

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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*'That they all may
be one'*



EDITORIAL

Welcome to our first issue for the new Year 2001! As stated in the last issue, it is smaller in size, but not in content. We bring you an interesting variety of material, with much gratitude to all contributors.

Local ecumenism - which is so essential - is expressed in many of the articles in various aspects. Our readers may well be inspired and encouraged to put into practice some of the ideas and pass them on to others. Bellingham, Crayford, Putney, Bostall Park and Welling are featured and their experiences shared. Canon Clements (always a faithful contributor) has given us his thoughts and examples on "All Change" — as well as on the "historic occasion" at Canterbury Cathedral.

You will also enjoy Helen's interesting account: "To be a Pilgrim." We would like to add that the request for the walk to be sponsored for Cancer Research came from the late Fr. Sam Abela (former Parish Priest at St. John Vianney's, Bexleyheath.) Fr. Sam had been receiving treatment for cancer at the Royal Marsden Hospital for two years, but regrettably, no more could be done for him and he returned home to Malta. He was so pleased to know the plans for the walk, and a recording was sent to him of the short broadcast on Radio Kent when Helen and Margaret were interviewed. Sadly, Fr. Sam died just two days before the completion of the walk. The cheque for £2,526 resulting from the sponsorship, was very gratefully acknowledged by the Royal Marsden hospital to be used for cancer research.

We look forward to receiving your contributions (as soon as possible, please) for future issues. Thank you, and may God bless you in this New Year.

The reception of Holy Communion by other Christians in a Catholic Church — see pages 8 and 9 within - is also set out in a small leaflet published by the Catholic Board for Catholic Women. Fr. Bernard Longley has given advice on this, and it would be a useful resource. (Leaflets price 20p, plus postage may be obtained from the NBCW. 34 Park Road. Disley, SK12 2LX.

RETIREMENT OF BISHOP JOHN JUKES

November 7th 2000 was a sad day for those involved in Christian Unity in Kent, since on that day Bishop John Jukes retired as Area Bishop/ Vicar General for the county, a post he has held since January 30th 1980.

Bishop John's commitment to the cause of Ecumenism was emphasised by his work for both the Kent Area Commission and Churches Together in Kent.

Both bodies are extremely grateful to him for allowing their meeting to take place in his house.

We will continue to pray for him in his new post North of the Border.

Keith Hunter

(Secretary, Southwark Christian Unity Commission. Kent Area).



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BELLINGHAM

Bellingham estate is a large sprawling council estate in Catford, London SE6, built after World War 1. It is enclosed by two railway lines and a river, forming a triangle. At the northern end, round Bellingham Green, is the Anglican church of St. Dunstan's; Fr. Paul is the parish priest. Opposite is Christ Church, the United Reformed Church. The former minister, James Ashdown, has moved and the appointment of a permanent minister is under consideration. The R.C. Church of the Annunciation and St. Augustine of Hippo is at the southern end; Fr. Michael Gibbons is our parish priest.

Over a number of years there has been contact with the Anglican church, joining together for the public Stations of the Cross on Good Friday and the Women's Day of Prayer

In August 1998 to promote 'Churches Together', a meeting was held between the three churches. It was agreed to set up a steering group comprising the parish priest/minister and two lay representatives from each church. The priest/minister would take the chair for a year on a rotating basis.

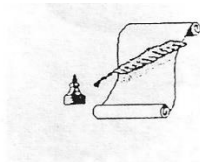
A planning group met on October 20, 1998 to organise a Christingle service at St. Augustine's on a Sunday close to Christmas. The attendance was disappointing although those who participated enjoyed it and requested a repeat service in December 1999. St. Augustine's hosted this, and the attendance had improved. The service in 2000 was at Christ Church (URC).

A service of Prayer for Christian Unity took place on Saturday, January 23rd 1999, followed by a shared lunch. St. Augustine's hosted the January 22nd, 2000 service.

By June 1999 it was agreed to set up a Covenant between the three churches and Fr. Paul contacted Sister Liz Grant, from Waterloo. (Churches Together) and invited her to attend our next meeting on September 21st. She brought examples of Covenants and gave guidance on the form ours could take - simple but achievable. Finally, an agreed draft was prepared and each church took it to their parishioners. We discussed it with the Parish Council in March 2000 and Fr. Michael explained the Covenant at all the Masses on a following Sunday. Copies were made available and comments invited. The draft was agreed; ours had been sent to Bishop Henderson for comment/approval. and with just one amendment, which was accepted by all three churches, was ready for printing. Now we could press ahead with the organisation for the signing. The signing was arranged for Saturday December 2nd 2000 at 11 a.m. at St. Dunstan's in the presence of the Rt. Rev. Charles Henderson. Auxiliary Bishop in Southwark (R.C), the Rt. Rev. Colin Buchanan, Bishop of Woolwich (C of E), the Rev. Raymond Singh (URC). Invitations were sent to Sister Liz Grant, Council members, the local M.P., schools and groups on the estate. After the service there would be a shared lunch. The steering group met to agree the order of service.

