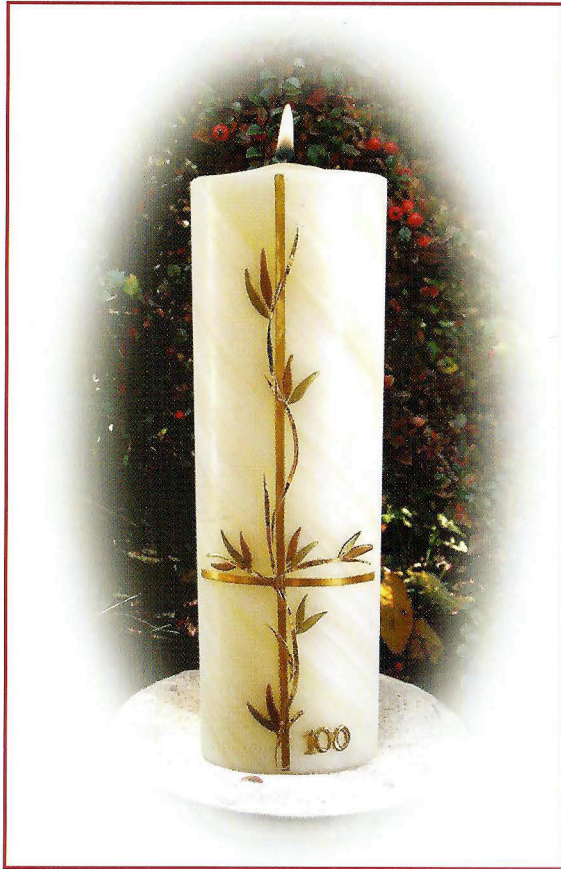


FAIRACRES CHRONICLE

The Community of the Sisters of the Love of God



one hundred years
1906 ~ 2006

WINTER 2006

Vol 39 No.3

£1.50

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	2
COMMUNITY NOTES	5
DARKNESS AND LIGHT	
Sister Barbara June SLG.....	7
FOR AN ‘UNKNOWN FRIEND’ ON HIS BIRTHDAY	
Reinhard Körner OCD	11
CLAIMING CONNECTIONS: CENTENARY REFLECTIONS	
Mother Rosemary SLG.....	17
‘THE SURPRISING LOVE OF GOD’	
Archbishop Rowan Williams.....	21
THE FOUNDING OF THE CONVENT OF ST MARY OF NAZARETH, DUDWELL ST MARY, BURWASH IN 1935	
From the Community Archives	24
SLG AT ST ISAAC’S October 1995 – June 2006	
Sister Susan SLG.....	28
TO GOD AND GOD ALONE: Contemplative Communities Celebrate Centenaries.....	
Eldridge Pendleton SSJE.....	33
THE CROSS IN OUR LIVES	
Curtis Almquist SSJE	37
‘THE PASSING OF THE FATHER FOUNDER’: An Account of the Death in 1914 of Fr George Seymour Hollings SSJE	
From the Community Archives	45
ASSOCIATES	49
SLG CHARITABLE TRUST LIMITED: The Community and the Company Sister Avis Mary SLG	50
CHARLES MURRAY ROGERS RIP	58
BOOK REVIEWS:	59
Jim Cotter Kenneth Leech John Scott Sr Adrian SLG Sr Avis Mary SLG	
ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS	70
<i>From SLG Press</i>	71
SOME SIGNIFICANT DATES	74
RETREAT OPPORTUNITIES	75

EDITORIAL

IN OUR AUTUMN EDITION, we reported on some of our major events to celebrate this our Centenary year, particularly on 6 August (Feast of the Transfiguration) and on the actual Centenary day, 14 September. We continue now to reflect with our readers on 100 years of the Sisters of the Love of God.

We were happy to have with us for the evening of 14 September the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and we include his thought-provoking reflections on the ‘Surprising Love of God’ in his homily at Vespers that day. He spoke to us of what it is to be a ‘Community of the Love of God’, called to be under the cross of Christ who redeemed us—as St Paul said—by ‘becoming accursed’. Fr Curtis Almquist, Superior of the American Congregation of the Society of St John the Evangelist, had spoken to us in the morning about the cross in our personal lives, even as the exceptional rainstorms lashed down upon the roof of the vast marquee which had been hired for the occasion. We may have felt more settled and comfortable than the Israelites in the first reading (Numbers 21: 4-9) who complained that they had ‘no water’ (!) and that they were tired of unsatisfying food, yet housed as we were in a tent with the elements making themselves felt, we were reminded that we are all of us in transit all of the time. Br Curtis had some 250 people transfixed as he asked us, ‘Where is the cross in your life right now?’ Looking around and knowing just a little of some of the personal stories, including terminal illness, financial and legal worries, relationship difficulties and loneliness, we could guess that he was speaking in some way to every heart. Those present with us then will be glad to see his words reproduced here, and perhaps others who were not able to come will also be helped by them.

Our lives are interwoven with joy and sorrow (‘joy & woe are woven fine’: William Blake), with light and darkness. Here in the northern hemisphere, the days are growing shorter, even as we prepare to celebrate once more the coming of the Light of the World. Sister Barbara June gave us a homily on her own natal day in the summer, the Feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist, and we include here fruits of a lifetime of meditation upon this

enigmatic figure, the Forerunner, with whom she shares a birthday, now adapted by her for Advent reading under the title 'Darkness and light to thee are both alike'. John the Baptist—the Voice—tells us of Jesus, the one who is to come. As we prepare to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, Dr Reinhard Körner OCD asks searching questions along the lines of how much time amidst our celebrations we really have for him. Fr Reinhard is a Carmelite priest who has for many years run the priory and retreat house at Birkenwerder, north of Berlin. He is well known in Germany for his retreats, courses and many books in the field of spirituality. We are honoured to be able to introduce him as a new author for SLG Press and are publishing a translation of two talks which he gave on the topic of Suffering (see page 71 for details).

To return to the *Community's* birthday, we print in this edition the second part (*Quo vadis?*) of Mother Rosemary's centenary reflections 'Claiming Connections' given on 7 August 2006. We mentioned last time the importance for our life of the houses where the Community has lived and featured Boxmoor in Hertfordshire and Bede House in Kent. Now it is the turn of our other two smaller houses. We give an account from the archives of the foundation in 1935 of Burwash in Sussex, which we sold in 1992. Sister Susan has written about the story of SLG at St Isaac's in New Zealand from 1995 until this year when we withdrew, leaving it in the hands of the St Isaac's trustees—including Sister Anne, who asked to remain there. Sister Susan's reflections will be welcomed by those who know and love St Isaac's, and by others wishing to know something of this aspect of our history and what it has given us.

This brings us to this Convent of the Incarnation at Fairacres, where with few exceptions all of us are now. How to do justice to the story of Fairacres? Space has run out this time, but perhaps that is 'meant', for our life here goes on and there will be other opportunities. In 2007 we shall return to publishing two editions during the year. In the first few days of June, we shall be electing a Reverend Mother. By then, Mother Rosemary will have served for 11 years, the maximum consecutive period currently permitted by our Statutes. She hopes to have a time of rest and retreat after that,

returning to the common life this time next year. We shall ‘hold’ the summer *Fairacres Chronicle* until June, in order to be able, God willing, to announce the name of her successor. Next year is a celebratory year for SLG Press, when we give thanks for the 40 years since we began in 1967 and for those whose vision it was—in particular, Fr Gilbert Shaw and Mother Mary Clare.

SLG was founded by the brethren of SSJE, then based just up the road from the Sisters and known as the ‘Cowley Fathers’ and now having its focus in the USA, and we rejoice at our ongoing links. Fr Eldridge Pendleton SSJE tells of some of the ways in which our two communities have been linked over these 100 years. He would say that an article of this kind can only touch briefly upon some aspects—which, in putting together this magazine, we can fully endorse! We are including the ‘period piece’ of the death of Fr George Seymour Hollings SSJE, our founder, letting this eloquent account of the unexpected ending of the first testing period of our history stand as a tribute to all that SSJE has given us.

The final article (by the Editor) is rather different: a reflection upon the registered charity which supports and sustains us and which provides us with the finances for our life and our fellow workers who help us day by day. The Editor would like to thank the many who have responded so positively to the extra autumn edition and all who have send messages of goodwill and support; your enthusiasm and encouragement have been much appreciated. We wish our readers a blessed Advent and a happy Christmas. As Sister Barbara June has done in her sermon, we shall give Sister Jane (Reverend Mother 1973-1988) the last word:

God shows his love for us by taking a vast risk, and each Christmas we are jolted into looking at it afresh. He ‘empties himself’ and puts himself into our hands, so that we can reject and refuse him, misunderstand and abuse him, manipulate and use him. Or we can try, by his grace, to respond with a love that does, however feeble, take its character from him.¹

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

¹ *Loving God Whatever*, Cairns Publications, in association with SLG, 2006, (p. 79. December 25).

