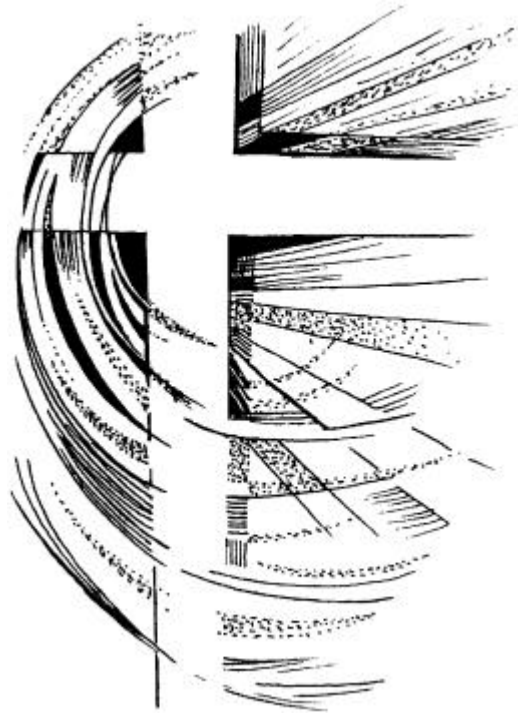


Ealing Abbey Parish Magazine



November 2006

FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue, there are many articles from new and old contributors, for which I am very grateful. I hope you enjoy reading the various accounts of holiday visits, prayer and other experiences which some of our parishioners have shared with us. I look forward to more contributions for the Christmas edition.

All contributions to the Parish Magazine are welcome. Please send them to "The Editor – Parish Magazine" c/o the Parish Office or by e-mail: parishoffice@ealingabbey.org.uk.

A VISIT TO TAIZE

A family from our parish chose to do something different during the summer.

We first visited Taize four years ago, when we were looking for somewhere to spend a week together as a family on “retreat”. A friend mentioned it to us and, despite the fact that we were engaged with the church in a fairly full way, we had only a vague notion of what went on there. Since coming to know more about it through our visits, it has often been our experience when telling people what we did during the holidays, that those outside the church had never heard of it and that those in the church associated it with a particular sort of chanting.



During the Second World War, Taize was a very small village, partially ruined, in an elevated position in a beautiful location in eastern France, close to the medieval monastic centre of Cluny. At that time, an unknown religious figure, who has come to be known as Brother Roger of Taize, perhaps spurred on by the political and human conflicts of the time, set out in faith from his home in Switzerland, to find a place to live a life of poverty, faithfulness to gospel values and solidarity with people who suffered. He was originally drawn to the area because of the connection to the monasticism of Cluny and the story is told that one day he was exploring the nearby village of Taize when an old woman said to him, “Stay here with us; we are so poor, so isolated and the times are so bad”. This he eventually did, at first on his own, and later with a handful of companions, saying and singing a daily cycle of offices in the tiny ancient village church.

This was the time of the division of France into the free and the occupied. Brother Roger found himself close to the border and became involved in receiving Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution. His efforts came to the attention of the Nazi authorities and for a time he was forced to leave, subsequently returning after the war.

Over the ensuing years, news of the presence of the small band of “brothers” attempting to live and worship together across the divides of denominational and national identities, and with a constant emphasis on being a witness of peace, trust and reconciliation in a divided world, spread mostly by word of mouth, and many were drawn to visit and spend small amounts of time with the community. The visitors were mainly young people and the community may well have been surprised by the attention it was attracting.

At first, a trickle became a stream, then a river, ultimately a torrent, as people flocked from all over Europe and beyond. The size of the community grew and a new church was built – the Church of Reconciliation. Local buildings were taken over and areas of land adapted to camping to accommodate the growing numbers of visitors.

It was not long before the large new church was not big enough and regularly over-spilled into tents attached to the side. Ultimately, it was expanded several times to cover more area than an average cathedral.

On the several visits we have made to Taize over the past few years, I am constantly reminded of how different the area must have looked in the early days, when just a handful of people sheltered refugees fleeing for their lives. It is as if the original seed of faith and courage is never far away, even in what has now become a massive religious enterprise to which tens of thousands of people flock from all over the world. Perhaps this is partly what makes Taize such a special place, the fact that it somehow remains close to an original experience, from which it has grown largely without premeditation, but simply by following the path that opened up in front of it.

