

# TOGETHER IN CHRIST

*Grace*



Vol 15 No 49 *June* May 1998  
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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to our June issue, and many thanks to all contributors for supplying interesting and varied material for it. Our gratitude is also due to Ms J Morris for her good work on the computer.

The "most rewarding" Methodist/Roman Catholic Study Day, of which Alfred Kenyon has given us an illuminating account, has inspired in our Commissions a desire for more such days. As we know from past experience, Study Days can be most fruitful, not only for imparting valuable information from expert speakers, but also for fostering closer relationships between the churches, and very often, for forming new friendships among the participants. We hope it will be possible to put into effect the suggestions made.

Crayford Churches have embarked on an unusual venture and we are grateful to David Goodhind (now a co-opted member of the SE Area Commission) for sharing its progress. We look forward to publishing the outcome in our October issue.

To "share a prayer-hike" as described by Kitty Hart is a very well worthwhile activity. Some other churches have various forms of prayer walks, but we hope many more will be prompted to organise such an event in their areas. Incidentally, a prayer service for prayer walkers, entitled Walking with the Lord was published in the Committee for Christian Unity's collection of services: AT YOUR SERVICE, copies of which are still available.

Some aspects of the Ecumenical Assembly at Graz have been vividly presented in our extracts of the account by Phyllis Wallbrook, and of Chiara Lubich's address - which received a standing ovation.

Contributions of a spiritual nature are most welcome, so we are delighted to publish an insight into Contemplative Life from Minster Abbey; also the poem by Rev Peter Allen (Anglican observer on the S E Area Commission) anticipating the feast of Saints Peter and Paul in June; and finally, the prayer of Pope John Paul II for 1998.

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We offer our warm congratulations to BISHOP CHARLES HENDERSON on the recent celebration of his silver Jubilee of Episcopal Ordination and Golden Jubilee of Priestly Ordination. Bishop Charles has been an inspiration to the three Area Commissions and to all his flock, to whom he gives unflinching love, help and encouragement. May God bless his ministry and make it ever more fruitful.

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The news of the sudden deaths of MATTHEW O'DONOVAN and his wife, NORA, in a tragic car crash as they were returning home from Ireland, has saddened us all greatly. Matthew was a Unity Contact on the S W Area Commission; he was present at the Methodist/Roman Catholic Day (reported within) and, in a telephone conversation with your Editor, he said he hoped to write an article for Together in Christ.

We offer our prayers for Matthew and Nora, and for their children and all bereaved, and give them our deep sympathy.

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#### PRAYER OF POPE JOHN PAUL for 1998

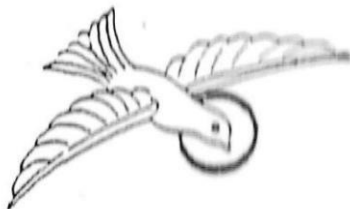
Holy Spirit, most welcome guest in our hearts,  
reveal to us the profound meaning of the Great Jubilee  
and prepare our hearts to celebrate it with faith,  
in the hope which does not disappoint,  
in the love which seeks nothing in return.

COME, SPIRIT OF LOVE AND PEACE!

Creator Spirit, hidden builder of the Kingdom,  
by the power of your saints guide the Church  
to cross with courage the threshold of the new Millennium  
and to carry to the coming generations the light of the world  
who brings salvation.

COME, SPIRIT OF LOVE AND PEACE!

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## A METHODIST/ROMAN CATHOLIC STUDY DAY

*Notes of the study day on 22 November 1997*

This most rewarding study day was attended by some three dozen people, who learned a lot about efforts to bring about Christian Unity, especially by these two Churches. The day was opened with prayers by Rev Martin Broadbent, South West District Chairman of the Methodist Church. The focus was on asking forgiveness for sins that had caused past divisions.

The speakers were David Carter, organiser of the event, Fr Paul McPartlan of Heythrop College and Una Ratcliff. David is a local Methodist preacher and a member of the National Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee. Fr Paul is a lecturer at Heythrop College. Una is well-known as editor of *Together in Christ*. She is a member of the Bishops' Conference Committee for Christian Unity, and represented the Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark at the Swanwick Forum of Churches Together in England.

