

Together in Christ

60p



MAY THEY ALL BE ONE

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Officers of the Area Commissions:

The Rt Rev C J Henderson

S E Area:

Sister Eileen Hewlett (Chair) Mrs. Margaret Moloney (Sec)

S W Area;

Rev. Kate Moir (Chair) Mr Alfred Kenyon (Sec)

Kent Area:

Sr Kathleen Clapham (Chair) Sr Margaret Mary O'Grady (Sec)

EDITORIAL

Praying for the restoration of full unity among Christians was the topic of the Pope's General Audience on 19 January 1994. He concluded with some beautiful phrases from the prayer recited at Santiago de Compostela (we quote these on p. 6), and added: "This is our prayer and commitment. May the Lord grant all Christians a renewed enthusiasm in seeking that full, visible communion for which Christ gave His life." Commitment and enthusiasm are surely evident in the rich variety of material in this issue. We are most grateful for the excellent sermon preached by Bishop John Jukes, and warmly welcome him to our pages. The interesting work of the Unity Group at Canterbury, the impressive work and prayer of the Damascus project, the fascinating glimpse of the Coptic Church, the enlightening report of CCBI, and moving descriptions of the Crisis walk and work at the Roehampton Institute all provide encouragement, information and incentives to initiate similar projects. Heartfelt thanks to all our contributors.

The New Ecumenical Directory

In our last issue of *Together in Christ* a short outline of the new Directory was published. In response to a request, we refer again to paragraph 129 regarding "Sharing Sacramental life with Christians of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities".

We are reminded that Sacraments are signs of unity. The Sacraments, and the Eucharist especially, as well as being signs are "sources of the unity of the Christian community and of spiritual life, and are means for building them up. Thus Eucharistic communion is inseparably linked to the full ecclesial communion and its visible expression."

This is the first of two important principles which must always be considered together. Sacraments are both signs and sources of the unity of the Church. There is an intrinsic connexion between Eucharistic communion and the Church, which cannot be separated.

The second important principle is then enunciated: the Directory asserts the teaching of the Catholic Church that other Christians are brought into a real, though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church, and quotes from the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism (n 22) : "baptism, which constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn. . .is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ."

The Catholic Church sees this process of Baptism being "wholly directed towards a fullness of life in Christ" as being a pointing towards full Eucharistic communion with the Catholic Church .

The two principles stated indicated the normal practice of the Catholic Church to administer the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (and also Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick) only to those in full communion with her. Exceptionally however, the Church both allows and commends their reception by other Christians.

These principles form the basis of consideration for other Christians who request to be admitted to Holy Communion in the Catholic Church.

SERMON FOR AN ECUMENICAL SERVICE At Christ Church: United Reform Church, Sevenoaks. 24-1-1994.

Readings: Acts of the Apostles: IV, 23—37

I am very honoured by the invitation to preach at this service which is one shared by Christians of many different congregations and communities. My purpose in this homily is to offer all here present some lines of thought which I hope will help us when we encounter those who dismiss us as not worthy to call ourselves Christians. They say they do this since we are divided among ourselves at least in respect of our obvious organisational disunity. They may have taken care to read the words of Jesus, and so be able to say to us "Your Master and Lord says: "May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me...." (Jn. XII 21-23). Why then should we believe in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer?" How then do we answer this accusation? We must start with Jesus Christ Himself.

In the pages of the New Testament there is no doubt that Jesus proclaimed His centrality and uniqueness in the plan of the Father in heaven for the human race. Jesus said of Himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (J X IV, 6) . To Philip's request "Lord, let us see the Father" Jesus replied: "To have seen me is to have seen the Father." (X IV, 8-9). Jesus spoke of Himself in the most absolute terms with respect to the human hope of eternal salvation. He also spoke of Himself as one who came to serve rather than be served. Thus for His contemporaries Jesus offered the most challenging demands ever made on any group of human beings. Some rejected these demands and encompassed His death. Others were able to accept His teaching and friendship and eventually were witnesses to His resurrection.

Jesus spoke of His mission from His Father continuing to the end of time. He Himself will not return except to judge the human race when the Father's will is fulfilled. Out of love for the whole race Jesus intended that His coming as Redeemer should not be an historical memory but should be a continuing saving mission to be presented to all men and women in all ages. To do this He established the community of His friends which we call His church. Jesus gave His church the gift of the Holy Spirit both in the dramatic events of Pentecost and in the continuing assistance of the Spirit to lead His followers to all truth. The followers of Jesus received from Him the basic inspiration, purpose and essential structure of the Church. From this starting point they have had reflect, develop and proclaim the Good News.