The usual length of time that visitors now stay is one week, during prescribed periods over the summer months or at Easter. It is mainly, but not exclusively, young people in their late teens and twenties who come to visit. Families with young children are based a short distance from the church and campsites of Taize itself, about half a mile away near the

neighbouring village of Olinda, in a group of old stone houses around a large central play and meeting area.

The family programme is different from that of people without children, but both are structured around the daily cycle of offices in the community Church of Reconciliation in Taize - at morning, midday and late evening. These are about half an hour long, but after evening prayer, many people stay and sing chants far into the night.

The offices consist of a number of Taize chants, scripture readings in various languages and a period of silence. They are attended by thousands of people, sitting on a concrete floor sloping gently down to the front. The brothers, dressed in long white robes, kneel on prayer stools in a rectangular area in the middle of the other worshippers. Everyone looks forwards, towards an altar area containing icons and an abstract sculptural arrangement of fire bricks and cut pipes filled with a mass of burning candles.

For families, most of the rest of the day is taken up by a variety of activities based in the “campus” at Olinda. These include puppet shows portraying scriptural stories and art groups for the children. For adults, there are talks from the brothers followed by faith-sharing groups. As with the “At Your Word Lord” groups at the Abbey, these are centred on a personal response to scripture rather than theological analysis. There is also the option to spend time alone and in silence.

The members of each faith-sharing group remain constant for the week and this forms the basis for the allocation of tasks. For our first two visits, our group had the job of washing up after the evening meal (for several hundred people!). It might sound daunting, but this was one of the most valued parts of our stay, providing a good chance to get to know the other group members.

All meals are eaten communally, either outdoors or in a converted open-sided barn.

In keeping with the ethos of crossing boundaries, the families are deliberately chosen from as many nationalities as possible, although the common language for all the talks is English, with translation by volunteer parents into all the other languages.

The experience of people without children, camping or living in dormitories in Taize itself, is somewhat different, being centred on one of a number of themes to be chosen by each individual on their arrival at the start of the week. Once again there is the option of silence.

As well as all this, there is a constant menu of seminars about a wide range of topics including cultural and political themes and their relation to Christianity. There is also singing practice for those who want to learn the various voice parts for the chants.

There would be so much more to say to describe a visit to Taize – whether it be about the Oyak shop run by volunteers where a cup of coffee is only ten pence (a perfect antidote to exploitative capitalism); or the “exposition” selling Taize pottery, books and music; or the wonderful walk to morning prayer through a landscape of distant mountains covered with a few rags of mist – but somehow it would not convey the true sense of what it is like to be there, which can only really be experienced by each individual for themselves.

Following his visit to the community in 1986, Pope John Paul II said: “One passes through Taize as one passes close to a spring of water.”

These words are appropriate in more ways than one, not only in terms of what they might mean spiritually, but also because in Taize itself there is an actual physical spring. This is called “The Source” (which is of course the French word for spring) and is found in a peaceful and hidden location, down a hillside, away from the main thoroughfare of the community with its campsites, dormitories and thousands of visitors. For a large part of the day, it is closed to all except those who have chosen to spend their time in Taize in silence.

Here, there is a clear stream of water flowing over rocks straight out of the hillside – then onwards through a small stone channel, and into a large lake surrounded by trees. It is a place of very special and moving beauty, and perhaps symbolic of that “quiet place within” at the very heart of all the music, discussion and activity of Taize.

Perhaps many will remember the death of Brother Roger, announced across the media in the summer of 2005. His life came to a tragic end when he was stabbed by a disturbed pilgrim during the evening prayer in church.

His very simple grave is found, alongside those of other brothers, in the tiny village church of Taize, overlooking the idyllic green valley where he first arrived as a young man of twenty-five in 1940.

Despite the circumstances of his death, it is a place of quiet joy, in the remembrance of a life of faithfulness to the vision of beauty and compassion that surely inspired him, so many years ago, to set out on his journey into the ravages of war-torn Europe. †

This article is a personal reflection based on our own experience and the account of the development of the Taize community is intended to give a general impression, rather than to be historically accurate. The Taize community itself has produced a number of books, CDs and DVDs which are an invaluable source of further insight. A fascinating and inspiring account of the roots and development of the community is given in “The Story of Taize” by J.L. Gonzalez Balandó, published by Continuum – ISBN 0-8264-6801-2. In addition, more information about Taize can be found on the internet, or via Father Peter in the Parish Office.