### **New approaches to the unity task**

David Carter said the Churches had always tragically underestimated their common ground. Wesley for example thought Catholics worshipped Mary. When the Churches recently shifted their focus from differences to what they held in common, pleasant surprises followed. Catholics and Methodists found they had the same belief in the Holy Spirit offering us grace and calling us to holiness, in the interdependence of Christian churches, and in the universality of the Church's mission to the whole world.

Fr Paul welcomed another shift: from scholasticism and theology to charity. Too much theology fosters divisions. Justification according to the Reformation comes through grace by faith, according to the Council of Trent from the saving action of God alone. Yet grace is God's act, so where is the contradiction? New insights in the Lima report on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry stressed the encounter with the Holy Spirit - as well as with Christ - in the Eucharist, the collective benefit of the sacrament to the whole Church, not just to the individual (a shift away from self-preoccupation) and the celebration in the Eucharist of the future coming of the Kingdom, as well as the past event of the Last Supper. Such new insights into these mysteries, said Fr Paul, enlarged our understanding of all of them.

### **The Word of Life (World Methodist Council 1996)**

This joint report by the two Churches on Revelation and Faith shows a remarkable convergence of view on the essentials of the Christian faith and mission. David Carter noted that it too was concerned with God's revelation to us and our response: faith. That response consists of: the initial act of trust; our commitment to stick with it; and finally joyous celebration in the Eucharist and the whole of Christian living. Faith is a gift from God, but it needs our response. It has three aspects: the act of trusting God;

the statement of faith and its content; and then its fruitfulness in the whole Church rather than in the individual.

Fr Paul stressed the importance of the word *Life* in the title *Word of Life*. Young people today do not easily relate to the concept of sin. They are much more likely to be attracted to life, to the overcoming of death. Death is of course the outcome of sin. The Resurrection has triumphed over both. Jesus said he had come so that we may have life. This is the gift found in the Eucharist, the bread of heaven in John 6:31-35.

Fr Paul also stressed that mission is essentially ecumenical. In Moltmann's words, it is not so much the Church that has a mission, but the Holy Spirit that has a mission which includes the Church.

### **Ut Unum Sint (that they may all be one)**

David Carter briefly reviewed what he regarded as the principal points of interest in this encyclical from Pope John Paul II of 1995. The letter

1. reinforced the ecumenical thrust of the Second Vatican Council;
2. underscored the importance of the dialogue method focusing
  - ❖ on what we really believe
  - ❖ the exchange of gifts,
  - ❖ and a broader, more inclusive view;
3. the way forward,
  - ❖ especially penitence on behalf of the Church for past wrongs, and
  - ❖ a ministry of unity, for which the Pope seeks advice from all the Churches.

On that last point (said David Carter) the Pope locates his own ministry within, not above the Church. His function in a future united Church would be vital, but exercised in partnership. This would enable the Churches to grow in a shared process, as the Methodist fathers had required Methodists to do.

David recalled an observation of Benjamin Gregory about Peter's ministry in Acts 9:32. Peter had even then visited the Palestine churches and gathered them into communion with the Jerusalem Church.

Fr Paul too stressed that paragraph 88 of the Pope's letter placed his ministry within, not above the Church. It was significant that the Pope increasingly called himself the Bishop of Rome. The Pope stressed the Eucharistic character of the Church, which again focused on the interdependence of the local churches. Unity with the Pope was the flip side of unity in the Eucharist, that is with Christ. Some co-ordination is needed because any one church can scandalise the whole Church: that is why Pope Clement had to intervene in Corinth in about 96AD.

## **The 1997 CTE Forum in Swanwick, Derbyshire**

Una Ratcliff painted the picture of the experience of this milestone event, which celebrated 10 years of Churches Together in England, which had begun with the 1987 Swanwick Declaration. Una gave a very full account of the Forum in the October 1997 issue of *Together in Christ*, so only a couple of themes will be outlined here.

In the early 14th century, Swanwick formed part of a monastic estate, and Una saw a reflection of the monastic way of life at the 1997 Forum, in beginning each day with Mass at 7am (attended by some other Christians as well as Catholics) and in all Forum participants uniting for worship at fixed times throughout the day.

