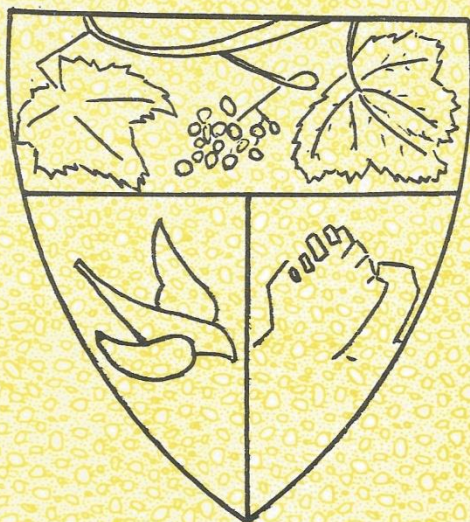


# Together in Christ 50p



**MAY THEY ALL BE ONE**

**Vol 7 No23  
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**EDITORIAL** The old year has gone; and now the new one is here As we enter 1989, we all assent to the truth of those simple words, with, perhaps, a brief review of what 1988 brought us - whether joy, sadness, achievements, disappointments, growth in relationships, news of births, marriages, deaths and so on, That year has gone, though its effects linger on Now the new one is here, Thoughts of newness remind us that Spring is not far behind, Spring will soon be here to thrill us with new life and beauty, stirring us to buoyant hope and fresh initiatives.

For all Christians, however, St Paul's message (2 Cor; 5: 17—19) from which our opening words were adapted, points to the supreme motivation for unflinching hope, perseverance and wonder as he tells us:

"And for anyone in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation is gone and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation".

All Christians through baptism are a new creation in Christ. We must never fail to assent to that, profound truth as we go forward in the power at his Spirit, who renews the face of the earth, to do our part in the work for unity and reconciliation, according to Christ's will,

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Sterling service to ecumenism has been given by many "who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith", and whom we remember in prayer. We think specially of: -  
**BISHOP FRANCIS THOMAS**, Bishop of Northampton who died on Christmas Day, 1988. Bishop Thomas was Chairman of the Theology Committee of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and was a member of English ARC, He was a loving and zealous pastor and a Bishop of great learning and wisdom.  
**FATHER HERBERT KELDANY** who died on October 22, 1988, Father Keldany was a member of the former Ecumenical Commission for England and Wales and a prominent ecumenist in

Westminster, He read law at Oxford, he was a historian and researcher and had completed 51 years as a priest. Both are remembered with love and gratitude; may they experience the fulness of new life in Christ.

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Grateful and sincere thanks to all contributors for enriching us with a variety of material in this issue. Please keep the material flowing in.

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### *Reflections on the Unity Day at Sidcup*

I would like to share some thoughts and reflections arising out of the Unity Day held on October 8, 1988, organised by the S E Area Commission at St Lawrence's Church Hall. First of all, some very Personal reflections,

The most important feature of such a day is not necessarily the contribution of the main speakers! Often the most moving experience comes from the sheer presence and bearing of the participants as a group, meeting together to affirm and celebrate that degree of unity which we already have and to explore eagerly the possibility of extending and building on that already existing unity. Short and sometimes halting, testimonies are made to ecumenical and spiritual wisdom which reveal the depth of commitment and spirituality of so many of our folk in all the churches, and these meetings are, for that reason, always a source of great inspiration for me personally in my own ecumenical service.

It was a great joy to me to see the warmth and affection with which my dear friend Michael Jackson was greeted by so many people; it: touched me, personally, that I too, was so often received and embraced with such Christian love. Michael and I enjoy working as a team on such occasions. He has, of course, a particularly effective style. More than almost anyone else I know, Michael' has the ability to give a talk which is both theologically rigorous and yet profoundly moving devotionally. The Roman Catholic Church in England is

indeed fortunate in its ecumenical officer and the rest of us are privileged to receive a ministry so obviously owned of God and blessed by Him.