A report on the day's events would be submitted to a later meeting.

Sheila Pender and Betty Atchison
(representing the R.C. Church of the Annunciation and St. Augustine of Hippo).



OSCAR ROMERO; MEMORIES IN MOSAIC

PEOPLE SAY... that a Democratic congressman from The United States, Tom Harkin, who was passing through El Salvador, went to Mass one Sunday at the cathedral.

He was moved by the piety of all the poor people and by the Archbishop's homily. But what really made an impression on the gringo's heart was the lousy shape the cathedral was in. It needed paint. Birds were flying around inside the sanctuary, coming in through broken windows and out through the door frames with non-existent doors.

"This church doesn't give good impression," Harkin lamented in broken Spanish. "Doesn't Monsenor Romero take care of his most important church?"

"Monsenor Romero spends his energy taking care of others." They told him that when Monsenor had become archbishop, he'd begin to plan to rebuild the Cathedral. but then soon changed his mind.

"It's not the most important thing". he said, convinced!

For Monsenor. people came first. And that's why he said the Cathedral would remain that way halfway done. as a monument to the people who can't have a roof over their head or land to plant on, people who have neither bread nor peace.



A MEMORY OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO

"Every day what he said was what gave us life. His sermons were the most eagerly anticipated event of the week. I was working in the communities of San Ramon, and on Sundays I would leave my house and walk to the Cathedral. I didn't have to carry a radio with me to hear his homily, because I could hear it the whole way there: there wasn't a single house that didn't have its radio on listening to him. My entire route was a homily! It was a chain of radios with a broadcast as uninterrupted as if it were a single transmission.

Martina Guzman

A FESTIVAL OF LIGHT, PRAYER AND PRAISE

at St. Mary of the Crays, R.C. Church, Crayford, Kent from 6am.
Friday, December 1st to Sunday Dec. 2nd, 2000.

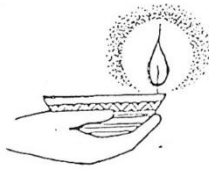


This was a spiritually uplifting and impressive continuous programme, arranged mainly in half hour or one hour periods. during the day and night. There were times of quiet, private prayer, and services for groups, with themes of Songs of Praise (for Playgroup and Toddlers); Faith and Healing (for Senior Citizens & Craft group); Unity of all Christians; the Rosary (for Rosary group), Praise (for Folk Group); Discipleship (for Confirmation group) The Eucharist (for Lay Ministers of Holy Communion); Invitation to the Heavenly Banquet (for 1st Holy Communion group); the Love of God (for Guides); Creation (for Brownies); The Kingdom of God (for Cleaning Team); Hospitality (for Repository & Offertory groups); the Word of God (for Readers); God's World (for Gardeners).

There was a service (with Fr. Peter) on the theme: Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and one with Benediction for School and Parents.)

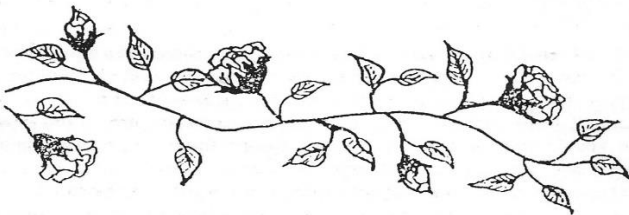
Throughout the night, there was continuous watching and private prayer, and on Sunday, after a time of Exposition of the Blessed

Sacrament, and a Penitential Service, the first Mass of Sunday was celebrated.



At the Unity Service - A TIME OF MEDITATION and PRAYER FOR THE UNITY OF ALL CHRISTIANS - there were hymns, readings, prayers, and addresses by the Leader, of which the following is one example

"The Church is one, but her unity is not yet perfect. That is very evident and to those who long. pray and work for unity it is experienced sometimes in great joys but also in disappointments and frustrations. Why is it that some projects seemed to falter, or obstacles, real or apparent appear that weren't there when we started? Who can say? But perhaps there's a clue in that reading we had from St. John earlier when he said 'Perfect love drives out fear' and that 'love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid'. Could it be that the reason we find things so hard going is that we are afraid; that whilst love drives us forward. fear holds us back? If that is true, (and we can only know it by looking into our own hearts). let us ask the Lord to calm our fear and heal us. for fear can be crippling!



A FLIGHT OF FANCY?