During the war, the Swanwick Centre was a prisoner-of-war camp, from which a few prisoners tried, with great determination and hard work, to make an escape. They actually succeeded; the rest remained imprisoned. Here, Una drew a kind of parallel with the imprisonment of the mindset, characterised by prejudice, ignorance, fear etc, which those in the ecumenical movement have tried hard to shake off.

Una beautifully described examples of how Forum participants have grown in listening to, and learning from, each other; and in trust, sharing and prayer are assisting in each other's struggles or problems. One example was when a member of the Society of Friends (Quakers) said they had not included the Sacraments in their worship, but were "thinking" about it, and asked for the prayers of the Forum in this process.

### **Conclusion**

The inspiring day ended with warm tributes to all three speakers and to David Carter for arranging it. Our ideas of One Lord, One Faith had been enlarged.

Alfred Kenyon



## FACING THE FUTURE (Part one)

There are five Christian communities in Crayford. Three of them - St Paulinus (C of E), Crayford Methodist and St Mary of the Crays (RC) - are in formal covenant. Crayford Baptist Church and Crayford Christian Fellowship are informally associated with the others, all under the banner of Churches Together in Crayford. Lately, we have undertaken a project, with the help of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to assess our situation now and to plan a strategy for our work together in the future. This two-part article describes how the project was set up and run and then gives some assessment of the outcome

The proposal to make use of the expertise and experience of the Bible Society to assist us was interesting, because its help would take the form of a consultancy and because it had never worked with a multi-denominational group before. In addition, there were some particular reservations about the project as a whole on the Roman Catholic side but, in the event, we were able to meet and resolve them.

The process began informally when the consultant, Rev Kerry Thorpe, vicar of the Anglican Parish of Margate, spoke at our United Service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 1997. The decision to go ahead with the project was taken in September. It constituted a serious commitment because it involved an obligation to provide a considerable quantity of information and to pay the consultancy fee of £900 on receipt of the final report.

The first part of the exercise began around 10 October, when the consultancy questionnaire was delivered to each of the churches. This consisted of a 24-page document containing 18 main questions with numerous sub-sections. We were asked to complete and return it to Rev Kerry Thorpe by 12 December 1997.

For St Mary of the Crays, this information gathering phase required a plan which would ensure that everyone would understand what the project was about and that the answers to questions of a personal nature could be given willingly and recorded conveniently. Space does not permit a description of how this was done, but we were able to achieve both objectives over a couple of weekends.

So far as the rest of the information was concerned: some we do not keep; some, like Mass attendance figures, was in the public domain; some was obtained through parish groups, and some concerned our patterns of prayer and worship, our pastoral policies, our resources and constraints and our hopes for the future. Despite the amount of information required and a change of parish priest, we were able to get the questionnaire into the hands of the consultant in time. The next part of the project was a consultancy meeting held on the evening of Friday 23 and most of Saturday 24 January 1998. A week or so before this, we were provided with statistical and demographic information for our area, extracted from the 1991 census returns.



The meeting was well attended and attracted the interest of our local MP and one of our local councillors. On the Friday evening, we were asked to split into church groupings and spend some time looking at copies of our questionnaires in conjunction with the census extracts to see if we could draw any conclusions with respect to Community, Church and Mission issues as well as Opportunities, Restraints and Resources. Our ideas were recorded and shared with the other churches. The consultant used them later to help in the compilation of his report.

The next day we had two sessions based on the Bible Society's long experience and research in studying Christian communities. The first was entitled *Identifying Mission Issues Through Factors Causing Decline* and we were asked to mark off on a table whether we regarded our own church position with regard to a list of seven factors, as faced with a 'Very Serious Problem', a 'Major Problem', a 'Minor Problem' or 'No Problem at all'. The seven factors listed were: Maintenance Complex, Failure Syndrome, Nominality, 'Fellowshipitis', Cultural Blindness, Overcrowding and Leadership Tensions.

The second session looked at *Identifying Mission Issues Through Factors Fostering Growth* and we repeated the first exercise against a list of ten factors, which were: Constant Prayer, Respect for Biblical Authority, Effective Leadership, Mobilised Membership, Eventful Worship, Continuous Evangelism, Community Life, Compassionate Service, Openness to Change and Released Resources.