LOURDES

by Ian M. Potts

Last summer there was a report in one of the Sunday papers about the “drunken behaviour” of young English pilgrims in Lourdes. I wasn’t there so I can’t comment on that occasion but I was in Lourdes with a large number of English and Scottish pilgrims in the British pilgrim period at the end of July. Yes, there was a lot of drinking by the young, and not so young, helpers at night. But, this was after most of them had spent the day pushing wheelchairs, providing water for sick pilgrims at masses and other religious functions in the grotto, and feeding and otherwise looking after pilgrims who could not look after themselves. For some, the day would have started in the hospital getting the sick up at 7 am – even if they did only go to bed at 3 or 4 that morning. Also, although there was quite a lot of noise at night (and being an old fogie I would be asleep in bed before 2 am) I did not see any signs of drunkenness – high spirits yes, but nothing like the behaviour at midnight in Ealing. Also I don’t recall any of our teams of helpers being incapacitated first thing the following morning.

The real point I want to make is that an awful lot of people were there in Lourdes, not just on pilgrimage, but giving up their holiday time to help others. They were from many different British dioceses and all ages from 15 to 70, but all were united in helping those less able than themselves to worship Our Lady. It is really very impressive to see how Lourdes is organised to cater for the sick. At services they are always placed at the front and there is even a special reserved priority pilgrim lane in the streets to the grotto. I realise that the many religious souvenir shops are there to make money but they are usually designed with large aisles that can cater for wheelchairs, and if they don’t have the space, the staff will come out to deal with the wheelchair-bound at the entrance.

In this age of politically correct equality Lourdes is a good example of a place that has for years treated equally, irrespective of their age, health or race all who respond to Mary’s request to “come on pilgrimage to this place” and long may it continue. I’m sure that Our Lady will continue to smile on those who having worked to help her visitors all day let down their hair a little in the evening. So next time you see press reports on our young people there – take it with a pinch of salt. †

THE SAGRADA FAMILIA BARCELONA'S LANDMARK CHURCH

by Nathalie Zajackowski

Construction of the Sagrada Familia began in 1882 as a neo-gothic church. When Antonio Gaudi took over as architect in 1884, he re-designed it into a huge modernist building. He dedicated the rest of his life to building it, but he never saw the finished product. Even though it has been under construction for over a hundred years, the inside is still a building site. But it must be the most fabulous building site in the world!

Since Gaudi's death in 1926, many architects have tried to turn his vision of a "20th-century cathedral" into reality – but it won't be finished until 2041.



The church is huge. The outside is made of stone with hundreds of images showing the life of Jesus and his disciples engraved everywhere. Two of the façades, the Nativity façade and the Passion façade, are finished and you can spend hours looking up at sculptures of biblical figures, birds and animals. The Glory façade at the back of the church isn't built yet. Each façade has four towers that rise over 100 metres. The spires are decorated with cups or grapes to symbolize the blood of Christ and with hosts or wheat to symbolize the body of Christ. When the Glory façade is completed, there will be twelve towers, planned by Gaudi to represent the twelve apostles.

Inside, some parts of the church are not accessible because of the building work. The columns along the central aisle are made of concrete in the shape of trees so, as you look up high above, you see the shape of palm leaves across the ceiling.

We walked up the steps – more than 400 of them - of one of the towers to the top and looked around. By going up and down the stairs, it is possible to move from one tower to the next. The view across Barcelona is wonderful.

This is one of the most interesting churches I have ever seen and I recommend it to you all if you go to Barcelona. If you do visit it, I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did. †

MY VISIT TO NORTHUMBERLAND

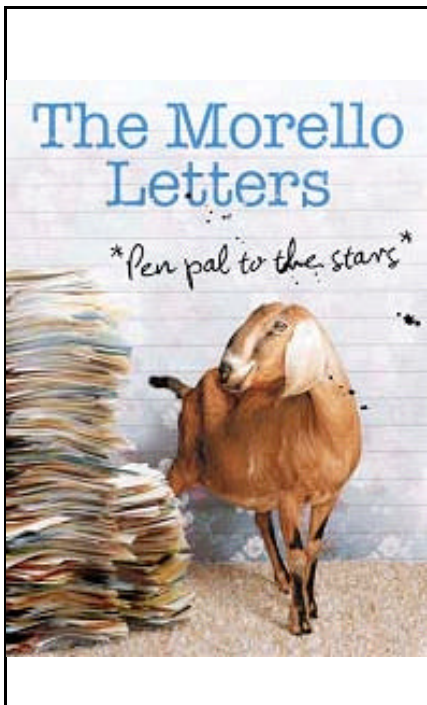
by Rosina Rousseau.

