CR Review

LADY DAY 2019

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Transfiguration

As we came to the Sunday before Lent, the gospel was the Transfiguration: Christ on the mountain-top shone with light as he conversed with Moses and Elijah. Elijah is a mystical and exciting figure, not least for his dramatic Ascension into heaven. Jewish tradition abounds with stories and beliefs about him; the prophet Malachi wrote that when the great and terrible day of the Lord was to come, Elijah would come beforehand. So in the Passover Seder every Jewish household sets a place at table for Elijah, expectantly.

Was John the Baptist Elijah? people asked. In one place in the NT the answer was yes, and in another no. And when Jesus said Elijah has indeed come, and they did with him what they wanted, that can be seen as a poetic way of making a point. However that may be, Elijah eventually does appear definitively, on the mountain, when Jesus is transfigured. Jesus talks with Moses and Elijah as equals; but then there comes the voice of God, and it becomes clear that Jesus is taking over – Moses and Elijah have been superseded.

Even more than that, Jesus is changing everything. Elijah could be a violent man, and on occasions if people misbehaved he killed them. He and Moses, both of them, at times were brutes. Jesus completely changes all that. Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you. Turn the other cheek.

This isn't just a change of policy: it is in the bigger, mysterious frame of the Transfiguration. Christ is transfigured, and the disciples, at a loss to know what to make of it, were, amazingly, seeing into the loving exchange between the Ancient of Days and Christ the Son, within the life of the Trinity. Being taken up into this loving exchange between God and Jesus is the heart and vehicle of all Christian prayer, very different from the exchanges Moses and Elijah had with God.

In the light of this, can we say that the old religion of the Jews is superseded by the Church? That can't be said, as Fr Thomas shows later in this issue. Indeed, the Church at times behaves in the same way as the people of Israel in the Old Testament. The Church strays from the Lord's ways; it can fall for lesser gods: power, self-protection, merely human success. And the Church has at times been a brute. However, if a driver crashes a car, you don't immediately blame the car. Just as there is a distinction between office and office-holder, so there is a distinction between baptism and how baptised people may then go on to behave. There is a difference between the priesthood and how clergy may sometimes behave. And so there is a difference between the Church which is the mystery for which Christ died, and those people in whose hands it is put. The Church on Earth is always in need of change and improvement. We have to see how we can reform and renew it; but on its own that kind of action will be barren, unless we look beyond, to the Church's transfiguration.

George CR

Cover illustration: Christ and his Disciples, by Odilon Redon

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Simon Holden CR 1930-2019

Not many CR brothers are talked about on *Saturday Live* or have their words spoken by an actor on Radio 4's *Morning Worship* at the time of their death. But this happened to Simon. It is a measure of the worth of the spiritual insight which Simon drew from a lifetime of prayer and contemplation. And of the affection in which he was held by so many people.

Simon combined two notable gifts: friendship, maintained over many years, and awareness of God's love, pondered in mind and conversation. Simon sought truth, not the truth of objective fact or coherent intellectual system, but the heart's truth drawn from the gospel, from difficulties he faced in life, from his own emotions, from a mind of breadth and warm sympathies and from a tough will. His conclusions had savour; occasionally they could shock: "Distrust yourself", Fr Richard Carter recalls him saying; or "Pain is needed in life; without it life is in danger."

These gifts were clear in Simon's last days: when all else was stripped away, his days were spent in spiritual conversation with friends, godchildren, former ordinands and directees. In this he was serene, utterly content to be coming into the closer presence of his Lord. It had not been like that for him as a young man, but many of the characteristics of his early years were still visible in old age: the colour and drama, passion, but also loyalty and reflectiveness. And in between? A lifetime as priest and monk engaging others young and old with the mystery of grace which had found him.

Simon was born Jack Crawford Holden in Catford, South London, on 28th June 1930, an only child. The family moved to Cromer and Simon maintained a life-long love of Norfolk. His father Cyril amassed a large number of artefacts of the town which he donated forming the basis of the Cromer Museum. Both Cyril and his wife Gwendolyn were artistic and elegant; young Jack was brought up to appreciate music and drama. In his last days Simon told often the story of his parents taking the trouble to learn a new dance; when the band struck up with it, they took to the dance floor and started on the steps, only to find they were the only ones - no-one else knew it or came up to dance. During the war his mother called on him to sing and entertain the troops, earning him the sobriquet: "the boy soprano". There were more difficult experiences. His father was often away and the young Jack was aware of one particular soldier who called frequently. He himself fell for an older man, until his parents stepped in

to put a stop to the relationship. Years later Simon heard from this man's widow how much their relationship had meant to him. At the end of the war, the Holden family gave hospitality to German refugees. Simon remembered being shocked by how thin they were – a revelatory moment, arousing his sympathy for former enemies.

He did his national service with the army in Egypt. Simon's contribution to shoring up the Empire was to lose all his clothes and belongings from his tent to thieves: dispossessed in the desert. Back home he joined the local bank, but being a bank clerk could not fulfil his deeper hopes. He had discovered the shrine at Walsingham and suddenly felt at home in its world of devotion, ritual, colour and, no doubt, risqué humour. A lifelong attachment followed. And news came to him – "like a miracle" - that there was a place where he would be supported financially and with a life of prayer shared with devout companions to gain the examination results he needed to enter university and be trained for the priesthood. This was the Hostel of the Resurrection, Leeds, run by CR. Simon entered in 1954. He came under the influence of Nicholas Graham and found a love of reading which continued through the years: "they discovered I had a brain".