If you happen to be a devotee of 'Startrek-Voyager' you will know that sometimes the characters are to be found playing a strange sort of game. It's a bit like the one where you have a heap of straws or sticks in a pile and each player has to take one stick away in turn without

disturbing any of the others. The player who causes the pile to collapse loses. The Startrek game works in reverse. Each player adds to the pile according to certain rules, until at a particular point, this higgledy piggedy pile of sticks or in this case, metal rods) is transformed into a beautiful crystalline structure. And the player who causes this to happen is the winner. No one can tell in advance what kind of structure will be formed or when, though as far as the story is concerned, the game works according to a very complex set of physical laws that the players are supposed to understand and are able to apply so as to outwit their opponent and arrive at the transformation first.

So what has all this got to do with anything? Well, I am writing this just after the Feast of the Transfiguration, when we remember how Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him to Mount Tabor, and was revealed to them in glory, speaking with Moses and Elijah, and the Father's voice was heard saying. "This is My Son, the Beloved. Listen to Him!" Thinking about that, it occurred to me that our efforts to work towards Christian Unity, not just in Crayford, but everywhere, rather resemble the Startrek pile of sticks. There have been many contributions and much has been achieved, but there have been setbacks and disappointments together with an apparent lack of interest, from the majority of our brothers and sisters in our various churches. There have been many changes, a great deal of talk, a willingness to pray together, but after 40 years or so, our 'pile of sticks' whilst it might seem bigger and somewhat rearranged, is still a pile of sticks! Depressing, isn't it?

But is it, I wonder? Could it be that this is all part of God's plan? Would it be too much of a flight of fancy to imagine that He intends there to be a sudden transformation, a new Transfiguration, at which Church, the Body of Christ. will be revealed again in glory and that the world will hear those words again. "This is my Beloved Son.... Listen to Him"? Could it be that all our work and prayers for Christian Unity are intended to bring about just that, something beyond our imagining. beyond the limits of human achievement, but possible for God, who could make it happen now if He chose, but through His infinite love and mercy and respect for the freedom He has given us, makes Himself dependent upon our co-operation?

If so, we mustn't be despondent, we mustn't give up and we mustn't be afraid But we do need to remember that we all have a part to play. We

don't have to be important or clever or wait to be given some special task to do. some authority to speak or act. All we need to do is to be like Jesus, who came not to do His own will, but the will of the One who sent Him and who told us: "Learn of Me. for I am meek and humble of heart." Let's make that our prayer
"Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine."
A flight of fancy? An impossible dream? "If you don't have a dream. how're you gonna have a dream come true?"
Peace be with you!

David Goodhind

*'That they all may
be one'*



SEMINAR ON LOCAL CHRISTIAN UNITY
(Ways of Working Together)

Churches Together in Putney were invited to send representatives to a Seminar on local Christian Unity which was held at Rivercourt Methodist Church. Hammersmith.

Canon Richard Quinlan and Joyce Scroxtan (Chair of CTP) spoke about our progress since we made our Covenant. Brian Nixon talked about the achievements of Christian Aid in Putney and Margaret Yearsley took part in a panel, chaired by the Bishop of Kensington, Michael Colclough, answering group questions and leading discussion.

It was a very enjoyable and stimulating day, led by Churchlink West London, who were very friendly and welcoming. The invitation had come from Rev. Donald Reece. former vicar of St. Margaret's, Putney, now Kensington Area Ecumenical Advisor.

After opening worship, the keynote address was given by Rev. Geoffrey Roper, of the Free Churches Council, which includes Baptist, Methodist, Wesley Reformed. Moravian, United Reformed Church and New Testament Church. He spoke of church as a social support network where we could co-operate in community projects

and perhaps relieve pressure by sharing buildings. He also prepared questions to start discussions in small groups which followed. There was a presentation from the vicar of Bar Hill, Cambridge, which is a United Congregation of Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists living together on a purpose built estate or village. He had a formidable task but it seemed to work. Then the Chaplain from Feltham Young Offenders prison spoke about her work. It was moving to hear how young lives and attitudes could be changed by their encounter with Christ in her Chapel.

After lunch. Putney gave our presentation and we then split into small groups. Discussion was quite lively, especially over the Alpha course. which some found spiritually uplifting. but others thought too emotional. Each group prepared a question for the panel and these ranged from how best to use resources to how to involve reluctant clergy!

Closing worship was led by Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue. Roman Catholic Bishop, in West London.

Margaret Yearsley.

SEMINAR ON CHRISTIAN UNITY: SPEECH BY CANON RICHARD QUINLAN

'On Tuesday, when my thinking about this moment started to grow in intensity, a member of the Church said to me that CTP - (Churches Together in Putney) is a living proof that we can 'live together without going to civil war. She was right and wrong! - Let me explain this paradox. I begin with the proposal to write the history of our traditions in Putney over the last millennium. In reality it is the history of Christ among us in the last ten centuries.