It was good to see so many old friends and to make new ones. particularly effective word was spoken by Bishop Charles Henderson, when, at the prompting of Canon Clements, he spoke so movingly of his experience of collegiality, not merely within the Catholic hierarchy, but in fellowship with other church leaders, with fellow Catholic clergy and laity, and indeed, with other Christians in general,

We were looked after most hospitably by the folk at St Lawrence's, and, of course Sidney and Una Ratcliff were quietly seeing, after weeks of preparation on their part, that everything was in order. At one stage Michael teased me by saying we had got to a stage in our relationship when we could safely be rude to each other! That, I think, is something to be very thankful for. The early stages of ecumenism are, necessarily, accompanied by great tact and politeness, in reparation for the unkindness and hurts of previously un-ecumenically minded generations, But a time must come when, in the confidence of mutual trust, we can be totally honest, 'speak the truth in love' share our doubts and our problems about each other's ways, and, indeed, open ourselves to the correcting and purifying influence of the modes of discipleship of each other. More of this later, but it is important we come to such a point.

The day was, of course, devoted to a study of Catholic and Methodist concepts of the Church, life in the Church (primarily worship) and authority in the Church, Predictably, the question of authority revealed the greatest continuing divergences, and it is around some of the matters raised in that session that I want to raise some questions for further explanation. One of the great and continuing points of divergence between Catholics and most other Western churches relates to the degree of unity in faith that would be regarded as the minimum before full communion could be established. It is clear that, for example, Anglicans and Methodists would leave to the discretion of individuals many theological issues which are the subject of 'de fide' dogmas in the Roman Church. Such

matters would probably include the Marian dogmas and many finer points of sacramental theology.

I rather rashly claimed, without thinking out the point completely, that acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity ought to be the starting point for establishing minimum consensus in faith. Michael smartly drove my rather loose ecumenical ball to the boundary and emphasised, quite rightly, that for Catholics the matter was one of fidelity to a total tradition, not just a basic dogma. It is a whole way of living in the Church that is at stake.

This sent me back later that evening to reflect on my rather rash statement. I reread Wesley's great Trinitarian hymn:

"Father in whom we live, in whom we are and move"  
(Hymns and Psalms No 4)

and I think that there is a case to be made out for what I claimed, from the distinctive Christian understanding of God as Trinity, Wesley derives, so to speak, the essentials of the Christian experience, at any rate that of the people called Methodists. In verse 1 he associates all creation with the due praise of the Creator, in verse 2 he talks of the 'Incarnate Deity' and refers implicitly to eucharistic worship and the eucharistic style of life:

"Let all the ransomed race render in thanks their lives to  
Thee for thy redeeming grace."

In verse 3 he speaks of the spirit of holiness, while verse 4 ends triumphantly with:

"Sing all the Saints thy love has made Thine  
everlasting praise."

the consummation of all Christian hope and activity in the unending song of praise of the whole communion of saints.

Many questions then arise. How do our two 'traditions' Catholic and Methodist, of living the Christian life relate to each other? Is there any sense in which one is fuller than the other? Are they in fact complementary to each other? Do they need to be complemented not merely by each other but by the interpenetration of other Christian traditions if a reunited Church is to enjoy real fulness? These, and many other questions deserve and require close attention not merely from theological experts but from ordinary Christians seeking to discover the fulness of life in Christ. Maybe a musical analogy is

appropriate, one can write excellent music in a particular key, say that of B minor, but no musician would imagine his experience complete if he only wrote or listened to music in a particular key. Perhaps it is the same with the different traditions of Christian devotion and life. Even within major church traditions there are, so to speak, sub—traditions. Within the monastic orders of the Roman Catholic Church present—day Benedictines, Franciscans and Jesuits are heirs to different traditions. One is not necessarily superior to the others, though any may suit the temperament and circumstances of a particular individual better.

It may, of course, be that in separation, certain traditions have become distorted or exaggerated. It may be that, in some cases, we need to look to the purifying influence of another tradition in order to correct or adjust our tradition in some way or another. May be, as a very nice Anglican once suggested, that Christian traditions are generally correct in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. I suggested that one of the key features of the Methodist tradition is a willingness to learn from others. The report of the Catholic-Methodist International Dialogue suggested that Methodists might come to value and accept the ministry of the Bishop of Rome if they could be persuaded that he fulfilled an essential function in serving the unity of the Church. I think too that if Methodists can be persuaded that Catholic forms of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary really can lead us to a richer life of devotion and greater holiness, then we will be prepared to take these 'on board' in a manner unknown to our ancestors.