In the proclamation of the Good News, it is always necessary to remain faithful to Jesus and His teaching and witness. A necessary element in doing this is found in the operation and witness of the church itself. The Good News in itself starts from the basic, simple premise or statement that God has sent His son into our world to redeem us from sin and prepare us for heaven. The working out in practice of the consequences of this essential truth is complex. This complexity flows from the changing circumstances of the world and mankind itself; the work of exploration of the mystery of the love of God for us; the growing realisation of how great and unlimited is the mighty God whom we are called to adore and serve.

What Christians are about in the work of proclaiming the Good News is the pursuit of truth about the centre and source of all Being. The essential guide for each in this pursuit is the Church, since to the Church is given the guidance of the Holy Spirit together with the transmission and preservation of the Holy Scriptures and the maintenance of the life of praise and worship which is the sacred liturgy. Now all these are matters of the highest importance and significance in carrying out Christ's will to preach to all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

With all this in mind it is a matter of the greatest importance to each individual Christian to be part of that community of the friends of Jesus, to that Church, in which the individual Christian finds and is sustained in the truth which Jesus brings us. For it is the Church which brings us to Jesus and Jesus to us. This is the way Jesus established the continuance of His saving mission through the ages. Thus the seriousness and care with which each individual Christian seeks to come to Jesus through a particular community merits respect. Since we are human it is inevitable that the wonder of the Son of God and God's love for us will lead to hesitation on the part of individuals and even communities as to God's purpose and will. This in fact occurred in Jesus' own lifetime even among His friends. On hearing of the promise of His flesh as bread and His blood as drink, many of His listeners said "this is a hard saying and many of His disciples left Him. It was Peter, on behalf of the twelve who responded to Jesus' question about leaving: "Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life. You are the Holy One of God".

If it were not for the prayer of Jesus that His followers should be one in a unity compared with that of Father and Son, it might be argued that the diversity of Christian communities is acceptable in that it promotes various avenues of exploration of the mystery of God and Jesus His Son. Yet the Truth is one and must be sought. Truth can be expressed in a great variety of ways. Yet the inner reality we seek to declare remains and must not be betrayed. At the same time the

search for truth must never be allowed to offend charity. As Paul reminds us, these three remain: Faith (which is of truth) Hope (which is of present perception and future vision) and Charity. It is this last which is the greatest and closer to the mystery and being of God.

+John Jukes

(R.C. Area Bishop in Kent)

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

At 11.00 a.m. on Sunday, 23rd January, in the Cathedral, some members of St Thomas' Christian Unity Group had the happy experience of assisting at a Sung High Eucharist, as part of their research project, viz. Christians in Canterbury. The occasion happily coincided with Christian Unity Week.

The service, which is not unlike the Roman Catholic Mass, was concelebrated at the high altar, and the participants, seated between the altar and the quire, were able to see the various motions at the altar quite easily, and with the celebrant, offer their prayers to Christ for the unity for which He Himself had prayed. Throughout the service the delightful choir and beautiful music accompanied the various stages of the celebration, and emphasised its significance.

The visiting group were delighted with the spiritual experience, and felt deeply grateful for the warm welcome they received, and for the opportunity to pray with their friends, and to share and appreciate their Christian heritage in an atmosphere of such inspiration and beauty.

Sr Margaret Mary O'Grady, L. S. U.

*'That they all may
be one'*



CHRISTIAN UNITY AT WORK IN ROEHAMPTON INSTITUTE

It is doubtful whether any of us had heard of the Armagh Project . In February 1994 we (the S E Area Commission for Christian Unity) heard about it from Rev Philip Richter, a Methodist, and chaplain of Southlands College. The students arrange each year to get two parties over from Northern Ireland, 14 children from a Protestant school and 14 from a Catholic school. The two groups would never meet at home. They stay here together for a fortnight on 'neutral ground' - the phrase is a chilling one. Schoolchildren meeting on neutral ground. The transformation starts at that point. By the time they have to part and go home. they have become friends and there are tears. The ground has somehow lost its neutrality, and has become something shared and owned by all 28.

That project is now in its 21st year, and it costs a lot of money. The funding and running of the project is done by students of all four colleges in the Roehampton Institute (Digby Stuart, Froebel, Southlands and Whitelands). An example of the fund raising was a Wimbledon Fun Run, which raised a staggering £2,000. What the Commission was interested in was the effect of this on the students, whose faith becomes deeper, and who grow into Justice and Peace with that very practical initiative. It could hardly be more ecumenical.

