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TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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Erratum

We apologize for an error in Fr Lovell’s article on *Independent Black Churches* in our last issue p.17. The poet was Linton ‘Kwesi’ Johnson, not ‘Crazy’. This was misheard from the commentary.

EDITORIAL

We in the Unity Commission offer you this latest offering of articles and events and hope that they encourage you towards deeper involvement in Unity in whatever way you can.

To begin there is a description of the structure and aims of the Catholic Church's effort toward Unity in Southwark.

The final part of Mgr Galligan's talk on John Paul and Benedict shows how their leadership has struck a chord with other churches.

An item first published in New City Magazine is offered as a memoir of the early years of Chiara Lubich, who died this Summer. Her influence in the Focolare Movement has led to mutual understanding through love, respect and openness that removed many barriers between our churches.

Terry Davies reaches 100 not out with Beckenham Churches Together.

Fr Robinson sees a link between biblical families and us. His examination gives enlightenment and some speculation. Almost a 'Who's Who' from the time of Christ.

Joy Peck learns about a worship group in SW London.

If you are encouraged to contact and be part of the Unity Commission in Southwark get in touch.

Michael

So what is the Christian Unity Commission of Southwark Diocese?

The Ecumenical Council of Vatican II marked a change for Roman Catholics in their relationship with the other Christian churches. A new word was introduced to them: 'ecumenism' from the Greek derived word 'œcumenical' meaning 'all gathering together'. The Council recognised a desire and call by God to work with the other churches towards reconciliation and Unity. The resulting decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* and the other teachings from the Holy See and the Code of Canon Law call God's people to search for Christian Unity as a response to God's grace. This response to Jesus' prayer 'may they all be one' led the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales to form, in each diocese or area, a body to encourage and develop local ecumenism.

In Southwark this was the Christian Unity Commission. It has three Area Commissions, Kent, SE and SW London. This Commission seeks to be representative of all parts of the Catholic community in its membership – clergy, religious and laity, and reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the area it covers.

So, what does it do? The Directory on the Principles and Norms on Ecumenism¹ recommends the following objectives for officers.

- Encouraging diocesan initiatives concerning prayer for Unity.
- Seeing that ecumenical attitudes influence diocesan activity.
- Representing the Catholic community in relation to other Christians and their leaders.
- Facilitate contact between other Christian leaders and the bishop, clergy and laity.
- Advising the bishop and other members of the diocese on ecumenical matters.
- Keeping in touch with ecumenical officers and commissions in other dioceses.

The Commission as a whole should work towards the following terms of reference:

- Put into effect the decisions of the Church on ecumenical matters.
- Keep in touch with the Bishops Conference Ecumenical Commission, Department of Dialogue and Unity.
- Encourage spiritual ecumenism.
- Take forward the ecumenical formation of clergy and laity e.g. conferences, seminars.
- Take interest in the ecumenical formation of seminary students.
- Promote good relations between Catholics and other Christians.
- Initiate dialogue with other Christians at Diocesan level.
- Promote joint witness to the Christian faith and co-operate in areas like education, justice and peace and culture.

This should carry into our parishes so they take part in ecumenical initiatives at the local level, sharing experiences with other parishes and with diocesan authorities.

Members of the clergy, religious communities and laity (parish unity contacts or PUC's) should represent this local level of parish and deanery in the Christian Unity Commission. These contacts form a link from the local church to the Bishop. Their experiences locally in forums like Churches Together, Focolare or missions like Iona Community and Taizé bring depth and meaning to the search for Unity. By reporting the successes and failures to the Commission other parishes or groupings can be cross-fertilised to go out and work confidently with our fellow Christians.

The PUC is essential to the work of the Commission. These members have influence in the parishes by having membership of parish groups – UCM, KSC, SVP, prayer groups and Legion of Mary. They can spread ecumenical influence to these societies as well as encouraging others to join in as participants in joint activities with the other churches in their area especially during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Over the years the focus has changed. Even thirty years ago at the Swanwick Declaration on 4 September 1987, the hope of Unity was to move from separation, not to conformity but towards ‘legitimate diversity’² and involved the main-line churches. Today, there are many more hurdles in place to prevent a simple coming together of churches into one united church. There is acceptance that the likelihood of full communion with the Protestant Churches is not coming anytime soon. With this prospect ahead for us, where can the search for Unity go?

