

TOGETHER IN CHRIST



Vol. 14, No 43. February 1996.

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60p

Together in Christ is published by the Christian Unity Commission for the Archdiocese of Southwark

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Price 60p per copy, Annual subscription £1.80
For postal subscriptions £2.70

Material for publication and all correspondence to be sent to the Editor: Mrs Una Ratcliff.

(Copy dates: 15 December, 15 April and 15 August for the February, June and October issues respectively)

The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor nor of the Ecumenical Commission.

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EDITORIAL

"Walking, cycling and driving trails (available from TICs) run alongside the medieval seabanks, the rivers and ancient coastline, and through old villages and salt marshes ."

This extract from an article in a Catholic paper jumped out at your Editor, on seeing "TICs" , who immediately thought there was a reference to Together in Christ, for which the acronym TIC is often used.

But no, realisation soon came that the article was about travelling in the Fens, and the "TICs" referred to "Tourist Information Centres!"

However, our bulletin may have some similarities with such centres, as we present in this issue, ecumenical tourists" whether walking at a steady pace, cycling more quickly, or driving at a fast speed to achieve their objective:

*** another successful ecumenical walk by Churches Together in Thanet

*** an ecumenical tour of discovery of Hinton St Mary and surrounding area, from which emanated the famous mosaic

*** the "Way Forward" speaks of the Pope's wish for speedy progress towards unity, whilst also appreciating obstacles and attitudes which may slow down the pace

*** the steady pace and hard work of planning Pentecost '95 celebrations, especially by Churches Together in Croydon, and a valuable assessment of reactions to it

*** great steps forward by Channel Churches Together,

*** much progress in shared understanding in the review of Mary, Mother of the Lord

*** important ecumenical initiatives in Celebrate Mission and Pilgrim's Way, involving long journeys, much walking (which might well take in medieval seabanks, old villages, salt marshes etc!) and celebration of faith and prayer together

*** a question about ordination - which way?

*** a pause on the journey to light a candle and pray

*** remembering that Jesus is. the Way, the Truth and the Life our issue concludes (by request) with a meditation on the True Vine.

Readers expressed great appreciation of the spiritual Contribution from Bishop Henderson in our last issue. We hope to include more in the future.

Grateful thanks to all our contributors; please keep the material flowing in.

A HOLY AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

PENTECOST '95: CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

For some years now Christians from across London have come together in June in one of Central London's major churches including Westminster Cathedral and St Paul's to pray together as Londoners, for London. As the mid-point of the Decade of Evangelisation approached, the church leaders sought a means of marking that point in the churches' pilgrimage together, and encouraged and enabled the establishment of a project team to plan and organise a major celebration at Pentecost 1995.

The project team, led by the Rev Andrew Mawson, Director of Bromley by Bow Church Centre (which incorporates a vital East End community project), and Jacqui Christian as project manager, presented proposals for a Great Banquet to be held at the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall and a major ecumenical service to be held in Westminster Cathedral. The Banquet drew its inspiration from St Luke's Gospel chapter 14 vv 7-24. Churches and councils of churches across London were encouraged to organise parallel celebrations, wherever possible incorporating some kind of Banquet or meal, reflecting the importance Christians and members of other faiths have accorded, and do accord, to community through communion.

Pentecost '95 was to be "A London wide ecumenical celebration of the life of London during Pentecost week 1995, communicating the Gospel through signs, symbols and parables". It was hoped to encourage ". . . interaction between groups who would not normally meet".

A variety of celebrations as part of the whole were organised within the diocese, most especially in the South-West London boroughs. There were wide variations in size and organisation from the quite formal to the very small and informal.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY was the name chosen for the local participation in Pentecost '95 organised on behalf of, and for, Churches Together in the Borough of Croydon (CTBC).