The Catholic and Methodist people have much yet to do in terms of learning from each other and growing into a deeper appreciation of each other's traditions and so into the fulness of Unity. We need not fear the loss of that which God has already given us, but we may certainly hope to grow into the richer and fuller heritage of His future.

David Carter

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## *God's Corner*

The Ecumenical Team carried out a "Christian Unity Drive" in Streatham in October, taking it in three stages. They visited English Martyrs parish presbytery on the evening of Tuesday October 11 and were welcomed by the Parish Priest, Fr David Sheehy and three lay people. Canon Clements expressed his amazement on hearing that a Christian group which started in the area over twenty years ago was still active and thriving, two of its members being present. Although people had come and gone, and instead of coming together monthly in the evening, they now met fortnightly in the afternoon; they followed their original format - studying a selected book and examining and discussing it chapter by chapter.

During this meeting, Father Sheehy informed his visitors that he had been told that this particular area of Streatham had been dubbed "God's Corner". The Catholic church had the local mosque as one neighbour, while across the road was the ancient Anglican church of St Leonard's, and diagonally opposite was the "Manna" Christian book centre and coffee shop. Not far away was a Christian Refuge, and the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, while the Methodists were just down the road past the Church of England school.

On the second visit Sat/ Sun, October 15/16, Canon Clements, Esther Godowski Father John Murphy and Father Luke Verhees spoke at the four Masses, and with the help of local people handed out explanatory leaflets. This was followed by a third evening visit on Thursday, October 20, when Canon Clements, assisted by Father Murphy and Mrs Godowski, chaired a small meeting of enthusiastic ecumenists in the parish hall. There was a general discussion on the Real Presence and the difference of beliefs among the various denominations. There was a suggestion that joint services should follow the regular worshipping pattern of the host church - not be a "set piece" put on specially. One member felt that everybody was not happy just talking, and felt there should be emphasis on doing things together. Several



ideas on this line were aired, including joint distribution of service times. A member of the U C M pointed out that their foundation regularly invite and visit other denominations. A volunteer agreed to act as local contact, and the meeting finished with a prayer.

Margaret Connolly.

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## *Epiphany and revolution*

### AN ECUMENICAL MEDITATION PREPARED FOR THE FARNCOMBE COMMUNITY

The Feast of the Epiphany was originally the only feast that the Church had which commemorated the shining forth of God in Christ and it was concerned almost entirely with the baptism in the Jordan. The early Church understood it as the fulfilment of the Jewish Feast of Lights and in Greece it is still known under that name.

For more than three centuries Christians were content to celebrate the Incarnation in this way - not as the commemoration of an isolated historical event incongruously surrounded with the fabulous tinsel of angels and star, but rather as the resolution of all the fragmented lights in Israel's experience into one single beam of light, the light of God in Christ. When, as a matter of state policy, December 25th became the Feast of the Nativity, all its liturgical imagery was borrowed from the existing feast. In the Orthodox East, Epiphany remained the main feast of the Incarnation, and by comparison the Feast of the Nativity remained a "comparatively private event" (1)

Let us reflect on the significance of this amazing fact. . .

In the Eastern liturgies the special characteristic of Epiphany is the Blessing of the Waters - either representatively in the centre of the church or out of doors at some place where water is flowing naturally. The water is blessed as representative of the beauty of God's first creation and in anticipation of

its future glorification in the Kingdom. "Water", wrote St Cyril of Jerusalem, "tis at the origin of the world; the Jordan is at the origin of the Gospels."

"The voice of the Lord cries over the waters, saying:

Come all of you, receive the Spirit of wisdom,

the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God,

even Christ who is made manifest. . .