In the Army, Egypt 1949

Simon with his Mother in 1957

Simon took a full part in the social life of the Hostel and University. He sang tenor in a small group of students on the Hostel Carol night. On Collop Monday, two days before Lent began, the CR brothers and the College students from Mirfield came to the Hostel for the day. In the evening, Simon produced the play *See How They Run*. It was a tradition to keep the name of the play a secret but the Mirfield students had discovered it. To surprise them Simon put on the first act of *The Importance of Being Ernest* before switching to the play they were expecting. In his final year at the Hostel Simon was the Senior Student. He received many invitations to gala events at the other Halls of Residence and went to all of them. Nevertheless Simon gained his 'O' and 'A' levels.

His BA at Leeds followed and then two years at the College of the Resurrection, with ordination to the diaconate in York Minster in 1961. Simon's curacy was served at All Saints Middlesbrough, then a parish of the Company of Mission Priests. He revelled in the complicated ceremonial of the English Missal: "it was like a game in which the insiders all knew the rules." Simon's later sympathies moved to a more open faith, but he never lost this first love. He was a dedicated curate visiting the homes assiduously. Simon was soon joined in Middlesbrough by Michael (later Crispin) Harrison. Simon and Crispin had met at the Hostel, and were to come to the Community at Mirfield around the same time. Crispin CR remembers "we pooled our stipends and lived in the vicarage with the parish priest. It was a happy time with a marvellous, supportive congregation and youth club." This remarkable band has kept their friendship even to this day. Although Crispin subsequently spent years in Africa and Simon too had postings away from Mirfield, their friendship persisted, so that guests coming in recent years have been greatly amused by their affectionate and utterly natural sparring.

As a student chaplain

Simon came to CR in 1964. He left behind the name Jack and became Simon, as Jack Guinness was a brother at that time. He made his first profession on 16th July 1967 and two years later was at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in Stepney and working as an assistant chaplain at University College London. He took to the liveliness of student ministry in the early '70s, learning to listen to Radio One, reading Karl Jung, staying up late with the students. Some he invited to the 'Holy Parties' at South Park. He touched many lives, gently opening the possibility of vocation and, on more than one occasion, introducing future husbands and wives. For Bishop Peter Ramsden, Simon performed both of these services.

Simon returned to Mirfield in 1975 at the request of Eric CR to be Novice Guardian and Precentor. These were no easy tasks. The Community's tradition

of singing was under question. Simon treated music earnestly. He later regarded developing the chant as the staple of the music at Mirfield, preserved through the guidance of Eric CR, as his most significant contribution to the communal life of CR. It has since flourished, enriched by the scholarship of his successor Peter CR. The novitiate had been closed following the departure of the then Superior, Hugh Bishop, and subsequent tensions within the Community. Simon oversaw its re-opening in a very different era to the one in which he had been a novice himself. Antony Grant and Nicolas Stebbing were almost waiting at the door to be admitted and there followed a line of talented men seeking to join CR, many of whom, but not all, stayed. Simon's personal approach and questioning style suited the new times, but it came at a cost and could lapse into something overly anecdotal and emotional.

On his 80th Birthday

Personal difficulties re-emerged. He had struggled - with desire, with frustration, with needing assurance, with alcohol - as a young man, and these struggles never fully left him. He came to regard the stripping away of false images of self, of our worthiness, as the most necessary development in our lives, so that we can be open to meet the real, living God. As Simon told a friend who visited him in hospital: "People have the wrong idea about God. God is not looking to punish them, holding everything against them." No, God is forgiveness itself– the very source of the continuing creative spark of life: this is God's nature, who God is. And it can be our pain which unearths this for us, catapults us into waiting on God rather than trying to create our own heaven.

It was Simon's willingness to disregard the conventional and to search for a more truthful account of self and so of the action of God's love which drew scores of people to him as their spiritual director. Fr Richard Carter recalls, "He was wise, always challenging and surprising, often amusing, or irreverent,

very human but always open and he opened my eyes to see in my life and struggles the workings and the calling of God in ways I had not always realised or believed possible. And as the years went by I also realised that he was not only accompanying me but I was accompanying him and indeed this speaking and listening this listening and speaking, this reciprocity was a huge mutual gift from God." "Talking about God is impossible," he said, "Sermons are really about what the preacher has not yet discovered themselves. Sermons should be invitations into that which is beyond understanding."

To be very human: this was what Simon sought, and it was intimately connected with the God who makes us human. Simon retained his capacity to be astonished at the richness and unexpectedness of the life God creates. He had a taste for the curious, but never mastered technology. He could be the despair of his brothers in Community as he asked for even the simplest of instructions to be explained over again. But he always loved discussion, and his emotional awareness could lead him to ask the probing question when others became stuck. Simon had a gift for wonder and gratitude, echoed in his life-long love of artistry and poetry: an awe that God's attention is always on us, that God chooses to love us through others, that God chooses to love others through us. We are human when we know, with every last particle of our being, that our life

Leading a Retreat Group with Fr Richard Carter, 4th November 2018

is God's life lived through us.

These gifts came into their own most completely at the CR Emmaus house in Sunderland, down towards the docks. This was a house of silence and contemplation, which followed on from work pioneered by the then CR father Augustine Hoey in Manchester. Simon went there in 1988 joining Aelred Stubbs CR. Many came for spiritual direction and appreciated the stillness of the house. Simon found in this way of life a balance which never quite left him. He read Merton. He admired the hermits, and counted many among his friends. He never became one, but had a hermitage in the early hours of the day before Mattins when he prayed. To Simon's lasting regret the Sunderland house closed in 1994. Simon then returned to Mirfield and spent the final 25 years of his life based there, giving retreats, talking to ordinands on prayer, supporting communities of sisters, seeing directees, ringing friends with whom he kept in touch with remarkable thoughtfulness over the decades.

