

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our first issue of the new Jubilee Year. It contains a very interesting and informative variety of ecumenical material. We offer our gratitude to all contributors, to our distributors and helpers, whose work is greatly appreciated.

Pope John Paul has called this year 2000 a "Jubilee of Jubilees", giving a list of Jubilees for celebration during the Year. The list includes a 'Jubilee of Senior Citizens' on September 17, and a 'Jubilee of those involved in Public Life' on November 5th. Ageing and Public Life are both featured in this issue, so their authors may like to consider special celebrations and also highlight future work, as practical ways of help and support are recommended. Ecumenism is not specifically mentioned in the Pope's list, but we can all try to make the celebrations times of unity, joining with other Christians in prayer and future activity. **We wish you all a very holy and happy Jubilee Year.**

CONGRATULATIONS:

We warmly congratulate the Rev. Harvey Richardson, a Methodist minister who is well-known in the S.E. Area, and who was appointed Chairman of the South-East District on 21 August 1999.

The Methodist Recorder (9 September 1999) featured some of his ideas as he considered the responsibilities in this new and important post. In his work in the District, Harvey set out 3 priorities. He looked forward to "encouraging and fostering vision" which "combines theological, moral and strategic aspects". He realised that "issues that arise out of our post-modern cultural situation need to be met with openness and vigour."

"I am greatly looking forward to continuing in developing and sharing in ecumenical enterprise, which is such a vital aspect of the work of the District". He had been "profoundly shaped by the quest for unity at Queen's College, Birmingham, and in various local ecumenical partnerships."

His third priority "of the highest importance" is the pastoral aspect of his calling, an office which is "very broad - and far-reaching."

Harvey was well-known in the S.E.Area in the Shooters circuit, he was one of the three speakers at a very well-attended unity ministry Day and in his involvement in establishing a Local Covenant in Welling: at St.Thomas More's Church hall, Bexleyheath, and was involved in many other activities. May God bless and guide him In his ministry.

(We thank Mrs-Maud Humphries for passing on much of this information.)

HOMILY FOR CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND : MASS

First reading : Exodus 12: 37 - 42)

"The Bishop of Rome must fervently make his own, Christ's prayer for that conversion which is indispensable for "Peter to serve his brethren. I earnestly invite the faithful of the Catholic Church and all Christians, to share in this prayer. May all join me in praying for this conversion."

Those words are from Pope John Paul's Letter on Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*. Repentance, conversion, a change of heart and outlook he comes back to over and over again: - his own personal conversion (which he speaks about here), the conversion of his successors as Bishops of Rome, the conversion of structures in the institutional Church, the conversion of Catholics (an urgent need, he says, as far as ecumenism goes), and the conversion of all who believe in Jesus Christ. Conversion, repentance, are at the very centre of ecumenism. But how deep must that conversion go? What must I leave behind "in Egypt". and let go of? Jesus Christ has come to me through a particular tradition: in my case, the Roman Catholic tradition, in its English cultural form and story. If I am called to conversion, to that change of heart and outlook that underlies ecumenism, what am I being called to leave behind "in Egypt"? What things are Indispensable - or more positively, what are the precious gifts we have to bring with us; and what things have become a form of bondage: a beloved bondage, maybe, that keeps me "in Egypt". How deep must my conversion be?

There is a shallow kind of ecumenism that simply means "being keen on ecumenism", and not much more. I can "Tut Tut' about my fellow

Catholics who are not interested; I can join committees and so forth: I can even preach about ecumenism. But I can do all this with the comforting thought at the back of my mind that it is not actually going to happen - not in my lifetime - so I'm not actually going to have to let go of anything.

While they were in Egypt, the children of Israel were in bondage. But when they were truly out of the desert they longed to go back. In the Book of Numbers, (Ch.11) it tells us they grumbled to Moses: "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic. Now there's nothing at all but this manna to look at".

