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EDITORIAL

Tic-toc, tic-toc. Last night the thought came to me as I listened in the silence with only the clock sounding the seconds away *TiC*, *TiC*, Together in Christ; *toc, toc*, the one Church, the one Church; and I realised how well this expressed our purpose and motive. To be one as Christ and the Father are one. That essentially we all have a share in the life of Jesus shown in different ways. I hope you find this is described in the articles presented here.

‘Here our Prayer’ in Sydenham and Forest Hill, South London shows the value and goodness working together can provide. It can be a template for any other groups of Churches willing to co-operate in bringing Jesus into their town.

‘The Ecumenical Vision’ is a talk given by Dr David Cornick of Churches Together in England (CTE) to members of Churches Together South London (CTSE) and worth hearing in a wider context.

Fr Michael Lovell has summarised a meeting with Metropolitan Kalistos, a Bishop of the Greek Orthodox Church considering the need and role of a world wide leader.

Fr Kevin Robinson gives the last part of ‘A Family Affair’ examining the relationships of the early Christians joined in Faith.

One of the important lessons we can take from our times in company with other denominations is that enthusiasm is infective and should be joyful and uplifting not wearisome and tiring. Someone who has embodied this joy is Mrs Grace Sangarajah, who has retired from the South-west London Area Commission. I thank her for her support and effort as promoter and distributor of *TiC* for more years than I can remember. She will be missed.

Michael

HERE OUR PRAYER

An Ecumenical Prayer Project in Sydenham and Forest Hill

I am a member of the Catholic parish of the Resurrection of Our Lord, Sydenham Kirkdale. I was the secretary of the steering group which, under the auspices of *Churches Together in Sydenham and Forest Hill* (CTSFH), organised the *Here Our Prayer* weekend in September last year (2008). A brief account of the project and how it was managed, plus a (strictly personal) view of some lessons which might be learnt from our experiences, may be of interest to readers of *Together in Christ*.

The aim of the weekend was to bring Christians in Sydenham and Forest Hill together to pray for the needs – expressed or unexpressed – of everyone living in our area. The initial idea came from a similar project in Eltham which some of us had heard about. Almost all – over twenty – of the churches in Sydenham and Forest Hill eventually participated in or supported the event: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Baptist/URC, New Testament Church of God, Elim Pentecostal, Society of Friends, independent evangelical churches. The local Strict and Particular Baptist church did not respond to an invitation to participate, and we are not sure we reached all the small Pentecostal (mostly black-led) churches in the area. We considered trying formally to incorporate a multi-faith dimension (although there are no mosques or synagogues actually in our area), but initial informal approaches were not very encouraging so we did not pursue this. We did however organize a talk about Jewish prayer under the *Here Our Prayer* umbrella.

At the core of the weekend were individual prayer events put on by participating churches. These included Eucharistic adoration; presentations of the Rosary and *lectio divina*; prayer labyrinths, (at least three, but all different in style and presentation); a Taizé service; street prayer; Quaker silence; and charismatic prayer.

Church-goers were encouraged to attend events run by other churches, and quite a number did. There were also some centrally run activities. First, all local people were invited to complete a prayer request form, which could be returned either by post, in a special post-box which we placed either in churches or in local shops, libraries etc., or online. (We haven't, at any rate as yet, been able to quantify the response to this, but it appears that we didn't get all that many prayer requests online).

Secondly, there was a free event for young people (secondary school age) on Saturday evening, called *Dialog*, with prayer and praise, music, talks, a barbecue and an impressive (and expensive) fireworks display. One of the local independent evangelical churches took a major role in organizing this. There was a particular focus particularly on gun and knife crime, a big local concern. Between fifty and eighty young people (estimates vary) from participating churches attended – with hindsight, we could have coped with more and the rules we set as to who could come may have been too restrictive. But I am told that those who went (I was too old!) thought it was great.

Thirdly, there was a 'monk about town' (actually an Anglican Franciscan lay brother from the Cerne Abbas community) who spent the weekend walking around the area and getting into conversation with people in the street.