Following a meeting of representatives of churches from across London convened by Rev Andrew Mawson, the project director, a small group of ministers and lay people from Croydon met and decided to organise a celebration to be held in a central Croydon location. The Enabling Group will recall receiving a report from that group and mandating it to proceed on behalf of CTBC. The group identified the purpose as:

— to demonstrate the relevance of churches as they engage with their communities

— to recognise the importance of food as a means of meeting together in many cultures

— to present an acted parable, symbolic of the kingdom of God, in which rich and poor, powerful and powerless, meet together on equal terms, and the church is seen as servant

— to show that, as at Pentecost in Acts 2, the Gospel is for all people, and the church is to be outward-looking.

Initial plans were made to provide a meal for 150 invited guests, drawn from the whole range of the Croydon community, prepared and served by members of the the Croydon churches.

All churches in Croydon were written to in December '94 informing them of the intention to proceed and asking for support, including donations of a minimum of £10 per church, reflecting the desire that the churches should, so far as possible, be both providers of and hosts at the meal. Neither fundraising nor sponsorship would be actively pursued outside the churches.

Careful consideration was given to the guest list. With a view to securing as wide a range of guests as possible it was decided to establish a number of categories of organisations and people to be invited to attend or to nominate named people to be invited. The categories were:

1. Politics
2. Disadvantaged
3. Churches
4. Other Faiths
5. Economy/World of Work
6. Services
7. Others

There was little difficulty in naming individuals from within the Politics and Churches categories, and in identifying organisations within the Economy and Services categories. An extensive list of organisations dealing with 'Disadvantages' was drawn up, but revised and expanded after consultation. In April and May personal invitations were sent to named individuals, and a proforma was sent to all the identified organisations asking for nominees. Included was an invitation to phone for discussion if that were thought likely to help the process. Over 100 proformas were sent out, and most of these were followed by a phone call. While there was a positive response from some organisations, the general level of response was disappointing. In view of the uncertainty about numbers, and to save waste of food (and unnecessary costs) It was decided late in May, to reduce the total to 104, 13 tables of 8. Church leaders and CTBC officers were asked to act as hosts at the tables, it having been previously determined that it was not practicable to ask them to serve at the tables. The meal, nonetheless, was wholly prepared by church members, other church

members assisted by preparing the hall and clearing away, and by acting as welcomers.

As with the parable, so with the event: many did not respond to the invitation, others declined. Consequently the last few days invitations were issued to neighbours and friends who were known to play roles within the community. In the event 90 people, including the hosts, sat down to the meal.

Rev Ian Knowles, as minister of the host United Reformed church, welcomed guests briefly and offered a short prayer. There was no "talk menu" but, from first to last, there was a buzz of animated conversation in which most people present appeared to be engaged. Subsequently the hosts were asked to recall the issues that had been raised, and, later, as many of the guests as could be contacted were also asked for their recollections. Their comments included:

- (i) from hosts: Better co-ordination of voluntary groups and organisations for better sharing; in future it might be better to have topics to discuss; uncertainty as to purpose of the meal; surprise at some of the ethnic composition of Croydon - especially the sizeable Italian community; education and "moral (sic) of children today"; better guidelines in future organisations nominating guests; need for better transport; justice for refugees; unemployment; "encapsulation" - tendency to live lives within isolated circuits; lack of press interest in Good news; problem of really involving disabled people in the round table conversation.
- (ii) from guests: Inadequate funding for housing; help for small businesses; the need for a directory of all (voluntary?) work in Croydon; (one is already published by CTBC); application of Christian beliefs to life in community; legitimisation of asylum; churches' responsibility for social training of young people; unemployment; homelessness; need for religious revival (arising from conversation with a young Muslim guest); keeping Sunday as a holy day; support for carers.

It will be seen that discussion was wide ranging, and, inconclusive, at least people from different backgrounds were able to share ideas in a manner not usually open to them.