Father Michael Hayes, a Catholic and chaplain of Digby Stuart, told us of social action. One project is a twice weekly visit to the homeless in the Strand. The students bring hot food, but above all, they spend time with the homeless. Reflection on issues of justice is encouraged as a follow up.

Rev Robert Titley. an Anglican, and, until the end of 1993, chaplain of Whitelands College, stressed the annual Chaplain's weekend. A party of 25 students spend it at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park. Here in 2½ days the clock of the students' maturing and shared faith is speeded up by the shared reflection and experience.

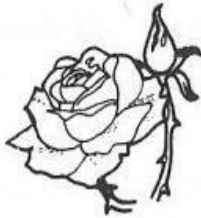
Was the sense of unity taking root? Here the three chaplains felt that it was hazardous to generalise too much. Some students are disoriented by barriers, others are frankly tribal, others again were attracted by a charismatic approach, where they could both own and be owned by, the movement. How they split, was also influenced by how and why they came to be at the Institute. The Institute was formerly four independent women's teacher training colleges. It now has 6,000 students and several faculties: Social Sciences, Education and Science, and Arts and Humanities. Students' attitudes to denominational barriers will owe something to whether they chose Roehampton in order to become Catholic teachers, or were attracted by one of its specialisms, or whether they came through the 'Clearing'.

There were grounds for optimism. The chaplains work together and circulate among all four colleges. The language is that of unity, and with the help of the Holy Spirit it will undoubtedly take root.

We Commission members felt enormously cheered by what we had heard. As some of us at least were not quite as young as we had been a few decades ago, we had perhaps worried a little too much about the young ones. We had invited the chaplains to tell us how to get the young ones involved. We got our answer. As Bishop Charles Henderson put it, they need three things: the personal challenge, as in the Strand, the shared project, like Armagh, which they themselves must launch and run, and the shared pilgrimage, like Cumberland Lodge. Yet we got a lot more than the answer to our question. There is not much wrong with that generation, probably less than with our own. God is in them, and as God wants us to be one, the young ones are marching with us on the same road. We just need to recognise and welcome them, and encourage them to do it in their way.

Alfred Kenyon.

(S W Area Christian Unity Commission)



PHRASES FROM THE PRAYER

RECITED AT SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA Quoted By Pope John Paul 11
On 19 January 1994:

"O holy Trinity of love,

We come to you in thanksgiving for the gift of koinonia, which we receive as the first fruits of your kingdom. . .

We come to you in expectation of being able to enter deeply into the joy of koinonia. . . .

We come to you with trust in order to commit ourselves anew to your plan of love, justice and koinonia

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ERITH (CTE) / DAMASCUS PROJECT

The Damascus Project in Erith and Belvedere was initiated in December 1992. The group of churches of differing traditions making up CTE agreed on the vital need for evangelism in the area. It was felt that a new approach in this Decade of Evangelism / Evangelisation was necessary as there was little success in attracting people into the "Church".

Andy Paine, an evangelist from On-Line Christian Outreach (based in Braintree, Essex), was invited to share his experience of engaging people of all ages in conversation relating to God on the streets, in public houses and clubs, in fact, wherever people were willing to be approached. He told of a trailer unit which *OnLine* use as a stage for outreach work called "The Damascus Project".

We began to see that the whole emphasis of evangelism should be on Christians "going out", and not asking people to "come in" to hear the Good News.

In order to promote this challenge locally, a Core team was elected with each member having a specific role, such as taking care of events, school work, prayer, street work, elderly people, pastoral, finance, publicity and follow-up.

In June 1993, the Damascus Project in Erith engaged in a week of outreach with the help of a team from "On-Line" and also a "Task Force" of helpers from the churches in Erith and Belvedere. The events included schools work, visits to elderly peoples' homes, door to door visitation and a youth open air concert. The main event was on the day of the Erith Water Festival, with a rolling programme of song, drama, testimonies and also the opportunity to mingle with the many people attending this annual event

The on-going work, since this outreach event, has included conferences at a Secondary school with the opportunity for classroom work and building up of relationships. There were also openings to do assemblies in Junior schools and regular visits to elderly peoples' homes. A street survey was undertaken (see details at the end of this article) .

As part of the national "On Fire" Initiative which takes place from 21st May to the 5th June 1994, the Damascus Project has draw up a programme centred on the family. To launch this event there will be a coffee morning and a garden party in the afternoon where people will be invited to further events, such as a couples evening, Children's "light" factory, youth "Safari supper", and an elderly peoples' "tea dance", where there will be the opportunity to hear the Gospel message.