There is not space to define all these factors, but clearly they do show up some differences between various church traditions. However, everyone was able to complete them and the results were amalgamated so that we could get an overview of how we believe we stand at present both as individual churches and as a group of Christian communities. They were also used in the production of the final report.

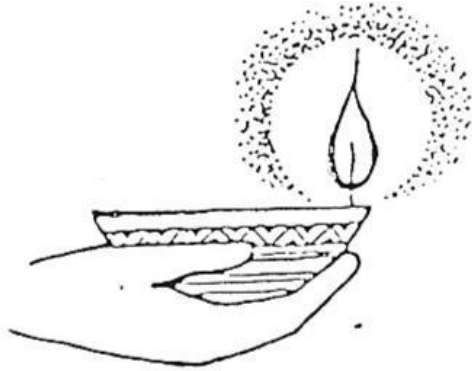
The final two sessions were to do with using the information gained so far to determine our present position and to look forward to where we wished be in a year or to two's time. A step by step plan was presented to help us define and reach our separate and group goals, as follows: evaluate the present situation; recognise values; pray for vision; state purpose (what business are we in?); set goals; establish priorities; make plans; take action; evaluate and alter; assess the process.

It will be important for these steps to be followed carefully, leaving none of them out and refraining from moving on until the current one is complete. The management of this process is in our hands. Decisions are ours to make and take. The consultant will provide the material for our deliberations in a form that we can use in a constructive way by means of his report, which we now await with anticipation.

David Goodhind

*Part two of this article will include a summary of the report and how Churches Together in Crayford are starting to act on it.*

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## CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Racial Justice Sunday will be on 30 September 1998. It is an occasion when we in the Churches are asked to focus specifically on our responsibility for racial justice in the community and within our own organisations, to pray for those whose lives are made difficult by the various forms of discrimination and inequality in society, and to commit ourselves to prayer and work throughout the year.

Every Christian community and church in Britain and Ireland is urged to join in: reflection on racial justice issues; prayer to enable a Christian response; fund-raising for the continued support of national and local initiatives; and an ongoing commitment to action for racial justice.

In his Pastoral letter on Racial Justice Sunday 1997, Cardinal Hume said:

"There are two points I want to make on this special Day of Prayer for Racial Justice. When God created us, it was in his own image and likeness. Every human life matters. Each person is in some sense a unique image and reflection of God. Secondly, we share with all people a fundamental belief in our common humanity. That makes every human person a brother or sister to me."

The Day is a good opportunity for ecumenical co-operation.

A Racial Justice Sunday Pack (including posters, worship suggestions, prayer leaflet, worksheets etc) is in preparation

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## THE 'SHARE-A-PRAYER' HIKE

Every year, on the Saturday at the end of the week of prayer for Christian Unity, people from as large a number as possible of all the Christian churches in Folkestone go on a long walk round the town, visiting half a dozen churches on the way. The half-way house provides refreshment in the form of tea and biscuits, and the last church will sometimes provide something more substantial, like soup and a roll - especially if it is snowing!

This year the organiser, Mark Fletcher from St. John's C.of E. church, included three very interesting venues. Using cars, the first people on the hike went to St. Martin's church at the west end of Folkestone near Shorncliffe Military Camp. The Rev. John Wright first told us about his church. The tower is the oldest part, being Saxon; the Normans managed to miss it, and so the next architecture is early English, and the church is steeped in centuries of worship. After prayers and hymns, the little group moved on to the Headquarters of Operation Sunshine, housed in some large obsolete buildings on Shorncliffe Camp.

Several of the people on the hike had not seen these premises before, although most of the churches support the charity. Sheila Lloyd and Muriel Cotter led us in prayer round the main work-table, then we saw pictures of helpers packing the containers and African families receiving the clothes, and were shown the store-rooms where the food, bicycles, medical equipment and sewing machines are kept, and sack upon sack of second-hand clothes.

The next stop was the United Reformed Church, which has a central position beside the railway station and is used for a number of social activities including a play-group and the Volunteer Bureau, beside hosting concerts and recitals throughout the year. From there the hike proper began, and we walked a few hundred yards to the Police Station.