Come to the water, you who thirst,

and as many as have no money, let them eat and drink

without price, both wine and fat. . . . (Liturgy, citing Isaiah 55)

In this way the Church affirmed that the Son of God, by taking human flesh and consenting in his human understanding to be immersed in the waters of the Jordan, has once more sanctified matter, purging it of all its deathly qualities (2) for those who in faith and the fear of God accept it as it now is, a freshly cleaned window is opening on to God and no more a dirty opaque mirror on human passions, The world is declared to be filled with the fulness of God (Eph: 3:19), already to those with eyes of faith and integrity, the new heaven and the new earth glimpsed by Isaiah and seen by John the Divine on Patmos. Baptismal water thus becomes for all who are immersed in it emblematic of the whole cosmos, the world as the life of man, cleansed by the Incarnation to be once more a means of communion with God, a sign that matter is not to be despised in the quest for God. (3) There is, of course, one other aspect to Epiphany insofar as it deals with the baptism in the Jordan as understood in the unfolding Tradition of the Church. Not only does it represent the manifestation of God as such, or Jesus as the Son of God, but it represents pictorially the as yet unformulated doctrine of the Trinity. And so St Ambrose was to write in his treatise on the Holy Spirit: "Does it not strike you that there at the Jordan, where Christian baptism was instituted we have the presence of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?"

So important is this aspect of the Epiphany in the consciousness of the Greek Church that the monastery of the Prodromos near the ford of Hadjla on the Jordan, although repeatedly destroyed over the centuries, has always been faithfully rebuilt, for it was reputed to be the site where the baptism took place as well as the spot, significantly, where Joshua led the Israelites across the river into the Promised Land. As such it is a spot revered both by Christians and Muslims. (4)

"When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the  
worship of the Trinity was made manifest.

for the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, calling Thee  
his Beloved Son.

And the Spirit in the form of a dove,  
confirmed the truthfulness of his Word.

O Christ our God, who hast revealed Thy self and hast  
illuminated the world,  
glory to Thee!

This is surely a succinct adaptation of the Benedictus:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people;

And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us, in the house of his servant David;

As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began

And thou child shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

To give knowledge and salvation unto his peoples for the remission of their sin

Through the tender mercy of our God: whereby the day—spring from on high hath visited us;

To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

So this Jesus is truly the "Holy One of Israel in our midst" (Is 12)

Very. early the Church appropriated this image of Isaiah and declared, in harmony with the prophecy of Isaiah 60, that through him salvation was extended to all mankind.

"They shall come from far, from the north, and from the west, and from the land of Sinim."

thus, the covenant with Israel would "burst out of narrow ethnic confines" and those who could see would "walk on an even path" invulnerable to the scorching wind and sun of worldly cynicism.

The light of the Epiphany is manifestly not a magical light stuck up in the sky or surrounding the Christ-child in the manger but one enveloping Christ as a man standing in muddy waters, a light that everyone with adequately functioning optic nerves can see.

It is not - decidedly not - that terrifying archetypal light known to the Israelites and alas now, in these last nuclear days, to us, which melts the eye of all indifferently, The light of Epiphany, which indeed is shown to the whole universe and therefore to every man, actually 'enlightens' deep inside only those who, as the Eastern Liturgy puts it, praise Christ "with understanding". Who are these? Those perhaps meant by the familiar expression "the poor" in Jesus's first sermon that represents an Aramaic original which probably meant something more like "those who with integrity seek - or are open to - the Lord", i.e. those who have no ulterior motive other than to seek the one thing needful, final reality. St Basil the Great said that the divinity shone through Jesus's body as through clear

glass, but only for those whose inner eye was 'pure' ; and lest we understand by this merely 'nice' people, he adds the declaration in his Liturgy that Christ appeared to sinners and tax-gatherers - "for where else would your light shine but to those who sit in darkness?" Honesty is not to be confused with conventional virtue!

This is the basis of the Church's true reality. The Latin Liturgy of Epiphany uses Isaiah 60 to underline this:

"Arise Jerusalem, rise clothed in light. .

For though darkness covers the earth

and dark night the nations,

The Lord shall shine upon you

and over you his glory appear. .

The fact that the light of the Epiphany is seen only by special grace or election imposes upon those who receive it a special duty of service (diakonia) TO THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS. This was learned by the apostles the hard way, chiefly through martyrdom (for after all, those who killed them were obviously unable to see what they saw). But as Maria Boulding notes in her study of the Lord's comings, the Church of every age has had to relearn it (5), and it has often relearned it imperfectly, treating the precious vision as a formula to be memorised by heart or received at the point of the sword or - heaven help us - blandly announced in best British Rail diction as if the Lord's arrival was like the arrival of an Inter-City special!