Fourthly, there was a hot air balloon in which Bishop Christopher Chessun (Church of England), Bishop Paul Hendricks (Roman Catholic), Rev. Nigel Uden (United Reformed Church Moderator) and other church leaders, together with young people from most of the participating churches, went up (not as high as we hoped – a bit too windy!) to pray for the area.

Finally, there was a joint closing service on Sunday afternoon, attended by bishops and other church leaders, the Mayor of Lewisham and a large congregation. We devised a special liturgy round the theme of ‘living water’, which included liturgical dance and the release of a large number of (eco-friendly) helium filled balloons with the *Here Our Prayer* logo. I should perhaps add that two local bookshops agreed to put on special displays of book about prayer in connection with the weekend.

How was the project planned and organized centrally? A small steering group, comprising both lay people and ordained ministers was set up eighteen months ahead of the weekend – and we certainly needed all that time. It was chaired by a curate from one of the local Anglican churches (who has now moved on to take charge of a parish outside the area). Without her dynamic leadership and hard work – and, in my view, if there had not been an ordained minister visibly at the head of the project – *Here Our Prayer* would never have got off the ground.

The steering group’s first task was to draw up a project timetable, showing what needed doing by when. It then tasked groups or individuals with taking the lead in three particular areas: publicity, the event for young people and liaising with individual participating churches

The publicity plan for the project had a number of different elements. The top priority was to find the right name for the weekend. *Here Our Prayer* was, I am proud to say, my wife’s suggestion, enthusiastically adopted by the steering group (though we were subsequently surprised how many people thought we’d mis-spelt ‘Hear’!) The second was to commission a logo from a graphic designer belonging to our churches – the result (see right) was much admired.

Press and broadcast media publicity was handled for us by the Anglican diocese of Southwark press office. I've seen no formal report from them, but my impression is that we were not in the event able to get significant coverage in non-specialist media. (We had hoped that 'bishops up in a balloon' would be something of a draw).

We commissioned five publicity banners (ten feet by two feet) which were displayed in prominent places round the area, including at Sydenham and Forest Hill stations. (We had to get specific permission from Southern to do this – they don't normally allow banners on stations). With hindsight, we should perhaps have tried to find the money for more of these. There were also printed posters, for church notice boards, shops etc., but I think the distribution of these was a bit patchy. We prepared several thousand leaflets (each of which included a prayer request form) which many participating churches put through letterboxes in their areas.

We also set up a website (<http://hereourprayer.webeden.co.uk>) you can still – at the time of writing – access it and look at some pictures of *Here Our Prayer*.) Another online medium we tried was posting messages on local website discussion forums. This certainly attracted interest (including some rather hostile comments) from users.

The total cost of *Here Our Prayer* was about £6500. The biggest elements were the hot air balloon (£2600), the youth event (£2200) and publicity costs (£1500 – but we didn't have to pay for the website, which was done for us by a church member.) It is worth noting that the biggest funder was the Anglican Diocese of Southwark/West Lewisham Deanery (£5000 from three separate funds). Other moneys were provided by *Churches Together in South London* (£500), some participating churches, special collections and anonymous individual donations.

Was *Here Our Prayer* a success? Only God really knows, of course, but I guess we must assume that any prayer must, at the deepest level, count as a success. At the human level, we may, in my view, have missed a trick by not building into the initial project design some mechanisms for recording for example the number of people who came to services and the number of prayer requests received. But that would have been quite a management challenge. CTSFH are still considering whether even at this stage we can do some sort of formal evaluation of the outcome of the project; it remains to be seen how practicable that will be. But it is clear at any rate that *Here Our Prayer* has provided a lot of encouragement and support for all participating churches, and CTSFH will be thinking about how best we can build on that.

Robin Orton
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'The Ecumenical Vision'

An address given to

Churches Together in South London

Council meeting, 1 November 2008

Thank you for the opportunity of this meeting. This is for me part of a steep learning curve as I get to know *Churches Together in England*. I think such conversations are of real importance in a world which is changing as rapidly as ours.