There will be a Christian presence again at the Water Festival on 5th June with the "On-Line" Christian Outreach trailer unit and CTE commitment to assist as before in 1993.

Prayer has played a vital part in this project and continues to be the underlying factor. There are 50 pray-ers who pray regularly either individually or in groups. The prayer coordinator circulates a regular prayer sheet so that every aspect of the work is covered by prayer. A weekly early morning prayer group meets to pray for all the needs of the area, remembering especially our local clergy and leaders who need our prayer and support.

Several prayer events are being organised before and during the "On-Fire" fortnight. Seeds of the Good News of Jesus are being sown. We give thanks to God for the growth of unity between the churches in Erith and Belvedere and for this opportunity to witness together in His Name.

Joan M. Hart.

(Mrs Joan Hart is the Unity Contact for Our Lady of the Angels parish, Erith, on the S.E. Area Christian Unity Commission) .

C.T.E.'s SOCIAL SURVEY:

A social survey undertaken recently in Northumberland Heath, Belvedere and Erith reveals that overall the majority of people are happy where they are. The main findings are shown below.

GOOD POINTS: Northumberland Heath scored well for the equality and range of local facilities available, while residents in Belvedere felt their area had more of a village atmosphere with "Good neighbours" playing a significant role. Overall there was general satisfaction, most people seeing the area as being pleasant and quiet with good schools, plenty of open space and with easy access to town and country.

BAD POINTS: While all residents considered to some extent they were "poor relations" in the Borough of Bexley, only those in Erith felt that it affected their lives adversely. The main sources of concern voiced in all three areas were traffic, pollution, and crime / vandalism in that order, with Erith voicing the major concern over vandalism. Those with children considered the lack of teenage facilities a serious problem and also the lack of safe play areas for younger children.

COMPARISON WITH FORMER HOME: Of those who had moved into the area from elsewhere, more than twice as many thought the area an improvement on what they had left as those who believed it to be not so good.

LOCAL AMENITIES: The response to questions about the use of local amenities mirror the national move away from community enterprises as superstores take over from High Street shops and home entertainment from the more public leisure

and social activities. However, even in this field, local shops are still much appreciated whereas churches, public houses, libraries, swimming pools and parks show a much more marked fall in attendance

COMMUNITY NEEDS: The community's greatest needs were identified as teenage facilities and safe play areas for the younger children. Improved facilities for pedestrians were also seen as a necessary adjunct to road improvements overall. It was also significant that people were looking for more of a community spirit, but felt it was up to others to make the first move.

ROLE OF THE CHURCHES: The question concerning the role of the churches provided conflicting information. Many saw them as already playing a useful part in the community with little need to change. Others felt that much more could be done to involve the young, providing a greater sense of morality and responsibility. Some considered the churches to be too inward looking and needing to come out more into the community and with a clearer message. A significant number also saw the churches as having a role to play as a social conscience, voicing concerns that individuals may feel but cannot express. The survey was organised by Churches Together in Erith (C.T.E.), representatives of the Christians communities in Erith and Belvedere who are seeking ways of working together to promote Christian values. Although the survey has a Christian bias, the churches are anxious to identify with what it is people in the community need. When the results are fully analysed, details will be sent to the relevant organisations for their consideration and with a request that C.T.E are informed of the action they intend to take.

C.T.E. hope to maintain this as a regular exercise to keep informed of trends and social issues in the community.

REVIEW; *Working For Unity*, by Father Emmanuel Sullivan and Denis Rudd Arundel and Brighton (1993) .

With a striking cover design and clarity of presentation, this booklet immediately attracts attention. It is warmly commended (in the Foreword) by Bishop Cormac Murphy O'Connor. In their introduction, the authors, who are members of their diocesan Commission for Christian Unity, tell us that the handbook 'brings out the spiritual, educational and social dimensions of ecumenism', and that it deals with the why, the what and the how of working for unity in the context of parish life. Why ecumenism? Why local ecumenism? Two chapters present answers to these important questions. In the subsequent three chapters we find a clear expression of the "Principles of Local Ecumenism":most helpful guidelines on "Local Ecumenism in Practice" and "Promoting Ecumenism in your Parish." Useful appendices are added. The Catholic Church is committed to prayer and work for Christian Unity; this excellent handbook gives invaluable information,

encouragement, -and practical advice to all engaged in responding to that commitment. Don't miss it!