Cardinal Basil Hume may have seen these difficulties from the beginning for he spoke of seeking ‘*koinonia*, that fellowship, that one-ness in the Body of Christ, of which the essential elements were already outlined in the Acts of the Apostles, “be true to the teaching of the apostles, the breaking of bread, to fellowship and to prayer”.’ He continued to explain that ‘In a full *communion* we recognise, of course, that there will not be uniformity but legitimate diversity. It is not often stressed enough that even within the Roman Catholic Church there is considerable diversity.’³ He had decided that where the churches were able to, they should act together.

The search for Unity remains a duty for the Church. Our involvement with the other churches should be teaching us how to rediscover those ‘essential elements’ Cardinal Hume spoke of, and use them in new and exciting ways. This road to Unity is but a step toward finding out how Jesus wants us ‘to be one, as He and the Father are one!’

Michael Baldry

Notes

¹ *The Search for Christian Unity*. Bishops Conference of England & Wales, 2002.

² The Swanwick Declaration: *No Longer Strangers – Pilgrims!*, 4 September 1987.

³ *The Cardinal’s Decisive Intervention* – Cardinal Basil Hume, Swanwick, 1987 as recorded in *Together in Christ*, June 2006, Vol 24, No 75. pp. 5-7

The Catholic Church and the Search for Unity

John Paul and Benedict

PART THREE

I spoke last time how Pope Benedict's Encyclical Letter had reiterated that ecumenism is an organic part of the Church's life and work, and has to 'pervade all that she is and does'

8. You don't need me to remind you how greatly Christians have differed in their attitude to the Pope. For most, to put it mildly, he has been and remains an 'ecumenical problem'. Is it wishful thinking, however, to wonder if the attitude to John Paul by the time of his death, as well as all the interest in his successor, shows rather more than just curiosity about a well-known world religious leader? For some, the interest is simply that the Pope leads the Catholic Church and so his attitude to ecumenism matters. Many however also came to see in John Paul a great apostle and leader, somebody whose commitment to the Gospel had enabled him to become at times a spokesman for many *Christians*, not just for Catholics. Some of the tributes at the time of his death showed this. One, from the Baptist World Alliance for example, expressed appreciation for his defence of human rights and of his call 'to the dignity of human beings created in the image of God'. It reminds me of a letter from the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council back in 1994, which asked the Pope to give a lead in a Christian celebration of the millennium of Christ's birth, saying that no other Church by itself nor the others together would be

able to do this. Is it just romantic or pious to wonder if for some he became their Pope as well?

Of course such reactions have a lot to do with the charismatic way of exercising his ministry that was peculiar to John Paul. But maybe *that very exercise* had revealed something of the function the Pope might have for all Christians and not just for Catholics; maybe it had begun to make engaging in a fraternal dialogue about the papal ministry thinkable. Just as importantly, I think it will inevitably also cause the Catholic Church to reflect further about how this ministry is exercised, when others find it difficult to recognise as a ministry of unity for serving them. I suspect we may be seeing this in how Pope Benedict has begun, and in the emphasis he has given to the search for Christian Unity. He could not fail to be aware of the paradox that he has received a ministry of unity which is not accepted as such. In this he follows the path set by Pope John Paul, with whom he collaborated so closely for so many years. And how could receiving this ministry of unity not involve the very deepest commitment to ecumenism? Some may have been surprised, but Benedict has willingly taken up the challenge coming from the ministry he has been given.

9. So in this new Pontificate, there is a great deal of *continuity* with what went before. Benedict has in no way gone back on the commitment made by Vatican II and developed under his predecessors. And that is only right: this commitment was undertaken by the Catholic Church itself, and is not the personal whim of a Pope. Work that had already been ongoing when he became Pope has begun to bear fruit under Benedict: the 1999 Joint Declaration with the Lutherans about Justification has now been affirmed by the World Methodist Council, last year. International dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church has started up again. The IARCCUM text has

been published for discussion and reflection. The Catholic Methodist International Commission publishes its dialogue document *The Grace Given You in Christ* last year. The PCPCU continues all the work it has been given to do for the Church.