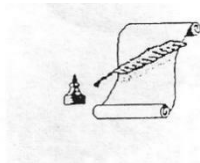
Do we really want to let go of the melons, the onions and the garlic? I think if I were really faced with the prospect of being out there in the desert, with just the "manna" of the Will of God, minus many of the fruit and the vegetables of English Catholicism, my conversion would begin to wobble.

- And there we come to the nub of it - the "manna" of the Will of God. Real conversion is not about having correct views on ecumenism and on Vatican II. It's about something much older and more radical than that. It's about loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might.

This is the conversion that's at the heart of ecumenism. "In His will is our peace. This is the only "exodus" that really matters.

Mgr. William Steele.

July 17 1999 at the Forum of Churches Together in England.



THE EMMAUS COURSE AT ST. MARY BARNES

St. Mary, the parish church at Barnes, SW13, is holding its first Emmaus course, to which members of any of the Churches Together in Barnes, and indeed anyone else was invited. Two Roman Catholics are in fact taking part with evident joy. The Emmaus course is rooted in an understanding of evangelism, nurture and discipleship modelled in the example of Jesus as portrayed in the story of the Emmaus road

in Luke 24. The purpose of the course is to enrich the spiritual lives of the congregation, better equipping them to nurture Christians in future.

The course embraces what Christians believe; how they grow; living the Christian life. Lots of study material is provided , giving group leaders flexibility as to how they lead a session.

The course is for anyone, whether they are taking new steps to discover more about the Christian life, or have been worshipping in church and reading their Bible for years. The richness of the groups is in all our differences.

Meeting week by week over fifteen weeks, and getting to know one another better, expressing aloud feelings and thoughts we haven't expressed before about God - what he means to us; what we do or do not understand about a particular teaching; what we have difficulty with; in this way someone else's experience or belief can sometimes shift our view or clarify something. It's not so much dazzling lights as little shifts, different perspectives which help us grow in our experience of God.

The nature of meeting in one another's houses in small groups is such a vital part in growing towards God, adding to our worship in church, and our own personal journey - as Christians need the fellowship, stimulation and encouragement of one another.

I hope that those of us who have been enriched doing the course will stimulate others to take up an opportunity of doing it, especially newcomers to our churches.

Fiona Barnett.

(We are informed that the Emmaus course, is similar to the R.C.I.A., was preferred to the Alpha course, which was thought to be more evangelical. ED.)

CATHOLICS IN PUBLIC LIFE CONFERENCE

Until now, no publicity has been given to the ecumenical content of this Conference. Indeed, coverage in the Catholic press gave little idea of the realities of the event, with the possible exception of *The Tablet* and, of course, the Bishops' Conference journal *Briefing*. As in

Parliament the show place is the chamber of the House of Commons, while the hard work is done in committees, so in this case half the time was spent in workshops which went unreported.

The objectives of the conference were explained by Bishop Howard Tripp chairman of the organising committee. As he put it *As far as I am concerned, there are two outcomes by which I shall judge it. Do more people take some part in public life? And do those involved in any area of public life feel they are supported by the rest of us ?* No

mention of Catholics and clearly the ethical standards sought by the conference did apply to all Christians - and adherents to other faiths.

The conference was arranged under the aegis of the Bishops' Conference by its Public Life committee and was a follow-up to *The Common Good*, also a preparation for the millennium jubilee year. It was held at the ecumenical, Anglican/Catholic Hope College in Liverpool from 8th to 11th July and was attended by 320

delegates drawn from all dioceses and from major Catholic organisations. It also included observers from the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Baptists, United Reform Church, Christians in Public Life, the Free Church Council, Islam and Zoroastrianism. Most delegates were mature, with experience in parliament, local government, law, health, education, social services, trades union, etc. but there was a sprinkling of youth - the youngest delegate was a young lady of eighteen, one of the Southwark delegates.