Churches Together in England (CTE) is what it says on the tin, it's England's churches together, and when they do things together it becomes a reality. And that happens in hundreds of diverse ways in villages, suburbs and cities, and occasionally across the nation. It happens when the local churches decide to work together and create a night shelter. It happens when some local congregations decide to clear up the local recreation ground as part of *Hope 08*. It happens with the *Good Friday Walk of Witness*, or the activities of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. It happens when the Methodist and United Reformed churches across the street from each other decide that one worshipping congregation is a better bet than two. It happens when a group of training institutions decide that the most efficient and effective way to service their constituencies is to do it together. It happens when the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission meet. It happens when Inter-church families come together for their annual gathering, It happens when the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary meet in conference or put out another volume of essays. It happens, if you like, in both structured and spontaneous ways. My colleague in South London, where one of the important influences on church life is black-led independent Pentecostal churches, thinks that the balance is moving towards the spontaneous. I'd be interested to know if that is reflected in your experience. If it is, it's worth noting that we are better equipped institutionally to deal with the structured rather than the spontaneous, and that we might need to

do some thinking about how we can most helpfully respond to new realities.

But, that is all part of ecumenism, which happens when Christians choose to do things together rather than apart. They might not give it that name, but that is the reality, a little bit of growing together as they grow nearer to the Christ whom they seek to serve, who is one Christ, not thirty-eight Christs. Whenever any of that goes on, CTE becomes real.

And I don't see any diminution of that reality. It is all around us now, praise God, a normal and accepted way of going about being church. And sometimes we need to pause there, and remember that it wasn't fifty years ago, and be grateful for those who have brought us to where we are.

If I were to point to one great achievement of English ecumenism, it would be that we have broadened the table as English Christianity has broadened. We are I think, the most varied ecumenical community in the world. Coptic Orthodox sits with Quaker, Black Pentecostal with Anglo-Catholic, and Roman Catholic with Congregationalist. That has only been possible because of the far-sighted, Spirit-guided decision of those gathered at Swanwick in 1987 to replace the *British Council of Churches* with *Churches Together*, thus allowing churches with profoundly different authority structures to come together as equal partners at one table. In a sense, that decision has enabled ecumenism to respond to the profound changes which globalisation and migration have caused in British society in the last twenty years.

The world church is no longer something 'over there' it is here, and it is reflected in our table, in all its complexities and tensions. The Swanwick structure has accommodated that diversity, and we rejoice in it. We have been less successful in bending our minds around what it actually means to be 'churches together'. Nobody admitted in 1987, or as far as I can see since, that it is much easier to be a council of churches than *Churches Together*, and my colleagues on the ground tell me that some *Churches Together* groups still mistake themselves for councils of churches. But we are

not about deciding what everyone will do, rather we are about the business of sharing charisms, and if CTE as an organisation has a specific charism to contribute, it is simply that it is gifted at bringing people together around a table.

So, the first challenge for us is to work out what it means to be ‘churches together’. The famed marigold booklet explained how the ‘churches together’ philosophy could be translated into ecclesial reality. There should be ‘...a conscious self-denial by the churches, so that when new work is proposed...each does not simply go ahead as before, as if no-one else existed’ and it spoke of ‘...a process of consultation between churches which will result in shared ownership of work.’ My hope is that that is more manifest at diocesan, intermediate and local levels than it sometimes appears nationally. My overall suspicion is not that the Swanwick ideal has been tried and found wanting, rather it has been found difficult and not tried – with due apologies to G K Chesterton. So, the success of *Churches Together* isn’t primarily about money and funding, it is about commitment, theology and ecclesiology.

The second challenge is that we need to be realistic about the table and its partners. What we mean by ‘church’ is changing almost as we speak. I am a cynical old historian by background, so I believe in a mixed ecclesiastical economy. Institutions show remarkable resilience, and despite the rhetoric of the advocates of pioneer mission, I do not believe that the institutional church is on its last legs. As Cardinal Cormac dryly noted, they said that in 1789 and the French church is still there. Discourteous comments about ‘phantom ecumenism’ and ‘churches about to die’ should have no place in the debates of our churches. However, I do believe profoundly that around those institutions new forms of discipleship and being church are coming into being.