And Pope Benedict is clearly not downbeat; indeed, while noting the progress that has been made, he hopes for more. That is why (on his Polish visit, for example) we find him both affirming what has taken place internationally and also, in a sense, ‘confirming the brethren’ by speaking approvingly of the recent ecumenical developments in Poland itself, so important in a country which for a while was slow to see the need to engage. And, as I have already pointed out, he has underlined the continuing importance of theological dialogue, calling it ‘the Lord’s commandment’.

9. What other emphases does Benedict bring? I would briefly mention two: a certain *realism*, and an emphasis on the vital importance of *spiritual ecumenism*.

Pope Benedict is not afraid to be realistic and say that the goal of unity may not seem within immediate reach. However, this ‘does not prevent us from living with one another in charity at all levels, from this moment... love cannot fail to be a short cut to communion.’ He does not expect to see unity within his lifetime (which after all will probably not last so very long more!) but that is no reason for weary resignation.

That brings up the second point. If progress is going to take longer than we hoped, is everything being done that can be done? Pope Benedict says to the Catholic Church that the long journey to full communion must continue through theological dialogue, but at the same time much more attention must be given to the value of spiritual ecumenism. John Paul had laid

great stress on this in his Encyclical (cf *UUS*, 21-27, 41, and *passim*), where he wrote how it can help us appreciate how much already unites us. This year the Pontifical Council, in the person of Cardinal Kasper, published a *Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*, pointing out to Catholics all the opportunities that exist for working and praying together so that we may grow in appreciation of the other and their faith.

Maybe in the past we took this for granted, or even considered it a poor second-best to the institutional steps we were hoping for. Benedict underlines our belief that *unity is a grace* and, as such, *a gift* for which we continually need to ask the Lord, showing that we do actually desire it. As such, it will not come about through a sort of ‘works righteousness’, just by our own striving alone. It is a grace for which we must intensify our prayer together: ‘Asking together already marks a step towards unity between those who ask... Relying precisely on divine goodness, let us intensify our common prayer for unity, which is more than ever a necessary and very effective means’ (Homily for Vespers at the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 2006). Commenting on Jesus’ words, ‘there am I in the midst of them’, he explained ‘It is the presence of Christ that makes the common prayer of those gathered in his Name effective.’ He talks about a ‘symphony of hearts’.

In Germany in 2005 he put it like this: ‘the fact that we consider each other brothers and sisters, that we love one another, that together we are witnesses for Jesus Christ, should not be taken so much for granted.’ And, he went on, we should really value this: ‘brotherhood is in itself a very important fruit of dialogue that we must rejoice in, continue to foster and to practice. Among Christians, fraternity is not just a vague sentiment, nor is it a sign of indifference to truth. ...it is grounded in the

supernatural reality of the one Baptism which makes us all members of the one Body of Christ.’

10. I do not intend to carry on picking out quotes. I think all agree that Pope Benedict has not begun as many thought the former Cardinal Ratzinger would. He has stated with as much, or even more, conviction than his predecessor that the Catholic Church has embarked on a journey from which there is no turning back, that our commitment to ecumenism is ‘irreversible’. He has emphasised this from the very start, calling it his primary task. He has set himself the task of continuing the implementation of the Second Vatican Council, for which the search for unity was fundamental.

What else will follow we do not know. Words and good intentions are important for setting the tone, but they are not enough. He said as much himself in his Initial Message after his election: ‘Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential, inspiring in everyone that inner conversion that is the prerequisite for all ecumenical progress.’ So maybe we could yet be surprised.

Address given by Mgr Timothy Galligan to
Churches Together in South London
9 May 2007



CHIARA LUBICH

THE EARLY YEARS

Frank Johnson looks back to the beginning of the Focolare Movement and its humble origins in war-torn northern Italy.