Speakers included Archbishop Kelly, as host, who gave the keynote speech in place of the late Cardinal Hume (who was sadly missed, especially in view of the great impact he had on public life); Lord Nolan, John Battle Minister for Industry, Ann Widdecombe, Shadow Home Secretary, Baroness (Shirley) Williams,; and of course, Bishop Tripp. There were 21 workshops covering Catholic social teaching, public opinion, parliamentary and local government, legal



Bishop Tripp

and racial issues, the media and teaching - in the context of public life.



Lord Michael Nolan

A greeting from the Holy Father saw the Conference as standing at the very centre of the Church's mission with a vision of society in which service of the common good must be placed above all else.

Among the speakers, Lord Nolan, the first chairman of the Standing Committee on Standards in Public Life, was particularly interesting: one could see how the Committee's reports on ethical standards correspond to Christian social teaching. The keynote of his speech was participation - the need for us all to play our part in public life. The Committee

found that there was still a widely based tradition of public service in Britain, mostly unpaid - for example 30,000 magistrates, to say nothing of those from every age and from every walk of life who work voluntarily for charitable causes. These people felt entitled to demand very high standards of those who are paid for their public service. Generally, those standards were maintained, so how was the poor reputation of our politicians explained? He thought that even the best politicians were guilty of economy with the truth and denigration of their political opponents, particularly by accusing them of dishonesty, such faults were exaggerated by the media and lapped up by armchair cynics who would soon become bored with virtuous truth. Other countries have been politely astonished at the fuss we make about the lapses of public figures. Obviously, our standards are higher than theirs. This speech was the meatiest of the conference and upheld its slogan: public life is an honourable vocation.

Archbishop Kelly gave an erudite opening address. He gave us a measure for public life: *God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son*. God became totally involved in the human story. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures to reconcile the world to himself so that 'the

gap between worship and social ways and customs may not be'. Catholics caught up in public life will act, not only talk. They will take steps to change what is the result of sin and what is absurd, first of all in themselves. In the words of Cardinal Hume, *If I say things must change, it means I must change.*

Journalist, Melanie McDonagh, thought the whole point of the conference was to enter into every area of life, not to designate an area of life which is specifically and exclusively Catholic. Her function was to speak the truth. The principles of journalism - and every other



Bishop Nichols chairing the panel

walk of life - are not self-contained; they are to be projected onto the wider screen, which is public life, personal life and the wider world. The panel session, involving John Battle and Ann Widdecombe, looked at specific questions: women in prison, business ethics, institutional racism and justice. Shirley Williams' speech was in the nature of a personal statement in the course of which she dealt with the responsibilities of those in parliament. She recognised that, in the moral challenge to politics, Catholics other Christians - and for that matter Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus - need to get deeply involved.

As indicated, half of the conference's working time was devoted to workshops. No reports have been published and it is not possible here to give details of what took place. It can, however, be said that they were mostly lively and constructive and that a number of positive ideas emerged. Among the diversity of

Catholic organisations involved, all formed on an ad hoc basis, there was a recognition of areas of common interest, duplication of work and the need for networking. Significantly, it was appreciated that the areas of interest were not exclusively Catholic and there would be benefit in combining forces with other Christian, and other faith

interests.