COMMUNITY NOTES

TODAY, as every year in November, we had a Requiem Mass for all the Sisters of the Love of God who have died. This year the last name on the list at our Requiem was that of Sister Margaret Clare, our most senior Sister, who died on 8 November. In the 1980s, the most fulfilling years of her life, Sister Margaret Clare lived as a hermit in Cameroon with the Sisters of Emmanuel at Bafut. It was there that she exchanged the religious habit for simpler clothing, and on her return saw no reason to wear it again. She loved stories and she loved to write, so it was not difficult to persuade her to write down some of her memories for us, 'Meanderings of a Metheusaleh', as she called them. Fr David our Warden drew on these for his address at her funeral, and I quote here the beginning and the end of what he said:

Sister Margaret Clare came into this Community on 5 January 1938, in time for the Feast of Epiphany, and she died quietly on 9 November 2006, only five days beyond the anniversary of her actual life profession, 4 November in the octave of All Saints. It is an extraordinary span. As a young girl of 26, she was thrilled to be here. The day after her entry she ran, singing, down the cloister, rounded the corner and cannoned straight into Mother Mary Frances. Mother Mary Frances' stern rebuke seems to have melted before a postulant who simply said that she was 'terribly happy'. And at the other end of these sixty-eight years, her final, whispered word, in response to the words of Psalm 71, with its rocklike affirmation of God's abiding love, was not so very different: 'Lovely!' Her death, only a short time later, seemed a kind of falling into that love.

As I have prepared this homily, the striking thing about Sister's Margaret Clare's life has seemed to be the way ends and beginnings come together. Going through her papers I discovered something extraordinary. When she went to see Fr Cary in 1937 to ask about joining SLG, after a long debate with herself, she decided to wear her best frock—navy-blue satin, with white muslin trimmings, set

off by a scarlet handbag. His acceptance of her, just as she was, was a turning point. Today we bury her in another navy blue frock and with a white scarf: the longest professed Sister, who did not wear a habit, had dropped her dedication, and was, in her own words, ‘an unclassifiable hermit’. But, I would want to say, from that moment with Fr Cary to the last breath, a God-made, true Sister of the Love of God in the profound depths of her heart. She died in utter obedience to God’s love, and God has received her into his heart.

Today at our Requiem, as every year, there comes a point, while the names are being read out, when a change happens: about a third of the way through the list we come to the Sisters whom I have known, and from there on the names are no longer just names, they evoke faces, mannerisms, conversations, stories, and experiences we have shared. The names speak of a rainbow of different relationships—some bright in my memory, some dim—which persist even though in a hundred years ‘death has undone so many’.

At Christmas as we celebrate the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ we put ourselves in the way of apprehending a comparable but immeasurably more significant change: there comes a point in the tale of human history when the name of God is more than a name. Since the birth in Bethlehem, ‘God’ evokes a particular human face, a human story, and our own human experience. ‘God’ is a relationship in which we ourselves are held and known first hand, God is recognizable, *known*. May we all enter by faith this Christmas more deeply into that knowledge and love:

*And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.*

And he replied:

*Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way.*

MOTHER ROSEMARY SLG

DARKNESS AND LIGHT
to thee are both alike

SISTER BARBARA JUNE SLG

A sermon given at Fairacres on the Nativity of
John the Baptist 24 June 2006, adapted for Advent reading

He must increase: I must decrease.

He must grow greater: I must grow smaller.

ST AUGUSTINE likes to link this text to December and June,¹ the winter and the summer solstice (in the northern hemisphere, I hasten to add!) and the way that the days grow longer and lighter from Christ's birthday, and shorter and darker from John's. The balance, shift and play between light and darkness seasonally, daily, spiritually, in any life is important, isn't it? Liturgically Advent waits for a daystar's dawning and the coming of the Light of the World. The midsummer celebration of a previous nativity, that of John the Baptist, invites us to focus on the pattern of light and darkness in the life of the Forerunner.

John's life too begins in joy and a wonderful and mysterious new dawn. The unexpected fulfilment of the hopes of his aged parents causes a stir of wonder and speculation among their neighbours. 'What then shall this child become?' is the question being buzzed about in the hill country of Judah after his birth.

Yet the surprising name given him at his circumcision, breaking with tradition, already distances him from his family and environment. His father's solemn prediction, that the child is destined to be called the prophet of the most High and to go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way, defines his vocation.

The hidden years in the wilderness, with Elijah the Tishbite as a role model in dress and lifestyle, marginalizes him yet the more. St Augustine well classifies him as a man on the edge, standing at the frontier—or boundary line—between the Old and the New,

¹ 292, *Natalis Johannes Bapt.*

mysteriously excluded from the coming kingdom. He is the one of whom Jesus says there is none born of woman who is greater, and yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. So John in some sense is a patron for the marginalized, the misfits, the non-conformists, those who feel they don't quite belong or qualify.

To his contemporaries his charismatic strangeness raises urgent questions. No longer 'What then shall this child become?', but 'Who are you? What have you got to say about yourself?'. The terms in which he answers those 'Who are you?' questions exemplify, I think, a kind of inner shift in the way he sees himself in the short time of his public ministry.

First of all he likes to answer the 'Who are you?' questions about himself and his work in terms of a voice, a herald voice, with a loud and urgent message to proclaim. He knows from the start who he is not and is always clear that the announcement he has to make is about the un-named greater someone who is coming. So John's self definition is in terms of the voice described in Isaiah 40: 1-11, the first reading for the Feast. It sounds like an Advent reading, and Isaiah's is the prophetic voice linking John's birth with that of Jesus.

So, John is a voice, and as the Advent hymn puts it:

Hark, a herald voice is calling
Christ is near, it seems to say.

There is something compelling and magnetic about a sound we don't ordinarily get a chance to hear in our day and age—a loud, clear, resonant, un-amplified human voice in proclamation. I'm remembering the crowd soon gathering round the Town Crier I heard at Rye last summer. He appeared on the steps of the Town Hall in his heraldic medieval costume, bell in hand. As he began to proclaim his message, a crowd quickly gathered, children first and then tourists, drawn by the unusual sound and spectacle. It was not hard to make the connection with John on Jordan's bank, uncouthly dressed.

John's proclamatory voice must be imagined. It is visually suggested in some notable pictures and carvings of him by a strong pointing hand. Think of the famous Grünewald altarpiece where the Baptist stands at the side, pointing to the Christ in agony on the

Cross. The Baptist's pointing hand is saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God' and to emphasise this the artist makes that hand dominant and disproportionately large, to match the larger hands of the Crucified.

But as well as arousing expectation and focussing attention away from the speaker, a pointing hand can also be accusatory and sharp with judgment. It is not difficult to imagine John the Baptist's pointing finger sweeping across the crowd on Jordan's bank and gunning down the complacent and self-righteous, while he says: 'You brood of vipers; who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' A more serious and personal accusation is the uncompromising, bold, truth-telling rebuke to Herod: 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' Those are the words specifically that bring John to imprisonment, darkness, death.

At his life's end no less than at its beginning, the Forerunner prefigures what lies ahead for Jesus. It is from prison, from that place of darkness and doubt, that John asks his own 'Who are you?' question of the one he once thought he knew as greater than he. 'Are you the one who is to come, or must we look for another?' 'Are you the someone I confidently announced would come after me—or was it all a terrible mistake, and should we be looking expectantly for someone else?' Paradoxically, John is both a great believer and a congenital doubter—like his father Zachariah. His 'Who are you?' question to Jesus hangs unanswered directly. Doubt and belief co-exist beyond questions and answers.

Imprisonment may silence John's voice, but darkness is the context of the second way in which he defines himself—not only as voice, but as listener. That claim comes out strikingly in the words he uses about himself in that memorable testimony which pre-dates his imprisonment. His own disciples have come to him, loyally protesting that everyone is going to Jesus. He responds: 'You yourselves can testify that I said, "I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him". The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less' (John 3: 27-30). John rejoices in his lessening from greatest to least. His

growing less is not so much a diminution as a distillation—lessening down to a maximum capacity for Christ—*kenosis*, Forerunner style!

So at the last John is the joy-filled listener in the darkness—and at the first too. En-wombed in darkness, an unborn listener responds to Mary’s voice raised in salutation and kick-starts his life’s work. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and John speaks without tongues, preparing the way of the Lord.

In his poem, ‘The Quickening of John the Baptist’, subtitled ‘On the contemplative vocation’, Thomas Merton writes about John as the type specifically of contemplative religious ‘planted in the night of contemplation, sealed in the dark and waiting to be born’. John, listening in the womb, waits upon what Merton calls ‘the first far drums of Christ the Conqueror’, a phrase which evokes for me, whether Merton meant it or not, the steady, muffled boom—boom—boom of a foetal heartbeat.

Night is our diocese and silence is our ministry
Poverty our charity and helplessness our tongue-tied sermon.
Beyond the scope of sight or sound we dwell upon the air
Seeking the world’s gain in an unthinkable experience.
We are exiles in the far end of solitude, living as listeners
With hearts attending to the skies we cannot understand:
Waiting upon the first far drums of Christ the Conqueror,
Planted like sentinels upon the world’s frontier.