Of course, a police station is a busy place, and the cells were full after Friday night, but Inspector Nick Fudge led us on a very interesting tour of the building. He had briefed us first on the functions of the various rooms, and we kept particularly quiet as we filed through the busy operations room. When we got back to the office where we had started, Nick led us in prayer for the people of the town.

Continuing with the walk, we came to the Civic Centre half way up Castle Hill Avenue. Here we were greeted by Cllr. David Dickinson who took us into the Council Chamber, and talked about the many functions the Civic Centre serves. The general public usually know it as the place to pay council tax or to claim housing benefit. All Council meetings are, however, open to the public, and there are meetings about various issues every day of the week. One can find out what is to be discussed by looking in the newspaper or 'phoning in to the Centre to ask. There is also a number of committees which meet in private. Christians committed to the improvement of the

lives of those in Folkestone can have a very great influence if they interest themselves in these matters. David finished with a time of prayer, and we went on our way to the parish church of Folkestone, St Mary and St Eanswythe.

This church is built on the site of the seventh century Benedictine convent founded by St Eanswythe. The fish-pond is still near the present twelfth century church. The bones of a young woman from the seventh century, in all probability those of St Eanswythe, were found a few years ago in a lead casket in the wall near the choir stalls. Canon Dilnot gave us a short but interesting history of the church, followed again by prayers and a hymn.

The last visit was to our own church, Our Lady Help of Christians, where the sacristan, Hazel McCann, led the prayers, as Fr Nesbitt was still convalescing after the heart trouble he had before Christmas. About twenty hikers had made the whole journey, accumulating more at their own churches, and so quite a few people stayed for tea and biscuits afterwards in the Church hall.

Everyone approved of the interesting route and venues we had visited. I look forward to next year's excursion.

Kitty Hart

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## OPERATION SUNSHINE

In our last edition, Kitty Hart wrote about Operation Sunshine, an ecumenical charity that sends food and clothes to Africa. Here are some photos of the charity in action.

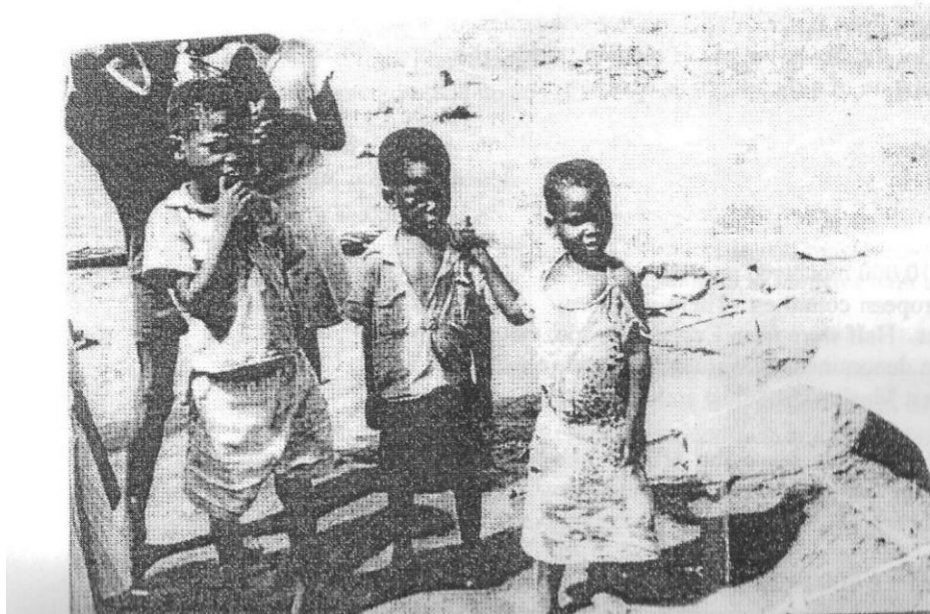


*Loading a container at Shorncliffe heading for Zimbabwe*

*Right: a distribution to  
Zimbabwean families*



*Below: little Zimbabwean boys*



## THE SECOND EUROPEAN ECUMENICAL ASSEMBLY

*The second European Ecumenical Assembly took place at Graz, Austria between 23 and 29 June 1997. We publish here extracts from two articles inspired by the Assembly.*

### GRAZ: ONE PERSON'S EXPERIENCES

One of the main attractions of Graz was the variety of contacts made each day; and the ecumenical kindnesses such as the Bishop of London pushing my wheelchair!