During the Conference, an Ecumenical/Inter-Faith meeting took place. Participants from other Churches and faiths met with Bishop Howard Tripp, Dr. John Williamson (from the Committee for Public Life of the Bishops' Conference and Rev. Bernard Longley (Secretary of the Bishops', Conference Committee for Christian Unity) to discuss the conference's aims, content, participation and method. They expressed their appreciation of being able to take part in the conference, which they considered a valuable contribution to the ethos of public life and an example which other Churches might follow; because there is a real need to balance spirituality and politics - spiritual values should be applied to the secular agenda. Some thought their councils and elders meetings might lead the laity to concentrate on the business of running the church rather than being society focussed. At the same time, they wondered if all the conference delegates knew why they were there, apart from being asked by their bishops. This might indicate the need for a strategy for providing regular involvement at this level and to educate Catholics about the Church's social teaching. They were surprised that there had not been greater emphasis on what is distinctive in being a Catholic in public life. (Maybe this reflected a recognition of a spiritual ethic rather than an exclusively Catholic one.) Indeed, it was suggested that the follow-up should be on spirituality in public life. These participants thought it was ecumenically valuable to meet Catholic lay-people reflecting on their vocation and observed that they had a real desire to come together regularly and pray, reflect on and discuss their Church, within Church structures; though they were surprised at the low proportion of black and Asian delegates. Finally, it was interesting to learn that Christians in Public Life, based at Westhill College, Birmingham and co-ordinated by the Revd Dr. David Clark, were in the process of setting up a Christians in Society Forum to 'discover new ways of being Church for a new way of being world.'

This report would not be complete without a tribute to our own Auxiliary Bishop, Howard Tripp.

Apart from the major task of organising the conference, when he spoke, he never lost sight of its purpose which was not always the case with others. His telling quotations included Pope John Paul's words: *All of us, each and every one, are the goal of public life as well as its leading participants.* He also reminded us of the guidance given in

The Common Good. His last words at the end of the conference were Its success will depend on what happens now.He for one continues the endeavour to see that success is achieved.

Finally, it is important to say that the whole conference was conducted under an umbrella of prayer. Had it been otherwise, we certainly would have failed in our purpose.

Denis Quinn

*'That they all may
be one'*



THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR OLDER PEOPLE

During the International Year for Older People, I was able to attend some special conferences about Age Awareness. The Halley Stewart Trust had awarded a grant to Methodist Homes to finance an Age Awareness Project which they intended to introduce, in conjunction with the Christian Council on Ageing and other organisations. In preparation for 1999, Rev. Albert Jewell, the project administrator, worked with members of the appropriate organisations to produce the book, *Spirituality and Ageing* - a module for the training of clergy in the spiritual welfare of older people; *Perspectives on Ageing*; and ten booklets on various aspects of ageing. These were all launched at a conference at the Business Design Centre in Islington on September 23, 1998 to mark the inauguration of the Age Awareness Project. The Rev. Gerard Hughes, S.J. gave the excellent keynote address: 'Recognising the Gift.' There were several other speakers including some of the authors of the booklets.

All of these publications sold well at the Halley Stewart bookstall at the Conference. At the Christian Council on Ageing bookstall I worked with a Salvation Army Major to sell our booklets and tapes, to hand out our brochures and to describe the work of the Christian Council on Ageing. 'Faith in Leeds' ran a bookstall and explained to people the value of preparing a "memory box", before becoming old, to contain items which would be appreciated in old age, especially if

one were entering a residential home or a nursing home. The inauguration was followed in November 1998 with a two-day residential conference in Sheffield with the title - 'Ageing-a Spiritual Journey'. This was attended by 90 delegates drawn from all parts of the country from Devon to Edinburgh. The Anglican Bishop of Sheffield, the R.C.Bishop of Hallam and the Chairman of the Sheffield Methodist District each attended for part of the conference. In addition to interesting talks about meeting the spiritual needs of older people, we had the opportunity to attend four different workshops

1 RETIREMENT

2 SINGLENESS

3 AGEING IN A STRANGE LAND

4 FACING TERMINAL ILLNESS

5 OLDER PEOPLE AND BEREAVEMENT

6 DEMENTIA

7 A LAST HOME

8 CARERS

9 STILL PRAYING

I attended numbers 2, 3, 6 and 9, which were all interesting. The most heavily subscribed workshop was number 9 which was led by the Rev. Graham Keyes, an Anglican priest in Newcastle-on-Tyne, who began research into 'Prayer in the Second Half of Life' in 1984. An ecumenical project "Simeon and Anna" grew from the research in 1993. This project is going into a national network in the North East. The Christian Research Association held a seminar on Age Awareness, chaired by the Rev. Albert Jewell in Northampton in May 1999, and repeated it at All Saints, London Colney in September.