One of our clergy is a historian, so it was natural to invite him to put our story together in ten laminated A4 posters for display in each local church and the public library. We begin with the mention of Putney in the Domesday Book of 1086, an ordination in St. Mary's in 1302; 12 Alms houses built in 1640; the Putney Debates of Cromwell's Army in St. Mary's in 1647, Charles Wesley's visit in 1732, etc., up to the present time when we are St. Margaret's, St. Mary with All Saints, St. John's (Polish Catholic), St. Simon's, Methodist, Baptist and three or

four more church associations. We have grown over the years, but also, in relationship to each other.

Our conclusion, when the millennium story was completed, is that we are not the Churches Together in Putney, but the Church in Putney. This title is unacceptable to our sponsoring body, the South London Leaders or the Churches Together in England, and for the time, we accept that. It is our experience that differences - be they historical, cultural or theological are not reasons to differ from each other, but moments and occasions to enrich each other. We all have developed in parallel lines some aspect of being church or living the Gospel. Now we make that gift of the Spirit to each other with freedom and even gratitude.

So the lady was right - we can live together without civil war - and she was wrong at the same time, because there is war, which is not between us, but in us, in each person and tradition. The civil war is the need for conversion to acceptance of each other's ways of worship. of perception of the Church, and how we conduct our ecclesiastical affairs. Our memory. experience and cultural tradition make us think we are different and separate from each other. But we believe in the one Baptism and the one Gospel way of life. That is enough for one lifetime. This is not to ignore the barriers to that complete unity where the Holy Spirit will lead the Churches in the fullness of time. Our martyrs on all sides were valid and an inspiration to each tradition, but we have a Brother/ Sister fellowship that nobody can take from us. For now, we feel that we are pushing at an open door that leads us into covenant and beyond it.

I conclude with a quotation from *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. an Apostolic Letter from Pope John Paul II, on preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000,

"The whole of Christian history appears to us as a single river. into which many tributaries pour their waters. The year 2000 invites us to gather with renewed fidelity and ever deeper communion along the banks of this great River the river of Revelation, of Christianity and the Church, a river which flows through human history starting from the event which took place at Nazareth and then at Bethlehem two thousand years ago. This is truly the 'river' which, with 'streams', in the expression of the Psalm, "make glad the city of God".'

FINDING GOD TOGETHER - ECUMENISM AT A PARISH MISSION

During a nine-day Parish Mission (St. Thomas More, Bostall Park), when two priests from the Catholic Missionary Society were welcomed, one evening was devoted to Ecumenism. There was a full Church, with members of other Christian churches attending. The evening began with a hymn, prayer, and a reading from St. John's Gospel (ch.17). This was followed by a question and answer session. The panel consisted of two Mission priests, Fr. John O'Donoghue (Parish Priest), and ministers from two local Anglican and Baptist churches. The Methodists very much regretted their absence due to a prior engagement.

The churches had been asked in advance to submit questions (from clergy and laity) and there was no lack of them! Not surprisingly, the first reference was to *Dominus Jesus*; this was followed by regret that Holy Communion is not offered to other Christians by Catholics..., why not?

Fr. Peter (C.M.S.) said that other Christians do not all share the same beliefs as Catholics. Fr. John mentioned some special occasions when other Christians may, under certain conditions, receive Holy Communion in a Catholic Church, with the permission of the Bishop, and he referred to the papal document *Ut Unum Sint*.(1995) (From later discussion, the fact emerged that some Catholics and some other Christians did not know that such reception was possible)

We give a relevant quotation from *Ut Unum Sint*, (para.46):

"It is a source of joy that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases to administer the Sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments."

The Catholic Church has maintained that to share the Eucharist is a sign of unity achieved, unity in faith, worship and community life, rather than a means of obtaining that unity. However, some exceptions may be permitted. Catholic ministers may administer the Sacraments

in danger of death. In other cases, it was recommended (in the Ecumenical Directory) that the Bishops' Conferences should "establish norms for judging situations of grave and pressing need, and for verifying the conditions under which the sacraments may be administered." The conditions mentioned in the Ecumenical Directory were:

"that the person be unable to have recourse to the sacrament desired to a minister of his or her own Church or ecclesial community.;
ask for the sacrament of his or her own initiative;
manifest Catholic faith in the sacrament and be properly disposed."

In their teaching document, 'One Bread, One Body', the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales sets out their norms on the admission of other Christians from other Christian faith communities.:

"Admission to Holy Communion and to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the sick may be given to baptised Christians of other faith communities if there is a danger of death, or if there is some grave and pressing need. This may at times include those who ask to receive them on a unique occasion for joy or sorrow in the life of a family or an individual. It is for the diocesan bishop to judge the gravity of the need and the exceptional nature of the situation."