The first morning at breakfast, I met a Presbyterian pastor caller Stuckelberger from Basle, who said that the churches were still very separate from each other. He was elderly like me. I had an interesting talk with Marie Wienken of the Focolare movement. She said how important our friendships and these links were, and how the church hierarchy would follow us. She was young and full of idealism.

I was introduced to Mrs Anne Marie Weicher who is a Member of Parliament for an area around Graz. She is a Catholic and told me that she had been to Rome three times to have private audiences with the Holy Father. I had lunch with her and we talked about ecumenism and how personal rather than intellectual contact really makes a difference.

Helena Hanson from Belgium told me that she believed in the Women's Movement, but was put off by the obsession about women priests; they ought to be putting pressure to stop the mutilation of girl children in Africa.

The Conference was aiming to: search for **visible unity**; establish **dialogue**; give commitment to **social justice**; promote **non-violence** between nations; and promote responsibility for the **environment**.

There were 10,000 registered participants and 700 official delegates representing churches from all European countries. There were representatives from all different churches and organisations. Half were from Eastern Europe, including over a thousand from Romania. All Christian denominations were represented in the talks and discussions, and there were also important Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu speakers.

I could on the whole leave the official delegates to their detailed arguing about the wording for the final document, and go to many of the 200 or so Hearings. It was a little difficult sometimes to find one's way because every direction sign was in German!

There were about 200 Hearings and people were encouraged to enter into the discussions after hearing the speakers, sometimes with very different views. The Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow started us off with an emotional complaint about massive proselytising by foreign missionaries in Russia. I was moved when an

Orthodox Priest spoke with passion on how, when joining at last with other churches, he was told: "At last you are now a real Christian". That was very hurtful to them, because they had preserved Christianity right from the time of Christ. He said that we must try to rise to get to 'anotherness' above our differences.

I realised how careful we must be when trying to convey ideas, by using careful, respectful speech so that we do not hurt.

I found the Northern Ireland Hearing so interesting. There were all sides represented. The more I listened and heard the grounding in history, the more I realised how extremely territorial men are and this accounts for the most of the misery of war and refugees. They really seemed unable not to see everything from a political and territorial standpoint. The past is past and the future will be formed by our present action. I pointed out that intellectual arguments will not alter the fear!

The only way is to act in the present, in the light of the commandments, applying action rooted in caritas as commanded by Jesus. All the speakers were men and it did show that on the whole women are more naturally protective and men more naturally concerned with territory, but there was a good spirit amongst the participants.

I did not attend the special programme about Women's Rights. I did not feel that I wanted to go as I found that certain aggressive tactics and tone embarrassed me. Particularly when women dressed up and demonstrated on the last day. But they should I am sure have a voice.

Three of the speakers at the Future of Europe Hearing spoke much about anti-Semitism. They apologised for the past and one spoke of recent burning of synagogues in Austria. We gathered from other speakers at other times that there is still much anti-Semitism and racism in Austria. Some black delegates had racist attacks to contend with at the station. Austrian delegates condemned this and apologised.

Participants seemed particularly impressed by one woman speaker, the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches. She said that in South Africa they had learnt that without reconciliation we are bound to repeat past conflicts and perish together.

There was a talk and discussion on Inter Faith Communion, and here it was clear that there is not just a gap but a chasm between East and West. The Orthodox were in agony at even talk of such a thing.

The differences of East and West and between the different churches were forgotten in our wonderful morning worship together. There were thousands of us, singing the same hymns but in our own tongues: there were thousands of us praying the same prayer each in his own tongue. Each morning a different persuasion led and prepared the service and we learnt so much of God and so many ways of following the star.

One morning, the Prayers were taken by an Orthodox Priest and a large Icon was put on the stage and we were all presented with a small copy. We were led to see so much within the painting and to begin to see the religious significance for the Orthodox. We saw that to them they are so much more than just a Painting but an act of worship.

I got so much out of Graz, but saw sadly what a very long way we all have to go. It is good to be faced with reality in order to see the task ahead.