Dr. Peter Brierley, the Director of the Christian Research Association, gave useful statistics showing how the proportion of the population aged over 65 has increased in the years since 1961 and is expected to increase during the next 25 years. He also circulated details of the age structure of English churchgoers which showed clearly that church attendance is much higher in the age groups over 45 than in the age groups 15 to 45. Heather Wraight, the Assistant Director, explained a behaviour profile of older churchgoers based on surveys carried out by the Christian Research Association , including one linked with the Age Awareness project.

At the Northampton seminar, I was given a slot to describe the work Of the Christian Council on Ageing, and at each seminar I was able to sell CCOA booklets and tapes.

During the International Year, I represented the Christian Council on Ageing at two BBC seminars. At each of these, I had opportunities to explain to their representatives ways in which their religious and some of their other programmes could contribute to the spiritual Welfare of older people, especially those living alone or in residential homes.

The Liverpool Branch of the Christian Council on Ageing held a conference in November on "The Advantages of Ageing". This aimed to encourage a positive attitude to growing older by drawing attention to the opportunities for developing latent talents and new interests during retirement years. Another positive aspect was to see the latter part of this life as a time for spiritual growth.

At a local level, two Methodist circuits worked together to organise a seminar on age awareness at Hither Green Methodist Church on a Sunday afternoon in April. Over 60 people attended and, in addition to hearing talks, they joined in group discussions and had sufficient time to see the wide selection of books and pamphlets on different aspects of ageing.

1999 was a very busy year for anybody concerned about the welfare of older people. Many Christians from different traditions worked together to spread information about existing resources, and to stress the importance of spiritual welfare for older people.

Mary Gallagher.

(Mary was Vice-Chairman of CCOA from 1994 to 1997 , and is still a member of the Executive.)

"The just will flourish like a palm tree and grow like a Lebanon cedar, still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still green, to proclaim that the Lord is just." (Psalm 92: 13, 15-16)

Pope John Paul quoted from this Psalm in his *Letter to the Elderly*, (26 Oct.'99) "as if to recapitulate the splendid images of elderly people found throughout the Bible." He finds " great peace in thinking Of the time when the Lord will call me", and "at the hour of my death, call me and bid me come to you." This, he says, "is the deepest yearning of the human heart,even in those who are not conscious of it." He prays: "Grant,O Lord of life, that we may be ever more vividly aware of this and that we may savour every season of our lives as a gift filled with promise for the future... Grant that We may lovingly accept your will and place ourselves each day in your merciful hands.

ECUMENISM IN ROEHAMPTON

"I know less about this parish now than I did 3½ years ago when I first arrived". Tom McHugh,the Parish priest,nodded at me and answered, "It's true for me too, and I came here six years ago." Roehampton is a suburb of Putney in S.W.London.It is a very high mixed area with 3 large council estates each containing a number of high rise blocks of flats.Altogether there are 43 of them. The parish (the Catholic and Anglican parishes are practically coterminous) is undergoing immense change at present. Private landlords have bought up hundreds of family flats which now house students. Elderly couples are offered quick,lucrative options on their properties and are now leaving the parish in droves. The buyers may be businessmen wanting a 'pied a terre' in London for weekday accommodation whilst spending weekends in a substantial home in Sussex or Herts. This is a reverse of a weekend cottage. Or the buyers could be young couples wanting to exploit the housing boom: our flats are very well built; several of them are listed buildings; they enjoy the best views in London;we have excellent access to Richmond Park and Wimbledon Common; one day soon Roehampton will be the next Battersea. Roehampton has always been a changing community : a quiet village backwater becoming a series of post-war LCC developments for slum

clearance and rehousing. Thereafter for a quarter of a century it was probably one of the most successful examples of social engineering in the country. Then in the eighties things began to change again.

