites within the Catholic Church, with various customs and languages. From the time of the Second Vatican Council, Mass within the Latin Rite may be, and usually is celebrated in the local language of the people.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders, by which Bishops and Priests receive the power and authority to celebrate Mass, to forgive sins, and to bless, goes back to the beginning of the Church, and, in its essence, is, we believe, of divine institution. By divine institution, only men can be ordained to the priesthood. The present Pope has said that he does not believe that he has authority to change this. The Catholic Church recognizes the validity of orders in the Coptic Church and the Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches, even

though we are not in communion. But we believe that, at the Reformation, the Mass and the priesthood, as we understand them, were rejected by the Reformers, and that they no longer believed in, nor intended to ordain, sacrificing priests.

Christ gave the Apostles the authority to teach in his name. Bishops are their successors today. St Peter was given the task of holding the apostles together in faith, and his successor, Pope John Paul II, has that task today. Priests are sent by their Bishops with authority to teach and to administer the Sacraments. They make a commitment of celibacy, and receive no salary from Church or State, but depend upon the support of their people.

In this parish of Birchington we have an elected Parish Council, to enable me to hear the people's views, and I do listen to them. But I have to remember that I am sent by the Bishop, with authority. The Council is advisory, not executive. We also have a Junior Parish Council, for boys and girls aged nine to fifteen, so that I can listen to them. Because Christ promised to be with his Church always, we believe that the whole Church cannot err in the essentials of the faith, and that the Pope cannot err when he solemnly defines a truth of the faith.

The Catholic Church strongly defends family life. Marriage is the total giving of one man to one woman for life. There can be no divorce of a valid sacramental marriage between Christians. ‘Nullity’ means simply that there never was a true marriage from the beginning. Out of respect for marriage as a loving relationship between a man and a woman, open to new life, the Church condemns sexual activity before or outside marriage, as well as contraception and homosexual behaviour. Marriage is about children. Parents are their first and best teachers. Catholics have always been willing to make sacrifices to send their children to Catholic schools.

The three statues in our church are in honour of Mary, Mother of Jesus, St Joseph, his guardian and foster-father, and St Benedict, patriarch of Western Monks, and patron of Europe. We venerate statues; we do not pray to them. They remind us of the Communion of Saints, by which the saints in heaven know what passes on earth, and can, and do, pray for us.

Here on earth, we are on a journey. Heaven is our home.

Canon William Clements
Birchington

'TOGETHER FOR EUROPE'

An historic ecumenical meeting, Stuttgart, 8 May 2004

So often in life a friend or acquaintance invites you to an event you know very little about and perhaps, at first glance, an event that does not really interest you, especially when it's on a Saturday afternoon in spring and the sun is shining. However, not wishing to offend your friend, you go anyway and something unexpected happens which can change your life. Going to the Focolare Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City on Saturday, 8th May was a bit like that.

We had been invited to attend a satellite link-up to an event that was taking place in Stuttgart, Germany. It was the final day of a three day event, which had brought together representatives of Movements and Communities of the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Churches. We arrived at 2.0 p.m. just as the satellite transmission was beginning and were immediately drawn into the atmosphere of this spectacular event. One of the presenters in Stuttgart welcomed all of us who had joined by satellite link. We were in one of over 150 venues around the world and we felt as if we were really present, participating with the 10,000 people who packed the Hans Martin Schleyer Halle.

The first afternoon session was dedicated predominantly to witness, especially by young Europeans from all parts of the continent. They danced, they sang, they shared their visions and ecumenical experiences of a united Europe with a 'soul'. A young Catholic woman from Spain talked about her two weeks of study with a group of young people from many different countries in the ecumenical town of Ottmaring in Germany, where, together with Christians from other denominations, she experienced a real presence of Jesus in their midst.

The young people were followed by representatives from just a few of the 175 different Christian Movements and Communities present in the hall from different churches and traditions. They included Cursillos, Focolare, Schonstatt, Equipes Notre Dame, YMCA, Charism of Orthodox Youth, Teen Challenge, Charismatic Renewal and St Egidio, to name just a few. I was surprised and delighted to see and hear Nicky Gumbel, founder of Alpha, talking about his non-Christian upbringing and how he came to faith in Jesus at the age of 18. He said that Alpha courses were now running in 147 countries and in 30,000 churches around the world and that nearly half of the 70,000 prison population in Britain had taken part in an Alpha course.