For us, who are listening in the darkness of Advent for the voice proclaiming the Coming One, these lines peculiarly resonate with our Community vocation—and indeed that of all contemplatives. But if they seem a bit too metaphorical, here—to give Sister Jane the last word—is the sentence allocated to 24 June, the Feast of John’s nativity, in *Loving God Whatever*:

If we *can* let the darkness and emptiness ‘come upon us’, I believe they prove to be more friendly than we expect.²

The extract from the poem is reproduced from The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton, Sheldon Press 1977, p. 201, by kind permission of Sheldon Press.

² Cairns Publications, in association with SLG, 2006 p. 40.

FOR AN ‘UNKNOWN FRIEND’ ON HIS BIRTHDAY

as Christmas approaches

REINHARD KÖRNER OCD

IF I WERE a scriptwriter and filmmaker, I’d like at some point to produce, as vividly as I could, a short play based upon the following situation. A birthday celebration is taking place and many guests have come. A moving speech is given, music is performed which really touches the heart, a festive evening meal is served. The guests have brought presents with them, and they give them to one another... and somewhere in the midst of them, the one whose birthday it is just stands there. Some people take the opportunity to ask him to help them in various ways, but otherwise, and in general, people take no notice of him.

This situation seems as if it must have been made up. In the way we really celebrate birthdays, this downright grotesque scenario has almost no precedent. Yet it is no fabrication. It is repeated year after year, as we celebrate the ‘Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord’.

Interest in Jesus?

In linking this scenario with Christmas, I’m not thinking primarily of the people in secularised Europe who as a matter of course celebrate Christian feasts without being aware of their religious meaning, but rather I have in mind the situation within the Church. I’m thinking of Christians who attend services Sunday by Sunday, and on Christmas Eve too, and of those who care for them pastorally. I’m thinking of Christmas Eve as I have experienced it and helped to shape it myself for many years within the context of Christianity as it is. Attention is paid to the festive music, the decorations on the tree, the glow of the candles, the time before and after the church celebration of Christmas, the presents, the special food, the familiar get-togethers—an idyll, then, which the Christmas festival conjures up year by year in people’s hearts. The preacher speaks of peace on earth and of the needs of the whole world,

perhaps of human longings, perhaps too (and as far as possible in a suitable ‘parsonical voice’ and catechismal language) of God’s Son who was born in Bethlehem. And the very one whose name is mentioned again and again on this evening hears himself being talked about, but stands there alone. If someone does turn to him personally, then it is with concerns for him to attend to.

I can well understand if the well-disposed reader, after much shaking of the head so far, were at this point to ask what it is I want, and whether I’m seeing problems where they don’t really exist, at least with regard to the Church’s initiates, its circle of ‘active Christians’. I’d have reacted the same way until that year when I left the setting of general church life and society and experienced my first Christmas in the Carmelite priory. We don’t give each other presents at Christmas in the priory. Between supper and Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, we stay in our cells in silence and solitude. In turns, each brother then brings to another brother the bambino from the crib for half an hour. Left alone for half an hour like this with the unadorned clay figure on Christmas Eve nearly a quarter of a century ago, I became aware for the first time: ‘I’ve never actually spent Christmas properly with you, Jesus. I’ve never actually said “Happy Birthday” to you. I’ve never yet told you, on the feast of your birth, how good it is that you exist. I haven’t yet asked how *you* are and—who you are.’

My friend from Nazareth...

Religion is a two-edged sword. A human being can mature through religion, but can also backslide, according to whether love or greed is the secret motivation behind his or her piety. In his time, Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) found that:

Many people want to look at God with the eyes with which they look at a cow and want to love God as they love a cow. You love her because of the milk and because of the cheese, and in any case for your own benefit. This is how all those people who love God for the sake of outward riches or inner comfort behave. They do

not, however, love God properly, but they love their own self-interest.¹

These lines have lost nothing in topicality, and that is shameful, not primarily for the faithful in our parishes, but above all for us, the ‘shepherds’, insofar as we do not know how to teach them anything other than that they can get ‘milk and cheese’ from religion.

Perhaps at no time more than at the feast of Christmas is it so clearly revealed how badly the Christian ‘faith’ as it is actually practised is saturated with this ‘milk and cheese piety’. For someone who has eyes and is willing to see, it occurs with particular intensity on this day. We can, however, here at the feast of Christmas also become aware of the complete craziness of this ‘piety’ and above all of its abysmal nastiness towards God. And precisely therein lies an opportunity, one we should take.

Christmas can be a good chance to counteract this mentality, which emanates from getting trapped in the ego and promotes what is practically godlessness. We only need to set sufficiently decisively before our own eyes—and, as we proclaim the gospel and celebrate the liturgy, those of the people who are dear to us and who celebrate with us—what this feast is actually about. We are celebrating, to use the official liturgical title again, the ‘Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord’, a *birthday*, therefore! Then all we’d have to do is to have the idea—or lead each other towards it—of behaving no differently with this birthday than with the birthdays of our relatives, friends and colleagues at work, where we just take it for granted that:

we give our attention to the one who has the birthday, not to the ins and outs of the celebration;

what occupies the centre of attention isn’t looking back upon the circumstances of the person’s birth (or at the most, not more than occasionally, in passing), but the person who was born then, as he or she is today;

the guests don’t exchange presents with each another, but give them to the one whose birthday it is; and

¹ Sermon 16.

we don't (on this day at least!) come to the one who is celebrating a birthday with all our own wishes and concerns, but we give him some sign of attention, we say warmly affectionate words and we show a little interest in him and in his wishes and concerns.

I only feel that I have celebrated Christmas properly if I've had at least a brief, yet intimate, personal meeting with the 'birthday boy' who is alive, hidden and yet present, and if talking with him has been first and foremost about congratulating him. A Christmas sermon is only 'on topic' if it's about *Jesus*, the Jesus of then, who is the Jesus of now. The sermon is only 'relevant' if it is *mystagogic*, that is, if it teaches people to say a personal 'You, Jesus...' It has only hit the right note if the preacher has just greeted this Friend, this Friend from Nazareth, on his birthday and talks about him.

Who are you, Jesus?

What is proclaimed on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day is based upon texts taken from the so-called 'infancy narratives' in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke or from the Prologue to the Gospel of John. The placing of these texts within the total concept of the respective Gospel gives us—if it is observed—a further important tip as to how to go about sharing the mystery of Christmas and the Christmas proclamation.

Independently of one another and using differing pictorial narrative styles from different literary modes, Matthew and Luke each take two chapters to unfold what their shared model, the Gospel of Mark, expresses in a single line: 'the beginning of the Gospel about Jesus, the Son of God'.² Just as these first words in Mark present a kind of heading where the listener and reader is told what and whom what follows will be about, namely the joyous news of a person called Jesus who is the anticipated Messiah, the Son of God, so also do the first two chapters in Matthew and Luke, and likewise the Prologue in John. As in a preface which unfolds the

² Mark 1: 1.

title of a book and leads into the content of a work, or as in an overture which presents the theme of a piece of music, so the four evangelists try to make people curious about the One they will talk about in what follows in their writings—one (Mark) is short and sweet,³ two (Matthew and Luke) use pictorial narratives,⁴ and one (John) employs an old Greek philosophers' song, now applied to Jesus.⁵

Putting the Christmas texts at the beginning of the Gospels reveals the right place of the Christmas feast itself. In sermons and in the liturgy, the Christmas message should not give the impression of a hermetically sealed theme, but should be a 'heading' to be presented. Christmas is a preface, an overture, and a stimulus and an opportunity to occupy myself more consciously from now on with the one whose birthday it is, to interest myself in him as a person, in his life, in his message and his bequest, in his fate. The Christmas feast poses the question, 'Who are you, Jesus?' We can use the time after the feast and throughout the whole New Year to study and meditate upon this entire question by asking, 'Who are you really, Jesus? Not just the biblical figure of long ago but you, Jesus, the Jesus of today? What kind of heart, what kind of inner life is actually concealed behind your name? How do you think, how do you feel, what are your views? How do you see God? How do you see us human beings? And what was it that you really wanted when you let yourself in for becoming human?'

If this doesn't arouse at least the beginning of interest, then one shouldn't fool oneself that the Christmas liturgy, be it ever so festive, has anything to do with the Christian faith. I say that because I believe that God and our fellow human beings deserve for us to open each other's eyes as to how scandalous our practical godlessness at the altar and in the pews really is.

³ Mark 1: 1.

⁴ Matthew 1 & 2; Luke 1 & 2.

⁵ John 1: 1-18.

You, unknown guest...

Probably most clergy and most people have never been at all interested in getting to know Jesus better and more fundamentally, not in general, and certainly not at Christmas. Human beings seem to have a sixth sense that getting involved with the Man from Nazareth would bring both excitement and disturbance. Life is more peaceful if we live with a fixed image of Jesus which was given us once and is then confirmed again and again. Whoever would think that there is someone standing behind the projection screen who longs to be recognized for who he is: the One who is always greater, always ‘completely other’?