The response of the Church was to get stuck in. In some ways for each of the denominations it was a very old-fashioned style of ministry: plenty of visiting, Church School as a focus for teaching and Christian formation, strong links with uniformed organisations; attendances as large as could be coped with, weddings and baptisms galore. Church life as vibrant as it could be in this very large parish. Relations between the churches have always been good. Personal friendships, lay and clerical, down the generations making for clear understanding and mutual respect. The Anglicans and Methodists became particularly close, forming a Local Ecumenical Partnership in the late 1960s, applauded by the Catholics. But there has always been a real openness embracing all churches. In stating all this I am very much aware that what I have described has been the common experience of countless communities, particularly those in metropolitan areas. Roehampton is not unique, nor is it special. But what we do find here and now, is that fundamental questions are posed to us in a very naked way.

Here change in the community is translated into a very significant turnover of population and a change in the nature of that population. One estimate of the average length of residency in the parish is 4 years - single people and couples, with or without children, but ready to move on, forming the core of this fleeting population. Catholics and Protestants intermingle in all our churches and loyalty to one particular denomination is fairly weak. More important is how much an individual will 'enjoy' a service and the nature of the fellowship at one particular church. There are ethnic clusters at each of our churches, but even these allegiances are weakening. At one level this is a very encouraging development for ecumenism. The old shibboleths have faded away and there is a very real ease of fellowship and friendship between individuals of different denominations. Lay folk are often happy to worship as Catholics in the morning and Anglicans in the evening, especially with large suburban charismatic churches such as Holy Trinity, Brompton, and St. Mark's, Battersea Rise, so close by.

But stark questions for us lie beneath the surface. What is the place of an individual denomination and its traditions in this melting pot? What is the place of unity within a denomination if we become focussed upon our own locality and its demands? What is the role of a parish church if it 'captures' members for only a couple of years before they move on, very possibly to another denomination elsewhere or on to none?

In Roehampton our ecumenical partnership embraces a number of these concerns. In our Lent and Advent courses, which we always conduct together, our focus has very much been on the basics of the faith: studying the Bible, prayer and spiritual reading, individual witness to the impact of Christian faith or conversion.

The centrepiece of our ecumenical relationship has been our joint Good Friday worship, incorporating the essential features of each denomination's Paschal liturgy. However, even this majestic and unique event has inevitably evolved to take account of subjective experience and 'high presentation values'.

Other pressures also shape the nature of our ecumenism in this environment. The crisis in vocations and economic pressures have reduced the complement of clergy in all three mainstream denominations. St. Joseph's Presbytery used to house up to four clergy. Now it is one. There used to be three curates at Holy Trinity. Now there is just the vicar. There used to be a full time resident Methodist minister. Now our minister lives in Barnes and can only spend one third of her time in Roehampton. We used to have the staff to liaise with each other in the planning, production and support of sophisticated joint ventures. The constraints of time prevent Tom, Veronica and myself from embarking on anything really novel.

Lay involvement has always been important for us. Our pre-Advent course this year has been produced and organised by a layman - a series of visits to the places of worship of the differing faiths of South West London. And yet, lay involvement has its limits. Our parish is a mixture of consolidated, but ageing working class families and fleeting middle class younger families with heavy commitments. We are proud of the eagerness to help which is shown by the laity of all denominations, but it can only really be in terms of one-off events.

Sustained commitment over more than just a few months is simply not available.

The ecumenically sponsored venture of a possible credit union for Roehampton has stalled on precisely this point. There has been real enthusiasm for this secular venture, but those involved are either senior citizens with limited resources of energy, or younger individuals and couples who have plenty of energy but have too many irons in the fire. As always there are testing times in ecumenical relationships. At present the problems are much less between the denominations here than the context within which we are working. Our friendships across the denominations are very important to us. Our fellowship, lay and clerical is a profound joy for us all. The friendships are firm and our understanding deepens all the time. We revel in the fact that we can meet together as Christians in such a secular setting. This friendship has always been the core of our ecumenism in Roehampton, and it is this that has enabled our joint efforts to flourish.