It was gripping and exciting stuff hearing from all these Christian groups. All shared a similar vision of a united Europe, not just from an economic or political perspective but also from a religious and spiritual one. They spoke about a Europe of the Spirit, of giving Europe a common soul, and inspiring Christian values and a desire to live the Gospel message by loving our fellow Europeans and welcoming strangers. When Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, took these ideas of a united Europe one stage further, to that of a united world, she was greeted with long and truly heartfelt applause.

For me, it was good to be reminded of certain events and facts, which I had forgotten. The 8th May, for instance, marked, for many in Europe, the anniversary of the end of the Second World War; an awful war, which tore Europe apart and cost the lives of millions of people and displaced many others from their homelands. It was also the date of liberation in Germany from a criminal dictatorship contemptuous of human beings. Nobody, at the time, wanted a repetition of hostilities ever again and the consequences of another war were too horrendous to imagine. In fact, during the last couple of years of the war, God gave life to something new in Europe. In 1943–44 we saw the beginnings of Christian communities like the Focolare Movement in the Catholic Church in Italy, the *Marienschwestern* and *Christusbuderschaft Selbitz* in the Evangelical

Church in Germany, the Brothers of Taizé in the Reformed Church in France and many others. All these Christian communities emerged with a clear message of peace, reconciliation, love and unity. All attracted members of other churches in a very short period of time. In fact, by the 1950's most of them had become ecumenical. They had laid the foundations for an 'ecumenism of the people' in Europe, which hopefully will also lead to church unity.

Peace and reconciliation had also been on the political agenda and it was good to be reminded that, on the 9 May 1950, Robert Schumann advocated the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, forerunner of the European Union. This was not set up, as many believe, for purely economic and political reasons, but to help bring France and Germany together in a pact of mutual support and friendship in order to avoid yet another war between these two countries. It is also worth remembering that the 'founding fathers' of the European Union, Schumann, Adenauer, Monnet and De Gasperi were all committed Christians and their vision was to create a Europe, founded on Christian values, where everyone could live in peace and harmony. Indeed, it was very good to be reminded of these fundamental ideas and facts.

Sensing the mood of the gathering, Helmut Nicklas, secretary of the Munich YMCA, invited everyone present, and those

participating from afar, to commit themselves to take back to their own countries what had been built in Stuttgart and to go ahead together as a united people. His sentiments were echoed in the final declaration, in which all pledged 'to work together with all men and women of good will so that Europe may be a place of love and fraternity, that it may be aware of its responsibilities and show itself to be open to the whole world'. Herr Nicklas then invited all the Church leaders from the different traditions to come on stage. Each read a verse of Jesus' prayer for unity from St John's Gospel. Then he invited Queen Fabiola of Belgium to lead everyone in praying the Our Father. The congress ended, as it had begun, with an inspiring anthem, with verses in English, German, Italian and French, which aptly reflected the spirit of the meeting: Land of hope, treasures of gold, ring full of diamonds, of shining stars in a blue velvet sky. Land of harvest all year round, your roots are in Heaven in a God who gave his life, in the Risen one.

It was a wonderful event. The satellite transmission had lasted just two hours but it felt as if we had taken part in a truly historic occasion, which marked an important milestone on the road of ecumenism and a step closer to universal brotherhood and a united world. Considering that it was just a week since ten new countries had joined the European Union, making a total of twenty-five member states, we felt that we had taken a new and extremely

positive departure in European relations. We had returned to the basic ideals of the European Union, which had been established on a Christian foundation. Let's hope and pray, and especially believe, that the aim of all the organizers and participants, to work together to give Europe a soul, may be quickly achieved.

I left the meeting renewed and exhilarated, determined to play my part in fulfilling the pledge we had all made, and convinced that we were indeed one people united in a common destiny.

Jon Dal Din

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THANET FESTIVAL OF HOPE, 22-30 May, 2004

An estimated 20,000 people attended one or other of the 140 events put on by some 50 churches of all denominations over the week-long 'Thanet Festival of Hope'.