Many remember him for his warmth, his smile, indeed his mischievous humour and full-bodied laugh. These were a joy. Yet Simon was not always the easiest brother to live with (which of us is?). He manifested a personal, emotional investment in relationships and at times this could be all absorbing, even intimidating. He could become oblivious to considerations beyond his immediate notice. Equally, being an extrovert living with the brothers CR cannot have always been easy for Simon, but he always spoke of "the inexhaustible kindness and acceptance of his CR brethren which sustained and blessed him".

Simon's last months and days were remarkable. He revisited Walsingham in a trip that became a round of greetings. He delivered a retreat at a time when he could hardly tell one day from another, but could draw on 20 years of spiritual conversation with Fr Richard Carter to converse together on the

things of God with a roomful of witnesses. Early this year he was diagnosed with leukaemia. He accepted this with serenity. "I am not frightened of illness as though illness were an enemy. I am me. I am part of creation. There is no me and the illness - just me." He had for some months let go of all concern to make or influence decisions. Occasionally he panicked, but was quickly reassured by any firm, kind word. What never left him was a clear awareness of the presence of God here and now, and a joy in talking to others of this. Simon died at Mirfield on 7th February 2019 and his requiem was held on St David's day, attended by over 150. It had something of the atmosphere of the Community's Festival Day as familiar faces showed at every turn and old acquaintances rolled back the decades. The brothers CR have been very grateful for the many expressions of condolence and the warm memories we have received.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Oswin CR

#Life Together Oxford: February 10th-14th 2019

The request the Community had received early last year for an engagement with the University of Oxford about the question of the Religious Life started when George was approached by the former chaplain of Brasenose College, who hoped that we at CR might be able to do something about this usually untapped vocation for men and women. Ere long he had had discussions with SLG, ASSP and CMSV – all Anglican sisterhoods wishing to get in on the conversation and have some involvement with the mission. I was asked to accompany, come armed with a story and a pair of ears. It sounded exciting. Who can forgo the opportunity to visit a city with such a rich ecclesiastical and academic history? There also came the prospect of debate and the 'challenging question' or two. Of course I was keen to be amongst it!

Being in Trier over the autumn however, meant that I had missed most of the planning meetings – and these had been extensive. I could keep up via email correspondence, but there is something important here with regard to the business of prior preparation and planning within such an event. I have to remark that the groundwork was excellent. There is no doubt that clear communication came in from the get-go, and made us highly aware of what we were about during the visit. Thank you to George CR and the sisters involved for all of that work.

The arrival in Oxford on Sunday evening saw us all warmly welcomed to our host colleges. Myself and George CR; Judith and Margaret Theresa SLG, Elizabeth Jane CSMV and Jane ASSP. I was in The Queen's college – fittingly so for me with its Northern links and long choral tradition. I certainly was impressed by the environment, and remarked when preaching at evensong that night how extraordinary it felt to be there and speak the Word amidst such apparent history and tradition.

We were there chiefly to pray, and so kept a monastic-style chanted office each morning in St. Mary's (the University) Church. This regularity meant that we saw and shared daily with many of the same faces. There were upwards of twenty people there for Morning Prayer each day, which was pleasing, and we had the opportunity to eat breakfast together in the café afterwards. Here there was ample time to initiate conversations and get to know one another. And this set the tone for the daily pattern with us, because subsequently there were talks and meet-a-monk/nun slots to which people we had encountered previously came. – So, crucially to good missionary work, there was sound opportunity for follow-up! The days were long but very pleasing on this account.

It was certainly a privilege for my part to experience the life of a university once again – and especially the life of Oxford colleges. The brothers and sisters agreed that the Oxbridge system is ideal to undertake vocation events within, because it allows for the building of relationships and gives individuals in the group continuity with the people they meet. It is possible to make links with

chaplaincy teams and clergy which last beyond the designated 'mission week.' Indeed, we are already looking to return to the university and are exploring possibilities of a similar event in Cambridge. Watch this space! I was really glad to make the acquaintance of Katherine Price, chaplain of Queen's college and ex-Mirfieldonian! Great exchange was undoubtedly made! I also hope to go back to Hertford College to preach.

Whilst I couldn't dine at high table every night nor perhaps keep up with the seemingly insane examination pressure these students are placed under, it was a joyous experience to offer something of my unfolding vocation with men and women likewise discerning theirs in Oxford. Pray that it may yield a harvest to His glory: thirty, sixty – even a hundredfold!

Marc CR

How can the Church Engage with Community?

From the Mirfield Lecture on Mission, given in March 2019

The Rule of Benedict makes it clear that joining the community is not something to be undertaken lightly. However, the communities in which we live bring pragmatic choices about opportunites for education and employment. We have to live somewhere, and where we live is probably dependent on affordable housing, transport links, and schools rather than a calling to a specific community.

Theoretical understandings of 'community' arose in the 19th century as a result of European urbanisation. Two German terms – 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' – distinguish between 'community' – 'face-to-face contacts with neighbours who are known as persons, clear role definitions, and group norms which provide ... order and security' – and 'society' – 'the co-existence of people independent of each other who relate to one another only because it is in their interest to relate ... in particular areas of life where they are, for utilitarian reasons, interdependent' (quotes from *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics)*.

A community may be geographical: the group of individuals living within a specific geographical place. However, within any geographically-defined community there may be tensions and conflicts between individuals who hold different understandings of what it means to live in relationship with other persons. Such tensions and conflicts can arise from differing perspectives and expectations of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability and age. Within a

geographically-defined community, therefore, there may be communities of identity within which individuals are identified according to these perspectives. A community of identity might lead to the formation of an issue-based community, a community focused around a policy issue in which the individuals that make up the community have an interest. By influencing policy and practice an issue-based community seeks to address issues they experience.