Rev Stephen Mares, chairman of CTBC closed the proceedings with a short address and thanks to all who had taken part particularly children from St Andrew's junior school who had painted posters which reflected the theme of celebrating community, and brightened the church hall. These were later displayed to a wider audience at CTBC's Borough Assembly.

A separate group undertook the organisation of the open air service held in Lloyd Park on Sunday afternoon, 4th June. Sadly, the weather was appalling, though the

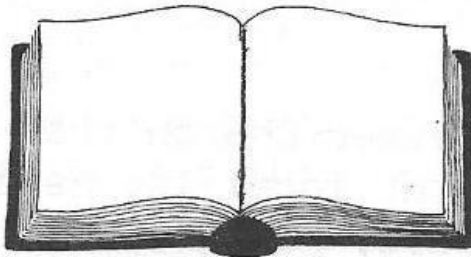
rain held off during the service. Initially it had been proposed to hold the service in Central Croydon, but the location was switched as it appeared there would be many more people in the park than in the town. The rain certainly ensured that the public were not to be found in the park!

Small groups of church members collected at four corners of Lloyd Park carrying banners and balloons and processed to the worship point. The Salvation Army band led the initial singing and further music during the worship was provided by the Emmanuel Inspirational Church of God Music Group. It wasn't only the Bishop of Croydon who was seen to be responsive to their rhythms'. Rev Stephen Mares led the worship which included praise and prayers, dramas by *Failed Amigos*, a reading from Acts 2 by the Mayor, and an address by Bishop Howard Tripp. Balloons were released carrying the Pentecost message in the direction of Kent (Some hopefully, came to ground in Croydon) . As at all good birthday parties a splendid birthday cake had been baked. The sharing and eating of it was a fitting end to the worship and Croydon's Pentecost '95 celebration .

Arthur Hughes

THE OPEN BOOK - an ecumenical project .

At their November 1995 meeting, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales agreed to commend to Catholic parishes, deaneries and organisations the Open Book project. Through this Project, the churches will work together to renew interest in and knowledge of the Bible in a wide range of activities covering both scholarly and popular approaches. It is to take place in 1998 and is organised by the Churches Together in England Group for Evangelisation.



CHURCHES TOGETHER IN THANET

LAST YEAR the Churches of various denominations in Thanet got together and decided to do something practical for the homeless people in Thanet .

Their sponsored walk, from Minnis Bay to st Anne's Church, Cliftonville (a distance of about miles) realised £7,410.24; which was presented to the Christian Housing Trust, a registered charity which provides housing assistance and services for the homeless, and has its headquarters in Margate.

It now owns three hostels in Margate, providing together 19 fully furnished and fully equipped self contained flatlets. Each hostel has a Resident Warden who helps residents towards rehabilitation, and also endeavours to find them work and permanent accommodation. The Trust would like to establish a similar hostel in Ramsgate, if and when funds become available.

THIS YEAR the second sponsored walk for the homeless, organised by the Churches of various denominations in Thanet, took place on Sunday, 1st October, starting at 2.00 p.m. Scouts of the 1st Birchington Troop provided marshals along the route, and the St John Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross were in attendance.

Lord Scarman came to Minnis Bay to start the 191 walkers on their way. He wished them 'Godspeed', and remarked that they had sunshine and a following wind. He then blew a resounding blast on an old-fashioned policeman's whistle, the first time, he said, that as a former Justice in the Criminal Courts, he had ever used one, and off they went for the mile walk to St Anne's church, Cliftonville, where they received a warm welcome and refreshments. The first home was Martin Clinton, of St Ethelbert's, Ramsgate. The youngest walker to complete the course was 7 year old Louise Hynes, of Sts Augustine and Gregory, Margate, and the oldest was 86 year old Mrs Phyllis Laurence of Birchington. The sponsorship money was presented to the Christian Housing Trust at a ceremony at St John's Community Centre, Victoria Road, Margate on Sunday, 5th November at 4pm.
Canon William Clements



REVIEW:

MARY, MOTHER OF THE LORD - *sign of grace, faith and holiness. Towards A Shared Understanding.* British Methodist/Roman Catholic Committee. Methodist Publishing House and Catholic Truth Society Publications .