The premium on time, person-power and energy preclude large scale ecumenical ventures here in Roehampton. We try to be faithful to our own traditions, and we try to be open and inclusive for our fleeting and passing membership. In the end it is love we preach and love we share. Our ecumenical friendship is perhaps its most concrete embodiment.

Jim McKenny

(The Rev. Jim McKenny is the Ecumenical Officer for the Anglican Kingston Episcopal Area, and Vicar in Roehampton.)

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ALL CATHOLICS WORKING FOR UNITY ?

We are all called to work for Christian Unity. The Second Vatican Council said division "openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling-block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the Good News to every creature." Nevertheless we commonly find that our fellow Catholics in the pews vary considerably in their approach to unity.

At one end of the spectrum there is (a) a gung-ho minority who cannot see why our Church does not permit routine sharing of Holy Communion with other Christians, and (b) a carefree minority who simply take Communion in other Churches and invite other Christians to reciprocate; they do not disagree with the Canon Law rules, but are simply unaware of their existence.

At the other end of the spectrum is the minority view that the other Christians have through error gone into schism, and can restore unity by returning to the fold.

These extreme groups are a small minority. There is another, even smaller minority: Catholics who strive for unity whilst studying and applying the rules.

The large minority however, neither break nor keep the rules. They are not really concerned about disunity, nor therefore about the rules. The reasons for this are mixed. There is a sentimental attachment to traditional Catholic beliefs and practice, coupled with a very human reluctance to change. The most troublesome reason however, is a general failure to see the Good News as a 7-days-a-week commitment, and hence a failure to see that unity matters. Maybe there is some wishful thinking that Christian and secular values are quite compatible. The Christian faith is seen as something less than a radical upending of secular values, as less than a total commitment to love. Such an approach is not a spur to ecumenism.

These diverse and not always consciously articulated attitudes 'in the pews' coexist with important tensions which will always be with the Church. One is the tension between central authority v local diversity.

Another is the one about updating. How to reconcile the apostolic mission and teaching entrusted to the Church 2,000 years ago with the need to learn from changes in the world here on earth.

That time dimension is important. If we tried to formulate a job description for the Church, one task would surely be to preserve the timeless aspect of the Good News, whilst continually reinterpreting it in the light of our changing environment. This updating task is obviously essential if the Church is to engage in the world, as She must.

Less obvious is the enormous complexity of drawing the boundary between what is timeless and what is not. God's revelation is progressive in the sense of constantly challenging us to see old truths in a new light. A striking example is Pope Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* which greatly modified the previous belief (shared until earlier in the 20th century by the Reformation Churches and still accepted by some of them) that the scriptures were literally inspired. It permitted Catholics to use bible translations other than the Vulgate, and to undertake scripture scholarship with modern critical methods. That new insight has hugely enriched our understanding.

The unity movement too is a belated realisation in all the Churches that our differences are contrary to Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). The differences are now seen as either imperfections in our service to God and our neighbour or simply misunderstandings. So how can we make inroads into the indifference to ecumenism of that majority of our fellow parishioners? Yes, we must pray that the Holy Spirit will help them to see the need. Yes, we must quietly network, and invite them to come to joint events, prayer groups, Good Friday processions, and community service. Every Catholic who joins us is a precious gain. However, there is an even greater need to deepen our Catholic faith itself. We find again and again that the most ecumenical parishes are the most lively ones.

The Churches are also finding that by coming together, as they have done in recent decades, they learn from one another. The Augsburg Declaration of 31 October 1999 shows a high degree of common understanding between Lutherans and Catholics about justification by faith. That issue had caused wars and persecutions for 4½ centuries! Such mutual learning makes our Church more Catholic, not less. Ecumenism is not a dilution of Catholicism, but an integral part of it.