Una Ratcliff

COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOR BRITAIN AND IRELAND (CCBI)
ASSEMBLY - 1st-4th MARCH

The second biennial Assembly of CCBI was held at Swanwick from 1- 4 March; but for a few of us, dependent on public transport, and travel ling from the deep south of England and from the far north of Scotland, it was necessary to arrive on the evening of the previous day. We were mistaken if we thought we were going to spend a leisurely evening. After dinner we met in the main lounge where CCBI members and staff talked in turn about the work of their own departments and of the interaction between them. We seem to hear on all sides that 'ecumenism is dead' , or that 'nothing is happening in ecumenical affairs' . Nothing could be further from the truth; but it is up to us to spread abroad the news of all that is happening; to filter news items in *Pilgrim Post* into parish magazines, and to make use of *Pilgrim Post* ourselves.

The theme of the Assembly was "Sharers Together in the Promise" and 300 persons attended, representing the 30 member churches and bodies in association. Among the guests welcomed was a Southwark diocesan priest, Fr. Tim Galligan who is at present working in Rome with the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. Another guest was Dr. Konrad Raiser, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, who in a keynote address given later In the week, praised the CCBI, saying that it o model for the churches in other countries to follow.

The Assembly provides an opportunity every two years to suggest to the Church Representatives meeting the next steps that the churches might take together, To do this, the Assembly members divided into three main sections to consider the questions dealing Faith. Life and Witness. Mrs. Elizabeth Templeton in her address to the "Life" section asked if the churches really meant it when they committed themselves at Swanwick in 1987 to move from ecumenism as an extra to ecumenism as an integral part of their life? There were certainly instances where churches were seeking to put their own houses in order first. Mrs. Templeton asked it Churches Together in England (CTE), Action of Churches in Scotland (ACTS) and Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN) are helping to move to where they committed themselves to be, and how do we move on from here? Cardinal Hume suggested that as perceptions change over the years, the commitment made at Swanwick in 1987 should be read out at each Assembly. After discussion the section broke into a number of groups to discuss issues of Community, Instruments, Pain barrier, Participation and Cosmic koinonia. Our report, together with those of the "Faith" and "Witness" sections were presented to

a full meeting on the final morning of the Assembly. Among the very many recommendations made for the Church Representatives Meeting to consider for the years 1994-1996 were a wider debate on and response to, the World Council of Churches' *Confessing one Faith*, an ad hoc Commission/ Exploration of unemployment and the place of work in Britain and Ireland in the late 1990s; and that the painful issues that divide us should be faced and not avoided.

Of course, not all the time was taken up in discussion and compiling these reports. The general secretary, the Rev. John Reardon, presented his report to the Assembly, outlining the achievements of the various departments of the CCBI in the past two years. At the first Assembly our expressed concern was for the plight of the peoples of Africa where prolonged drought and other upheavals had brought about extreme hardship and very great poverty. We were told of the steps taken to address our concerns.

St. Paul's letter to the Colossians was the subject of our Bible study which was led by Dr. Frances Young. St. Paul set up his network of churches at a time when the Second Coming of Our Lord was thought to be imminent, and he looked to these communities to spread the Good News of the Gospel so that the whole world might be saved. It was most important, therefore, that these holy cells did not fail in their calling; and so his letters to them were real letters, to offer encouragement and to address particular problems and failings as they arose. Dr. Young's statement that a household of that period, unlike the small nuclear family of today, would number about 50 people, consisting of a greatly extended family and slaves, gave rise to a great deal of comment. Apparently slavery is far from dead and in some instances it is still an abuse, but in some parts of the world it is a state that honours the owner and the owned. How else can a country with a poor economy, largely dependent upon agriculture, afford to care for the orphan or the disadvantaged? In vain did the chairman try to change the subject it wouldn't go away!

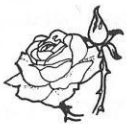
Eagerly awaited was a panel discussion on the Eucharist at which Bishop Vincent Nichols presented the Catholic point of view. For the Society of Friends (the Quakers), Rowena Lawrence said that for them all life. every gift from God was a sacrament, therefore they felt no need at all for a Eucharistic rite. Bishop James Weatherhead spoke for the Church of Scotland, and Very Rev. Dr. Sergei Hackel for the Russian Orthodox Church. This was an excellent presentation. However, I think it was an instance of where the time allocated to the session should have been longer, for although it overran quite considerably, even more time would have been appreciated for questions from the floor.