Some years ago, I went outside intending to spend some time clearing and tidying up the front garden - a task I always enjoyed. Hardly had I begun, however, than a lady (living nearby) stopped and said to me quite unexpectedly: "Catholics worship the Virgin Mary, don't you?"

As a speaker with a General Licence for the Catholic Evidence Guild, (mainly at Woolwich Market Place and Tower Hill) , having taken my first test on "Our Lady", the question put to me was by no means unfamiliar! Well, the pleasures of gardening immediately gave way to quite a considerable length of time, not only in answering the question, but sharing in a very friendly way, our beliefs and attitudes concerning the Virgin Mary.

i was reminded of this incident when, in the introduction to the recent pamphlet *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, I read: "Does not Catholic veneration of Mary come close to the adoration due to God alone?" John Wesley himself accused Catholics of adoration of the Virgin Mary. What Wesley was asserting in the 18th century has been echoed many, many times subsequently and, no doubt, previously, and so the questioner at my house was continuing a wrong impression prevalent for a considerable number of years

In para. 37 of the pamphlet, this point is expressed:

"Catholics have not always been careful enough to ensure that their devotions to Mary exclude any idea of her being between Christ and ourselves, or even taking his place, rather than being a special member of the Church who joins us in prayer. It is her unique and permanent relationship to Christ of being his mother that gives her this special place in the prayer of the Church. Catholic doctrine distinguishes carefully between the adoration (latria) due to God alone and forms of veneration (dulia) given to Mary and the saints. It was at this point that John Wesley was critical of the Roman Catholic Church)".

In its eight sections in relation to Mary, consideration is given under these headings:

Grace and Election,
Daughter of Sion, Sign of the Church,
Mary's free "Yes",

Mary, Mother of God,
Mary, conceived without sin,
Mary, the Virgin Mother,
Mary, assumed into heaven
Mary and Christians today.

Areas of agreement between Methodists and Catholics produce joy, e.g. (para 18)
:

"Methodists and Catholics rejoice together and praise God's glory for his gracious choice of Mary to be the human Mother of God's eternal Son, the bearer of God's Word who became flesh among us."

or (paras. 27 and 30)

Methodists and Catholics confess together that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus (Luke 1 : 34); and that as Wesley states in his *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, 7, "as well after as before she brought [Christ] forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin" .

Areas where the two traditions are not fully in agreement are also set forth, e.g. (para. 24):

"The Methodist Tradition does not accept the Immaculate Conception of Mary as a doctrine of faith grounded in the Scriptures, but Methodists and Catholics can affirm together much that it can say about the doctrine of salvation and of Christ's Church."

A similar comment is made regarding the Assumption of Mary into heaven. (para. 32)

As the title suggests, Mary is presented as a sign of grace, faith and holiness, and in these aspects she is seen as the model in the Christian life for all believers:

"It is above all in her personal pilgrimage of faith that "Mary is a model for us all: . . ." (para. 14)

"Mary shows us the path of faith in her free, loving and unhesitating acceptance of God's will for her . . ." (para 15)

"Mary's whole life was a humble, yet great, "Amen" to God's gracious choice of her." (para 16)

At the end of each section, a few points for group discussion (or indeed for individual reflection) are set out. Here are just two examples:

"What place, if any, has Mary played in your spiritual life and the life of your church?" (page 5)

"Discuss together the idea of Mary as a sign or "icon" of the doctrine 'by grace alone' . . . What does that doctrine itself mean to you?" (page 7)

We hope that this pamphlet will have a wide circulation and be used not only by Catholics and Methodists but by many other Christians so that all may reflect together and travel "towards a shared understanding."

Thoughts of gardening prompt some similarities with ecumenism .