What may the unique occasions be? *One Bread, One Body* states(par.109)

"We are thinking of an occasion which of its nature is unrepeatable, a 'one-off' situation at a given moment which will not come again. This may well be associated with the most significant moments of a person's life. for example, at the moments of Christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion.), Marriage, Ordination and death.

There may be various unique occasions when a serious need is experienced, not only for an individual but also for a group. - for example, on a pilgrimage.

It is important to note that when a request is made and permission given, this does not constitute a precedent; each case will be judged individually according to the norms. The parish priest should be consulted as a first step.

It is recommended that 'One Bread, One Body' (published by the Catholic Truth Society) should be studied for further information.

DOMINUS JESUS

The Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

This document has caused surprise and strong reactions from those who have experienced hurt, offence or anger at its tone or content. The hurt is deeply regretted.

It is a document which needs to be read carefully, and its value appreciated. It is mainly concerned with inter-faith relations, and stresses the danger of relativism. Only a small section relates to the Christian Churches, and to Catholic teaching regarding the Church, as set out in Vatican II and other documents. We read, in article 17: "there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter, and by the Bishops in communion with him."

The document continues, with reference to other Churches:

"The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are particular Churches. Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, since they do not accept the Catholic doctrine of the Primacy, which according to the will of God, the Bishop of Rome objectively has, and exercises over the entire Church.

On the other hand, the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense; however, those who are baptized in these communities are, by Baptism incorporated in Christ, and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church."

The phrase translated as "not Churches in a proper sense" or "not proper Churches" has caused offence.

Fr. Longley, writing in *Pilgrim Post*, gives the translation of the Latin "sensu proprio Ecclesiae," i.e. Church in the sense in which it has been defined/ in the sense proper (i.e. belonging) to our definition of Church. The English translation "(noted above)" does not do justice to the original. (The word '*proper*' is a notoriously 'false friend' in translating from Latin-based languages into English.) The document will no doubt continue to be discussed, and we need to consider together with other Christians our understanding of "Church". In his concluding passage. Fr. Longley writes: "Let's hope that *Dominus Jesus* Will be regarded as an opportunity again to return to the ecclesiological principles that underpin our work."

Dominus Jesus is published by the Catholic Truth Society @ £1.95)



TO BE A PILGRIM

Pilgrimage: Journey to sacred places inspired by religious devotion. (Hutchinson Dictionary of Ideas)

"Do you not realise you are a woman and cannot go just anywhere?" (Abba Arsenius-5th cent)

Women in the Middle Ages were thus exhorted to stay at home.

Although the notion of pilgrimage was essentially pious and religious, it could be criticised for encouraging people to leave their responsibilities and indulge in behaviour that would not be tolerated at home. A pilgrimage could become a frivolous holiday. The Pardoner in the *Canterbury Tales* shows how people could use the religious aspect shamelessly for their own ends.

Religious life prescribed stability on both monks and nuns, and they had to seek permission of their superiors if they wished to leave the religious house. In 747, St Boniface wrote to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury advising him to prevent "matrons and veiled women" from making frequent pilgrimages to Rome. It is not clear whether this was

out of concern for women themselves. or whether, because they were probably more vulnerable to physical danger when travelling, women would impose a burden of responsibility for protection from the men with whom they travelled. However, like the Prioress and the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, such women (as described by Boniface) did go on pilgrimages.

The reasons for undertaking a pilgrimage are many and varied. One can hope to gain blessings by following in the footsteps of ancient pilgrims going to a holy place; or there can be personal goals and hopes that one will gain a sense of achievement from completing what can still be an arduous journey. In the year 2000 parallels still existed with the situation of the mediaeval pilgrim.

My story is that a friend, Margaret, and myself had agreed to do a sponsored walk in aid of Cancer Research. Like a pilgrimage of old, a sponsored walk has to appear to be reasonably difficult in order to persuade people to part with their money. We wanted to raise £2,000 in the year 2000 and decided to follow the start of one of the pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostela. The pilgrims in the Middle Ages would have gathered from many parts of Europe at one of these starting points - Le Puy in Southern France being one, and was where we started from - to journey to the tomb of St James in Northern Spain. We walked to Conques - 125 miles away.

The reason for this particular pilgrim route is that after the death of Jesus, the disciples dispersed to different parts of the then known world to spread the Gospel, as they were bidden. We are told that St James went to Spain where, without much success, he spent a couple of years' evangelising. He then returned to Jerusalem but, shortly afterwards. in 44 AD. he was beheaded by Herod.