Phyllis Wallbrook

## GRAZ: A SPIRITUALITY FOR RECONCILIATION

Your Holiness, Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

*Reconciliation: Gift of God and Source of New Life* is the theme of this second European Ecumenical Assembly. Reconciliation in the widest meaning of the word: reconciliation with God; reconciliation between the Churches to reach visible unity; and reconciliation with other religions, between cultures and peoples, and between humankind and nature.

Christ founded his Church as one Church: "We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church". There is just one Church of Christ which we enter through Baptism - "the sacramental bond of unity existing amongst all Christians".

It is not enough to be united spiritually in our common Baptism. The ultimate goal of the ecumenical Movement is to re-establish **full visible unity among all the baptised**.

Ecclesiology of communion (koinonia) has been accepted in theological dialogues between the Churches as the way to understand the Church and ecclesial unity. As the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue found: "The Church finds its model, its origins and its fulfilment in the mystery of God, one in three Persons".

It is for this reason that the World Council of Churches and others are seeking an **ecumenical spirituality**. There are praiseworthy efforts to reach this objective. If they are the effect of the spirit, then unity is not only a dream or utopia: it is a real possibility.

Considering that the Church is a divine as well as a human reality, a first key point has to be God: God as he is - Love.

God does not only love us as individual Christians, he loves us also as the Church. And he loves the Church for the times when throughout history it has acted according to the design that God had for it. But also, and here we see the wonder of God's mercy, he loves the Church for the times when, because Christians became divided from one



another, it didn't correspond to his design, providing now they seek full communion again in the divine will.

It is this very consoling conviction which made Pope John Paul II ask "Could these divisions have also been ... a path continually leading the Church to discover the untold wealth contained in Christ's gospel and in the redemption accomplished by Christ? Perhaps all this wealth would not have come to light otherwise."

For those who want to commit themselves to reconciliation, it is a duty - and therefore a key point of a possible ecumenical spirituality - to live out the words of the Gospel, one by one, so as to re-evangelise our way of thinking, of seeing, and of loving

Cardinal Bea said that the more Christians live the Word, the more it makes them similar to Jesus and thus more similar to one another and more united to one another.

An authentic Christian who wants reconciliation is someone who knows how to love others with God's own charity, which makes us see Christ in each person, a charity that goes out towards all people (Jesus died for the whole human race).

And the Churches too should love with this love. Jesus prayed: "That the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them". And instead we are always ready to forget his testament, and to scandalise the world with our divisions, the world we should be winning for him.

An ecumenical spirituality will be fruitful in so far as those who dedicate themselves to it see in Jesus crucified and forsaken, who re-abandons himself to the Father, the key to understanding every disunity and to re-establishing unity.

Mutual love leads then to achieving unity. And unity itself must be another key point of ecumenical spirituality: "Where two or three are united in my name, there I am in the midst of them." And this presence of Jesus is a key point for living ecumenism.

By living with Jesus in our midst, who is present through mutual love, we enter in a full and living way into the presence of Jesus in the Church. This presence of Jesus is a gift which also lessens the pain of waiting for the day when we will all share together his presence in the Eucharist.

And another key point of an ecumenical spirituality must be a great love for the Holy Spirit, Love Personified. Jesus gave him to us as he breathed his last on the cross and he filled the newly-born Church with the Spirit at Pentecost.

An ecumenical spirituality lived in this way can produce exceptional fruits. In fact it will be the living out of a fourth ecumenical dialogue, in addition to the dialogues of charity and of prayer and the theological one. It will be the whole dialogue of the people of God.

To end these considerations on reconciliation between the Churches, I hope you will be pleased to hear about an ecumenical experience that has already begun. It is the Focolare Movement, which was in my mind in presenting these key points of a possible ecumenical spirituality: because I did not want to speak only of the theories but to speak of something that already exists.

The Focolare Movement began in Trent, Italy, in 1943 by a few girls shocked by the destruction caused by the war. They chose God as the ideal of their lives. They chose God who revealed himself to them for what he truly is: Love.

One day, while taking refuge in a cellar to shelter from the bombs, they opened the Gospel by chance and found the prayer of Jesus for unity, in John, chapter 17, and began to read it. They became convinced that they had been born for that page and it was for that page of the Gospel that the movement growing around them had meaning.