It is true that, as Chiara Lubich herself said on one occasion, ‘God writes straight on crooked lines’. In other words, God can turn even the most disastrous of us into masterpieces of sanctity. But it is also true that God often finds a ready response in those who, from an early age, have been nurtured in a family in which faith was an important element in their upbringing. This was certainly the case with the young Sylvia Lubich who, even at the age of ten had felt the call to martyrdom and had answered ‘Yes’ immediately.

Chiara discovers her way

The first signs of her special calling go back to 1939, when the nineteen year-old Sylvia was invited to go to a meeting of Catholic students in Loreto where, within the basilica there, so

tradition has it, the angels brought the house of the Holy Family from Nazareth. Chiara (still called Sylvia then), went to visit the House of Nazareth at every opportunity. She describes the experience in her own words: 'It was the last day [of the meeting]. The church was packed with young people. An idea came clearly into my mind – one that will never be cancelled out: you will be followed by a host of virgins.' Back in Trent, Chiara's parish priest was anxious to know why she looked so happy. Had she found her way, he wanted to know. All she could tell him was that her way was not that of the convent, or the married life, or that of a consecrated person in the world.

On a cold and wet morning in 1943 Chiara offered to walk up to the farm, in place of her sister, to get some milk. Just as she was passing under the railway bridge she felt very strongly that God was calling her. 'Give yourself completely to me,' was what she heard. Her immediate response was to make an appointment with a local Franciscan priest to ask him if she can make an act of total donation to God. After a long chat with the priest, he agreed to let her consecrate herself to God, which she did in a private ceremony at 6.00 a.m. on 7 December 1943. Later, this date came to be regarded as the date of the beginning of the Focolare Movement. Chiara wrote in her diary how she felt about that day: 'The interior joy was inexplicable, secret, but contagious.'

The Gospel the only rule

Contagious was the right word, because with in a short time of making her vows, Chiara had found other young women who wanted to join her: Natalia Dallapiccola, the first one, followed by Doriana Zamboni and Giosi Guella. Then there was Graziella De Luca, two sisters, Gisella and Ginetta Calliari, Bruna Tomasi and Aletta Salizzoni, and to more sisters, Valeria and Angelella Ronchetti. And the amazing thing was that they were following a way, that of the Focolare, that was far from a

recognised 'order' of the Catholic Church. All these young women had seen a light in Chiara and felt compelled to follow it.

Their only 'rule' was the Gospel, which they tried to put into practice in everything they did. One day, in May 1944, they were gathered in the cellar of Natalia's house, with a candle their only source of light. They opened the Gospel at random and the page that fell open before them was the one which contained Jesus' prayer to the Father before his passion and death: 'Father, that all may be one'. (Jn 17: 21) 'Those words seemed to light up one by one,' said Chiara, and they fixed in our hearts the conviction that it was for that page of the Gospel that we had been born.' Later, in the Christmas of 1946, they chose as their motto 'Either unity or death'.

When did Jesus suffer most?

So, unity became their watchword, and a short time after, Chiara and her companions discovered the other great foundation stone of the nascent Movement: Jesus forsaken. Dori Zamboni had contracted an infection that had brought her face out in a terrible rash, so she was confined to the house. Chiara had asked a priest to bring Holy Communion to Dori and, just as the priest was about to leave, he asked the young women when, according to them, Jesus had suffered most. They gave the answer that most Catholics of the day would have given: 'When he was in the Garden of Olives.' But the priest said that it was not then, but when he had cried out from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' These words of the priest struck Chiara deeply, and when he had gone, Chiara said to Dori: 'We only have one life, let's spend it as well as we can. If Jesus' greatest suffering was when he was abandoned by his Father, we will follow Jesus forsaken.' From that moment on, Jesus forsaken became the spouse of Chiara's soul for the rest of her life.

Where two or more...

Chiara and her first companions went to live together in a tiny house in Trent, at no. 2 Piazza Cappuccini. They lived the Gospel law of love, being ready to give their lives for one another. Living in this way, they discovered the truth of another promise made by Jesus in the Gospel: 'Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' (Mt 18: 20) Jesus is spiritually and fully present among us if we are united like this,' explained Chiara. She was convinced that this witness of unity would help bring many souls back to God and restore unity wherever it was lacking.