Immediately following his martyrdom his followers are said to have taken his body to Jaffa, on the coast, where a ship was waiting for them. They landed on the coast of Galicia, approximately 12 miles from what is now Santiago de Compostela. The body was then buried in a tomb on the hillside along with - later on - two of his followers. The tomb was forgotten for the next 750 years.

Early in the 9th century, Pelagius, a hermit living in that part of Spain, had a vision which he reported to Theodimir, Bishop of Iria Flavia, in which he saw a large, bright star surrounded by a ring of smaller ones shining over a deserted spot in the hills. On investigation, a tomb was

found there which contained three bodies. They were identified as St James and his two followers.

Alfonso II, King from 791 to 824 AD, visited the site and declared St James the patron saint of Spain. He built a church and a small monastery over the tomb in the Saint's honour. It was known as Campus de la Stella and the remains of St James are believed to be buried under the present day Cathedral in Santiago. News of the discovery spread and a pilgrimage route was soon established. The French monks at Cluny saw the route as an opportunity to attract money to the area and assist the Spanish church in their long struggle against the Moors.

Our "pilgrimage" was nowhere near as arduous as it would have been in the Middle Ages! We flew to Lyon where a bus took us to Le Puy: we stayed in small hotels and our luggage was transported to the next stop each day. We walked between 10 and 17 miles a day and were part of a group of 20 people. All had a different reason for coming. For some it was simply a walking holiday - one couple had walked part of the route further down towards Spain previously; others were making their own spiritual journey. We met others walking the same route - some going further than our destination. One young man was intending to walk alone to Compostela. He had lost his job and his home and was mentally sorting himself out. There are still some houses, huts, monasteries and other refuges along the way that offer food and shelter for a night free or for a nominal sum for those that need it.

We represented various faiths, but all prayed together when we stopped at some of the many shrines and churches along the way. There are still many ancient stone crosses along the route, and some newer wooden ones as well as shrines to Our Lady and other saints. Ruined chapels can be found on the tops of hillsides at the ends of very rugged, narrow paths. There are also modern ones, - one has now become the roundabout at a crossroads which has been tarmacked as one of the major roads through the area. But they all serve to remind the traveller of the original purpose of the route.

The path itself is very well waymarked. The route is shown by a red stripe above a white one painted on trees, telegraph poles, sides of houses etc. A useful addition was the existence of crosses painted at the beginnings of other paths that we were not to take. thus ensuring that we were always going the right way! This is especially useful in

woodlands. Our days began with breakfast and the repacking of our suitcases. We often had to buy some food to take as a picnic as on some days there were no bars or cafes en-route. On the other days we bought omelettes or baguettes in small cafes. Some were, however, clearly unused to making 20 omelettes at one time and on one day the second half of the party had to wait a considerable time for the patron to collect some more eggs from the farm!

We walked between 10 and 17 miles a day, bearing in mind that the mediaeval pilgrims would have kept going for about 40 miles a day. The days with shorter mileages often had higher ascents, so we usually reached our destination by 4pm. We would then relax with drinks and then find our rooms or explore the villages where we were staying. On one occasion, a couple, Malcolm and Christine, joined us to look round a chateau on a hill in the town of Estaing, which housed a convent. On wishing to leave, we found the huge wooden door locked. There was no one else around so I eventually had to knock on the door of the convent. I asked whether someone could let us out (managing to make myself understood in French), but when the nun realised that there was a man in our party, she explained that she couldn't let us go through the convent itself but had to contact a lady from the town to come from her house to open the door from the outside! I don't know whether St Boniface would have envisaged such a situation when he suggested that women should be kept from travelling!

Rural France is very beautiful. As we walked farther South, the sky became the azure colour beloved of artists, without a cloud in sight and getting hotter all the time. As it was a linear route, the scenery changed each day. To start with, in Le Puy, we were in a land of extinct volcanoes. Peaks of rock rise dramatically all over the town. One has a church built on top of it; another a huge statue of the Madonna and child. I climbed the hill to the statue which is completely awe-inspiring. There are steps inside the statue allowing one to climb right up to the head. Needless to say, the view from the top is breath-taking.

The second day was a 14-mile trek with three ascents and descents over the dramatic gorges of the Allier river in the Haute-Loire. Then came an area of pine forest, some of which had been badly damaged by the storms which had recently swept through the area. The next two days we walked across the Margaride plateau - a vast area (flat in

the main) which reminded us of a smaller version of the Yorkshire moors or the Lake District with its dry stone walls and views of distant hills. We passed through tiny villages in this area - usually in siesta time when sensible people were in the shade! Finally, in the Aubrac region, there are many varieties of cattle grazing in vast pastures. This is a great winter sports area. It seemed difficult to imagine the place covered in snow, but our hotel had many pictures of skiers and had trophies on display which had been won for various events. We descended into the valley of the River Lot to reach the town of Conques and its spectacular Cathedral.