I spent a lovely holiday in Northumberland with old friends in August. Previously we had visited the Holy Island of Lindisfarne – but we wanted to return to see more of the county so we decided to visit a few more castles (having already visited the castle at Lindisfarne and from a distance seen the beautiful castle of Bamburgh).

Our first castle was Alnwick – we stayed near to there in a lovely cottage overlooking some beautiful scenery with some wonderful birdlife outside the windows. We found the castle gardens most interesting because of the various water fountains including the Grand Cascade, the main centrepiece of the garden (opened in 2001). The Duchess of Northumberland, Jane Percy, also had the inspiration of creating a Poison Garden intended to bring effective drug-aware messages alive. We had to be conducted around it by an escort to prevent anyone from touching or smelling the plants. The gates were locked at night incidentally! We also visited their Labyrinth and in the middle of this was the Latin quotation OMNIA HOSPITES VIDISTIS VOBIS GRATIAS AGIMUS NUNC FORTUITO MINGATE – which makes me think I am going to ask Fr. James and Fr. Peter to place one in our Benedictine Labyrinth in the Study Centre garden. Alnwick Castle was of course used in the filming of the famous Harry Potter films.

We then visited Warkworth Castle, nearby to which is a river where we were rowed across by a ferryman early one morning (still rubbing his eyes) to see an ancient solid stone hermitage – luckily I had my torch on me to see the ruined chapel and cells inside. We then visited Chillingham Castle, which stood up to its name, ie. chilly and creepy! There used to be a particular legend of a Lady Grey, Countess of Tankerville, who escaped from her portrait to wander the castle in search of her errant Lord – so beware! There are plenty of dungeons to explore if anyone is interested. It is also famous for its wild white cattle, the only breed of wild cattle in existence in England I believe.

On our way home we stopped off to say hello to St. Cuthbert, who is buried in Durham Cathedral (the Venerable Bede is also there). Oh, and one other interesting place we visited was an old Victorian Railway Station in Alnwick – now converted into a warehouse selling second-hand books called Barter Books (the largest second-hand bookshop in Britain) - so we were in our element the whole of our holiday!!



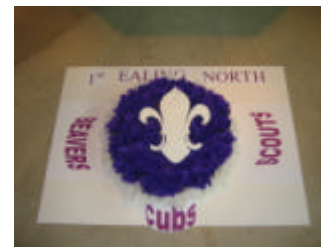
“The Morello Letters – Pen Pal to the Stars” is a hilarious new book of gently humorous spoof letters written by parishioner Duncan McNair under the pseudonym Mr Morello, to Tony Blair, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cliff Richard amongst numerous famous names, and their often guarded but hysterical genuine responses. The book (publisher Harper Collins, £9.99) has received rave reviews everywhere (even those to whom Mr Morello has written!) including the Bookseller’s “stocking filler of the year”. Sample letters are on www.morelloworld.com.

OPEN THE DOORS FESTIVAL



The Open The Doors Festival which took place in June was a great success and attracted many people who had never been in the Abbey before.

The flower displays inside the church were arranged by various Parish groups and other groups such as Ealing Flower Club.



AT YOUR WORD LORD AND AFTER

by Angus Somerville

Having started with eight people, after several years we are now down to seven, although one of our members is now not usually well enough to attend and two were not among the original group.

Our early sessions were more formal and kept closer to the material until we came to know each other better and allowed ourselves more freedom. This has led to a greater depth in the discussion and a franker exchange of views, although this has never ended in any serious arguments. The benefit has been more in the variety of experience we can bring to cast different light on aspects of the faith, since we have a convert, an Anglican and one person who has in his time looked further afield.

Following the end of AYWL we have continued to meet monthly, with a series on the sacraments, each session including also some major, usually related, question to be considered, of which I give a summary:

1. Baptism – different kinds (e.g. adult/child/full immersion or water/blood/desire), or any other initiatory experience, with a discussion of outward signs – how we actually show we are members of a church.
2. Confession – some talk of difficulties with this one. Preferences for the priest to be known or a stranger, a sinner or a saint. Experience of other kinds, generalised to a discussion of guilt, most of which is felt by people who do not seem to commit sins.
3. Communion – the ODWR (see below) has an excellent summary of communion as it is practiced by different churches, with other articles on Eucharist, Transubstantiation. In addition, we considered the question of one or both kinds and then broadened into the subject of community (but only as practiced at the Abbey).