The Festival had three underlying aims: to unite the Thanet churches in service to the wider community, to give local Christians the chance to serve, and to improve the links between the churches and their local communities. The events ranged through coffee mornings, flower festivals, family fun days, photo and art exhibitions, a jazz evening; outdoor and indoor 'Songs of Praise', churches being open for quiet prayer, performances of 'Godspel'; tea and guided tours at Minster Abbey; etc., etc., and culminated in The Main Event (actually two, one for children and the more

mature, and one for youngsters) in Hartsdown Park on Pentecost Sunday.

Coupled with the festival were three 'On the Move' events; one each in Margate, Ramsgate and Birchington. These involve inviting people to come and listen to a worship band, and enjoy a free lunch paid for by the churches. During the lunch there were cabaret style music and entertainment, with explanations of what the Festival was all about and invitations by speakers from all the main churches for people to learn what being a Christian means to them. Over the three venues 5,692 lunches were served by the 400 team members, with 61 'contact cards' for further information being handed in. Other people have just turned up subsequently at local churches and been welcomed by the members.

The Main Event was opened by Patrick Evans, Archdeacon of Canterbury, and Bishop John Hine was in attendance. The local Salvation Army Band provided music at the opening and closing ceremonies and this was supplemented by a Contemporary Worship Band. Children were entertained by Capt. Graham Nunn (Church Army). There were interviews in the main arena with special guests Adrian Plas and Jonathan Aitken, and a talk by Dennis Pethers (Vis-a-Vis Ministries). Adrian Plas and Jonathan Aitken also gave talks of about 40 mins each, followed by question and answer sessions, in the main marquee to capacity audiences of 350. There were face-painting, children's rides, and other enter-

tainment available during the afternoon. One of the favourite haunts for some was the 'Lost Children' tent, which always seemed to be crowded by children who weren't lost but just enjoying the play-things and colouring materials available inside.

Since the Festival finished many comments have been heard among churchgoers along the lines of: "this is only a beginning", "we have to build on this", "we must keep working together". One church's comment was: "we opened the church for tea and cakes but nobody came inside. So we took the tea urn and the cakes outside, and many people came and enjoyed them, and stayed for a chat." One lady said that she had been struggling with her faith for years but this got her out and serving the community and brought back all the joy she had been missing.

How much did it cost? Around £34,000 in total was raised and spent, with a little surplus to prime the pumps for the future. Of this some £9,500 was the expenditure on the 'On the Move' part of the Festival. The major spend on the Festival was for publicity, including 5,000 car Stickers, 2,000 badges and an Official Programme listing the 140 events delivered to every home in Thanet, with others being available at churches and fellowships throughout the island, and the final even in Hartsdown Park. Churches paid the expenses for their own events in addition to the above. No charge was made for entry to any event, though of course, donations were not refused.

Now what next? At the leaders' Round Up Meeting in June it was decided to keep the Thanet Festival of Hope banner for future events around Pentecost each year. Probably not on so big a scale every time, but with a large event every two or three years. Watch this space, great things are being wrought by God in Thanet.

Deacon Neville Gascoigne

SOUL IN THE CITY

In his latest communication to the clergy of Southwark (*Ad Clerum* June 2004) Archbishop Kevin McDonald sought to promote 'Soul in the City'. For a great many priests this would be their first realisation that this event for London was for Catholics as much as for other Christian churches. You ask what is 'Soul in the City'? The release says the following:

Thousands of Catholic young people are invited to gather in the nation's capital this summer to take part in one of the most ambitious missions this country has ever seen. 'Soul in the City' will bring together 15,000 young people from across England and Wales to witness to their Christian faith through social action projects and evangelization initiatives. The event runs from 26 July to 6 August.

At the deadline for *Together in Christ* the event will be underway. Here in Sidcup, Churches Together has been preparing to bring 'Soul in the City' to the Borough of Bexley, using the annual event one of our sister churches has called 'Lark in the Park'. This venture has grown through the years and offers recreation for children with sports, games and activities, youth buses, adult evangelization, worship and social action. This year, with Bexley Council, the Police, Park Ranger Service, the Sidcup Traders Festival and Miracle Street, as well as Soul in the City, teams will go out to areas of need to revamp deprived housing estates, interact with people and show that Christianity is for the community.