We are seeing that in the evolving form of black-led churches where small umbrella organisations bring together groups of entrepreneurial and enthusiastic pastors in the hope that they will grow, spin off and create new groupings – most of which remain in fellowship with each other. We see it too in the network of radical

Christian discipleship, loosely Anabaptists, nurtured by the gentle and self-effacing London Mennonite Centre. And we see it in the more institutionalised (although they would hate the word, but they do have an office in Lambeth Palace, which in my book is a rather distinguished, long-standing institution) *Fresh Expressions*.

So, challenge two is, have we got the structures right?

- Do our categories of membership and belonging reflect this complicated scene?
- How can we allow our partners to have the conversations that are appropriate to each of them?
- How can England's Christian leaders come together, given the fact that there is now such a huge mismatch of scale?
- How can the historic denominations, the new churches and the black-led churches share their charisms with each other?

Challenge three is very similar, but translated into the local. Within the space of a week, a widely experienced Christian Ecumenical Officer, a leader of *Fresh Expressions* and a group of denominational regional church leaders all groaned at me about Local Ecumenical Partnerships and what they perceived to be heavy and cumbersome ways of doing things which needed lightening. On the other hand, as soon as you start paying someone, or a building is rented or bought, lawyers get very interested and it is in everyone's best interest that things are done properly and well. But have we got it right?

I suspect that goes deeper than mere structure. Ecumenism has a bad name in some places. It is perceived as energy-sapping rather than energy-giving, an old-fashioned drag rather than a call to the cutting edge. That, to use a useful, if limited, management term is a question of branding. My sense is that Christians are still excited and delighted to be Christians and churches together, but the easiest way to ensure that any meeting consists of three old ladies and a dog is to label it ecumenical. And that isn't intended to be sexist or indeed anti-cat.

I enjoy reading Cardinal Kasper's work. He seems to me such a shrewd, sure-footed theologian. When he talks about us being in an age of 'spiritual ecumenism', he does so not out of a sense of frustration but celebration. We have reached the point in the ecumenical pilgrimage where we've worked our way through to the profound theological realities that deeply divide us – the meaning of the *eucharist*, the nature of the *episcopate* and so on. It is only the patient and prayerful work of scholars that will enable us to solve such questions – and lest we despair about that, let's remember the joint Catholic-Lutheran statement on justification which is bringing to an end half a millennium of misunderstanding and division. In the meantime, what matters is the sharing of spiritual treasures, praying together, being together.

The particular gift of Anglo-Saxon ecumenism has been what one might call institutional unity – Robert Runcie came back from Milton Keynes and said, 'I've seen the future and it works.' That form of unity is here to stay, and it is our responsibility to service it and encourage it. But I do wonder if the next stage is not to be far more serious about 'spiritual ecumenism'. Working out what that might mean is challenge number four.

I believe profoundly in ecumenism. That is why I do this job. On another occasion I would defend it theologically, but for the moment let me say that it embraces diversity and does not destroy it. It speaks of God's world in a way that is only confirmed by the pictures we have seen from space of this fragile globe spinning so wonderfully and of what ecologists like James Lovelock have taught us of *Gaia*, and it is a working out both of our Lord's prayer that we might be in him as he is in the Father and the Father in him, and that Spirit-given vision of Ephesians of all things gathered up, in their integrity and difference into the Christ, who as I said earlier, is one not thirty-eight.

Rev. Dr. David Cornick
General Secretary
Churches Together in England

ROMAN CATHOLIC – ORTHODOX DIALOGUE THE SEARCH FOR A UNIVERSAL PRIMATE

In front of a distinguished gathering of representatives of the Christian denominations which make up *Churches Together in England* (CTE), Metropolitan Kallistos, the well known Greek Orthodox Bishop, teacher and writer recently gave a fascinating account of the history of Orthodoxy in Britain and Ireland and the recent dialogue towards unity in which he had played a part. The day was made up of two parts. In the morning session, he dealt with the worldwide governance of Orthodoxy and more particularly its development in Britain and Ireland. In the afternoon, he spoke on the *Ravenna Document* drawn up in October, 2007 which concerned the Sacramental and Authority issues which have come to dominate discussions between leading Roman Catholics and Orthodox spokesmen in recent years.