'Community' can be used descriptively: individuals in a specific geographical place, or sharing the same identifying characteristics, or coming together around a shared issue. However, 'community' can be used normatively to suggest how members of a community should behave, for example through mutual trust and a willingness to help each other. Additionally, 'community' can be used instrumentally to suggest agency, implying that members of a community should act together to achieve shared objectives. Instrumental understandings may promote the concept of 'social capital', the networks, norms and trust that enable members of a community to act together more effectively to achieve shared objectives. Social capital is seen as the 'glue' holding a community together, making local economies and democracies work for a community. However, access to social capital can be as inequitably distributed as access to other forms of capital, thus reinforcing division and privilege. Indeed, social capital is not always positive: its dark side can include secretive, unaccountable and exclusive networks, and oppressive social norms. Since the 1990s 'community' has come to have political overtones. 'Community' is a mediating institution between state and citizens, an alternative to the state. Normatively, self-respect and respect of others are emphasised, responsibilities as well as rights; instrumentally self-government and service to others are promoted.

Given these theoretical understandings, what might it mean for the Church to engage with community? What might be the normative and instrumental assumptions? In what ways might these assumptions cause the Church to be disruptive to a community? What normative and instrumental understandings of community are there in our theological resources?

One starting point is Luke's account of the practice and experience of the first believers in *Acts* 2.42-47. There is also the more complex picture of the urban environment in which the Apostle Paul founded congregations. These cities were characterised by geographically-defined communities of identity – neighbourhoods – reflecting either a specific ethnicity (e.g., 'the Jewish quarter'), or a specific trade (e.g., 'the linenweavers' quarter'). Neighbourhoods comprised households, the basic unit within cities and in all likelihood the basic unit of congregrations. Each household comprised not only members of a particular family but also the family's slaves, the family's former slaves who were now the family's clients, labourers hired by the family, and sometimes the family's

business associates. Being a member of a household was to be a member of a larger network of relationships between family members, between master and slaves, between patron and clients, between friends. Congregations made up from one or more households ordinarily met in private homes. Within these congregations – communities identified by their faith in Christ Jesus as the Son of God – there were also communities of identity: Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. However, each congregation was to be a community in which 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all ... are one in Christ Jesus' (*Gal*. 3.28). Since 'through [Christ Jesus, the head of the body, the church,] God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things ... by making peace through the blood of his cross' (*Col*. 1.19-20) the congregations in the different cities were themselves part of a single community of identity transcending the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. The Apostle Paul's 'collection project' (2 *Cor*. 8 and 9) was a tangible expression of the unity of these communities of identity within a global community of identity transcending both geography and ethnicity (*Rom*. 15:27).

Other theological resources include *Rerum Novarum*, published by the Roman Catholic Church in 1891 in response to European industrialisation; it forms the basis of Catholic Social Teaching. Communities are, *inter alia*, places in which the dignity of each person is to be respected and each person is to contribute to the common good. The inequity experienced within British society in the 1920s and 1930s led Archbishop William Temple to question the shape of society. In 'Christianity and Social Order' he developed the principles of freedom – respect for personality in all people; fellowship – the interdependencies between persons; and service – individuals and groups put the welfare of all people before their own welfare. The third and fourth Marks of Mission challenge the Church to engage with community to meet human need and to transform unjust structures of society and challenge violence.

Many processes are available to help the Church engage with communities; Mission Action Planning, adopted by several Dioceses, is typical. It is based on a

four-phase project cycle: in phase one a need or an opportunity is identified; in phase two a plan of activities is designed; in phase three the activities are implemented; and in phase four the extent to which the need has been met or the opportunity has been taken is evaluated. The evaluation may lead to the identification of a new need or a new opportunity, and a new project cycle is started. There are tools and techniques to support the phases of the cycle.

There are many criticisms of the project cycle. The linear progression from one phase to the next is inappropriate for engaging with communities in which the realities of needs and opportunities emerge over time. It requires resources, both people and finance. Power imbalances can lead to the project cycle being imposed on a community, and responsibility for the project cycle being withheld from the community. However, a strength of the parish system is that relationships built over time between the Church and the community can lead naturally to the Church and the community collaborating to identifying needs and opportunities and to meet these.

There are many programmes on which the Church may draw to engage with community. They include the money management courses and debt centres offered by Christians Against Poverty, the network of foodbanks supported by the Trussell Trust, the tutors supported by The Lighthouse Group to help children struggling in full-time education, and the help and safety offered by Street Pastors. These programme help the Church to engage with communities on specific needs, reducing the time and energy required for project design and implementation.

Our hope when the Church engages with community is to see individuals flourish, their lives transformed by the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus; the work of transformation is God's not ours. As Sam Wells, in his book *Improvisation: the*

drama of Christian ethics reminds us, the Church is in the fourth act of a five-act play, between Act Three – the Christ Event and Act Five – the End Times. The Church is called to be faithful to her calling; she is not called to be effective or successful as if everything depends on her.

David Mundy

Prayer-Orchestra

In the parish where I shall be spending Holy Week this year we have begun an experiment. Before I say what the experiment is, I must explain its aim. It seems clear to me that the Church today needs a revolution in prayer. Nothing hifalutin – just something simple and practical, but requiring a revolution in what we suppose prayer to be. The experiment involves asking the people in the parish to commit themselves to saying a simple form of prayer every day, but as a corporate project of the whole parish. Everyone will be offering the same form of prayer wherever they are, knowing that everyone else is also praying it wherever they are. Some may be able to do it together in groups, or in the family. Others may find themselves praying it on the bus or while keeping an eye on the children, or taking a moment out from their work. That is the aim of the experiment – for the parish to be enveloped in a fabric of prayer woven by everybody together.