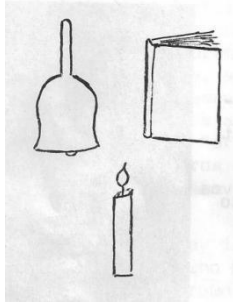
Unity became their objective, which they tried to live by putting into practice the mutual love Jesus commanded. In about 1960, this spirituality was taken up by the Evangelical Lutheran world, then by Anglicans, Reformed Church Christians, the Orthodox and other Churches.

Then the first small ecumenical town began in Germany, at Ottmaring, close to Augsburg, with the agreement of the respective church authorities. In this town Evangelicals and Catholics have for many years borne witness through their lives to the unity that is already possible, founded on evangelical love practised day after day. All of the movement's 19 little towns in the five continents live an ecumenical lifestyle.

As you can readily understand, a spirituality of communion can not only help bring unity among Christians, it also opens up dialogue with people of other religions. This dialogue is one of the most demanding and urgent challenges to us at the dawn of the third millennium.

A spirituality of communion, then. And unity is the keynote that can sum it all up.

Chiara Lubich



## CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

*The monastic community of Benedictine nuns at Saint Mildred's Priory, Minster Abbey, Minster, Kent*

We, the monastic community of St Mildred in Minster, are a small group of women committed to living Gospel values under the guidance of St Benedict's Rule. The Rule of St Benedict has been a vital force within the Church for almost 1500 years.

The name Minster is derived from the first "mynster" or monastery built here in 670 by St Domneva, a princess of the royal house of Kent. Her daughter Mildred became the second Abbess, one of the best-loved Anglo-Saxon saints and patron saint of Thanet. The abbey is situated a few miles from the place where St Augustine, the Roman missionary, first landed.

It was from a monastery in Dorset that a group of nuns set out to assist St Boniface in evangelising Germany and one of these, St Walburga, became the abbess of a double monastery in Bavaria. Over 1000 years later, in 1937, nuns from St. Walburga's Abbey returned to England to refound monastic life in Minster.

Today, as in those early days, the strength of our life is founded on prayer, *lectio divina* (sacred reading), work, community life and hospitality. The Rule of St Benedict provides us with a practical framework for following the Gospel, in the simplicity of monastic life, centred on Christ. The Benedictine vows of stability, the monastic way of life and obedience invite us to listen with open hearts to "the voice of the Lord who is calling us".

Life at Minster is rooted in prayer. At the heart of our life is the monastic liturgy. In our prayer and praise, we bring the brokenness of the world to God, our desire for peace and justice, the needs of the local Church and Community and our friends. Our life is lived in harmony with all of God's creation. Work in the gardens, the kitchens and the farm express respect and responsibility for the earth entrusted to our care. Art, music and crafts are also part of our life and we see them as bringing glory to God our Creator.

Monastic hospitality has long been recognised as a need in our Church. Guests from all denominations join us for the celebration of the Prayer of the Church. In our praying together and listening to the Word of God we find a unity which goes beyond the divisions between our Churches. At Minster, we try to be open to those who come for help, guidance and friendship. We also welcome men on community service to work with us in farm and garden. All these contacts enrich our lives.

Although enclosed, we do not stand aloof from the world and its needs. The Contemplative Life finds its place at the very heart of the Church.

## ST PETER AND ST PAUL

*A poem by Peter Allen*

For Peter who once earned his bread  
By catching fish in Galilee,  
Whom Jesus called to catch instead  
His fellow men and women. He  
At once forsook his boat and net,  
His faithfulness we won't forget.

For Peter who his Master failed  
When he had promised to be true.  
Yet found that Jesus' love availed  
To set him on his course anew,  
We give you thanks and pray today  
For grace to follow in the Way.

For Paul who in his fervent zeal  
Did once your Way attempt to end,  
You stopped him and caused him to kneel.  
From Victim you became his Friend,  
And he who once your people harmed,  
Became their champion, nobly armed.

For Paul, whose letters burned like fire,  
with love for Him he once did scorn.  
Whose soul did up to heaven aspire,  
Whose flesh did humbly bear the thorn,  
We give you thanks and pray as one  
That we his race in faith may run.

Rev Peter Allen

Anglican Observer, SE Christian Unity Commission