We did not stay at home, and raised £2,526 for charity. The experience had refreshed us spiritually and inspired us for the future: later this year we will be visiting Santiago itself.

Helen Ratcliff

ALL CHANGE

Some years ago, I visited a number of parishes, preaching about Christian Unity. My theme was that working and praying for unity, and wanting unity, was an obligation placed on us all by baptism. And this involved change.

I quoted Cardinal Newman, who once said, "Here below, to live is to change. To be perfect is to have changed often". People in the front row at the early morning Mass would glare at me (or so I felt), and I wondered if they were convinced.

But change we all must, if we are to be really as Jesus prayed at the Last Supper. Prayer for Christian unity does not mean "You-come-in-ism". we have to change too.

There seems to be a feeling around, even among some priests, that working and praying for Christian unity is a waste of time. Enthusiasts can become disheartened. I would just like to say how much I have been encouraged by the trend of events in the last few years.

I was present at a national conference of representatives of many Christian denominations, held at Swanwick in 1978, when Cardinal Hume, after quietly consulting other Catholics present, made a decisive intervention which included the 'We should have in view a moving, in God's time, to full communion'. As a result, the

organisation 'Churches Together in England', involving the commitment of twenty-two Christian denominations. was inaugurated at a solemn service in St George's Cathedral Southwark soon afterwards.

But above all. the present Pope has given a wonderful and encouraging example.

I was in Canterbury Cathedral in 1982. and heard His Holiness say, "Encouraged by the witness of so many who professed their faith in Jesus Christ through the centuries - often at the cost of their own lives, I appeal to you in this holy place to accept the commitment to which Archbishop Runcie and I pledge ourselves anew before you today that of praying and working for reconciliation and ecclesial unity according to the mind and heart of our Saviour Jesus Christ".

Back in Rome in 1985 he prayed for nothing less than the full communion of Christians in one eucharistic fellowship at the service of a truly common witness".

In the same year he reassured the Roman Curia that "the Catholic Church is committed to the ecumenical movement with an irrevocable decision".

And then came a startling example of the Holy Father's own openness to change. In his Encyclical Letter "*Ut Unum Sint*" he wrote "I have a particular responsibility ... in heeding the request made to me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation. He prayed "that we may seek, - together of course - the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognised by all concerned".

And then he asked, "Could Church leaders and their theologians engage with me in a patient and fruitful dialogue ... leaving useless controversies behind listen to one another. keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church "that they may all be one, so that the world may believe".

So the Pope is asking how he must change, saving his Office. We must tell him what we think, but we must also follow his example and ask ourselves how we must change. And our fellow-Christians must ask themselves the same question.

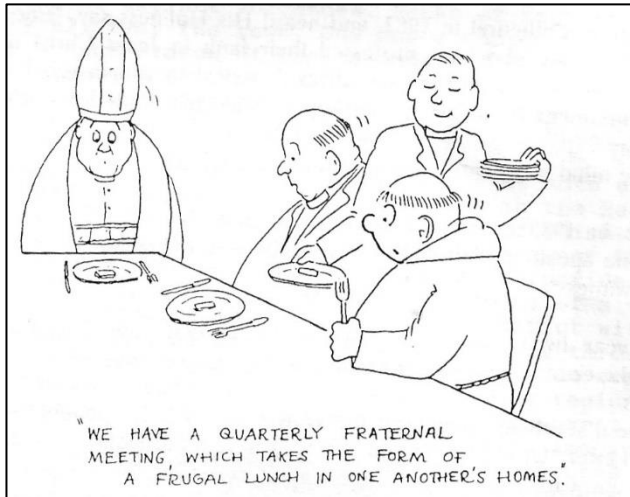
At our Millennium Celebration at Aylesford last July, I asked a panel of church Leaders, Anglican, Methodist, URC and Salvation Army, how they thought the Pope should change the manner of exercise of

his authority. Each answered separately, but all their answers said, "Accept variety within the Church".

More recently. I asked a congregation of the United Reformed Church if they could in any way conceive of the Bishop of Rome exercising an over-arching unifying ministry to all the Churches. The reply I received was, "We must ask that question".

So things are moving on. 'May all be open to God's call to full communion, following the word and example of Pope John Paul II "keeping before us only the will of Christ for His Church'.

Canon William Clements



WELLING CHURCHES MILLENNIUM CELEBRATION

In Christian Unity Week 1987 most of the churches in Welling signed a Statement of Intent to enter into a local covenant at a packed unity service attended by Bishop Henderson. I can remember feeling quite excited by the possibilities that lay ahead for Welling as I wrote my first article for Together in Christ.