The theologian Hans Weder introduced a new key expression to New Testament hermeneutics, to the scholarship of the correct understanding and interpretation of the Gospels: the expression ‘unknown guest’.⁶ Applying it to our reflections: if a person doesn’t stick with ‘little Jesus in the manger’, but after Christmas goes on reading the Gospels from which the ‘preface’ was proclaimed at Christmas and asks the one who had the ‘birthday’ with genuine interest in him as a person: ‘Who are you, Jesus?’, then he or she will meet a stranger who does not correspond to what is familiar and known, who, with his views and his ways of behaving, does not really fit in with today’s world, does not really fit in the Church either, nor within the framework of the words with which we customarily paint his portrait in liturgy and in proclaiming the Gospel.

This key expression, which theologians quote today, doesn’t simply speak of the ‘stranger’, but of the ‘unknown *guest*’. It means that the power and credibility of Christianity will depend, in small things as well as in great, upon whether we ‘deport’ this stranger or give him the right to hospitality at our tables.

The ‘Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord’ can be an opportunity to extend a (counter) invitation when offering

⁶ Neutestamentliche Hermeneutik, Zürich 1993, P. 427 ff.

congratulations: ‘You, Stranger from Nazareth, come to my room, sit down with me and tell me about yourself, just as a stranger would do. Tell me about how you live, how you think, who you are. I want to listen to you, even if what you say will not always confirm my own opinion or share my convictions, even if it brings into question my answers and completely topples my image of you and your God.’

I can imagine the one whose birthday it is, the stranger from Nazareth, replying to my invitation: ‘Do you *really* want me to tell you about myself? And if I come... will you be at home?’

This article was published in German, firstly in a pastoral letter to the Archdiocese of Berlin (*Informationen*) in November 1995 and subsequently as *Dem „fremden Freund“ zum Geburtstag: Weihnachten entgegen* in the book *Mystik konkret: Impulse aus dem Karmel für das geistliche Leben heute*, Reinhard Körner, St Benno-Verlag, Leipzig, 2nd ed. 1998. It has been translated into English by Sister Avis Mary SLG. Permission to reproduce the article in English has been given by the St Benno-Verlag.

CLAIMING CONNECTIONS:

CENTENARY REFLECTIONS ON 7 AUGUST 2006

Part Two: *Quo vadis?*

MOTHER ROSEMARY SLG

SOME FIFTY YEARS AGO Fr Sophrony hazarded that monasticism in the form in which we know it would not survive in the modern world. He foresaw a new form which would be simpler, closer to the way in which ordinary people live (so more hidden), and at the same time radically different because based on the gospel and repentance for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Something like Jesus’ teaching:

In the white blaze of this kingdom of his there was to be no property, no privilege, no pride and precedence; no motive indeed and no reward but love. Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him? Even his disciples cried out when he would not spare them the light. Is it any wonder that the priests realized that between this man and themselves there was no choice but that he or priest-craft should perish? Is it any wonder that the Roman soldiers, confronted and amazed by something soaring over their comprehension and threatening all their disciplines, should take refuge in wild laughter, and crown him with thorns and robe him in purple and make a mock Cæsar of him? For to take him seriously was to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness. *cf.* Matt. 12: 46–50; Mark 10: 17–25; Mark 7: 1–9.

H. G. Wells, *Short History of the World*, 1922.
‘The Teaching of Jesus’

A purple passage! And H. G. Wells certainly did not have twenty-first century monastic or contemplative life in mind when he wrote it. But if we are really thinking about our beginnings, and the rock on which we are founded, surely it does speak directly to us: ‘no property, no privilege, no pride and precedence; no motive indeed and no reward but love’; ‘to take him [Jesus] seriously was [is] to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness.’

When I was preparing my chapter charge in June, my attention was caught by a news report about a robot spacecraft being designed to gather information on Mars. When completed, it will lead the most advanced attempt so far to discover life on the seemingly barren red planet. Among its sophisticated features there will be a probe which would penetrate the permafrost and alert scientists to the presence of any molecules associated with life, such as amino acids. In its thoroughness, moving slowly across the surface of the planet, taking samples at a depth not reached before, remaining for several years, the report claimed that it would be ‘no tourist’ or passing visitor. It would open up a new level of serious endeavour and its findings would command respect.’ I reflected that

if SLG is to survive, if contemplative monastic life is to survive, it will have to have seriousness, depth, or we will be mere ‘tourists’, not serious ourselves and with no right to be taken seriously.

Two days ago I was given further cause for reflection. I took part in a survey by the Ian Ramsey Centre, which gathers together theologians, psychologists, neuroscientists and philosophers in inter-disciplinary research. The aim is to study religious belief, its relation to the brain, and its impact on conscious experience. I had agreed to be a guinea-pig for them several months ago, and am even sufficiently interested in the work to have agreed to go and do it the day before our big celebration! This particular piece of research is about the effects of religious beliefs and perceived control on the perception and processing of pain, so, after filling in a long questionnaire (the tick-the-box variety), I went up to the John Radcliffe hospital on Saturday afternoon for a series of functional MRI scans during which I looked at different images and was subjected to small (and not so small!) amounts of pain, my responses being minutely recorded. Afterwards the further questions I was asked and the conversation I had with the researcher raised for both of us questions about the involvement of our bodies in prayer and the occurrence of ‘subjective’ but scientifically measurable experiences. At one point he said how *healing* it would be if practices such as chanting, meditation, and saying the Jesus prayer, perhaps using prostrations, were more widely known and practised in the Christian churches. That crystallized for me two further points that I want to make about contemplative life in the future. Firstly, I believe that we should learn to attend with much more respect and sensitivity to our bodies and our capacity to be conscious through and within the physical world. Secondly, we should see the connections, be ‘inter-disciplinary’ and gladly interfaith, in our learning and practice.

My hope for the first springs out of fundamental beliefs: that the world, the physical universe, is made by God and that it is good; that Christ, the Logos, the second person of the Trinity, became human and, in the man Jesus, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone. And it springs out of experience—of how my own awareness of

being, and being in a body, is always astonishing, and that that astonishment is first cousin to worship, and then to recognizing the given-ness, giftiness, of the world. We need those awarenesses. And it seems to me that there are at least some parallels between research into human consciousness in the material world and our 'experiment' of contemplative life, and what springs from our faith in the Word made flesh.

My hope that we should make connections, be 'inter-disciplinary' and gladly interfaith, in our learning and practice is also rooted in Christian faith and experience. In acknowledging the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we also acknowledge our limitation, that we are not God and that our knowledge, even knowledge informed by love, is little and limited. God is always more and other, and nothing is separated from Christ 'without whom nothing was made that was made'. Now, in our global village, everyone is our neighbour and in our deadly international conflicts we need every scrap of wisdom that human experience and faith can offer. We have no ground for imperialism, and no need to be afraid of the other.

We live as human beings at the crossing point of knowing and unknowing, actuality and potential, meaning and bafflement, yearning and dread. Contemplative life is at home in these borderlands where the touch of God can be felt directly and he awakens in us responsive faith. The search for truth becomes a search for his face.

The first part of this talk appeared in the Autumn 2006 edition of the Fairacres Chronicle.

‘THE SURPRISING LOVE OF GOD’

ARCHBISHOP ROWAN WILLIAMS

Reading: Galatians 2:19 - 3:3; 3:13-14; 6:14-16; including:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

CHRIST REDEEMED US by becoming accursed, says St Paul. Christ redeemed us by going to the place where everyone was sure God was not, and everything in the Letter to the Galatians hangs on that single—though I cannot call it simple—confession. The love of God is love that goes where God is not supposed to be, where God is not imagined or conceived to be. Love, we may often think, is free and gratuitous, and yet in most of our human relations, it rather tends to go where it is expected or returned or where it makes sense. God’s love is recognizable precisely as that love which goes where it has no business to go and which lives, blossoms and acts in the place of the curse, in the place where God is forgotten.

When St Paul writes about what does and does not justify us, set us right with God, he is reminding us that anything less than this vision of the God who redeems us through the accursed body of Jesus on the tree is likely simply to be a more or less sophisticated way of telling ourselves that at the end of the day, we *deserve* to be loved; that is to say, that we have a *contract* with God. St Paul wants us to believe both that it *is* utterly, absolutely, eternally, divinely natural that we are loved, because *God* is God, and that it is *not* divinely, naturally, the case that we are loved, because *we* are

who we are. St Paul walks that particular tightrope in all his letters, trying to save us from the twin abysses of despair and complacency. It is very much what justification by faith is all about; recognizing the love that is God's love, because it goes where it is not expected. And whether we think we are a place where God's love *is* to be expected because we are good, or whether we think we are a place where God's love could never be expected because we are bad, St Paul drives a coach and horses through both these errors. God is God, and the love of God is the love that goes where you don't expect.