As the air raids became more and more frequent, Chiara and her companions spent many hours in the shelters, where they continued to read the Gospel together and to share the fruits of their having put it into practice. The other people in the shelter were attracted by this group of young women who emanated a kind of 'spiritual warmth'. This gave rise to the nickname they were given in the early days, a nickname that has stuck ever since: Focolare, which is the Italian for hearth or fireplace. By the end of the war, the number of people in Trent who were living this new spirituality was more than five hundred.

Such were the humble beginnings of what was to become a world wide, ecumenical, interfaith and inter-cultural movement. In 1945, Chiara and her friends had asked the Father, in simple faith, to give them 'the furthest confines of the earth – a prayer that was to be fulfilled beyond their wildest dreams.

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Chance Encounter

I was making one of my brief forays into my local super market and bumped into an old friend, the wife of the local Salvation Army Major.

The usual cheery greetings and exchange of information followed. However, on this occasion I was chatting on about the meeting I was going to Chair for the Unity Commission that evening.

My friend followed by explaining that she is now heading up the Borough Ecumenical Deans. Further more she told me about a monthly ecumenical prayer group which meets to pray for the needs of Wandsworth and invited me to come along.

I felt very strongly that attendance was imperative and turned up to a wonderfully warm welcome. I have been working ecumenically in the area for nearly forty years so my face is familiar.

As soon as the coffee was consumed and the meeting settled, I was asked to explain my views on ecumenism. People who press that particular button find that I have a lot to say. Starting with the announcement that ecumenism is not an option but a clear direction from Christ. ‘. . . that they may all be one’ (John 17:20-23) and moving on to the concept of ‘unity in diversity.’ I also talked about the various bodies and organizations I am involved in and how they contribute to unity.

The evening progressed with a session of worship largely expressed through music with some people remaining seated and others choosing to move with the music. This was followed by a detailed account from the Salvation Army lady officer of the prayers needed for Wandsworth. Currently, these are for the development of a Street Pastors scheme which seems to be well underway and for the continued successful and positive contact with Wandsworth Council where a weekly prayer meeting is being held.

The prayer session, which followed, was rather different to anything I am used to. One person prayed vocally and very loudly while another gentleman was walking in circles saying equally loudly "yes Lord" over and over again. Some of the participants knelt on the floor and bowed low like the Muslims or Orthodox Christians. At intervals other people sang in tongues while all this was going on. I needed to pray in a more familiar way for myself to keep on track and this I managed. The prayer time finished with a requested prayer for Christian Unity, which it was a great privilege for me to be asked to lead.

I will make every effort to keep up the attendance at this meeting and to build unity at the local level. I am now also conveniently on an email link which will keep me up to date with local events which should be very useful.

Joy Peck

Have you ever made a century or even a double century?

Well, I have. At St Paul's Church on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul on 29 June I celebrated my two hundredth Sunday service at one of our Churches Together in Beckenham (CTIB). My innings began in 2001 soon after moving to Beckenham. I had become a Board Member of CTIB and set out to find where the fifteen churches were, to meet their ministers, and to pray at each one.

I began a perpetual pilgrimage round our CTIB churches aiming at two circuits a year – thirty-two services a year allowing for special feasts and family occasions. So, after seven years, I was set to make my double-century, but where to make it?

St Paul is my hero. I had spent three weeks in Malta at Eastertide and attended Mass at the Church of St Paul Shipwrecked. Now as the Church is celebrating *The Year of St Paul* from 28 June 2008 it was obvious that I should make my mark at St Paul's, Brackley Road by celebrating my double-century there.

I took a taxi to avoid the long walk down Brackley Road. During the service, I was asked to explain why I was doing the pilgrimage. I said the advantage to me was that it allowed me to pray with most of the church-going Christians of Beckenham. Our Church does encourage us to do so, does it not?

I made my latest visit to Christ Church and aim to make many more visits to score a second double-century as fast as possible on account of my age! I plan my visits to coincide with the Eucharist at each church whether Anglican or Non-Conformist. Why don't you give it a try?