The Patriarch of Constantinople was present in Rome at the Synod of Bishops on the Sacred Scriptures . He is regarded as the primate of honour and represents the Orthodox Patriarchs, although he does not speak for them. In fact, he has much less power than the Archbishop of Canterbury, and, of course, there is no equivalent of the Pope in Orthodoxy. In all, there are fourteen different Orthodox Churches. Their Bishops do meet in a synodical way, but the Synods do not necessarily include all Bishops when the different Churches meet. The Russian Church is the most centralised, this due in some part to effects of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

In Britain and Northern Ireland, there are now two hundred Orthodox clergy of which forty per cent are of Western background, and two hundred and seventeen places where the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. The Metropolitan estimated that there are thirty thousand worshipping members practising their Orthodox faith. The numbers have gradually increased along with increasing immigration, as they have done in the Latin Church in these islands. The same situation is also experienced with the falling away of

young people from practise, an interesting parallel. There is one Orthodox Monastery, to be found in Essex, with twelve monks and thirty nuns.

The various Churches of Orthodoxy are also represented in these islands, the largest group being the Greek Church, to which the Metropolitan belongs. There is also the Church of Antioch and Russians who are joined to Moscow. The Ecumenical Patriarchate includes Eastern Europeans such as the Ukrainians and Romanians as well as Russians.

The Metropolitan has, on many occasions, argued for a Committee of Orthodox Bishops to meet regularly in this country, along the lines of the American model. He made reference to pecking away at it like a woodpecker, hence the notion of the 'Bishop as Woodpecker' given to us by the CTE General Secretary in an amusing way in the closing address! The serious side of this was that there needed to be a way of drawing the Churches together to represent Orthodoxy in Britain and Ireland. The various headquarters of the different Churches have, so far, not been able to reach agreement on this. We await developments.

Orthodox Bishops are basically in charge of a diocese, appointed for life and not normally transferred. They have no specific retirement age. Assistant Bishops have no executive responsibilities and the Metropolitan amusingly noted that as he was one of these, he was to be treated as an 'optical illusion'. He was greeted with loud laughter! One difference was clear between the Orthodox and Latin Church. This was to do with the method of appointment of parish clergy. An elected parishioners' council usually consults with the Orthodox Bishop before a Parish Priest is appointed. This seems to have more in common with Anglican and Methodist practice, providing an interesting contrast with the Roman Catholic Episcopal appointment system.

Having some knowledge of the local and world workings of Orthodoxy, we moved on to hear more about the *Ravenna Document*. The Metropolitan spoke about his memories of arriving for the significant gathering of Church Leaders in Ravenna, Italy. The Italian Municipal Police were everywhere, carrying their

weapons and protecting the convoys of cars to and from the hotel. Were these esteemed clerics likely to provoke such disagreement amongst each other that civil disturbance would break out on the streets, he wondered! We are, of course, more conscious of terrorism in any international setting.

We were reminded of the ecumenical consensus which existed in the early Apostolic Church between the East and the West and the importance of the Ecumenical Councils. The *Ravenna Document* describes such a council as ‘an “event”, a *kairos* inspired by the Holy Spirit who guides the church so as to engender within it the institutions which it needs and which respond to its nature.’ (paragraph 39). So far reaching were the effects of the ecumenical councils that the Latin and Orthodox Churches continued them, in their own way, even after they split up. They had originally drawn together the five major sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. The conclusions of the Ecumenical Councils were binding for all the Churches and all the faithful. Ever since, the ecumenical councils have been instrumental in establishing doctrinal positions. They could, in the future, be an important instrument once more in uniting the East and West. The conciliar process itself is common to both traditions.

The historic episcopate is also a common foundation. The Bishops are successors of the Apostles and have the task of handing on the apostolic faith. Quoting the earlier dialogue, the *Ravenna Document* indicates that Bishops ‘should be united among themselves in faith, charity, mission, reconciliation’ and that ‘they have in common the same responsibility and the same service to the Church’ (paragraph 9). Their conciliar leadership is founded on Christ himself and spreads throughout the various layers of the Church’s life: the local, the regional and the universal. This model is common to both East and West. For the Latin Church, each Diocese has a local Bishop. Then there are Bishops Conferences, such as that in England and Wales. In turn, the Pope is universal primate. In the Orthodox Church, the first level is the same. The local Bishop presides in his Diocese. Then there are regions drawing together various dioceses with one of their Bishops having

a principal role. At the third level, the regions such as Greece or Russia, the Bishops must appoint a 'first among equals'. There is, however, no equivalent of the Pope as universal primate. This difference has given rise to one of the main concerns of the *Ravenna Document*, namely the role of the Pope as universal primate for the Churches of the East and the West.