So what is it to be a 'Community of the Love of God'? Is it to be a community of people who go where you are not expected to go?—a slightly odd condition, you might think, for a contemplative community! Yet part of the identity and the vision of this Community has always been to go in prayer and imagination, in solidarity and silence, to those places where God's love is not expected. That does not, of course, mean only that prayer and thought and imagining flow out from a community such as this to the places where God is forgotten or where people believe that God has forgotten them. It also means that this is, we hope and pray, a community where God's love is allowed to come to life in those parts of ourselves where we believe that God is forgotten or we are forgotten by God; and there is the challenge and the work of a lifetime, to let the love of God be in ourselves where we do not expect it. One of the justifications for a contemplative community is, of course, that it has no justification, that is to say, that it does not set out to be a community of exceptional, nice, holy, high-achieving, exemplary Christians. I hope that is a relief to you! It sets out to be a community of people resolved simply to be a place where the love of God comes unexpectedly alive; for each individual member of such a community seeks to allow the love of God to reach the God-forgotten and the God-forgetting parts of themselves, and in that process, to learn how to pray and think and be in solidarity with the God-forgotten and the God-forgetting places of the world, with all those many places in our world where it seems that humanity lies under a curse.

And so, when St Paul says ‘God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of Christ’, I believe what he is saying is that he wants to be simply a place where the love of God in the cross is made visible—that is, the unexpectedness of God’s love being the place of the cross. Paul doesn’t say, ‘My credentials are my learning, my energy’, and happily he doesn’t say, ‘My credentials are my niceness and easiness of temperament’ either, because that would be extremely implausible from what we know about St Paul! He *does* say that he will boast in the cross, because he has been called simply to be that place where the unexpected love of God comes alive.

That means also, of course, that part of the function of a Community of the Sisters of the Love of God is to be a surprising place, a place where people see something about God that is unexpected. It is always rather difficult if somebody says to you: ‘Surprise me!’—as in the legendary Oxford interview, where an interviewing tutor asked the candidate that question and was rewarded by the candidate leaving the room very promptly! But nonetheless, the call of the Community is to surprise the world with that love; to surprise it with that love, not by a great out-flowing of apostolic and charitable work, which is a proper part of the Christian calling, but by something else: by the truth that nakedness and poverty, uncertainty about present and future, sometimes confusion, and frequently darkness, are places where the surprising love of God comes alive, where the triumph of the cross, the foolishness of God, comes alive.

Today we are giving thanks, then, for a century of holy confusion and holy surprise and holy foolishness! We are giving thanks for a century of the love of God flowering in the midst of unexpected places, for countless lives lived here, in which the love of God has reached and touched and inwardly changed dark places in the lives of individuals inside and outside the Community, a place where prayer has been offered night and day for the God-forgetting, God-forgotten places of the world. It is not an easy time for this Community, or for any community—we are all aware of that—but that is, at the very least, a good moment to celebrate the God of

surprises and the God whose love lives in unexpected places, and the God whose love seeks nothing more than to be in the place where everyone thinks it is not—in our hearts or in the world. So may God strengthen the purpose and resolve of this Community, called to be under his cross, boasting in his cross. May God strengthen the resolve of every one of us to be witnesses to that God who will not be confined by any expectation or any law, but who will obstinately and relentlessly go where he is not expected, and even where he is not invited, because he is who he is; and he is eternal, burning, unqualified love.

Archbishop Rowan Williams at Fairacres, Vespers of the Feast of the Holy Cross, 14 September 2006 (Centenary Day).

THE FOUNDING OF THE CONVENT OF ST MARY OF NAZARETH, DUDWELL ST MARY, BURWASH IN 1935

FROM THE COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

DUDWELL HOUSE, BURWASH, East Sussex belonged to a Miss Foster whose life work had been taking girls from broken or unhappy homes and training them for domestic service. For this purpose she had had a wing built on to the original house. This contained a large kitchen and scullery, dining and sitting room, laundry and ironing room on the ground floor and on the room above, a dormitory for the girls, a room for the matron, bathrooms and so on, and a room which was used as a chapel in which Mass was usually celebrated once a week by the Rector. Miss Foster felt the time had come for her to give up this work just when we were needing to expand further.

In Passion Week 1935, Mother Mary Frances and Sr Madeline went to see the house and to get advice about tradesmen and so on. It seemed ideal for our purpose, and as it was going to be used ‘in the cause of religion’, Miss Foster generously let us have it at a

greatly reduced price. All she asked was a sum sufficient to buy herself a small house. Miss Foster recommended a local villager to help get the house in order. Mrs Maynard was an excellent worker and continued to help for a time after the Sisters had settled in, and it is recorded that single-handed she used to do all the washing on Monday mornings and at no moment was there ever any water on the floor—no mechanical aids, of course.

The labour party in the second week of May, consisting of Mother Mary Frances, Sr Madeline who was to be Sister in Charge, Sr Rachel, Sr Norah and Sr Dorothy, began to scrub the rooms. The large empty house seemed enormous after Boxmoor and, said Sr Rachel, ‘we wondered how we could ever get all the floors scrubbed and polished before the great day’. There was no Aga then, but Sr Norah with great perseverance and determination cooked everything on a tall ‘steamer’ perched on top of the primus, which was continually going wrong. On one occasion, Sr Madeline cooked some rhubarb in a bottle let down into the laundry copper by a string!

News soon came that Sr Muriel was seriously ill, so Mother Mary Frances went back to Fairacres, leaving Sr Madeline in charge. The Chapel was not ready for use, so Office was said in the workroom, and when news came of the passing of Sr Muriel, the watch was kept there too.

At first there were only six Sisters resident, so the top floor of the original house was closed until numbers grew.

Tuesday 11 June 1935: the Day of Dedication arrives

The great day dawned and visitors arrived, including Fr William O’Brien SSJE (the Father Superior), Miss Foster, Sr Madeline’s priest brother and many others, for about half the village had been invited. As is usual with SLG, there were many homely touches: Mr Wrenn delivered the crockery at the back door and then went round to the front door to be announced as a guest, and Mrs Maynard who had been invited as a guest stayed on afterwards to wash up! The Chapel was full to overflowing, the visitors filling the centre and the

Nuns finding places where they could, Sr Rachel sitting on the step of the Superior's stall and precenting psalms and hymns from there (She was 5 ft 9 ins!).

In addition to this story of how the Community came to be at Burwash, the archives also yield a copy of the address given by Dr George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, at the dedication of the house and chapel and a copy of a letter sent to Fairacres after the Dedication by the then 'Father Director' of SLG, Fr Lucius Cary SSJE, both of which are reproduced below.

Address by the Lord Bishop of Chichester—Dr Bell

The dedication of this House and Chapel is an event of great importance in the life of the Church, and especially in the life of the Community, and represents a further expansion of your ministry of adoration and reparation and intercession. It is also an important moment in the spiritual life of the Diocese of Chichester which receives you and harbours you and welcomes you into its full life. It is, besides, an important moment in the spiritual life of the individual Sister who is called to work out her special ministry in these new surroundings.

I think too that we who are present, accompanying this benediction by our prayers and friendship, must feel that the spiritual act has a special significance in the life of the Church at this time. I think it may be truthfully said that in this age, these special years in which we live, the Church of Christ has an agony, a struggle, a conflict to wage, which represents with a particular similarity the agony, the conflict that the little Church of Christ had to wage at the first Pentecost. For those few Christians, called to be witnesses, and filled with the Spirit of Power, were conscious of living at a time when they saw before them the great standing power of Rome, the Roman state, Roman imperialism; the dangers and attractions of a false philosophy and unspiritual culture represented by a Greece that had decayed. And they knew also that they were surrounded by many dangers to the life of the flesh as well as to the life of the soul. No one who reads the papers today or reads and is in touch with what people write today

can help seeing and being conscious of a stress not dissimilar to that.

Now the Church, the whole Body of Christ, is called to detachment from the world, called to devotion to Christ our Master, and called to an oblation of every faculty of the human being, just because every member of that Body is baptised. Nevertheless it is very healthy and a very great intensification of the strength of the generality of the members of the Body that there should be certain persons who feel themselves called to whole dedication in a very emphatic and particular way. The life of the world has to go on, and it is not everybody who is called or is conscious of the call to this special and peculiar and intense dedication. Reverend Mother and Sisters, you are conscious of this special call, not only to the religious life but to the religious life with a peculiar devotion and a peculiar concentration on adoration and reparation and intercession.

This call comes to you, not for the saving of your own souls apart from the souls of all others in the Church. You are conscious of that, I know, Nevertheless, those who are called as you are to this special oblation, this special giving of all their faculties and the surrendering of all their being to Christ, form a representative function and have the character of ambassadors pleading our cause before the Throne of Christ. Not separated from us—far from that—but drawing us after you and focusing in your prayers and your adoration, the prayers and adoration we desire to give. It is a great responsibility but yet a responsibility for which special grace and strength is given.

In this human benediction we have offered together prayers not only for this House, not only for these Sisters, but for the friends who have made the setting apart of this place a possibility, and I as your Bishop ask you to remember also the life, the faith, the work and the difficulties and trials of all your fellow members in the Diocese of Chichester. On behalf of this Diocese, I bid you Godspeed and I assure you of our prayers and our good hope.