It is hard to be a good ecumenist without becoming a 168 hours-a-week follower of the Good News, and that means a 168 hours-a week Catholic. Is not that what we must all become?

Alfred Kenyon

COME AND SEE

In previous issues of Together in Christ (No. 33 p. 14, No.36.p. 17) I described visits to each other's churches by the Christians of Birchington, Through them, in a friendly and non-threatening way we have come to understand each other better.

Some time ago, we all visited All Saints, the local Anglican Church. The Rev. Fred Smale, the Vicar, made us very welcome and prepared a display of photographs and documents showing the history of the church and of the local community. The archives of the parish go back to 1538. The chancel was built in the 13th century, and served as the original church. In the 14th century, a nave, with two side aisles. was added. Considering that there were only between four and six hundred souls in the parish at that time, living a hard life at barely subsistence level. this was a great declaration of faith. Until 1970, the church was a daughter church of Monkton.

The vicar said he saw denominationalism in perspective, as largely an accident of birth. We are one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church. We have faith in our own beliefs and practices, together with an openness to the riches of others, all of which can contribute to the cause of Christian unity. We are one, he said, with Aidan, Bede and the other saints of old, and we are sustained by the writings of great bishops and of such writers as John Donne, George Herbert and W. H.Auden.

Anglicanism seeks to hold together the Evangelical influence of the Puritans, together with the high churchmanship of the Oxford Movement. In her liturgy, the Anglican Church uses both the Book of the Common Prayer and the Alternative Service Book. She cherishes her lovely old buildings and her choral tradition. The ancient custom of summoning the faithful by bell-ringing is preserved. Christianity is preserved in our culture, receiving and preserving tradition in a living present. The Church has preserved the parochial system, introduced by St. Theodore of Tarsus.

The Church has preserved the ancient Creeds, and received no new Creeds, Sacraments or Orders; nothing outside the Scriptures. She accepts the first five Ecumenical Councils.

There is a strong missionary tradition within the Church, and the Anglican Communion is worldwide.

The vestments used in the liturgy have been preserved down the centuries, and were originally the ordinary dress of a gentleman.

We adjourned to the Hall adjoining the Church for refreshments.

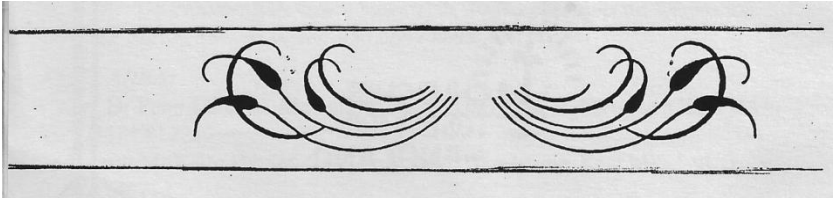
I hope this rather brief summary has been of some help to readers in trying to understand the Anglican tradition; to realise how much we have in common, and in what important things we are still divided.

I was present in St. Peter's in Rome on 25th October 1970, for the Canonisation of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, and heard Pope Paul VI conclude his homily with the following words:-

"May the blood of these Martyrs be able to heal the great wound inflicted upon God's Church by reason of the separation of the Anglican Church from the Catholic Church. Is it not one - these Martyrs say to us - the Church founded by Christ? Is not this their witness? Their devotion to their nation gives us the assurance that on the day when God willing - the unity of the Faith and of Christian life is restored, no offence will be inflicted on the honour and sovereignty of a great country such as England. There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church - this humble "Servant of the Servants of God" - is able to embrace her ever beloved Sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ : a communion of origin and of faith, a communion of priesthood and of rule, a communion of the Saints in the freedom and love of the Spirit of Jesus.

Perhaps we shall have to go on, waiting and watching in prayer, in order to deserve that blessed day.

May we indeed go on, waiting and watching in prayer, but also working in order to come to that unity for which Christ prayed and gave his life.



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