Terry Davies, PUC Beckenham

A Family Affair

By my reading of scripture, in the period after the resurrection, the early church was really a network of family connections. Not only were there the obvious domestic siblings: Peter and Andrew, James and John, and the sisters Martha and Mary, but there were lots of other incidental connections. Whose twin was Thomas Jn 11:16? We hear of Peter's mother-in-law but what of his wife? There are influential people like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. These were well connected in Jerusalem as members of the Sanhedrin. Additionally there are the shady characters like Judas Iscariot and Simon (the rebellious) Zealot. Simon of Cyrene of course helped Jesus to carry his cross, but is it significant that he is also specifically named as "*The father of Alexander and Rufus*" (Mark 15:21). Could it be that this is of no interest or is this the same "*Rufus, chosen servant of the Lord*" to whom Paul sends affectionate greetings including, "*his mother—a mother to me too*" Romans (16:13). The simple fact that the gospel writers casually include incidental names evidences that there were various characters other than the original twelve who acted as key figures in the embryonic church. We shall never fully determine these identities or unravel the connections between them, but certain sequences demand more consideration.

I bet you have never noticed that John's Gospel even mentions a sister of the Blessed Virgin, (19:25). Perhaps, at the time this sister was so well known that there was no need to mention her name, but now she is forgotten. There again we could speculate that she is actually Joanna whom Luke names as being one of the women at the foot of the cross. Previously the same Joanna is mentioned as being the wife of Herod's servant Chuza (8:3). She was among those women who supported Jesus during his ministry. Although she is never previously spoken of, Mathew mentions that the mother of James and John (i.e. wife of

the illusive Zebedee) was also at the cross but she remains nameless. Are you still with me? Let's move on:

John-Mark was the cousin of Barnabas. His mother, yet another woman called Mary, ran a safe house in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Perhaps this was the same house (complete with servant girl called Rhoda) that supplied the upper room used for the last supper and later meetings. It was to this house that Peter made a miraculous escape from prison. Perhaps John Mark's mother is also "*The Other Mary*" whom St Mathew mentions together with the Magdalene in Mt 27:61 ff. Maybe also, this is the same "*Mary the Wife of Clopas*" mentioned with the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the cross in John 19:25. Indeed could this Clopas be the same Cleopas whom St Luke describes with another unnamed disciple meeting the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus? The eastern Churches have a tradition that this unnamed disciple is actually Luke himself modestly disguising his identity. In the same way in John's Gospel, John is never mentioned by name but only spoken of as "*The beloved disciple*".

Let's go back to *Mary the mother of John-Mark*. This is the John-Mark who becomes the early travelling companion of Paul and Barnabas and supplies his name to the second (really the first) Gospel. Despite the family base in Jerusalem, Barnabas is from Cyprus. His real name is Joseph, but like so many characters in the New Testament he adopts a new name after entering the baptised community of Christ (Acts 4:36). Now he is known as "*The Son of Encouragement or Consolation*". Without Barnabas, Paul may never have embarked on his apostolate, Acts 11:22, or if he had, he would never have been accepted as a regular "apostle" but just another itinerant preacher of an eccentric home spun religion. Paul himself admits that after his conversion he did not go up to Jerusalem but for some reason went to Arabia Gal 1:17. It is difficult to reconcile the sequence of events following his conversion as he describes in Galatians

with the sequence described in Acts. It seems likely that Luke smoothed over the complex problem of Paul's relationship with the original twelve. Whatever the facts, Barnabas is the key player at this stage. He had already been entrusted with apostolic responsibilities especially in Antioch before searching for Paul to join him Acts 11:22. It is no doubt for this reason that Barnabas is remembered in the Canon of the Mass while others are overlooked, e.g. Timothy and Titus. If you have ever been on holiday to Cyprus you will know how widespread are the names of Barnabas and Paul on that island. The Cyprus mission was like a trial run for their later more ambitious adventures 13:3-12. Although it is not in scripture, local tradition claims that Paul was flogged at Paphos for causing a commotion and unsettling the people. This probably squares with 2 Cor 11:23. To this day a certain pillar is venerated as the very place where this happened. The nearby church that stands on ancient foundations has changed hands through the centuries between Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians and is nowadays shared by both communities. But there is more: Cyprus was evidently the first or second home to Barnabas and John-Mark. John-Mark had been with them on this tour (Acts 13v5) but from here he decided to go back to Jerusalem, while Paul and Barnabas ambitiously set off for the regions of Asia Minor nowadays modern day Turkey. This would have been closer to Paul's home territory at Tarsus. Subsequently Paul and Barnabas had the most flaming argument over John-Mark Acts 15:39 so that they separated and Barnabas' name is never mentioned again either in the Acts or Epistles and John-Mark only grudgingly Col 4:10. I suspect that this is more Paul's problem than the others. Why shouldn't Mark have gone home, perhaps he had a different calling to the others, not the least of which was to gather up the sayings and stories of Jesus and write them down in a consistent narrative? In the Gospel, there is the tantalising suggestion that Mark is the same youth who ran away naked when he was caught up in the