*"One is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth. " (Dorothy Frances Gurney)

That closeness to God is also experienced when Christians worship together in the heart of God's love.

Weeding and much preparatory work has to be done in a garden. as we all know! In our search for unity there needs to be a weeding out of prejudices, rash judgements, untrue ideas of other's traditions (as in my example regarding devotion to Mary) or of devotional excesses which may give rise to wrong impressions. The ground is thus cleared for a shared understanding: seeds of mutual forgiveness, hope and love are sown, and as we have to wait for the flowering of our seeds or plants in the garden, so we have to wait patiently for the fruitfulness of our united Christian endeavours.

Gardens delight us with surprises; flowers may appear which we have never even planted! The Holy Spirit delights us with His surprises too perhaps guiding us to greater success in an ecumenical task than we had ever imagined. Think how we have been changed in the last 30 years!

The work of the Methodist/ Roman Catholic Committee and of many other dialogues reminds us to be ready to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, for, as St Paul says:

"If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ who is the head . . . "



THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

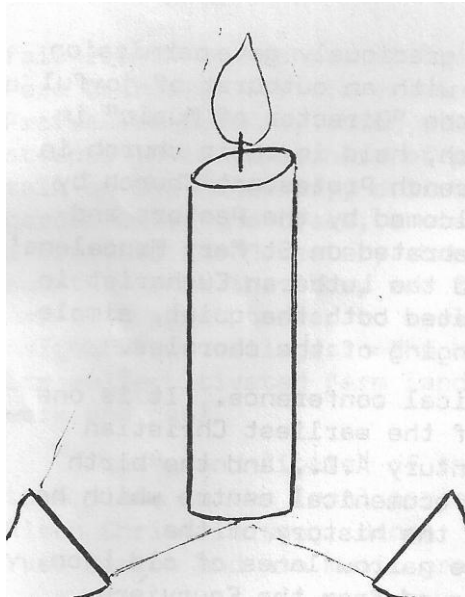
FELLOWSHIP

At 8 a.m. OR 10 p.m. a small group of people separated geographically, light a candle and pray that they may be used to help spread the light of Christ around them, to the glory of God. Some of us also use this time for our morning or night prayer .

We invite you to join us. We seek to encourage each other through a duplicated newsletter.

The only membership fee is the cost of a few stamps to cover postage and duplicating.

We look forward to welcoming YOU !



FINDING THE HINTON ST MARY MOSAIC

(An illustrated talk given to the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary on October 26th, 1995, at 4 Whitehall Bridge

Anyone who has visited the British Museum in the last 30 years has probably seen the Hinton St Mary mosaic. They could hardly miss it in the Romano-British section at the top of the main staircase and occupying more floor space than any other single item.

Discovered by accident on September 12th 1963, it was hailed as the "find of the century". It must have been the floor of a villa and dates from about 330 A.D. Dates on coins show the site to have been inhabited between 270 and a time soon after 400 A.D.

Of the two inter-connecting rooms, the larger one is a square, in the centre of which is the earliest known portrait of Christ so far discovered in Britain. It is also the only known portrait of Christ on a mosaic floor in the whole of the Roman Empire .

No doubt this is because an imperial decree of 427 A.D. forbade representations of the cross on floors where they could be trodden on. Those in existence were ordered to be removed, and this would have applied to portraits of Christ. It is likely however, that the news did not penetrate through to Dorset, or perhaps the villa was abandoned by then. The large gashes mended by stones could suggest a raid during the beginning of the Dark Ages. The persecution of Christians only ended in 313 A.D. so public worship and a mosaic like this could not have existed before then.