Parishioners have been given a booklet which contains 31 forms of prayer, one for every day of the month. It has the same shape every day:

- A short phrase calling to mind that we are all praying together,
- Then a few verses from a Psalm,
- Then a verse from Scripture on the same theme,
  after which the person might read the Psalm-verses again;
- Then there is a prayer which sums up the theme.

There is a different theme for each day of the month. People are encouraged to look up the Scripture-verse in their Bible and read further if they want. They can also add other prayers of their own. Here are two sample days:

4th Day of the Month

Lord our shepherd, we pray with everyone in our parish –
Help us, as we pray, to find life in you

From Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.
3 He shall refresh my soul
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Reading *John 10.14 – 15: I am the good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.*

O God, our shepherd,
who brought again your Son Jesus Christ
from the valley of death,
strengthen us with your protecting presence
that we also may be good shepherds to others. Amen

23rd Day of the Month

Lord, unite us with all who struggle and all who rejoice –
may we support one another in our common prayer

From Psalm 130

1 Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice;
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.
4 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him;
in his word is my hope.
5 My soul waits for the Lord,
more than the night watch for the morning,
more than the night watch for the morning.
6 O Israel, wait for the Lord,
for with the Lord there is mercy;
7 With him is plenteous redemption
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

Reading *1 Corinthians 1.3-4: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction ...*

Father, we commend to your faithful love
those who are crying from the depths;
help them to watch and pray
in sure hope of the dawn of your forgiveness and redemption:
may we all truly know that we belong together
with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

This use of a few select verses from the Psalms goes back many centuries, to the making of *Flores Psalmorum*, or "bouquets of the Psalms", one famous collection being that composed by the Venerable Bede. There is nothing like the Psalms for drawing us into prayer. Secondly, it's a great help to have an idea of what we are expected to do, something to aim for. Thirdly, it's a further help to know that we are in a team, depending on each other, and encouraged by the sense of a corporate endeavour. Fourthly, the sense of praying with the whole Church on Earth and in heaven sets us free from thinking it's something we have to achieve from our own efforts (which can seem so feeble). We are all carrying each other along, borne forward by the whole Church at prayer, the fuel in our tanks being the Holy Spirit, the life of God, released in us through being in this Communion of prayer.

Why does the Church need this? Because it's obvious the Church in our society needs more *oomph*, more vigour, and only one thing can give that – walking with God, and actually taking some pleasure in it. When I go to this parish in Holy Week I shall be interested to ask them how they have got on. If your parish are also interested in conducting such an experiment, please let me know.

George CR

All things Green and Beautiful

Does your drooping Aspidistra, fantastic Ficus or perky Mother-in-law's tongue respond to your whispered encouragement or even a blast of Julie Andrewes from *The Sound of Music*? Do you feel positively uplifted when wandering as lonely (or in company) as a cloud through woods or tree-lined parkland? Or perhaps you are someone for whom all plants – whether indoor or outdoor – go pretty much unnoticed as you hurry through your daily routine: they are just a green blob in a pot or a large brown item with bark and branches to which you do not spare a second glance. If you are in the latter group, it would seem you are now much in the minority as we, in 21st-century Britain, perhaps in reaction to the everyday troubles of the times, seek solace in the natural world.

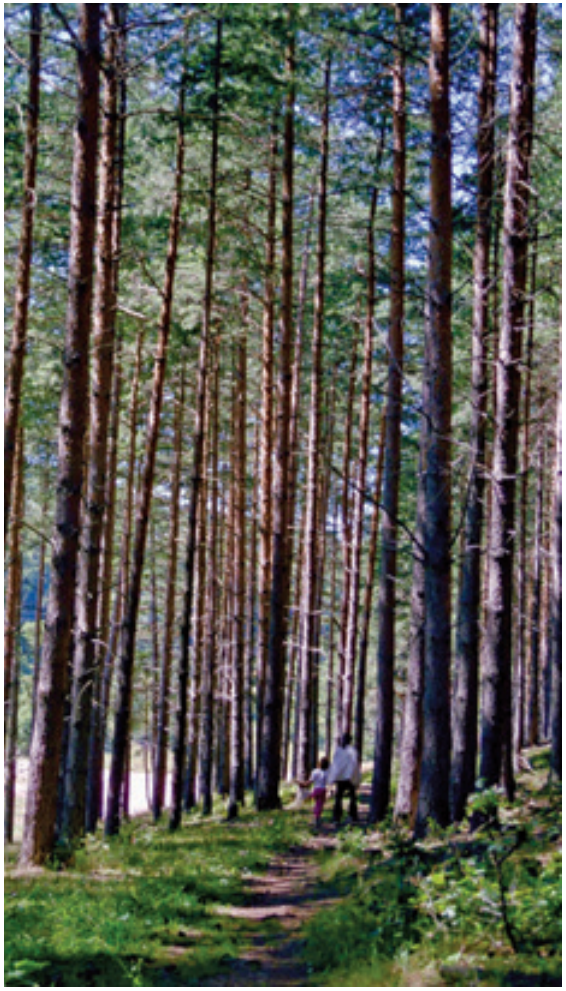
Shuffling my way through a main shopping district in Berlin recently, I noted people hustling about carrying and buying, searching out bargains and everyday essentials: some no doubt, laden with heavy bags, had been indulging in some 'retail therapy' which involved spending lots of money on items probably never needed and all designed to provide a temporary uplift to flagging spirits. A few hundred yards away at my destination, the wonderful Botanic gardens, a different type of 'green therapy' was going on, and in my own earnest opinion, was showing a vastly greater success rate in uplifting those of frazzled minds. Here in this inspired vision of flora and fauna at the heart of the city, old and young wandered through the incredible indoor nineteenth-century palm houses and arboretum, marvelling at the size, shape, colours and texture of the natural world. A sense of calm and peace pervaded.