commotion on the night of Christ's arrest Mark 14:52 (omitted in the other gospels). Like Luke and John, if the theory is correct, this would fit the subtle mechanism for a writer including a reference to himself in the Gospel without boasting his name. It would also mean that he had been witness to Christ's passion investing him with an apostolic authority at least equivalent to that of Paul. But we have not yet exhausted this subject. The earliest tradition suggesting information about the writing of the Gospels was by a certain Bishop Papias of Hierapolis (near Laodicea) at the turn of the 1st century. Among other things he wrote: "*Mark became the interpreter of Peter, and wrote down accurately everything he remembered*". Perhaps, rather than fastening himself to Paul, Mark decided to fasten himself to Peter whom he remembered in hiding at his mother's house in Jerusalem. Perhaps this was also part of Paul's resentment. A late 2nd century tradition suggests that Mark's Gospel was written in Rome. This cannot be substantiated, yet neither can it be overlooked. The closing remark, at the end of the first letter of Peter, reinforces the idea: "*Your sister in Babylon, who is with you among the chosen, sends you greetings; so does my son, Mark*" (1 Peter 5:13). Babylon was a codename for Rome among Christians and Jews of the 1st century. Being a long way from home, if this is the same Mark who was the lad so many years before in the safe house in Jerusalem, Peter would have been uninhibited to speak of him affectionately as a son. (Just as Paul spoke of Rufus' mother as an adoptive mother to himself). Scholars have speculated on the authorship of this 1st Letter of Peter. The language is too sophisticated for an Aramaic speaking Galilean fisherman. Nevertheless even if this text is better understood as a 1st century church product written under the authoritative name of Peter, the tradition associating Peter's name with Rome and Mark is all the more impressive.

The seacoast of western Palestine and Syria is key to understanding the *westward* expansion of the early church in the formative years. Philip the deacon (one of the original seven) lived at the coastal city of Caesarea with his daughters. This was part of the region still known locally as Samaria. Philip had had some success proclaiming the Gospel in these parts. Early on Peter and John were dispatched from Jerusalem to regularise progress Acts 8:14. Philip's house seems to have been another convenient base for travelling apostles Acts 21:8. Luke claims that he stayed there with Paul (and others possibly including Timothy) as they made their way back by sea from Turkey on their way to Jerusalem. Some years before, it had been at Caesarea that Peter received the decisive revelation that the gospel message should be taken to foreign nations and not just Jews. Like Caesarea, Antioch further North on the coast had at an early stage become a major Christian centre. This was the sea gateway between Western Europe, Central Asia and the Far East, being the beginning of the famous "silk trade route" towards China. Barnabas had been sent there early on Acts 11:22, he had evidently become an established name there 13:1. There was considerable movement of early disciples between Jerusalem and Antioch. The city provided a safe nursery for Paul in the early stages of his apostolate 11:26. It was to be the main base for each of his major missionary tours and it was here that the disciples were derisively first called Christians by the local people. [To be completed next time]

Kevin the Rev.

A Prison Chaplain in Southwark Diocese
(Middle name Peter – Confirmation name Thomas)

Fr Kevin informs me that he intends this article to demonstrate that the Family of the Church as existed in biblical times remains relevant to our own time as a Christian family united by Jesus. The names may change but the relationship remains. Ed