4. Confirmation – anything we relate to the Holy Spirit, and the difference between faith and belief and the balance between faith and good works.
5. Ordination will include various forms of dedication, but also ascetic practices (any kind of sacrifice, fasting, etc.)
6. Marriage will inevitably involve some consideration of gender roles, but also other dualities that need to be reconciled.
7. Anointing of the Sick involve discussion of many aspects of the approach to death.

Two books from which we have been reading, in addition to the obvious, are:

“The Faber Book of Religious Verse” edited by Helen Gardner

“The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions” edited by John Bowker (ODWR). †



BEING WITH OUR LORD AND PRAYER: a little reflective amble...

by Concetta Vager



About prayer... what draws you to the tabernacle so frequently?

Jesus, I have to go to Him! To be there in front of the tabernacle with Him, praying, in adoration... I talk to him... I tell Jesus how much I love him... tell him what happened to me this day... I tell Him that he loves me more than I can ever love... I want to be with Him... I tell Him when I am happy, not happy... There may be something special that I want to ask him... Sometimes I nag him because I am still asking

for His help... really, my true, true friend! Whom else do I have like Jesus? Nobody!

Have you always spent time with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?

Yes, I did always, somehow... Something happened... Jesus touched me... At first, I used to go and when I prayed I would find that my mind would wander to so many places... I would say, "please my Lord, help me to come back to you!" Then something happened... yes, of course, I wander around still but I feel I am drawn. I have to go to Him! There is not a day that goes by without me going and sitting in the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle. I get so much out of it. I have brought other people to sit with me there... and some of them now also have to be there! They find they have to go to Our Lord... they want to stay with Our Lord... we can just be present... we do not always have to "say anything"... just sit with Our Lord and keep Him company... being there... looking at Him, and He is looking at you... this is already a prayer, I think... honestly I do feel like that!

You pray the rosary frequently...

Yes, I pray to Our Lady for what I need, for confession of sin, for sick people, for my family... and the whole world, the world needs so much prayer... and it brings me closer to my Queen, Our Lady...

So many Hail Mary's can be a little boring...

No, not to me. I pray the rosary and the mysteries... the Joyful, the Luminous, the Glorious and the Sorrowful. To me it is never repetitive... it is actually calming... I am at peace... I receive peace... I could sit praying my rosary all day.

Never, I do not find it boring... maybe sometimes I do not pray as well... with as much fervour... it's more like lip service... I speak quickly... it is not from contemplation, from deep prayer... this does happen to me on occasions, but still, I do not find it boring. Then other times, my prayer is deeper... whatever word I say to Our Lady... each word I pray... contemplating the mystery. Sometimes I know that if I can pray the Our Father and ten Hail Mary's like that, it is better than the whole rosary! I feel that way about it.

When you were growing up, did the practice of prayer come from your family?

Yes, all this comes down to me from father and mother, especially my father... because he was very devout to Our Lady and he never missed mass. Every evening and every morning, papa prayed the rosary so this has stayed from my childhood. I have always been close to Our Lady... I see her really, how can I say this... it might sound wrong... more than my mother she is my mother! She is my mother number one... and of course, I love mother number two, but I will always go to her – Our Lady, Our Mother, first... this is how it is for me, but we all have differences on how we are with Our Lady... and when I need something special, I ask through the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I am close to Our Lady, and I ask her to take it to the feet of Jesus... for me I am a sinner... and I ask her to take my prayer to Jesus.

Prayer is the food of the soul... as well... it is as if we eat bread, pasta and so on for our bodies, but forget sometimes to feed the soul... we have to feed the soul... if not, I feel empty! Truly... if one day I miss my prayers, I feel hungry, I am not functioning right... truly. I have to separate myself from everything, go back... and again I am embraced by the love of Jesus Christ and Our Lady... and this feeling comes on me... especially too, during the mass... in the last 10 years, the mass has become so important to me. Without prayer, I am finished, I am nothing, kaput! It is so important...

Should people make prayer a habit?