Of course there is now copious scientific evidence of why this sense of calm and 'wellness' seems to hit home when plants surround us – whether indoor or out. A Norwegian study in 2000 found that employees appreciated their employers far more when they had plants in their offices. Why should this be? Well, they were seen as bringing real positive benefits: improving the microclimate in the room by producing oxygen and humidity and absorbing pollution and dust. They helped to smother noise and gave off delightful smells when in flower. Environmental psychological studies have shown that plants also have a positive influence on our thought and feelings, for example in reducing stress and tension. Just to stand and gaze for a few seconds at a houseplant can help to calm us, it seems, with our blood pressure actually dropping; and by getting our hands a little dirty repotting or working in the garden, we help to release serotonin, the so-called 'happy' hormone which boosts our mood. Other studies have shown that a green environment helps promote better memory performance and linguistic creativity.

Wandering around the House of the Resurrection you will find a fair range of indoor plants, often, like their surroundings, of a fair vintage, and bringing a sense of the natural world into the house. But it is outdoors that the real green gems are to be found. One of the great joys of the Community is its situation, which perhaps at times is taken for granted: the house and college sit in a 17-acre site of utmost delight. For whatever the season, a wander around the

various parts of the grounds can be an unquestionable restorative. The rose garden may be in full bloom or the apple orchard in blossom; the more 'wild' areas down by the disused quarry or along the back to the old open-air theatre are equally delightful, as is a stroll round the 'cricket' pitch, or trying to figure out the money puzzle tree planted some 20 years ago by Br. William. Such walks bring us closer to nature - and to ourselves and our Creator. Looking skyward one can marvel at the immense canopies of numerous species of trees; the woodland is home to a vast array of creatures, from birds and insects to wood mice, rabbits, voles and foxes. This hidden green oasis is truly the 'lungs' of Battyforde, as the surrounding roads get busier and the human population grows by the year.

In Japan it is said walking through woodland is like saying your prayers because every tree is just that – a prayer reaching up to heaven. To take a walk in the woods is to 'bathe' in a spiritual realm, which perhaps is why such activity, at any pace, can leave us in a totally different state of mind than when we set off. The Begali poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote that *'Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven.'*



There are an increasing amount of books being written about mindfulness and nature. Walking need not be just about the purely practical necessity of reaching a set destination or for physical health, but it can be used to reacquaint ourselves with our souls. Standing underneath an ancient oak or birch, allowing our eyes to slowly take in the incredible

texture of the bark, the moss, lichens and twirling ivy, marvelling at how the budding branches have come back to life again after the cold and wet of winter, is something humans have been doing for thousands of years. It is behaviour that takes us away from our worries and anxieties of the moment and into a natural, creative and quite marvellously beautiful realm. In appreciating the created we also reattach ourselves to the Creator.

This year is the 200th anniversary of the birth of John Ruskin, the great Victorian artist, poet, philanthropist and social reformer. He believed that all beauty comes from nature; and that nature was the work of the Creator. For Ruskin it was not surprising that enveloping yourself in the natural world was to allow your very soul to move into a state of togetherness with God. Like C.S. Lewis, who noted the staggering sense of 'awe' we feel when standing on a cliff looking out to sea or at the view from the top of a mountain, Ruskin felt nature was a way to feel God in our deepest being. He noted *"Nature is painting for us, day after day, pictures of infinite beauty if only we have the eyes to see them."* Thomas Merton, another great spiritual presence of more recent time, wrote movingly: *"Let me seek, then, the gift of silence, and poverty, and solitude, where everything I touch is turned into prayer: where the sky is my prayer, the birds are my prayer, the wind in the trees is my prayer, for God is all in all."* The prayers of Francis of Assisi's 'Canticle of Brother Son and Sister Moon' also come to mind in the strong appreciation that we are not separate from creation but a very part of it.

Numerous 'green' projects have sprung up in recent years aimed at those suffering from mental or emotional health problems. A few hours each week spent working on a garden allotment or a simple 'green' programme has radically changed many people, renewing their sense of self that has perhaps been knocked out of them by daily life in our fast-paced but often unfeeling 'human' world. Professor Tim Kendall, NHS national director for mental health said last year: 'The therapeutic value of spending time gardening and in green spaces is increasingly recognised... More and more, patients and their doctors are looking beyond medicines and traditional treatments, through a range of activities, including exercise, gardening and nature.'

Research has shown that we in the western world now spend more than 95 per cent of each day indoors! No wonder when we head out to the countryside, the local park or the grounds of CR, we give ourselves a mini retreat, whether of a few minutes or hours. We are confronted with a world away from plastic, from manmade objects, central heating and inanimate creation: instead we have living nature's seasons of wind and rain, sun and moon, dark and light: all around is the age-old landscape that continues day after day with no regard to Brexit worries, Donald Trump or even C of E synod rulings! How delightful that is in itself!

So a positive new year's resolution for me has been to appreciate rather more often and rather more intrinsically the beauty and abundance of nature. Not so much 'tree-hugging' – but spending a little more time valuing the natural world in walks through woodland and over hills, moors and fens, as JH Newman would no doubt quantify them. For those of a true Yorkshire persuasion, I can also add that of course nature is free! Unlike those retail therapy shopping trips which can cost a small fortune for a very temporary uplift. There is also my resolution to appreciate my growing collection of indoor houseplants: these leafy friends that silently watch my daily routine, listen to my moans and laments at life's frustrations, and have to cope with my sometimes tardy administering of water: each has become little friendly green pots of splendour. Calming in their simplicity and beauty.

Let me end with some words from William Blake, the great poet, mystic and visionary:

'To see a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour.'

Andrew Wallis

Ministry on the Margins

Being a mental healthcare chaplain can sometimes seem that it is offering ministry on the margins, for it certainly is an eclectic ministry!