The duty imposed is to the unprivileged, the helpless, those "enclosed in human weakness, a straying mind", . . . who want for tenderness" and cannot grasp the meaning of their lives" (6), for whom, in short, circumstances more than sinful passions stand between them and the vision.

A favourite theme in primitive Christian art is Moses striking the rock with his rod and causing water to gush out. This violent image is typical. All the Old Testament readings associated with the baptism in the Jordan: in the worship of both East and West add up to an impression of crisis or turning— point or 'moment of truth'. They call for a radical change in the destiny of individual persons and peoples, decisions to be taken which involve life or death. (7) They are not comforting. In fact, they are acutely painful. So, Jesus himself understood them apparently, for he promises to anyone who believes in him a flood of living water gushing out of his belly (John 7:37-38). It is one thing to witness the noble sight of water gushing

out of an inert rock, quite another, and more painful experience to have it gush out of one's own belly!

Epiphany, then, is not a feast for a static, do-nothing Church or a Church which proudly thinks it has all significant questions and answers tied up in neat formulae. "As we pray for a new and changed humanity", writes Professor John Ferguson, the President of the Selly Oak Colleges, "the very Spirit of God is alongside us in our prayers. For this is the Creator Spirit who moved on the face of the waters to bring the universe out of primal chaos, and who moves among us now to inspire a new world. But not lightly. Not predictably. Not in such a way as to be captured within a closed society." (8)

This truth is summed up admirably by two modern Methodist hymn writers, David Head and F Pratt Green:-

You, Lord, in Jordan were immersed,  
One flesh with every child of Cain:  
Earth's angry children fret and thirst  
Until justice falls like rain. . .

Yours the new Church by water born,  
Strong for all families in earth.  
Our deadness, not your death we mourn,  
As you bring fresh hope to birth.

Christ is the world's Light, he and none other;  
Born of our darkness, he becomes our Brother.  
If we have seen him we have seen the Father. Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Peace, he and none other; No man can serve him, and despise his brother. Who else unites us, one in God the Father? Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Life, he and none other,  
sold once for silver, murdered here, our Brother -He who redeems us, reigns with God the Father: Glory to God on high.

Traditional Christianity even Orthodox Christianity (appearances to the contrary notwithstanding) has title deeds which oblige it to be revolutionary in the truest sense of the word, for Epiphany consecrates

material creation as the medium of divine grace and challenges all believers to a Christ-like life of worldly service.

Judith E. Pinnington.

- (1). L Gillet, Orthodox Spirituality b a monk of the Eastern Church; 2nd ed. London, 1978; p 41.
- (2). Thomas Hopko, Worship; New York, 1976; p 127
- (3). Alexander Schmemmann, The World as Sacrament; London 1966; p 88.
- (4). Georges Barrois, Scripture Reading in Orthodox Worship; Crestwood, New York 1977; pp 155, 194.
- (5). Maria Boulding O S B, The Coming of God; London 1982; p 121.
- (6). Litany in the Breton Orthodox Liturgy.
- (7). Barrois, op cit.; pp 158—9.
- (8). John Ferguson, O My People: God's call to society; London 1977; p 83.

For evidence of emerging thought along these lines in the Orthodox world, see: Geervarghese mar Osthathios, Theology of a Classless Society; Guildford and London 1979; Metropolitan Paulos Gregorios of New Delhi, The Human Presence: an Orthodox view of nature; Geneva 1978.

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## *How my Father Came into the Church*

My mother and her sister came over from Belgium as refugees at the onset of the first world war. Their first port of call on arriving in England was Alexandra Palace which was a reception centre.

Lady S. interviewed them in order to find out about their family life and noted that they were skilled seamstresses. Their father ran a small business selling the lingerie his daughters made. Lady S. realized that they would be useful to her and invited them to live with her family, promising they would be treated as part of the family.

They soon got to know their place in the 'big' house, for they were put with the servants. They settled in and every Sunday the parish priest would fetch them in his horse and trap to take them to Mass in the 'tin hut church.