People must make prayer a part of their life, every day or they will drift from it... go far from it... make a conscious effort... to think and pray... everyday... you do not have to spend hours... but the more you pray, the more you will want to... that's how I feel... the more you will feel embraced from prayer... away from other things... make time to pray... time to talk to God who is listening...

What do you say to people who struggle... and say God does not answer?

I feel, number one, God's time is not our time... and two my mamma always told me there is a queue! Never doubt that God answers... all prayers are answered... it will happen at some point... but we do not know when... I truly believe that... a hundred percent from my heart. The will of God is what we rely upon. A friend of mine was very sick... but I knew that my prayers would not be answered in the way I asked for... it was time for him to go to Our Lord... in my heart, I knew that Jesus wanted him more... for other purposes than here on earth. I do believe all our prayers are answered, but it is true, not always in the way we would like... as it happened with my friend... that we have to rely upon the will of God who knows what is best for all of us...

Do you find you can only really pray in the church?

No, I pray everywhere, not just in the church... I pray in the morning or in the middle of the night if I wake up... I read my bible... Moreover, when I am in the kitchen cooking, especially for a function or special occasion, I pray most of the time... my true prayer is when I am cooking, when I am working... the first thing I do is light a candle by Our Lady's statue, and I say, "Now, my Queen, guide me, supervise me please". But it is true

that whatever I do in my life, I ask Jesus to watch over me, and our Lady and my Guardian Angel help me... and then I remember to say thank you... therefore, Goda has apart of every single minute of my life... truly...

Would you say that there has been a change in your prayer life over the years?

Yes. Before, of course, I worked full-time and I did not have as much time for prayer... but it is different now... I never miss my morning, noon prayers or evening prayer and going to mass. I am a much happier person that I used to be... People who know me, know me well, know that I am different... Before I wanted everything now! When I was working, I ran everything like a military operation, but now I have more peace... I have mellowed... I am more sensitive to other people's feelings... in my heart I know something has happened to me...

I never say to people I will pray for them without meaning it... I feel so special, so privileged when people ask me to pray for them... that they think I can pray for them... It is such a blessing for me... because I feel Jesus wants me to do that...

What would you say to someone who says they cannot pray?

I would take them to the Blessed Sacrament... I would say let us sit down and just be here, we don't have to speak, we will just sit here... be open to Jesus... He will look at us, and we will look at Him... many a wonderful thing happens this way... I have seen people begin to change their lives by being in the company of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament... He is there waiting for us in the tabernacle! †



MARRIAGE COURSE

by Pierre de Cacqueray

Last year, a few couples from our parish went to Holy Trinity Brompton where Nicky and Sila Lee were running the Marriage Course which they have designed. Those of us who attended met up with Father Peter before the summer break to share our views on the course. We all agreed that it had been an enriching experience that has fostered love within our couple. So much so that we felt a great desire to publicise it more widely and reach as many couples as possible.

The course is a fantastic way to help couples set aside time for each other and talk about all the issues that lie at the heart of relationships but rarely get discussed in everyday life. The format was appealing: lively talks introduce simple but well thought-out exercises where couples have the opportunity to spend time together, deepening their knowledge of one another, having fun together, showing each other their love, making projects and thinking about issues such as respect, forgiveness and how to deal with one's parents and children. Great care is given to create a relaxing and peaceful atmosphere. Tables are set for two and the evening starts with a hot meal so that each couple has an opportunity for intimate conversation. All the exercises are strictly private to each couple and at no point are these intimate discussions shared more widely.

As Christians, we know and believe that God is central to the relationship between husband and wife. This particular marriage course is designed for all couples who want to deepen, foster or even, perhaps, heal their relationship.

This was an inspiring and invigorating course and we would like to invite all those who are interested in hearing more about it to an evening in January when we would introduce the course and give witness of its fruit in our lives. †

The introductory talk for this course will take place on Wednesday 10th January 2007.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

by Danielle Zajackowski

Choosing and applying for schools takes time, so for those of you who will be going through the application process next year, here are some hints and tips about what it involves:

Many parents will have spent much of this autumn traipsing around London and beyond, visiting schools for one or more of their children. Much time, stress and indecision is involved in this quest. The form-filling can take days of reflection.

Meanwhile, our Parish priest and his team have:

- taken countless phone calls on the subject
- made nearly 100 appointments to see parents
- completed over 150 references
- issued around 75 copies of baptismal certificates
- written letters confirming children have made their First Holy Communion

The new LEA procedure for transfer to secondary school encourages parents to list up to six schools in order of preference. Catholic schools in the state sector require a priest's reference, so, inevitably, the numbers for these multiply.