Our own Bishop Paul of Southwark Archdiocese asked the Metropolitan about the notion of the Pope being 'Patriarch of the West'. This title was dropped in 2006. The present Pope, when he was an academic in Germany, advocated a clear distinction between Pontiff and Patriarch. The two should not be telescoped. In other words, the Pope should not be seen as just one of the Patriarchs. The *Ravenna Document* supports this to some extent and goes on to make the case for the Pope adopting the role of universal primate among the patriarchs on the basis of being first among equals.

If this matter could be resolved, it would be a major step towards unification between East and West. The Metropolitan went on to explain how one of the Canons of the Orthodox tradition could be of help here. It is Apostolic Canon 34. Based on the relationship between the local Churches of a region, and acceptable to both East and West, it recognises the position of first among equals, but advises that no action can be taken by the *protos* without the consent of all those among who he is first. The emphasis here is on consent of the whole body. Here we see the principle of conciliarity at work in practice. It depends on consensus. The Metropolitan cited the experience of Pope John Paul II in the appointment of Bishops. Often, he exercised his power to appoint as he chose rather than accept the advice of the Diocese in question. This would have been for reasons of continuity and direction, something he considered a duty. However, this is not the way to exercise authority in the spirit of Canon 34. More open consultation would be preferred, along with mutual dialogue. Just as there is movement between the Persons of the Godhead, the Trinity, so there should be in the earthly Church, which is an icon of the Trinity. The current need is for such differences in understanding

of the role of the universal primate to be resolved through further prayer and dialogue.

Alongside these considerations, there is the question of the separate bodies of Canon Law which have grown up around the needs of the East and the West. A way needs to be found to retain these different bodies of law in a unified Church. This can be done, so long as the essential structure of the Church is not challenged. That structure of ecclesial communion is based on communion in the sacraments, something shared already by East and West.

A question was asked about St Peter and his succession in the Church. There are different ways of understanding 'succession'. We can say that both Peter himself, and his faith are a 'rock'. Is it Peter or 'the faith' that is the rock for the Church? The Metropolitan quoted St Cyprian who said that all Bishops are successors of Peter, not just one. The emphasis is on the apostolic succession which all the Bishops share, and that corresponds nicely with the notion of consensus and dialogue. The essential primacy is that of Christ himself.

The authority of Scripture also unifies us. The Church, through the Holy Spirit, interprets Scripture. It is a necessary point of reference for all dialogue and so is an essential tool of unity.

The current series of discussions leading to Ravenna produced various Statements from 1980 onwards, under the pontificate of John Paul II. I am reminded of his words about the Church 'breathing with both lungs', Orthodox and Latin. He also advocated a 'Primacy of Love' which is perhaps what Ravenna had in mind for universal primacy.

Fr Michael Lovell
Brockley

A Family Affair Part Two

The whole coastal region was still known by the Romans as Phoenicia. These two great sea ports Antioch and Caesarea were named after historic Emperors: the Greek *Antiochus Epiphanes* and the Roman *Caesar*. Antioch was soon to become one of the five major *Apostolic Patriarchates* or *Parent Churches*, namely: Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem, and remains so today. From Antioch churches were governed for the first centuries far away into Persia until the erection of a separate patriarchate in Baghdad in the 5th century. Antioch developed a great school of Christian learning specialising in the study of scripture especially from a historical perspective, but that is another story. Like Rome it claimed as its Christian founders the two great apostles Peter and Paul. The Letter to the Galatians indicates that Peter and Paul were both working together at Antioch (Alexandria claims its authority from Mark). Regrettably we read in Galatians 2 that there was a disagreement between the two apostles concerning the best way to accommodate Jews and Greeks within the same Christian community without causing offence. We are without Peter's side of the argument and although Paul is scornful in his attitude, elsewhere he is more tactful avoiding offence to Jewish/Christians in their observance of the law (1 Cor. 10:32).