They felt very uneasy when some of the some of the servants poked fun at them because of their faith. They thought it was strange that there were so many other religions in England, when they had only known what it was like to live in a Catholic country. They became progressively unhappy so Father B. promised to find them other accommodation. Shortly afterwards he introduced them to Mr & Mrs M who ran a Tea Room for the soldiers in an embarkation camp at B. They had 6 children, Mrs M. whom they called 'mama', was Irish and Mr M. was a converted Jew. Immediately they felt at home when they settled in to live with this warm and loving family.

Mother and Aunt served in the Tea Room and from all accounts they loved their work. The soldiers were of mixed nationalities, including South Africans, Canadians, etc., and, of course, the good old British Tommies! They were not short of a friend or two! The soldiers were fascinated by their broken English. It was "Dis or Dat?" when they served the 'boys'. Many asked them to write to them in France. I had an idea of their popularity when, as a child, I thumbed through my mother's autograph book and saw many contributions made by various soldiers.

My father was one of those soldiers and he, too, asked my mother to write to him, but, in addition, asked for a little memento. For some reason (which she maintained was not because she had fallen for him at this stage), she gave him her rosary and said "Please don't laugh at this! If you trust in God you will come back safely!" adding "I will pray for you." She knew he wasn't a Catholic though she didn't know that he had been brought up on Fox's Book of Martyrs! He told us later that his grandfather used to read him stories from it when he was a boy.

Time came for my father's troop to embark for France, and as the lorries moved out my mother and aunt and the M. family waved them off. One of the soldiers shouted to my mother "who are you going to marry mam'selle?" to which she replied "The one who comes back first! "

My father's regiment, the Royal Artillery, were due to go up to the front with ammunition. The conditions were appalling, a sea of mud freezing rain, thoroughly miserable. My father had put the rosary round his neck and hoped for the best. He never reached the front, he contracted trench fever, was sent back to a dressing station and subsequently to England to convalesce. He was first back! . . .

After an idyllic stay recuperating in Torbay, he went straight to B. to visit my mother and aunt and he promised them he would find a them a job in London where his family lived. He eventually found them a job, machining shirts, but it turned out to be a sweat shop! A thankless task for very little money and in very cramped and dirty surroundings. He and my mother became engaged. He visited a priest and decided to take instruction in the Catholic faith but without telling her.

Naturally my mother was delighted when he said he was going to be received into the Catholic Church. Not so his parents, his mother reminded him of his religious upbringing, to which he replied "What was I brought up as? Sometimes we would go to the Anglican church and sometimes to the Baptist, depending where there was a good sing song. Now", he added "When we marry we will share the same faith which will be a good foundation on which to base our marriage".

My mother stood as his godmother before becoming his wife!

I will always cherish the memory of the love and faith they shared and the great example they were to their family and friends. Though my father's family more or less snubbed them for some time, eventually my parents' patience and love overcame their resentment and they came to realise what a wonderful marriage it was. I can still hear my mother recounting this story in her broken English, something my father never corrected because of its charm.

My father's faith was a source of inspiration to many. After his retirement from his job he became very involved in the church and his greatest pleasure was being taught how to serve at Mass. The first



time as server wasn't without incident! The priest had put his biretta on the steps leading up to the altar and inadvertently my father's foot caught it and bowled it across the altar! my mother was quite horrified, but ended up having to muffle a laugh.

I am ever indebted to my parents for their encouragement and example which has helped me in my faith through a love of the Mass and the teachings of the Church.

Pauline Sexton.

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### *An ecumenical Pilgrimage*

A school party from La Sainte Union Convent. Highgate Road, London made a Marian pilgrimage to the Seven Churches in Anatolia, Turkey during the Whitsun week holiday of 1988. The purpose of the pilgrimage was to honour Mary, the mother of Jesus, in a special way during the Marian year by visiting and praying in Mary's house, in Ephesus, as well as having look at the ruins of the Seven Christian Churches which St John mentioned in the Apocalypse.

With her guitar, Sr Annemarie the group's musician, joyfully led the hymn singing, Fr Dermot Power, the school chaplain, generously provided relevant themes for the meditations and homilies which were inevitably on the subject of Our Lady, the apostles, the Early Church and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit within the Church. Petitions offered Included prayers for the participants of the pilgrimage as well as for their families and friends and for all people in need. Prayers were offered for the spirit of renewal and reconciliation within the Church and especially for peace among all peoples. Occasionally while we were praying and singing the praises of God in each of the Seven Churches, people from various other groups, likewise visiting the area, joined our group.