Worship is at the heart of these major ecumenical gatherings. The first day of the Assembly, being St. David's day, it was appropriate that our shared evening worship was led by the Welsh churches. This was beautiful, as was the worship and singing of the Baptist Church; but it was the sheer exquisite beauty of Vespers sung by the Russian Orthodox Church that led us all to leave the chapel in incredulous wonderment. The psalm tones were so simple, but sounded ethereal. All singing in the Orthodox Churches is unaccompanied, and the congregation stand for all liturgies .

All denominational worship took place at the beginning of each day. Many on these occasions chose not to attend their own liturgies, but to 'taste' another's, so there were many visitors at the two very simply celebrated Masses at which Cardinal Hume was the principal concelebrant at one and Bishop Mario Conti at the other.

The shared worship with which the Assembly closed was a very joyous affair. After three very closely packed days in each other's company, we felt that in every way we were 'strangers no longer'.

Dorothy Morris.



CRISIS AT CHRISTMAS. OCTOBER 9-10, 1993

For the last four years we have taken part in the Crisis at Christmas sponsored walk from Canterbury to London and never ceased to be amazed by the number of people taking part. The number of young people was particularly striking this year. Nowadays we hear so many negative things about the youth and so little of their positive contribution towards making our world a better place. These youngsters filled our hearts with hope and joy and we found ourselves thanking God for the privilege of sharing a week-end with them.

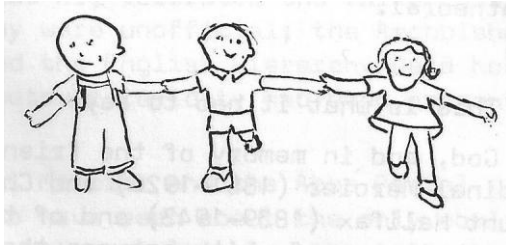
Each year as we assemble in the forecourt of Canterbury cathedral to begin the long trek, we feel like singing aloud that beautiful line of a hymn: "And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?" Yes, we were there, nearly seven hundred of us, in this august place, steeped in Catholic and Anglican tradition; some full of energy and optimism, others, like ourselves, more cautious and wondering if we would make it this time - but all with one purpose in mind: to walk to London to help those less fortunate than ourselves .

Fortified by prayer and a blessing we started out, all with rucksacks on our backs, carrying bare essentials like socks, tissues, plasters, torches etc. These seemed to get heavier as the journey progressed. This led to the question: "What other burdens were we all carrying?" "What were our inner burdens?" Words like shame, guilt, insecurity and broken relationships came to mind. Whatever our individual burdens were, they seemed to be laid aside, as we cheerfully plodded along. The support, care, the meals, the medical teams were a true witness of Christian charity. The word of encouragement from the back-up teams were of tremendous help: words, like "Well done", "Keep going" were sometimes all that was needed to keep putting one foot in front of the other, when the eruption of another blister could provide the perfect reason to give up! What great power is inherent in a few simple words of encouragement. Remember what a bit of encouragement did for Zacchaeus? His response motivated him to uncharacteristic generosity: "I will" he said, "give half of my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times as much!"

As we journeyed along we chatted to each other. Sometimes catching up other groups, sometimes overtaking a group that was beginning to wilt. There was always the smile, the kindly word, the words of sympathy for those who showed signs of pain or weariness. Like the pilgrims of old, to pass the time en route, we told stories, joked, laughed, but unlike them we had the frequent bleep of a horn or the loudspeaker from the Crisis cars saying "Well done, two miles to the next stop" "dinner in ten minutes" etc. How we looked forward to these welcome breaks, where our feet were pampered by super first aid teams, where there was

food in abundance and, above all where there was community, fellowship and joy, all united, whatever the creed or colour, in the one aim to support those less fortunate than ourselves - the homeless. Also, at least by implication, we wanted to thank God for the many blessings we take for granted. "Oh to have a little house, to own the hearth and stool and all". Not much to ask, but when Pdraig Colum wrote about *"The Old Woman Of The Roads"*, he voiced the need of all of us to be loved, to feel secure and to own our own space. We know that Crisis in some way helps to meet these needs and we ask God to bless them.

I suppose for most of us taking part in the walk, the nearest thing to experiencing



the hardships of the homeless was having to sleep in sleeping bags on the floor of St John the Evangelist school in Gravesend. We chickened out of the experience and this year stayed the night with the Sisters of Mercy who live locally. They not only treated us like royalty, but gave us a very generous contribution for the cause. This somehow gave us courage to face the second day, and it does take courage to tackle Shooters Hill!

"Sometimes the road seems long, my energy is spent;
then, Lord, I think of you and I am given strength".