A letter to Fairacres after the Dedication from Fr Lucius Cary SSJE

Much has been said and written in varying degrees and emphasis by friends who were with us on Tuesday on the beauty of the

place and their sense of its fittingness. Some of their remarks might be disquieting if one saw the House of Our Lady of Nazareth through their eyes. It is not to be a place of pious dreaming with the solace of natural beauty to give local colour to the dream. It is a trust given to our keeping, to enable better the labour of strenuous work and the patience and penitence of prayer to be practised towards perfection, and as such it is worth acceptance and deserving of the most we can put into it. If there are moments of disquietude of spirit over the external attractions, it is for the Community by the brave and constant assertion of the Community spirit to dispel such anxieties and to put such fears to shame. You will have heard how kindly the Bishop was, how reverend in his action, how fatherly and sympathetic in his words. He struck the right note in the address he gave to the fifty or sixty people who filled the Chapel. The attitude of everyone seemed friendly and welcoming.

Sr Rachel and Sr Anne did their parts splendidly at the function. I do not know how many times they went through the Gradual Psalms while the Bishop was blessing the cells and on the way to and from the gardener's cottage which was also blessed, but the House seemed resonant with chanting.

As you will have heard, the Father Superior came and helped in attendance on the Bishop. He had general control of the holy water vessel and found a hand for the censer at odd moments on demand. Nobody seemed to observe that we were making the best of things to supply the place of the acolytes, thurifers and others who were not forthcoming.

SLG AT ST ISAAC'S
OCTOBER 1995 – JUNE 2006
SISTER SUSAN SLG

WHEN THE LAST SISTER came home in June this year, St Isaac's ceased to be a Community house. It was an important moment, and one which challenged us to ponder two questions. What has our presence there, on the other side of the world, given to the Community? And what have we contributed to the life at St Isaac's?

In the 1970s, Clementina Gordon felt a call from God both to live the life of a solitary and to live in New Zealand. She was a remarkable woman of pioneering stock, with many diverse gifts. She chose for her new home the property now known as St Isaac's. It is in the Hokianga, in the North Island, a part of New Zealand which in 2006 is still very rural. It is eighty-five acres, much of it bush. Animals as much as people were part of her vision for the place; at any one time, there might have been cows, goats, pigs, chickens, ducks and a horse to greet visitors. She put up a cottage to act as a guest house and in time turned a tractor shed into a chapel and remarkably good library. Her hope was that people would join her and that there would be a small community of hermits who would live separately, but join together for prayer in the chapel in the morning and evening. Some did come, and a few stayed for some months, but nobody settled in any permanent sense. In the 1980s, she had the foresight to turn the venture into an ecumenical trust, and when in 1994 she could no longer continue as Warden of St Isaac's, the Bishop of Auckland on behalf of the trustees invited SLG to send Sisters to live our life in that place. We considered this invitation in Chapter, and in January 1995 Sister Sarah and I went out to New Zealand for five weeks to experience St Isaac's and to meet the Bishop—both the one who had invited us, by then retired, and his successor—and as many other people as possible who, should we accept, would have an interest in, or be affected by, our presence.

It was an extraordinary experience for the two of us, and one which we shall never forget. We were welcomed very warmly by the trustees and by everybody whom we met. For many people, we were their first experience of nuns. That warmth of welcome continued to be a mark of our experience of New Zealand for the whole ten years that we were there—but those first five weeks, despite the beauty and the hospitality, were tough. However, we returned to the UK with a deep sense of the possibilities for SLG in that place. After another Chapter meeting, the Community made what was a huge decision, and in October of that year, Sr Sarah and Sr Alison Kathleen went out to live the SLG life there. Ten years

and eight months later, our situation made it necessary to withdraw again. In between those dates, there has always been one Sister there, sometimes two, usually three. Now Sr Anne is there without the outward support of other Sisters, but in company with Leah Turner, a New Zealander who has come to live and work alongside her.

In many ways St Isaac's continued under SLG as it had in Clem's time, but it must have been experienced as very different by the local people and those who visited. We were the first Anglican contemplative religious order in New Zealand, so it was a new venture, and the Church as well as our neighbours had to get used to us. Although there was a sense that our way of life was very foreign, we were never made to feel unwelcome or strange; rather, people seemed to go out of their way to help us. Almost from the first, the Sisters established a celebration of the Eucharist in Maori on a Wednesday morning, with coffee afterwards. Initially it was difficult to find a priest who could preside regularly, but then, with the commitment of Butler Tane and Wiritai Toi, both much respected elders and priests, it became a regular event and people from the parish began to join us. This was immensely helpful both in making friends and in learning a little of Maori culture. Wiritai in particular was able to explain the concepts behind the Maori form of the liturgy, and he talked with us informally over coffee afterwards about the issues in the local community. We were also gradually introduced to the Maori customs when someone dies. Even for us in Community who experience death perhaps more frequently than most, this was an enormous experience—as much because of the sense of being included into the family of all the people present and sharing in that love and grief, as because of the naturalness and unconcealed nature of the death.

For the Maori people, the family is central. They have an awe-inspiring knowledge of their family trees—who was related to whom was the subject of frequent jokes, as well as being profoundly important. This is, though, more than just knowledge of relationship; it is lived out in daily life. There are huge family gatherings to mark anniversaries and at Christmas and Easter, and it

seemed that no child would ever be left uncared for while the family system is functioning. Everybody grows up with siblings—cousins, if not brothers and sisters. This was extended to us sometimes, and Sr Anne and I were honoured to be invited to an eightieth birthday party last summer. When the Community was thinking about Sr Anne’s request to stay at St Isaac’s after the rest of us came home, it was reassuring to hear that the Maori community considered her ‘whanau’ (family).

It became necessary for all of us to learn a little Maori, even if only the Lord’s Prayer and a greeting, because our local church was part of a Maori pastorate—and indeed the North is very much a Maori area, so many Maori phrases are part of ordinary speech. It was immensely helpful if we could learn a little more, partly because it was possible to go deeper into the service, but even more because of what the language itself seemed to reveal of the values of the people. We had known, both from the way people talk and from the history of colonization, that the Maori people don’t consider that land can be *owned*, rather, *it sustains us*. So their purpose is to use it in such a way that they can hand it on to their children and grandchildren. This concept I discovered is extended to many of the things that we usually consider as ‘ours’. Some things one can consider as possessions, things that one really does have control over, as in ‘my pencil’, but there are other things to which, if one thinks about it, one owes *respect*. Maori distinguish persons and things by using a different possessive adjective, and moreover the possessive adjectives ‘my’ and ‘our’ are determined by modification of the noun to which they refer. If, for instance, one says ‘my horse’, then the form used indicates that one ‘owns’ or ‘possesses’ the horse, but that one does so only in a very limited sense; furthermore, ‘my horse’ when it is carrying a rider is an extension of the human body, like one’s legs, and so the respectful personal form is required. I found this immensely helpful when thinking about the Vow of Poverty and our instinctive need to acquire possessions.

All of us who have been at St Isaac’s will have a lasting memory of the Land family. They are a huge Roman Catholic

family who live in the next valley to St Isaac's. They have all chosen a life style which, in varying degrees, challenges most of the assumptions we make about the basic needs of everyday life. One part of the family has opted for subsistence farming and they live off their land. They admit themselves that they are not poor because they own their land, but they do without all the amenities which we take for granted. They cook on an open fire, have minimal electricity from a solar panel, have no electric gadgets at all, grow and grind their own maize for flour. Although they do own an old Land Rover, they get about for much of the time on their feet, on horseback, or for longer distances by hitching. It is a challenge. We met with them fairly frequently because Joseph Land was for many years the chairman of the St Isaac's Trust. They came regularly to share Morning Prayer with us, and helped us in many ways, particularly with the outdoor work. Conversations with them, as with the people who came to the Maori celebration of the Eucharist, could be stimulating and they gave us a great deal.

Those are some of the special ingredients to life at St Isaac's, but what sustained us of course was our everyday life, the same basic rhythm that we live here at Fairacres, with the Office and prayer. In many ways life was simpler there than it can be in Oxford, and so in a sense the demands were also starker. We talk about dependence on God; there, with little outside support, this approached a reality, at least at times. When one was lonely or not of one mind with the other Sisters, there was nothing to do but pray about it and then try again. On the whole we said the Office rather than sang it, but we each had to enter into it fully every time and share the responsibility for it. We also each shared the decision-making when unusual requests came our way. Life at St Isaac's was not a bed of roses, but it created a strong sense of community amongst ourselves—and, to a lesser extent, with our guests who in many cases shared our life quite closely.

Each Sister who has been there would probably have other experiences and recollections to relate, but these are some which I think we may well share. As individuals, we almost all returned confirmed in our vocation and enriched. So, if the Community has

gained from our presence at St Isaac's, it is probably indirectly in the lives of the Sisters and in what we can share of that experience. If we have given anything to St Isaac's and to the Anglican Church in New Zealand, then that might well be better identified by others and with the benefit of hindsight. There was a cost in making the decision to go, simply in sparing Sisters and maintaining them there. The last 'cost' is of course agreeing that Sr Anne might remain at St Isaac's for the rest of her active life. We miss her greatly. But is the loss at one level compensated by a gain at a deeper one? It seems that it must be so. We have tried to listen to God speaking to us throughout our time there, in all the events of the ten years. Those of us who have had the gift of physical presence in New Zealand will, I think, remain constantly grateful for it, and to all the people who have become our friends, even at such a distance.