Back in 2002 I was grateful to our diocesan Bishop and director of ordinands for both believing and supporting my calling to ordained ministry in healthcare chaplaincy, rather than parochial ministry. So, whilst being licensed to a parish,(for which I am so grateful) my main ministry is in chaplaincy.

It seems worthy of sharing after years of involvement, and in experience in both healthcare and prison chaplaincy, that it is also missional. In supporting that suggestion it can be seen that in the traditional parochial model it is chiefly reliant upon people coming to a church. In contrast, chaplaincy is about going to people and meeting them where they are at. It is also worthy of mention that at any one time the patients in a hospital are generally representative of society. By that it is likely a majority will be "unchurched". And yet it is often that when people are facing adversity they start to question the meaning of life and perhaps explore the spiritual part of their being. Often there are requests for prayers of forgiveness, confession and requests often for Bibles. To these people who we offer support to, journey with and minister to, many state they would not have gone to a church, for varying reasons.

So, it is good to meet these people where they are at as we humbly seek to support their spiritual wellbeing. For it is worth pointing out that the Royal College of Psychiatry now embraces the fact that a person's spiritual wellbeing has an influence on their mental wellbeing. Moreover, spiritual wellbeing

is now more accepted as a part of the wholistic model of a person's overall wellbeing. Hence our chaplaincy team have been receiving an increased number of referrals from healthcare professionals. That is to be welcomed, but it does provide our lead chaplain with one or two resourcing challenges. For we are a large mental health trust spread out over multiple sites and also increasingly being involved in community chaplaincy. And yet we are a relatively small team.

Meeting people then where they are at seems meaningful to me, and so fulfilling in offering this particular ministry. The diversity of people one meets is comprehensive in this role. From older people with dementia; general mental health conditions; young people and adolescents; people with addictions; secure units and people with severe personality disorders and self-harm issues, to mention a few – meeting people with whatever condition we do with respect and sensitivity, remembering some are vulnerable, some have issues of trust, which may have resulted from past traumas and experiences. That might require a patient approach to build up a sense of trust with, say, someone who may have been abused. Also, many we journey with are likely to be receiving treatment for months, or even years!

Over the years of chaplaincy ministry there have been some truly humbling experiences. Much gratitude and appreciation has been expressed and gifts offered; although we are not allowed to receive any monetary gifts, we suggest they offer them to their local church or some charity.

Well, one such expression of appreciation was notable. One lady who I had been visiting for over two years, and was suffering complex mental health problems, as well as several physical ones too, was fond of knitting when her concentration levels were sufficient to enable her to. On visits over the months I had encouraged this talent she had, and admired the articles she had managed to knit. Sometimes she might abandon it for weeks when suffering a particularly severe period in her illness. So one appreciated just how commendable it was to actually knit anything, given her difficult

circumstances. So, on one visit it was to my astonishment that she said to me "Father Barrie, I have managed to knit you this sweater. It is a small token from me for all your support and prayers and being here for me in this adversity. I hope it is to your satisfaction". Well that was one of the occasions when I was humbled in the extreme. This lady had presented me with the most beautifully knit Arran sweater that would have graced any clothes shop, all under such difficult circumstances. What an act of loving kindness. It is something I treasure for what went into the creating of this gift, and an example of how we, as chaplains, learn and receive on a deep level sometimes, from those whom we support and journey with.

Ministry in this context provides fertile ground for much reflection: for example, when one meets and journeys with people such as the one just mentioned, plus many more, and one appreciates that for these people their faith is so important. For some they testify that faith is the one flicker of light in a life of darkness and adversity. That may be difficult to understand when one is not suffering from adverse mental health conditions. And it has caused me to reflect upon how my faith would stand up to living with such difficulties. Yes, as my colleagues concur, we really do learn from those we seek to support.

Another aspect of our role is that we also support staff in their dedicated yet challenging roles. One sees the difficult conditions that they can be involved in and face on a daily basis. It is not uncommon for staff to confide in us and for us be a listener for them. Indeed, that seems from the years in chaplaincy perhaps the vital quality required for our role: that we are a listener! For everyone has a story to tell, yet often there is no one to hear it.

As a priest ministering in this context I have been assaulted, sworn at, exposed to and shouted at. Yet it is for me a most fulfilling, rewarding and privileged ministry to be called by the Lord to be in. In conclusion, this statement makes that feel so affirmed. One person recently stated to me after numerous visits, "Thank you, for you have brought me hope when there was no hope. Your ministry is difficult, seeing people like me. I will pray for you"!

I did suggest that the Lord had given her the hope, but appreciation like that makes us as chaplains keep on keeping. For, yes, this is ministry on the margins.

Barrie Gaskell

Our Sisters and Brothers in the Jewish Faith

O MERCIFUL God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor desirest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Many will recall hearing this collect on Good Friday which was part of the liturgy for that day in the Book of Common Prayer. While praying for four classes of people, it suggests that 'ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word' are – at best – sins to which they are particularly prone. The prayer is for God's mercy – which we all need – and it does not include Jews and Muslims ('Turks') under the rubric of unbeliever ('infidels'); they believe in the same God.

It would be hard, however, not to hear notes of hostility towards Jews in this prayer. There are far worse attitudes towards Jewish people to be found in Christian liturgy. At its worst, there have been phrases which have blamed the Jewish people as a whole for the death of Christ, a kind of collective guilt. In 1964 the Roman Catholic church rejected this foolish notion and unequivocally condemned anti-Semitism, later removing the offending material from the western liturgy.