Fourteen years on I feel it is appropriate to look back and reflect on what has happened since. Lenten house groups have continued to flourish and I always feel to gain much by listening to fellow Christians from the other churches. In 1999 I ended up in the same

group as Christina Moyle who was the Welling co-ordinator for the Christ Alive Millennium Celebration involving most of the Bexley churches. She needed a representative from each of the Welling churches and asked if I would be the one for St. Stephen's RC. Christina's enthusiasm for the event was so great that I couldn't refuse. The very successful Christ Alive in Danson Park was reported in the last issue. Whilst the core group of Welling representatives had been meeting to discuss this event we also agreed it would be nice to have a special Welling Millennium Celebration.

When there are five Sundays in a month there is a service held on the Sunday to which all churches in Welling are invited. However, very often the church hosting the service just has its usual form of worship with little or no explanation for visitors. Also there is generally very little publicity. For the year 2000 it was thought that we should have a special celebration to attract a bigger congregation.

After much planning, especially by Christina who chaired our little groups of church representatives, the event took place on October 29th the 5th Sunday in October at St. John's C of E church. This was a Songs of Praise type celebration with six Welling residents giving testimonies. One young lady had been working with underprivileged children in Africa and a couple spoke about their work in Eastern Europe with disabled children in very difficult conditions. Clare O'Mara from St. Stephen's, who had never spoken in public before, bravely told us how her life had been transformed after a trip to Medjugorje when she had gone 10 years ago as a young unmarried mother. All spoke about how God was working in their lives. Each speaker was interviewed by Rev. Jean Kerr from Rochester, then chose a song of praise which they felt had inspired them. There was a lovely selection of hymns from traditional to the very modern, so catering for all tastes.

I joined the ecumenical choir and my son played the guitar in the band led by the very talented St. John's conductor and organist. It was a privilege to sing with such an excellent choir.

Although it was an extremely wet and miserable night, it didn't dampen people's enthusiasm and the church was almost full --- a congregation of around 400. The atmosphere was warm and friendly and colourful too as we sat surrounded by the flowers which had been arranged for the St. John's flower festival being held the same

weekend. The mayor of Bexley (a Catholic) and his wife, who both attended, were extremely impressed by the event.

The Millennium Celebration was certainly a great success. At the last meeting of the Welling Churches Together Executive Committee (of which I have recently become secretary as a result of my other ecumenical involvements!) members wanted it to be recorded what a brilliant evening it had been. It has also been suggested that we try and have a similar celebration on a more regular basis, ideally every time there is a fifth Sunday, but in practice I believe this will be too much for the organisers.

Looking back over the years since Welling entered into a local covenant, there are undoubtedly some disappointments that we don't seem to have made much headway, but events like this Millennium Celebration are just the tonic we need to make us feel we are heading in the right direction.

Gwen Chiosso

AN HISTORIC OCCASION

By kind permission of the Dean and Chapter, we were able to invite the Catholic Altar Servers of Kent to a special Millennium Mass celebrated in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral on Saturday, December 9th. Over 100 servers walked in procession from the Hall of the Catholic Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury through the streets to the Cathedral.

The principal Celebrant of the Mass was Father Gregory Moore, the Diocesan Chaplain of the Archconfraternity of St. Stephen for Altar Servers. Nine other priests and two deacons took part. Members of the Central Council of the Archconfraternity were present; also about 40 parents.

Monks from St. Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate, led the singing; Stan Brennan from Birchington was M.C., and Louis Clarke (recently awarded the Gold Medal of the Archconfraternity) was thurifer. The whole event was organised by Paddy Flynn, K.C.H.S. who has been M.C. at St. Ethelbert's. Ramsgate, for the last forty years.

The Crypt is the earliest part of the Cathedral, dating from about 1100 A.D. and it is believed that its western wall includes part of St.

Augustine's original church. built a few years after his arrival in England in 597 A.D.
Truly an historic occasion.

Canon W. Clements, K.H.S.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY AT PRAYER
READING AND MEDITATION: Ephesians 3: 14-21

Loving Father, we gather in your presence as your own family; you call each one of us by name.

We listen to your call to us now . . . May we recognise your voice in our lives, and in stillness know that you are God.

We pray that we may respond to the all-powerful work of Your Spirit within us; we ask for the peace and freedom from fear which Jesus imparts to us, for an increase in faith to believe more firmly in the sublime mysteries you reveal to us, and for the growth and blossoming of your love to be manifest in our lives.

May your divine life and love penetrate us more deeply, so that we, as a family, may in all circumstances of our lives, give you praise and glory and trust you totally.

We dare to trust that your power working in us may "do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine."

Our prayers come to you through Jesus Christ our Lord.



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