All Crisis events are truly ecumenical, receiving moral and spiritual support from the various churches, but organized by lay people. It is unity in action and unity at grass roots. What a sign of hope for our future! The work of Crisis goes on throughout the year and we ask you to support it as best you can.

Finally, on this the Silver Jubilee of Crisis, we ask God to bless this venture, and to the many workers we echo the words Of Christ:

"What soever you do to the least of my brothers/ sisters, that you do to me."

Patricia and Esther Murray LSU

AN IMPRESSION OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

On 29th August, 1992, with the approval of Bishop John Jukes and the agreement of our Parish Council, Father Axious, a monk of the Coptic Orthodox Church, celebrated the Divine Liturgy of his church for the first time in the church of Our Lady and St Benedict at Birchington. The ceremony took two and a quarter hours, amid a cloud of incense. The liturgy is now a monthly event, normally on the Saturday before the fourth Sunday of each month.

Our two Churches became divided in the year 451, when the council of Chalcedon deposed Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria for heresy. However, although our two Churches are in schism, we Catholics recognise the validity of their episcopal and priestly orders, and the following account, kindly written by Father Axious, shows how close are their beliefs to our own, in spite of a separation going back fifteen centuries.

Their liturgy, celebrated in our church in three languages, Coptic, Arabic and English, though difficult to follow at first witnesses very clearly to orthodox belief in the Real and Abiding Presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist, and in the Communion of Saints. there is also great veneration of "Our Lady, who is addressed as *Theotokos*," Mother of God.

The ceremony begins with the Offering of the Morning Incense, which takes about half an hour and includes prayers, doxologies, the reading of the Gospel and the incensing of all the statues in the church. the priest then vests and celebrates the Divine liturgy. which begins with the Offertory. Then, with prayers and ceremony. are read passages from one of the Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles and one or the Gospels. After the Creed comes the *Anaphora* (Eucharistic prayer), the Our Father, a profession of faith in the Real Presence and Holy Communion, which is received under both kinds. even by tiny children.

The Copts who worship in our church at Birchington are mostly living or working in this area. There is a Coptic bishop in London, and the Coptic Church is also found in African countries, as well as in Australia and the United States of America. the Copts have their own Pope, His Holiness Shenouda Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark, who lives in Cairo.

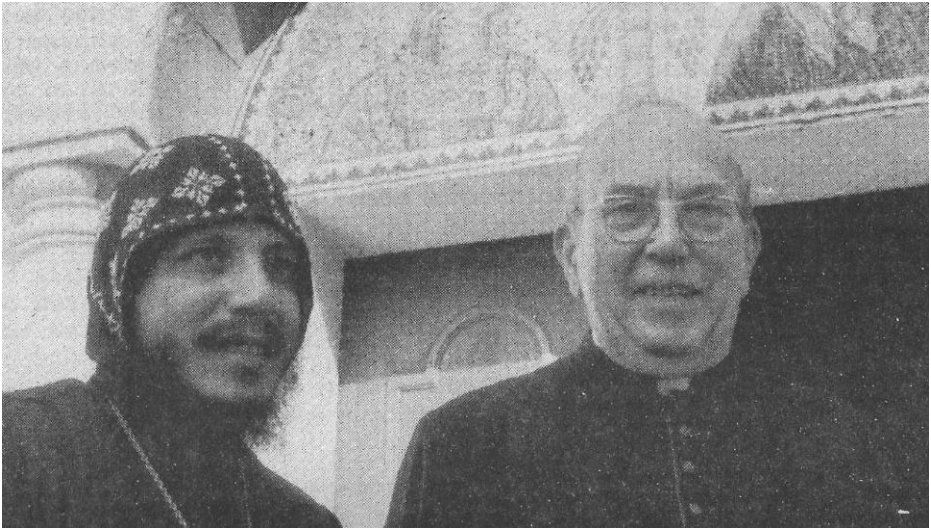
(Canon) Bill Clements.

(The photograph on the next page is of Father Axious with Canon Bill at the door or the church of Our Lady and Benedict, Birchington.)

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

HISTORY The word Copt simply means Egyptian. It is derived from the Greek word *Agyptos*; for the Copts are the native Christians of Egypt; the surviving Indigenous Egyptians. Their own Coptic language, still used in Church services, is a development of the ancient Egyptian language spoken since the days of the Pharaohs, originally written in the picture form called hieroglyphics.

Pantaenus, first head of the celebrated catechetical school of Alexandria, who died in 190 AD, established the present Coptic alphabet using Greek characters and seven extra ones for the sounds that do not exist in Greek.