The late Professor J. C. Toynbee was an expert in the field of the iconography of the time and established the fact that this mosaic can be accepted as a portrait of Christ. The features are indeed less refined and gentle than we have grown to expect, yet the mosaic artists of that time had little background of representing anyone other than the Emperor. Although Constantine did adopt the PX symbol for use on his helmet, the shields of his soldiers and the Roman standards, it could hardly be a portrait of him as it contains no symbols of imperial authority. Likewise, a Christian saint was always depicted with his or her own name or personal symbol. The surrounding symbols are mythological and allegorical and they fall into place once the central portrait is accepted as representing Christ. Pomegranates, for example are symbols of eternal life. The tree could represent the "tree of life" and the deer chased by dogs, but unhurt, could represent redeemed humanity. The four "wind-blown" portraits at the corners could represent the four winds of the four evangelists taking the Gospels to the world's four corners, or both.

The picture of Bellerophon or Pegasus killing the Chimera would have symbolised the victory of Good over Evil, Life over Death. It could indicate Pagan and Christian worship taking place simultaneously for different groups in the same family. There is one precedent for this apparently in the Roman catacombs. But it is wholly consistent with the cultural heritage of Gentile Christians of that time and a proof to them that they had their particular preparation for the Gospels as did the Hebrews .

Hinton St Mary is on a little hill in the Blackmore Vale and lies about eight miles south of the Saxon hill-top town of Shaftesbury. This was chosen as a stronghold by Alfred the Great during his struggle to defeat the Danish invaders. It was he who first dedicated England to Our Lady and attributed his resounding victory to

God's help through her intercession. No one was more convinced of this than Guthrum, the Danish leader, who, together with many of his followers, accepted Christian baptism. Alfred was his godfather.

To leave his mark of thanksgiving on the face of England for all time, Alfred founded the famous Abbey of St Mary at Shaftesbury, and installed his daughter as the first Abbess. He made the feast of the Assumption into a public holiday and this was the forerunner of our modern August Bank Holiday. The old folk-names of the wild flowers are a witness to that devotion to Our Lady for which England was at one time famous in Europe. A few miles to the north-west of Shaftesbury "Alfred's Tower" is silhouetted against the sky. This marks the spot where he raised his standard to rally the men of four counties in what many would have thought as hopeless struggle.

Hinton St Mary was therefore an outpost or lay brothers settlement belonging to St Mary's Abbey. The refectory and tithe barn are still there in the old Saxon heart of the village, hidden from the main road. Otherwise Hinton could easily be dismissed, as one guide book has done, "as ashabby string of cottages on the road from Sturminster Newton to Marnhull."

The field behind the forge where the mosaic was found had the name "Stony Stile" and probably it was a source of building material for the rest of the village. Luckily it had never been deep ploughed, for the mosaic was only fifteen inches below the surface at one point and could have been destroyed. It has the south-western slope that the Romans so frequently chose so that they could cultivate their vines and the towering elms in the vicinity are a reminder that the Romans first introduced them to Britain to use the wood for staking the vines. The site is singularly free of fog at all times and the field itself had obviously been somewhat built up to form a platform. It is now a scheduled site in the hope that there can be more excavations in the future.

Joan White

Canterbury E.S.B.V.M.



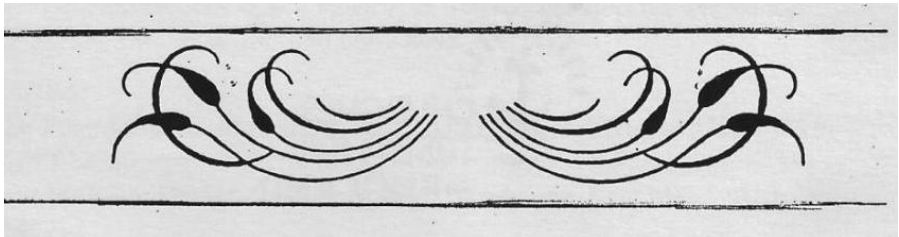
On Saturday, 2nd September, I went to the United Reformed Church (URC) ordination of Carol Lanham in Ramsgate at 1 p.m. and then to the induction of her husband Rev Harry Lanham as URC minister in Deal.