The bible gives us a wonderful account of the Jewish people and their relation to the God Who has called them; in their story we see our own as Christians. Then comes a Jew, a devout Jew, born of a devout Jewish mother, to renew and reform his people. People are drawn to him but in the end he is abandoned by those around him and brought to death by a group of people in power, whom the New Testament often and fatefully terms 'the Jews'. In Matthew – a gospel which shows evidence of being written in an environment of inner Jewish dispute – Pilate declares his own innocence and gets the reply: 'Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children'. (27.25). No verse has more of a claim to be a source text for anti-Semitism than this one.

Anti-Semitism is lifting up its ugly profile and that is something which is profoundly disturbing – there has been a rise in attacks on Jews and Jewish premises and the Labour party is facing prejudice and abuse from its own against its own. For a Christian it is clear that the Jew is our brother and our sister. This is an echo of St John XXIII (whose second name was Joseph) who in meeting members of a Jewish charitable body exclaimed 'I am Joseph, your brother', quoting Gen 45.5). Any prejudice, any irrational dislike or behaviour towards Jews is wrong and indeed a grave sin.

In those texts in the New Testament, we read and hear of the conflicts between *particular* people and groups – it is clear that some behaved with great wickedness and it is at least arguable that the sin of Peter in denying Christ whom he knew and loved was as great as that of Jewish leaders in front of Pilate. They are important to us because of how in them God shews us how our responses can be like theirs, not because they represent future peoples. It is to misuse scripture seriously if we bend it to feed our fears.

So are then Jews no different from any other people? For Christians they are special, because they are elected and that election has not been withdrawn. The gospel is for the Jew first and the Gentile second! In Romans 9-11 Paul who is surely motivated by a love for Israel deeper than he had when he was Saul, is severe in warning non-Jews of the dangers of being hostile to them, howsoever much he decries the feeble response of Jews to the good news. They belong to

the one gathering of God and as such, are a part as Jews of what goes to make the church the church.

If something like this is the case – and it has been said that Romans 9-11 is as prickly as a hedge-hog – then the idea that the church has replaced Israel, much as a new washing machine replaces an old one, needs to be put to rest. There are many ways of expressing the relation between Christians and Jews and this replacement idea has had a long run, but at best it treats Jews much as one might treat a leftover or a last speaker of an ancient tongue. At worst……

None of this has specific implications about how one regards modern Israel. Some would argue that to be opposed to Israel is itself anti-Semitic. This is surely a confusion. For the desire for not only a Jewish homeland, but for an actual stat e, is a comparatively recent aspiration for Jews. Zionism is a nineteenth-century development and until the second half of the last century lacked much of a following outside European Jewry. To desire a secure social and political space for Jews is not the same thing as to settle in an already lived-in area and to colonise it. Not all Jews are Zionists, not all Zionists are Jews.

So this Good Friday, may I suggest you make this your own prayer for other members of our family?

> Lord God of Abraham,
> bless the children of your covenant, both Jew and Christian;
> take from us all blindness and bitterness of heart,
> and hasten the coming of your kingdom,
> when the Gentiles shall be gathered in,
> all Israel shall be saved,
> and we shall dwell together in mutual love and peace
> under the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> **Thomas CR**

Companions

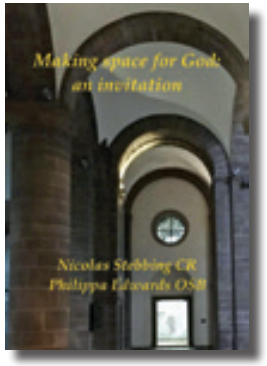
New: Rex Matthias
RIP: Celia Mackle; Ian Farrell.

Society of the Resurrection

New Probationers:
Robert Hammond
Barry Lowery
Andrew Wakeham-Dawson

Book Review

Making Space for God: An Invitation.
Nicolas Stebbing CR and Philippa Edwards OSB. Mirfield Publications.
Paperback. 112 pp. Isbn 978 0902834 48 4. £6.50.



It is not simple to explain the monastic impulse to contemporary culture. In just over a hundred pages, a CR father and a Benedictine nun do just that however. They explore the call, vows, habits, silence, and more in an engaging and direct way.

They begin by giving us something of their life history and how they met each other as students and then both found their way into their respective Religious communities. This biographical foundation draws the reader into the path they both took and the development of their vocations. Their journey into community then becomes the reader's, as they chronicle the issues they faced and explain how they came to understand the significance of the elements of Religious life.

It is striking how the ecumenical element seems so natural – an Anglican and a Roman Catholic writing in one spirit, showing how the monastic impulse transcends the divisions in the Christian family. In an era when identity politics seems to be making a comeback, amidst the so-called 'populism' of some political leaders, it is important that the churches do not retreat into defended corners but instead proclaim all that brings us together. Therefore, the ease of this work's collaboration is a statement in itself.

The writing is also honest and direct. It cannot remain neutral when faced with the stresses of twenty-first-century Western society. Strong political positions are glimpsed in the commentary on modern life. Seeking God in community has brought a perspective that must challenge various contemporary attitudes. I was struck by the chapter on 'valuing our world' and caring, whether about elderly people or the environment, where the definition of poverty is cast wide. The very planet itself is part of 'the poor', exploited in pursuit of wealth. Religious life is counter-cultural not only because it speaks of God in a secular society, but because it is a stand against the economic individualism that is dominating human interaction.

This is not an exposition then that portrays Religious life as in any way cosy or safe or a retreat into spiritual exploration. It has a radical edge. But neither is it a call purely to activism. Instead it finds power to change lives in silence, in worship and in seeking God in the wide variety of our actions and interactions.

The authors make the case for the monastic impulse changing lives one by one, as it has theirs, and thereby society is challenged to re-think and re-set. I hope it is widely read.

Petà Dunstan

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Please send articles for consideration for the CR Review to the editors at least 5 weeks before the issue date.

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