The morning of the celebration of the Eucharist, high up among the neglected ruins of the Church in Laodicea, a few neighbouring shepherds, hearing the music and singing, came running to the spot where we were to find out the source of the unusual noise. When, to their surprise, they found Fr Dermot saying Mass on a table-like rack with a group of pilgrims religiously concentrated in semi-circular formation round the improvised altar, they reverently removed their hats, knelt down on the grass and appearing to understand the content of the service, they joined in all the actions. When the moment of offering "the sign of peace" arrived, each shepherd said "frieden" as he shook hands with every member of the group. It was a moving and unforgettable experience.

Our Turkish guide, Suma, a trained archaeologist who spoke perfect English, was a god-send during our pilgrimage. Not only did we benefit from her expertise and her sympathetic attitude to Christians but we also learnt a good deal about the Muslim religion.

St John tells us in the Book of Revelation (1-3) that he addressed these Seven Churches from the Island of Patmos where he was exiled "for having preached God's word and witnessed for Jesus. Only the ruins of these particular churches can be seen today. The order in which we visited these first centres of Christian communities follows:

- (1) Smyrna (Ismir). Not far from the ruins of this church stands a Christian church which is dedicated to St Polycarp, a saint who is reputed to have known St John.
- (2) The Red Basilica of Pergamum was originally built as an Hellenistic temple in the second century B.C., and was later enlarged by the Hadrian who rededicated it to the rival Egyptian god of medicine, Serapis. Afterwards the Byzantines transformed it into a Christian Basilica. It was finally destroyed in the Middle Ages partly by Arabs and partly by earthquakes. Close by are the ruins of several Greek and Roman temples. The Asklepieion, with its symbol of the serpent, is an ancient and famous pagan centre of medicine and healing to which people

crowded in Roman times for health cures. St Paul is believed to have brought Christianity to Pergamum.

- (3) Some parts of the fabric of the Christian Church which flourished in Thyatira still stand. It is possible to distinguish the remains of the old altar.
- (4) The ruins of the Sardis Christian Church are close to the ruins of the old pagan temples in the same area. It is believed that this Christian Church was established during the age of the twelve apostles.
- (5) Only the ruins of the walls and the floor of the Christian Church of Philadelphia remain.
- (6) Numerous stones from the Christian Church of Laodicia are scattered over a considerable area of the hill. The destruction of these Christian Churches in Turkey is attributed to the numerous and drastic earthquakes which hit the region at different times during the past two thousand years.

An old basilica dedicated to St Philip the apostle is located not far from Sardis. Unfortunately this church has suffered the same fate as that of the Seven Churches; it is a massive ruin. St Philip is known to have been murdered and buried in this area. It is said that the local Christians built the Basilica in his memory after his death.

- (7) Ephesus was the highlight of the pilgrimage. It was in this city that St Paul established one of the most important of the early Christian communities. According to tradition, Our Lady moved to Ephesus with St John the apostle soon after Christ's crucifixion because it was too dangerous to continue living in Palestine on account of the unsettled political situation.

It was a unique experience to be able to visit Meryam Ana Evi the 'House of Mary' on the nightingale mountain which is believed to have been the place where Our Lady spent the last years of her life. The house is now a chapel and it has been visited by two recent Popes, Paul VI in 1967 and John Paul II in 1979. Three sisters of the Charity Order live close by in a small convent. A spring which has its source not far from the House of Mary is known to have special healing powers. There are local records of miraculous cures which

happened to some sick people who, with faith, visited the shrine and prayed.

The 'Double Church of the Virgin Mary' is believed to have been the first church which was dedicated to Our Lady. It was in this church that the Ecumenical Council of 431 A D took place when Our Lady was proclaimed the mother of God.

The remains of the church of St John the Apostle which was built over the traditional site of his home and tomb in the sixth century, brings to life his memory and his love for Mary the mother of Jesus. St Luke the Evangelist, who has included so much information about the Virgin Mary in his Gospel, is believed to have been buried in the unexcavated area not far from the Celsus Library. In performing his apostolic mission, he laboured in the vicinity.