My main memory of the day is of a lay member at the Ramsgate Church coming forward during the ordination and explaining:

- A) how they were looking for a minister,
- B) they invited Carol to come to their Sunday services and
- C) The congregation then met and 93% voted to invite Carol to be their minister.

Have we something to learn from this process?

(Rev) John O'Toole.



THE WAY FORWARD

The Pope is pursuing a major campaign to bring unity nearer by the year 2,000. His Millennium letter (October 1994) and his two encyclicals of May 1985, *Orientale Lumen* and *Ut unum sint* leave no doubt that the Holy Father wants major progress quickly. He speaks of real, if as yet imperfect Communion between all baptised Christians. He calls for repentance for past sins on all sides in causing splits.

Our bishops are setting all of us an example in their ever-closer and prayerful friendship and collaboration with the leaders of other churches. Similarly theologians of the various Christian traditions are not only finding much common ground, but also learning how to widen that ground. The Methodist/Catholic joint report *Mary, Mother of the Lord* is a wonderful example of what is being achieved.

Among the clergy and layfolk a strong minority is taking up the challenge, praying and working together in witness of the Cross and Resurrection with our fellow Christians.

This picture is a Catholic one, but it is largely mirrored in other Churches. In all Churches a majority find it hard to change the habits of centuries of separation. We are all fond of our traditions, and of our different forms of worship and witness. In all of them too there is an element of apathy or indifferentism, of compromise with a secularised society which is less open to God, to the concept of sin and redemption, to the need for brotherly love. Yet it does not seem to make people happier. What seems clear however, is that when full unity comes, it will almost certainly be a unity with a rich variety, in which people can go on practising their common faith in different ways.

It seems that we lay Catholics who work for unity, must avoid two pitfalls. One is to pretend that we layfolk can declare unity to be achieved because some of us want it to be achieved. There are still obstacles, and they need to be cleared by the Pope and the bishops. The other is to sit back and simply wait for the Pope and bishops to tell us that we have arrived. Some of us think for example that shared Holy Communion 'will come in its own good time'. That may be true, but what is not true is that our actions have no influence at all.

The Holy Father and the bishops cannot move at a speed that leaves the majority of the people of God far behind. If half a dozen in a typical parish want unity, that is not enough. We layfolk therefore have a twin set of jobs. Yes, we must get together with our brothers and sisters in the other churches, in joint worship and projects. But we must also be missionaries to our fellow parishioners. We must network so as to involve an ever growing proportion of them in the unity effort. We can start by getting more of them to read Together in Christ, but we must also do more to involve them in unity work and worship. That is the challenge facing all of us, and especially parish unity contacts. It is a vital part of the way forward.

Alfred Kenyon.

CHANNEL CHURCHES TOGETHER

Channel Churches Together has linked up with the Association Oecumenique du Littoral to tackle questions of unemployment, the integration of strangers into

Church communities and other issues arising on both sides of the channel. This international gathering meets quarterly.

In May 1994 the BBC Songs of Praise was transmitted from the Eurotunnel Exhibition Centre. This was an important instance of ecumenical partnership, and it is hoped this link will make it possible to heal hundreds of years of separation between our two countries.

The last meeting was in September and dealt with the theology of the stranger. This was an international gathering at which people were given the chance to talk about their experiences of integration in society through the Church.

Mrs. A Homsey

Member of Channel Churches Together



CELEBRATE MISSION: 18 May to 9 June 1997

From Pentecost 1997 (Yes we are really looking ahead!) for three weeks Christians have a special opportunity to celebrate missionary faith and to renew their commitment to carry on what we have inherited from others.

This time will include the 14th centenary of the arrival of St Augustine as a missionary from Rome; he was to become the first Archbishop of Canterbury. It will end on the fourteenth centenary of the death of St Columba of Iona, a Celtic missionary from Ireland. These two great saints can inspire us in our time to go on pilgrimage and to share our faith - in the power of the Holy Spirit - as they did.