We are still evaluating the progress of the early church as a network of family connections. At this point it is worth considering that even though Paul's home town was Tarsus in Cilicia (on the coast of Turkey) he appears to have had a sister and nephew also living in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). Being warned by them of a potential ambush, Paul is secretly taken under armed guard back to Caesarea. Previously arrested for attesting to his faith Paul makes his final appeal to the Roman Emperor and it is from Caesarea that the tribunal Festus finally deported Paul for a hearing in Rome.

We have gone a little way in the attempt to identify some of the women named Mary in the Gospels. The name was actually the most

frequent among women meaning *bitterness*. But if you think this is confusing what about all those men named Simon? There is Simon *Bar Jonah* whom we know as *Peter* otherwise written *Cephas* in Aramaic (Jn 1:42; see also 1 Corinthians and Galatians); *Simon the Zealot*, sometimes called *the Canaanite*, another of the twelve. *Simon the Leper* owned the house where Christ was anointed Mt 26:6. *Simon of Cyrene* has already been mentioned. *Simon Magus*, a magician foolishly offered the apostles money for the gift of the spirit (Acts 8:9), and another *Simon, a tanner*, accommodates Peter while staying at Caesarea. Judas, *the betrayer*. is also named *son of Simon Iscariot*. Is it any wonder that Simon's name was changed to Peter? The more one tries to get behind the complexity of names and identities in the New Testament the more confusing becomes the subject. It is hardly surprising that when certain names were so common, the early Christians frequently adopted new names to distinguish themselves. Simon is *Peter*; James and John, the *Boanarges Brothers* as Jesus called them, *Sons of Thunder* aka *The Sons of Zebedee*. Saul is *Paul*, Joseph is *Barnabas*, John-Mark inevitably becomes just *Mark*, Thomas is *Didymus* which means *twin* (the apostle to India), Mathew is *Levi* and such names are adapted between the Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic languages. Perhaps this explains why Bartholomew is usually named among the twelve but in John's Gospel we find *Nathanael* in his place. It seems reasonable to accept that these are two names for the same man; Bartholomew – *bar-Tōlmay* – meaning *Ptolemy's Son* (any name beginning 'Bar' or 'Ben' meaning *Son of*). In the first three gospels Philip and Bartholomew are always listed together and in John's gospel Philip and Nathanael appear together in a number of episodes (Bartholomew is later associated with Christianity in Armenia). The tradition of assuming a new name at key moments of Christian life remains part of the Catholic custom especially at the time of Baptism and Confirmation. It is part of the process of clothing oneself in a new Christian identity, putting on the heavenly man as St Paul describes it or as others might say being 'born again'.

Among the twelve there were two Simons, two James (*James the less* usually referred to as *Son of Alphaeus*) and two Judes: that is *Judas Iscariot* and Jude curiously designated *Son of James*, (could there have been a father and son among the twelve?) otherwise listed

as *Thaddaeus* in Matthew and Mark perhaps to distinguish him from *Iscairiot* (John 14:22). This man lends his name to the short *Letter of Jude* towards the end of the New Testament. He is believed to have taken the Gospel north east to the great city of Eddesa from where the Church spread eastwards into Persia.

What's in a name anyway? Think of the villain set free when the Lord was crucified: What was his name? Work it out for yourself and think of what Paul says . . . *because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"* (Gal 4:6) Barabbas means *Father's Son* and he is specifically named in all four gospels! How strange that someone with this name should be released while the legitimate divine *Son of the Father* goes to his death. Does the unjustifiably freed Barabbas become symbolic of you and I who have become adopted sons and daughters of God, 'justified' as St Paul teaches by the death of the divine *Son of the Father* who offers himself in our place?