The Acts of the Apostles record that St Paul visited Ephesus once during his second missionary journey; during his third missionary journey he remained two years in the city. In chapter 19 of the Acts, it is recorded that St Paul met some of the disciples of St John the Baptist while he was in Ephesus. In the same chapter the opposition to Paul is manifest. The people of that city regarded Paul especially as a threat to the sanctuary of the pagan goddess Diana which at that time was one of the 'Seven Wonders of the World'.

Almost two thousand years have passed since the cult of the goddess Diana of Ephesus was at the height of its popularity. Today, on the other hand, that cult is replaced in the same area by devotion to the Virgin Mary. Such Marian devotion is not only confined to Ephesus, it is a worldwide movement whose aim is to bring people together to pray especially for Christian unity.

Our pilgrimage to Turkey revealed the deep Christian roots of that part of the globe. However, the Muezzin, with his Asaan, calling the people to the mosque five times a day, reveals that the Turkish people are predominantly Muslim. Fundamentally the Turks are a deeply religious and a disciplined people. With the Turks looking to Europe socio-economically and with the Europeans going to Turkey

for leisure, it is evident that a religious encounter of some sort is inevitable. One can only hope and pray that the result will be an enriching experience which will lead all the people in question to a deeper understanding of God and of one another.

The pilgrimage to Turkey revealed the amount of suffering which is inherent in the life of a Christian and in the Christian Church. Mary the mother of Jesus endured much suffering throughout her life and especially at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. The ruins of the Seven Churches provide visible evidence of the love that the first Christians had for one another and for their faith. They were people who built churches because they wanted to meet and pray together to the God whose Son became "the Word Incarnate" and who finally laid down his life for all people. War and earthquakes may have shattered the fabric of each church but the invisible foundations remain intact because they were built on the rock which is Christ. St Paul's words to the Ephesians (2: 19—22) provided a suitable conclusion to our pilgrimage-

. . . so you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's household. You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. As every structure is aligned to him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built into a house where God lives in the Spirit.

Sister Margaret Mary O'Grady  
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## WORD OF LIFE

by Chiara Lubich

"WE, THOUGH MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND INDIVIDUALLY MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER" (Romans 12: 5)

Here St Paul wishes to correct a tendency which is always present like a hidden snare in Christian communities. It is a tendency to self-importance, to spiritual self-satisfaction, to conceit, ambition and the desire to dominate. He uses the image of a body: Christians form one body in Christ. Through his Spirit, Christ has united them to himself and to each other so as to form one body.

This image, which St Paul had already used in other letters, is particularly well suited to emphasising the gifts of grace that each person in the Christian community possesses. Each of us has our own role in the Church, and in view of this role each of us has received a particular gift. When we place our gift at the service of the Church, we are enriched by the gifts of our brothers and sisters.

If we all form one body and our gifts are complementary, the members of the community should have great respect for one another. If each of us has mission to fulfil for the common good, it should be carried out in such a way as to foster unity and the harmonious growth of the whole Christian community. So there should no longer be any room for pride, individualism etc

St Paul is telling us what the Church should be like in order correspond to the call and the most ardent desire of her Teacher: a community in which Jesus is the true Head, the true guide. This will come about if its members are detached from themselves, from their own particular concerns, and live inspired by humility and mutual love. As a result, Jesus will be able to use the community as a whole and each of its members individually in order to further his plans for salvation.

How should we live the Word of Life this month? The first way is to carry out the task entrusted to us with the new spirit St Paul has described here. We should remember that each of us is an instrument

of Jesus. We have each received a special grace, which will be expressed more effectively the more we live in a spirit of service towards our brothers and sisters. This grace cannot be used to the full unless we are humble and detached from ourselves.

Since we have been celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, another way of living this Word of Life could be to ask God for the gift of his Spirit, so that all Christians, belonging to the various Churches, may know how to give the greatest value to their common baptism, even though they are not yet in full communion. We should also pray that Christians may work, through their prayers and actions, to bring to life or to strengthen a flowing stream of charity between brothers and sisters of different Churches, so that the hour of full communion amongst us will draw nearer.