Some important statistics: the cost is estimated at £25,000, the children's club will supervise around 600 children, local street crime was reduced in past years by about 70%, and 150 young people will arrive in Bexley to help. Food and accommodation together with travel, all activities and services will be provided free of charge.

Each church has committed itself in some way to help this work through training, funding, praying and sharing. Soul in the City is London-wide; though the press may miss it, you should not. With God's blessing it should change many communities for the better.

For our churches this work will not end on 6 August. We all need to be ready to continue supporting these initiatives that come from outside the church to foster a united front against those wishing to hide away the effective charity and goodwill Christ's church promotes.

More information is to be found on

www.larkinthe park.com and www.caseresources.org

Deacon Michael Baldry

KENT COUNTY POLICE CHAPLAINS

Members of the Kent County Constabulary now have someone to whom they can talk in confidence or turn to when they need help in the person of members of the force's team of chaplains.

Chaplains are assigned to each of the force's nine areas play a key role in providing pastoral care to both police officers and civilian staff. Since the scheme was introduced several years ago many members of staff have benefited from the opportunity of taking up their concerns and worries over both work-related and personal issues with a member of the chaplaincy team.

The chaplains work is overseen by the Kent Ecumenical Chaplaincy Committee, which is jointly chaired by Fr Wilfred

McGreal and Assistant County Commissioner David Kelly. Fr McGreal, the Prior of Aylesford Priory, is keen to build on the success the Committee has already achieved in providing pastoral care to the whole force. ‘When we appoint police chaplains we particularly welcome those priests who inside their own church have the facility for dealing with people outside normal church structures’, explained Fr McGreal.

One of the principal requirements for police chaplains is that they should have the capacity to spend time visiting the areas they serve. Fr McGreal said, ‘I have described this as “Loitering with Intent” but it is important that people get to know us and to know that we are available to officers and civilian staff to talk to us. The stresses and strains of modern policing can, if we are not careful, take their toll on officers and the Chaplaincy offers a resource that they can turn to if they require it’.

Confidentiality is an ingredient of the work of the chaplains who are drawn from denominations including the Church of England, The Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church. There are nine police divisions in Kent and the aim is to provide two chaplains to each one.

Peter Mitchell

A funny thing happened on the way to the unity service

Yes, Christians are learning to laugh together. In fact, learning from one another and together is a very important part of the path to unity. A very good friend is the minister of a local Church. He and I were discussing some of our sick friends. He shared with me that he could see no difficulty with a possible hip replacement. He was less certain however about liver transplants, as St Paul was so firmly against having anything to do with loose livers.

Some of our experiences are of course denominational. The child answered her parish priest that, in her family, there was no need to pray before meals because her mummy was a good cook, was arguably identifiable as a Catholic. Similarly, those who talk about the inaccurate deception or an immaculate contraption. But how about these examples of children's answers in class?

- Samson slayed the Philistines with the axe of the Apostles.
- When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta.
- The epistles were the wives of the apostles.
- St Paul preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marriage.

We may well, of course, have wondered ourselves about the purpose of the 'axe of the Apostles', but this challenge seems to

face all of us not just one particular Church. This shared problem surely unites us more than most challenges.

I was encouraged in that belief when I read the snippet below. I had previously wondered whether perhaps our Methodist brothers and sisters were immune to some of these difficulties. To my relief, the Ripley and Heanor News reported last December: ‘A Christmas bizarre will be held in Ripley Methodist Church.’ Now which of us can claim that this could not happen to us?

Alfred Kenyon

BOOK REVIEW

William Steele, *Ecumenism for Catholics*, Blackfriars Publications, 13 Laneside Close, Chapel-en-Frith, High Peak SK23 OTS. 25 pages. £1.50

Monsignor Billy Steele is a well-known member of the National Committee for Christian Unity, and is deeply involved in ecumenical work. This booklet, as its title suggests, is a practical guide for Catholics who want to understand the history of the divisions among Christians, how and why the Catholic Church has changed in the last fifty years, and what is now being done by the various Churches to understand each other better in the search for full communion. I highly recommend it for members of Diocesan Unity Commissions, Parish Unity Contacts, and any other Catholics who are looking for an historically and theologically accurate, concise and simple booklet to help them in their work for Christian Unity.

Canon William Clements