What about the delicate matter of those known as *Brothers of the Lord* as in Mark 6:3: *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?* The dilemma is that the words for brother or sister are best translated as 'kindred' in these passages. One can imagine in a little street in Nazareth when Jesus was a child his cousins and friends in and out of each others houses and all lumped together by neighbours as one 'family'. The interesting thing is to wonder which of these, are the same characters as those listed among the twelve? It seems reasonable to imagine that *James, Son of Alphaeus* is the same James who in the Acts of the Apostles assumes a major role and is known there usually as *the Brother of the Lord* also supplying his name to that letter. This is the conventional Catholic understanding of these texts, but if his father's name was *Alphaeus* he was hardly a blood brother to the Lord!

We could explore further in the attempt to match the various travelling companions in Acts with the names mentioned by Paul in his letters. It is curious that while Timothy and Titus are so frequently named in the epistles, the name Titus does not appear anywhere in Acts unless this is the same *Titius-Justus* mentioned only once in Acts 18:7. This name is not seen in all ancient manuscripts and hence is

omitted in the KJV and other English texts. By the same token after the parting with Barnabas, according to Acts, *Silas* becomes Paul's main travelling companion, but in the Epistles no such name is seen except frequently we find *Silvanus* of which Silas is believed to be a contraction, (much like *Kev* is short for Kevin who is also not seen in the Bible). The NIV takes the liberty of making this assumption and substitutes Silas' name for Silvanus on every occasion in the epistles which is not strictly accurate.

Silvanus' name finally brings us full circle: The first Letter of Peter concludes: *I write these few words to you through Silvanus, who is a trustworthy brother, to encourage you and attest that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!* (1 Pt 5:12). Perhaps here is another connection and a solution to a mystery. It seems likely that the latter-day companion of Paul finally teamed up with Peter in Rome and may have sent this letter posthumously in Peter's name. The letter would have been offered as an act of reciprocal solidarity on behalf of Peter and the Church in Rome, addressed to the suffering disciples of Paul elsewhere in Asia Minor/Turkey. Indeed it is Christians suffering in the face of persecution with which the letter is most concerned. This would account for what is said to be the most elegant piece of writing in the New Testament found under the name of the unlettered fisherman of Galilee.

Throughout the New Testament, and especially the Epistles, scripture speaks of the church as being a *Household of Faith*. The word 'house' – *oikos* in NT Greek – provides the root of that modern term *oecumenical* by which we refer to the family of churches today. Little by little we will get to that place where we can restore the one single household. Until that time . . . *as long as we have the opportunity, let all our actions be for the good of everybody, especially those who belong to the household of the faith.* (Gal 6:10). It seems that in the face of so much opposition, the progress of the early Church survived as a widespread family affair. From the beginning, Christianity constituted an international domestic network of interconnected companions, supportive family friends and relatives. They witnessed to a common faith in the Risen Lord and were united *not by scripture* (other than a radically new interpretation of the 'old' testament), but by a living faith. They acknowledged *one baptism for the forgiveness of sins*. As

an international community they found a *personal relationship with Jesus* wherever the Apostolic Eucharist was celebrated. This was no mere memory, but a powerful experience of his actual presence as in Luke 24:31. We have identified in the scriptures: sisters, parents, cousins, siblings and various houses of apostolic hospitality throughout the Gospels and Epistles to say nothing of adoptive families and homes. So it remains today such that it remains customary in Christian affection to call our friends brothers or sisters, no matter which particular church or community an individual might belong to.

The catechism repeatedly tells us that *...the family home is rightly called 'the domestic church', a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity"* (para. 1666). And what does Christ himself say about family? *Who are my mother and my brothers?....Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother.* (Mk 3:33-35). That means you and me, equal children under one Heavenly Father, now adopted as sons and daughters because we are now brothers and sisters of the one who is Son of God by nature! In the same way, just like Paul and even Christ himself, the church today is no less mindful of those who are single and particularly offers his embrace to those who feel deprived of family life. As in apostolic times, *the doors of our homes, the 'domestic churches', and of the great family which is the Church must be open to all. 'No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone, especially those who "labour and are heavy laden".'* (para. 1658). So let us return to him as the weary travellers that we sometimes feel ourselves to be and let him refresh us in our generation just like he promised at the beginning.

And if you have managed to stay with me to the end of this article you may now have a glass of wine!

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