It's not just secondary school transfers we are talking about here. This is also the time of year for Nursery and Reception class applications.

As the deadline approaches for handing in the application forms, the pressure on the Parish office to deliver all the necessary documents to so many people is intense... If you walk in on any mid-October morning, you will find it more hectic than a television newsroom when a big story breaks.

There are ways you can help ease the anguish for yourselves and the workload for our Parish:

- visit schools a year early and make an informed judgement
- check the admissions criteria and your Catholic documents well in advance
- request copies of baptism certificates early if you can't find them – some schools also require a copy of the parent(s) baptism certificate
- keep a record of the date of your child's First Holy Communion
- note the date of your child's First Confession – you need to provide this for some schools. †

Most schools have a website detailing their admissions procedure, curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Further information about schools can be obtained from www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Certificates

of

BAPTISM

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

CONFIRMATION

are precious documents and should be kept safely, in the same way you keep your ID papers. You and your children will need these throughout your lives.

ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED

by Patricia Campbell

Access for the disabled is the new buzzword and Norman, my husband, and I have been taking part in a focus group since the beginning of the year. The group comprises many disabilities. Norman represents the blind and I the visually impaired. Once a fortnight we all meet at places of interest.

We were involved in the accessibility for disabled people visiting Kew Palace. Norman advised their curator on the type of Braille to be used for the inscriptions. He even gave a talk to the group and several interested staff on the basics of Braille reading and writing. He didn't go into the complexities of reading Braille music though, as he felt it was a little too advanced for a brief introduction.

I give my opinion on things like size of print, colour – black on white really is best, and not those artistic pretty colours on a pictorial background. It has become my mission in life to make public bodies use print to inform, not just to look nice. Ealing Abbey take note! I even got Chichester Cathedral to print its Christmas Carol Service in large print. I'm an elected Governor at Moorfields Eye Hospital and we did a survey on print size. When we increased the font size to 14, an extra three million people could read it. Many people do not even know they are visually impaired so I urge readers to get an eye test.

We've now completed our accessibility projects at Kew Palace and Kensington Palace and we're working hard on Hampton Court Palace. This palace is planning to open the Wolsey Rooms. Our group has been advising on lifts, handrails, steps and that all-important lighting. I say all-important because I nearly took a tumble on a badly lit step which reminded me of a visually-impaired friend who fell down just two badly-lit steps and broke her hip.

I've had a taster of the Wolsey Rooms exhibition and I'm eagerly looking forward to it. That period of history is so interesting and the forthcoming exhibition will just bring it alive.

It sounds as though Norman and I are only involved in palaces. We're not. The Royal Academy of Arts has an Access Co-ordinator, Amy Elias. She is ace at organising free guided tours for the visually disabled. These are one to one. All you need to do is call in advance on 020 7300 5732.

Norman and I have been to the Summer Exhibition where Alice Finch talked us through wonderful works of art costing as much as £35,000!

It isn't just the R.A. either. It is access on a big scale in London. The National Gallery and Tate Modern also want to help the disabled enjoy our cultural heritage. And if that isn't enough, the London Coliseum and Covent Garden give discounted tickets to disabled people.

We're enjoying our role, especially as we've found the professionals who ask for our opinion do not just listen, they act. !

A march is planned for 4th December in support of blind and visually-impaired people. They get the lowest rate for the government's mobility allowance, whereas other disabled people get the highest rate. This rally is organized by the RNIB and Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Meet at 1.30 pm outside the Houses of Parliament.

If parishioners are not able to attend, they may wish to write to their MP to support the Early Day Motion to increase the mobility allowance for the blind.



“Without Tia, I just wouldn’t
get out of the house”...

Guide dogs make life fuller for the blind. So can you as a
volunteer through the Home Visiting Scheme for blind
and partially sighted people in your area.

If you can spare an hour of your time each week to help
a visually impaired person and would like to find out
more about becoming a volunteer, please call:

020 8423 5141



Ealing Association for the Blind
Ealing



THE LIFE OF CHRIST

by Geraldine Larkin

My friend Paddy phoned me to say that she had some spare tickets for the outdoor play “The Life of Christ” which was being put on at a private estate near Guildford. I must come, she said, it was an experience not to be missed! Well, I just had to accept her kind offer and so after twisting my husband’s arm, we agreed to attend on a sunny Saturday morning in July.