PILGRIM'S WAY is an initiative in the four nations (England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales) to take a group of people (on 18 May) from Rome, whence Augustine

set out for Canterbury. Then three larger groups totalling 500, will travel from Canterbury through the British Isles to Derry in N. Ireland, the city Columba loved, so near his birthplace at Garton, Co. Donegal) .

At a service in Canterbury Cathedral, the group from Rome will be welcomed; and on St Augustine's day (25 May) the 500 who leave for Derry will be commissioned.

You may like to join in "Pilgrim's Way" in some special way. You could also celebrate the saints (e.g. by a special service, retreat, local pilgrimage); renew missionary faith locally (e.g have a mission audit, a festival of faith, an ecumenical mission or celebration of Christ's presence in schools, hospitals, etc.) You might celebrate people of Christian influence locally (your " saints") through a pilgrimage, exhibition, school activities, youth events etc. **DO SOMETHING - PRAY AND PLAN NOW!**

*'That they all may
be one'*



MEDITATION ON "THE TRUE VINE"

"I AM THE TRUE VINE . . ." words falling gently from the lips of Jesus.

"I AM. . ." We ponder on those words, so simple, so profound. Words echoing God's revelation to Moses; words through which Jesus discloses his own nature.

"I AM . . ." majestic, awe-inspiring, all powerful, divine.

"I AM . . ." words spoken by the human voice of Jesus.

"I am the true Vine"; Jesus is TRUTH. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is true Light, radiating that Light to enlighten the world. He is the true Vine: rich, vibrant, life-giving.

'My Father is the Vinedresser"; Jesus draws us to His Father, calls us to the mystery of the divine life of the Trinity, the life of pure love, of perfect communion.

We are the branches, united with Jesus the Vine. His life flows and throbs through us. The stillness of his peace permeates our souls, calms our restless minds as we listen to him. Reverently we absorb the perfect beauty, splendour and glory of his being; the deep, wonderful joy of his presence.

We become immersed in the unifying love of Jesus — " nothing can ever separate us from his love"; nothing in life, nothing in death.

With gratitude we recognise the ever-present divine initiative, creating, guiding, choosing, calling. We respond to the gentle, firm hand of the Father, the Vinedresser, tending and pruning us, powerfully upholding us if we weaken.

the voice of Jesus calls us, 'Remain in my love. " Remain . . . stay here with Jesus; be rooted in his love. No need to be afraid . . . "I call you friends" says Jesus, as he shares with us all he has learnt his Father.

May that "message. In all Its richness find a home with us", as we open our hearts to welcome It.

In imagination, we gaze upon a vine. Tiny branches emerge from it surprising and exciting us with wonder; branches which grow, mature and become ready to bear fruit.

Yes, we are branches united with Jesus, the true Vine. We trust in that union although we do not see the pattern of the future. We know we are to grow in all ways into him - to have his mind dwelling in the Father's love; his heart beating in the intensity of that love, his will obeying the will of the Father.

Through our union with Jesus, we are joined in a loving community with all other branches, called to be servants of the Word, speaking his truth, called to bear fruit in abundance. With the eyes of Jesus we look compassionately on those who suffer, and go to serve them; with the voice of Jesus we can bring comfort, healing and peace. Only by the power of the Spirit of Jesus can we produce fruit in a ministry of love, reconciliation and healing. Without him we can do nothing. "His power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine."

"The Father will give you anything you ask him in my name". said Jesus. Joined in mind, heart and will with him, our prayers and work become fruitful.

Jesus never leaves us. He gives us his life, his Body and Blood, Eucharist and sacramental life.

He may call us to suffer with him.

One day we will die with him.

And finally, he calls us to rise with him in the kingdom of the Father, enfolded in his all-embracing love eternally.

Una M Ratcliff.