TO GOD AND GOD ALONE

CONTEMPLATIVE COMMUNITIES CELEBRATE CENTENARIES

ELDRIDGE PENDLETON SSJE

THIS YEAR MARKS the hundredth anniversary of the founding of two Anglican contemplative communities with which the Society of St John the Evangelist has historic ties and abiding affection.

The closing years of the nineteenth century and the following decade of the twentieth century witnessed a growing interest in contemplative prayer among Anglicans. Fired by the writings of William Inge, Baron von Hügel, Evelyn Underhill and others, increasing numbers of women felt the call to dedicated lives of contemplation in community. Unlike the earlier Anglican religious orders for women that combined prayer and works of mercy, there was a growing desire for enclosed communities whose focus would be prayer alone. George Seymour Hollings SSJE, a leading authority on contemplative prayer at that time, encouraged many who sought his guidance to be contemplatives. With the blessing and support of his Superior, Robert Page SSJE, and the Bishop of

Oxford, he founded the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God in 1906 at Oxford.

That same year a small religious community active in works of mercy in north London felt the call to a more prayerful form of religious life. Under the influence of Abbot Aelred Carlyle of Caldey Abbey they adopted the Rule of St Benedict and moved to a secluded house in Baltonsborough, Somerset, near Glastonbury. In 1916, with the help of some leading Cowley Fathers, trustees of the English Abbey Restoration Fund, these nuns took up residence in the ancient monastic buildings of St. Mary's Abbey, West Malling, Kent, where they have remained ever since. In the intervening years since their founding, both communities have had a powerful influence on the life of the Church, and through the generations have maintained strong bonds of friendship with our Society.

Under Fr Hollings' leadership, the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God attracted vocations. After two temporary homes, the Community settled at Fairacres House, a property near the Iffley Road, Oxford, not far from the Mission House of the Society of St John the Evangelist, with grounds spacious enough to allow them to live an enclosed life. Following Fr Hollings' death in 1914, his place as Chaplain General was taken by Lucius Cary SSJE, who combined a profound interest in the contemplative life with many other spiritual gifts. Fr Cary helped the Sisters prepare a new Rule of Life and a Constitution. Under his leadership, and with the advice of some of the original Sisters, the Community flourished, establishing branch houses in Hertfordshire and East Sussex, and in 1938 laying plans for a new foundation at Ain Karim, the traditional birthplace of John the Baptist, near Jerusalem. With the outbreak of World War II this last was abandoned. In more recent times SLG has maintained houses of prayer in Kent and in New Zealand.

Peter Anson wrote in the first edition of his *Call of the Cloister* that while many have described the Sisters of the Love of God as Anglican Carmelites, this is incorrect. He asserted that 'although their brown habit may give them a superficial resemblance, in many respects in its early days the observances of the SLG were far more austere and penitential'. This is, of course, an outsider's observation,

to which the Sisters add that over the century this early rigor has moderated. The aims and objectives of this Community have always remained the same, the glory of God in the perfection of holiness and the offering of reparation for the sins of humanity.

After Fr Cary's long tenure of leadership, (he died in 1950), William O'Brien SSJE, the Superior of the English Congregation, served as Chaplain General to the Sisters of the Love of God, combining it with similar responsibilities for the Benedictine nuns at Malling. It was during this time that Fr O'Brien presented the nuns there with an abbatial cross which the current Abbess, Mother Mary John, wears. After Fr O'Brien's death, David Hemming SSJE briefly assumed the responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the SLG Sisters. Br Anselm Chiverton, who trained a number of communities in monastic chant, including the nuns at Malling, began his long association with SLG in the 1950s, drilling them in the Solesmes tradition of plainchant. For almost forty years he presided at weekly choir practices which were hard work, but, as Sr Isabel said in her charming remembrance of him, also a joy because of 'his humor, his gifts for poker-faced repartee and impersonation, his irreverence—never hurtful and always to the point'.

In more recent times Paul Wessinger SSJE served as resident chaplain for the SLG Sisters at Bede House, Kent, before returning to the United States to be Superior of the American Congregation and bringing renewal to the monastic life of the brethren in America. For a number of years Fr David Campbell and others of SSJE English congregation served as confessors for the Benedictine sisters. In the late 1970s two SSJE brothers and a sister from SLG began an experimental contemplative community life at Emery House. It did not last, and a little later, SSJE developed Emery House into a spiritual retreat centre. Also, at that time Martin Smith, then a member of SSJE, assisted by Sister Rosemary SLG, (now Reverend Mother), edited and produced *Benson of Cowley*, a collection of essays by scholars honoring the founder of the Society of St John the Evangelist.

After that, contact between SLG and the North American branch of SSJE was more limited until 1990, when Mother Anne

and Sister Susan visited our Community for the celebration of Br Paul Wessinger's 50th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Also at that time, under the leadership of Tom Shaw, SSJE, our Congregation began to look toward its roots in preparation for a Community pilgrimage to Great Britain the following year. The pilgrimage, which included a week of retreat at Bishop's House, Iona, culminated with a celebration over several days at Oxford. This included the formal presentation of papers by SLG sisters and SSJE brothers, and opportunities informally to savour the hospitality of the Sisters of the Love of God and to deepen our friendship with them.

In our relationship with both of these Communities, we have received as richly as we have been able to contribute.

In 1996, and again in 2005, Mother Rosemary SLG led our Community's annual retreat. In his appreciation to her some time after the 1996 retreat, Br Curtis thanked her for helping us 'to hear our own tradition again for the first time'.

Increasingly in recent years, SSJE brothers from this Community have made their retreats before profession at Fairacres. Others of our Society have benefited from quiet times with the nuns at Malling Abbey. I remember a wonderful week of retreat there in 1996. One afternoon during my visit, Mother Mary John told me of her first encounter with our Society, as an adolescent on a retreat at the Community of St Mary, Peekskill, New York led by Fr Robert Smith SSJE.

We give thanks for our many years of friendship with these communities. We celebrate their dedication to the contemplative life and their witness to the Gospel, and wish them many more years of God's richest blessings. In July 2006 our brother Tom Shaw [Bishop of Massachusetts] led a retreat for SLG at Fairacres, and in September 2006 Curtis Almquist and Geoffrey Tristram were in England to take part in the centenary festivities of these two religious communities.

This article was first published in 'Cowley', the magazine of the Society of St John the Evangelist, Vol. 34 No. 4, Autumn 2006.

THE CROSS IN OUR LIVES

CURTIS ALMQUIST SSJE

THE ENGLISH WORD, ‘paradox’ means something that is true, even though you might not think it true. Paradox is something that could be contrary to normal belief. The word has Greek origins: *para* and *doxa*. *Doxa* means ‘glory’—our word ‘doxology’ comes from the same root—*para* means ‘other’: other glory, glory in a way other than we might have imagined. When we look at Jesus’s life and witness, we see paradox. Here the long-awaited Messiah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is born in a stable by an unmarried mother in a very inauspicious town and country. (What good can come out of this?). As Jesus grows and finds his own voice, paradox seems to roll off his own lips. He says things such as that ‘whoever would be first must be last’, that grown adults must be ‘born again’, that we are to ‘grow up to become children’. Jesus ushers in a new thing. He says repeatedly, ‘*You* have heard it said, but *I* say...’. That’s paradox. Perhaps the most shocking paradox of all is Jesus’s saying, ‘If any want to be followers of me... they must take up their cross and follow me’.

If only we could get out from under the cross, but it seems to hang over us all the time. Christianity would seem so much nicer and neater if we could take just the *second* half of Jesus’s invitation, if we could say, ‘Yes, Jesus, I will follow you, but please keep the cross to yourself. I would just as soon not take up my cross, but simply follow you.’ But that does not seem to be Jesus’s invitation. He says that if we want to be his disciple, we must ‘take up *our* cross—not *his* cross, but *ours*—and follow him.’¹

If only we could get around the cross—but it seems to be everywhere. If only the archetypal symbol which we wear around our necks, which we have displayed on our chapel façade and stained into our church windows and placed behind the altar, could

¹ This invitation of Jesus is consistent in the three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 10: 38, 16: 24; Mark 8: 34; Luke 9: 23.

be something *other* than the cross. If only the chief Christian symbol were something else—say a tree of life, reminiscent of the Garden of Eden—it would be so much more pleasant and less troubling. Or if only it were, say, light, transfiguring light, or maybe a scene from mountain top. But it's not. The chief Christian symbol, on which everything else hangs, is the cross. 'If you want to be my disciple,' says Jesus to all of us, 'you must 'take up your cross and follow me'. And Jesus goes on to say, 'For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it'. Someone has said that the Gospel, the good news, is *bad* news before it is *good* news. And I would call *this* some of the bad news—at least the tough news—of the Gospel.