We found the venue easily and we were amazed at how many cars and coaches were in the field parking when we arrived. We had our two daughters aged 11 and 7 and our niece aged 7, a large picnic, sun cream, hats, drinks, a rug to sit on and a fold-up chair. We followed the flow of people from the car park and found our seat under the shade of a tree on an incline with a full view of the flat ground in front, which was to be the field. It was just after ten in the morning! We shared our hillside with about two thousand others! There were families like ourselves, teenagers, youth groups, grandparents, people in wheelchairs... we were a mixed bunch.

The drama began as it should with the nativity. The children were delighted to see a real donkey trundle onto the field on its way to the inn with Mary on its back and Joseph alongside. Soon after this, we had the shepherds and sheep. Three wise kings galloped up on horseback (I guess camels are hard to find in Guildford). We were riveted to the ground while the wonderful word of God unfurled before us. After the terror of the slaughter of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt, the whole audience moved to the next hillside, which overlooked the lake. Here, again in the shade, we watched the miracles of Jesus take place, the feeding of the five thousand (which the audience became), the calling of the apostles from their boats on the waterside, the wedding feast of Cana and many more of the Gospel stories were told to us in a most unforgettable way.

After a break for our picnic lunch, the audience moved again to the next site and watched the plotting and envy of the Pharisees, the Last Supper, Jesus alone in the Garden and the inevitable arrest. One last move from our grassy seats to follow Jesus on the way of the cross and onwards towards Calvary. It would have been extremely difficult not to have been moved by this drama on the Life of Christ and while we know the story well, to see it unfold before us gave us a new insight into our salvation and the Love of God for us. The children were really impressed and not at all bored by the long day – it ended at 4.00 pm – and now when we listen to the gospel on Sunday we can still “see” the grassy stage and the way it must have been at the time of Jesus.

Luckily, the state at Wintershall puts on this play each summer. Next year 2007, it will run from 26th June to 1st July. They also put on a nativity play from 15th to 19th December. I would recommend both. †

For details of this year’s Nativity play, call 0148 3089 2167 or look on their website www.wintershall-estate.com.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Faith formation for adults:

- Echoes will be delivered again starting on 7th January 2007.
- The Maryvale Catechist Course (approved by the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome) in collaboration with the Westminster Diocese will be hosted at Ealing Abbey beginning 10th February 2007. The Catechist Course is a distance-learning programme spread over two years.
- A new 6-week parish course on Prayer produced by the Maryvale Institute and published by the Catholic Truth Society will be offered after Easter.

Events for married couples:

- Holy Trinity Brompton course – introductory talk will be on Wednesday 10th January 2007.
- A special mass for married couples and their families – including the renewal of vows – is planned for Sunday 11th February 2007 at 2.30 pm.
- “Celebrate love” course – will take place on the weekend of 21st/22nd April 2007.

Look out for the Parish Calendar on sale near Christmas

FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS:

Baptism

August

Nathan Pacquette
Gabriel Dryden
Natasha and Catherine Young
Rebecca Cullen
Liam and Ellie Wrate
Emma Alderton
Hannah Dike-Lawlor
Issack and Sophie Tesfay
Ruben Hoskins

September

Eva Hitchins
William Walker
Caudia Lozinski
Isabella Rutland
Georg Bark
Patrick Rabey
Molly Clifford
Elliot Scupholme
Zak Bondarenko
Eden Hutchings
Yvie Rozarieux
Louise Bakhovska
Genevieve Bishton
Oliver Attrill
Samuel and Hannah Pruscino

Marriage

August

Adrian Thacker and Hina Parmar
Martin Gilroy and Rita Toon
Stefan Ludwig and Malgorzata Kedracka
Paul Sumner and Surraya Suleri
Matthew Whybrew and Una Sheehan

September

Lorenzo Guernieri and Maria de Angelis
Paul Glover and Anna Jeremicz
James O'Meara and Emily Dearden
Keiran Ward and Samantha Jones
Stephen Mackay and Ann Glynn

Death

August

Brian Orpin
Kevin Kelly

September

Marie-Eve Malhomme

A morning prayer

"I pray to you, O Lord;
You hear my voice in the morning;
At sunrise I offer my prayer
And wait for your answer."
(Ps 5:3)