In the Old Testament, Egypt is not only the oppressor so familiar to us, from which Moses delivered God's chosen people of Israel with mighty arm, for the same Hebrew scriptures contain striking prophecies of a later Christian Egypt. There God says: "Blessed is Egypt My people" (Isaiah 19:25) "In that day", he says, "there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt . . . and the Lord shall be known to Egypt and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day; and will make sacrifice and offering." (Isaiah 19:19-20) They shall offer sacrifice, observe, not in the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem, which passed away in 70 AD, but on that altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, because the Holy Family will find a refuge there from the cruel Herod, as it is written: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." (Matthew 2:15, citing Numbers 24: 8 & Hosea 11:1)

The honour of having founded the Church of Alexandria belongs to St Mark the Evangelist. This is what Eusebius tells us in his *History of the Church (Patrologia Graeca, vol 20, page 173)*, giving the name and the dates of all the Bishops who succeeded St Mark down to St Athanasius the Apostolic, the hero of the Council of Nicea. This is what St Epiphanius tells us; this is what St Jerome tells us; this is what Pope Leo the Great of Rome tells us; this is what Pope Gregory the Great of Rome tells us.

Saint Mark, one of the seventy, was born of Jewish parents at Cyrene, now in Libya. He wrote the second Gospel and was martyred at Alexandria in 68 AD. He left the Egyptian Church firmly rooted.

The Catechetical school of Alexandria soon became a centre of intensive study and a stronghold of the Faith until it won the hard battle against the non-Christian philosophers who had held undisputed sway up to that time. The first systematic attempt to harmonise the sound conclusions of human intellect with the Traditions of faith was made neither in Rome nor in Athens, but in Egypt.

The school there fostered such giants of theological learning as Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Origen (185-254), St Athanasius the Apostolic (299-373) and St Cyril the Great of Alexandria (376-444).

At the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325 AD, St Athanasius, though only a young deacon, led the defence of Christ's divinity against the Arian heretics, to whom the Church might have succumbed but for him. There too the native Egyptian Bishops at once squashed an attempt to enforce celibacy upon the priests of the Church.

At the third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus in 431, St Cyril vindicated the reality of Christ's incarnation against the Nestorian heretics.

Monasticism in all its forms was founded in Egypt. The Anchoritic by St Anthony, the first hermit, whose life as recorded by St Athanasius precipitated the conversion of St Augustine. The Cenobitic by St Pachomius, who through his disciple John Cassian largely shaped Benedict's Rule, and thus all monastic life in the Christian West. There too the Egyptian anchorites have always been deemed the Fathers and Models of all Christian life. (Ref. *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, New York 1913, article Monasticism.

The Coptic Orthodox Church rejoices in being an Apostolic Church, whose children in every age have, with a light heart, contended unto blood for "The faith which was once delivered unto the Saints" (Jude 3), mindful how St Paul

anathematizes the Apostles themselves should they ever preach anything different from what they preached at the beginning: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you that you have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1: 8-9)

Fr. Axious.

(Father Axious' article will be concluded in our next Issue. Ed)

ST THOMAS' CHRISTIAN UNITY GROUP.

On January 8th, Canon Peter Brett addressed the meeting on the subject of "Authority in the Church of England".

After humorously wondering if there were such a thing in the Church of England, he defined the boundaries of authority by describing the two poles: rigid authority and authoritarianism on the one hand, and stating principles to which people could assent or not, on the other. He showed how the Protestant Reformation of the Calvinists, Lutherans and Anabaptists in Europe differed from the English reforms of King Henry VI II, who rejected the Pope's authority, but retained the doctrines of the Christian Church.

He described the vicissitudes of the relationship between Church and Parliament in the Established Church - the eroding of Parliament's voice in the Church, the increasing role of the laity, the power of the General Synod.

The speaker listed the five sources of authority for Anglicans: the authority of Holy Scripture, the Book of Common Prayer with the 39 Articles and the Ordinal, the Canons of the Church of England and the Acts of Convocation. In the Church of England, authority and freedom are held in tension.

The ensuing discussion was wide ranging. There was the question of belief in the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Again all shades of belief were accepted. There was the question of Disestablishment and whether this would help the cause of unity. Would disestablishment take away the authority of the Church? Should bishops make clearer pronouncements?

The Church of England was described as idealistic and over intellectual in that it rejected sacramentalism, but the goals were the same. The rules came from the extended legalism of the Jewish faith. The remaining barrier for the Church of England was the Infallibility of the Pope. Anglicans do not like being told what to do, but the Pope would be accepted as a world persona representing and speaking for Christianity.

Joan Crosland, Canterbury.