So what is it for us 'to take up our cross'? I don't think we have to go out and look for it. It's probably already there, in all of our lives. The cross is not some kind of exalted thing, but probably a kind of lowly, humbling thing in our lives, a source of quiet humility, something which we would never have chosen to be there, but also something from which we cannot escape. The cross is likely to be grounded in humility, humility which we do not seek and yet cannot avoid. (The word 'humility' comes from the Latin, *humus*, which is 'earth' or 'soil'.²)

So *where* or *what* is the cross for you? I'll ask the question again in very down-to-earth terms: What is killing you right now? What seems to be consuming the life right out of you? That may well be the invitation of the cross for you.

It might have something to do with your family: with your spouse, or your parents, or a sibling or a community member. Maybe you are afraid because someone is leaving, or because someone is coming. Maybe because someone has changed and this is not the person you once knew, or because someone has *not* changed, and *that* is the problem. Maybe it is something you've only recently discovered and which is very difficult to even talk

² Humility, from L. *humus*, 'earth, soil,' and O.Fr. *humilité*, from L. *humilitatem* (nom. *humilitas*) 'lowness, insignificance'.

about. If it is within your family, it's in your blood... And the burden of your awareness is just killing you. The cross that's been handed to you might have something to do with your children or godchildren—with the choices they are making or have made, or the choices that you are making or have made for them. It might have something to do with the children who are still home, and *that's* the problem; or the children who used to be at home and are no longer, and *that's* the problem; or the children you always wanted and never had, and *that's* the problem. And some days you just wonder how you can go on...

The cross might have to do with yourself, something of which maybe few people are aware—perhaps no-one is aware. Although there is every outward sign and every seeming reason that you should be thriving, you actually feel as if you're dying—perhaps of loneliness or heartbreak. When Jesus says that he had nowhere to lay his head, you know very well what he meant.³

What is killing you? It may have to do with your vocation, which you cannot get *out* of. It may have to do with a sense of vocation you once had, and now there is no returning to it again.

Maybe the cross has to do with a relationship, with someone who has been important to you, and the person or the relationship has died, for reasons you may or may not know.

Maybe the cross has to do with a diagnosis or an addiction you're living with, and the fear of what *might* be happening *with* you or *in* you, which some days may be worse than the disease.

So what is the cross *for you*? I don't think any of us has to go out and look for it. It's probably already there, and we either stumble over it or we pick it up. And I assume that each of us here actually *has* picked it up, or we wouldn't be here on this day. We may have picked up the cross hesitatingly or fearfully or angrily, but *that* cross has actually led us to where we are now. The cross, for each of us, is not some kind of exalted thing, but some kind of lowly, humbling thing in our lives, a source of quiet humility, something which you would probably never choose to be there, but also

³ Matthew 8: 20; Luke 9: 58.

something from which you cannot escape. Something which may seem to be killing you. Jesus never promised us a rose garden, but he *did* promise us a cross. And I suspect that every one of us here has some kind of identification with the cross—something to which our life has been nailed, which we would probably never have chosen and from which we cannot escape, and which most likely is not the life script that we thought we would be handed.

Not so long ago I was talking with a woman whom I have come to know well. Several years ago her son, in university, died of a drug overdose. Some years have now passed since her son's death, and as we were talking recently, tears once more came to her eyes. She said to me what she has said before, that she thought she would never get over the loss of her son. Never a day passes when she doesn't think of him. But there's something else to be said, too. It is paradox which she can neither explain nor deny. At the same time that she has faced the most painful, extinguishing death she has ever known, she has also discovered something she had never before known about the love of God. This does not make sense to her. But it *is* real. Somehow, in an unexplainable and paradoxical way, her son's death has been a channel of God's life and love to her. She can neither deny the loss of her son nor her experience of the love of God. I would call that the cross of Christ.

I don't know many of you, but I can't help but wonder: did you *ever*, in your wildest imagination, think that you would be where you are now? Did you have a clue what you would now be facing and dealing with—in the world, in the church, in your own life and vocation, and with those whom you love? You might have found yourself saying, some time ago, if you ever had to face such-and-such, you could not imagine how you could ever go on. And many of you probably *have* had to face that very thing, and you have gone on...

Some of us here today are a sister or brother in a religious order, and I would imagine that this is particularly true for us. My guess is that we came into the religious life for a whole constellation of reasons, only some of which have remained true today. The reasons we came to this life are not the reasons we have stayed—not

entirely. A good many things have had to die and then be resurrected, to bring us to this day.

For those of us in the religious life, who have been called into a kind of hidden life, we have probably met up with the cross within the enclosures of our own community. In my own life, I have to say that on many a difficult day, I have fantasized laying down my life for Jesus in some dangerous place like the Sudan or Afghanistan or Palestine, some marvellous martyrdom which would make for such a wonderful obituary! But rather, I'm stuck here at home, and with brother or sister so-and-so, who *is* just *killing* me! One of our sisters or brothers is probably handing us the cross today—and they may not even know it. I would say, particularly to those of us in religious communities, that we follow the way of the cross in laying down our lives for our sisters or brothers, not just in showing love to them.

It's quite easy to dispense love to a person whom you know is in need, a person who is in some way your inferior or subordinate. I would say that the invitation is to lay down our lives before our sisters and brothers in our willingness to give *and* receive from them. To paraphrase St Paul, it is to empty ourselves of the presumption that we don't need this other person.⁴ The Father Founder of the Society of St John the Evangelist, Richard Meux Benson—also a dear friend of the Sisters of the Love of God from the very start—said that 'many people will humble themselves to do abasing actions, and will not humble themselves to receive little kindnesses. It is a great token of humility to receive kindnesses at all people's hands. Humility purges the soul from pride but humility fills the soul with that best form of self-respect, never thinking about itself.'⁵ The daily dying and rising with Christ will come to us enclosed in the person of a sister or brother whom we could quite proudly serve, or quite easily reject or resent. The cross they unwittingly hand us may be in *their* care or kindness or help for us. They are the agency of God, for the working out of our salvation.

⁴ Paraphrased from Philippians 2: 6-11.

⁵ Richard Meux Benson, quoted from *Look to the Glory*, p. 68.

The other word I speak, particularly to sisters and brothers in religious orders, is in the invitation for our heart to be *broken*, a kind of dying, in our allowing our heart to be broken open more and more to the love of God. God will break open our heart and enlarge it. We know our heart needs to be broken open when we don't have enough space in our heart for all those whom God has invited into our lives and into our communities. I'll quote Fr Benson again: 'It is our humanity being put under stress from within as it is expanded, stretched and made to grow by the divine life communicated to us.' Fr Benson says how God will accommodate himself 'to our littleness [so that] our heart will expand with all the love of heaven, to love all that God loves, to love God in all, to love with the love which God Himself gives, and whereby He makes us one with Himself.'⁶ The sister or brother who may just seem to kill us, the one who always gets under our skin, probably belongs there. They are not the enemy of God, but rather the agency of God for the working out of our salvation. They expose us, and our need. And they are one for whom our heart must be enlarged. The French theologian Leon Bloy says, 'There are places in the heart that do not yet exist, and then suffering enters so that they might exist.' This is the paradox of the cross of Christ...

Jesus calls to his disciples, 'Come, follow me.' And we've done it, or we wouldn't be here. But who would have guessed that where Jesus would lead us would be to the cross, which we don't seem to be able to get around. The cross is Jesus's way, which he shares with us, Jesus's way and truth and life.⁷ The cross is not the end, but it *is* the way *to* the end. *That* is where the bad news of the Gospel becomes good news. We are not left hanging on the cross simply to die. The cross is a doorway, a portal, through which we pass, and probably more than once in this life—probably more than once a day. What otherwise could seem like a sentence of death is actually a breath of real life—and there is no other way.

⁶ Richard Meux Benson, quoted from *Final Passover, part 2*, p. 39; and *The Way of Holiness*, p. 74.

⁷ John 14:6.

The moral of the story is not to go looking for the cross. It has a way of finding us. And if you understand just now what it is to have been handed a cross, to be wearing a cross, to be carrying a heavy cross, to be nailed to a cross, and it is undeniable and unavoidable and inescapable, then maybe you are in a place to take Jesus at his word and say a prayer as simple as: ‘Yes...’ Maybe you can pray Jesus’s prayer to the Father, ‘Into your hands I commend my spirit.’ This is to say, ‘Yes, God: if this is your way for me and your truth, which feels as if it is just killing me, then I wait for the life that you promise comes out of this.’ I believe it is a prayer that will be answered with real hope. The good news is that the cross is *not* the end, but it *is* the way to find our end. Our end is with God, and it is forever, and it begins in this life.

Where has the cross figured in your life? Where is it now? Jesus puts a face and heart and hands and voice to the God whom he calls ‘Father.’ God is paradoxically present, *really* present to you, *on* the cross and *in* the cross that Christ has shared with you, this ‘instrument of painful death, for us the means of life and peace.’⁸

On this occasion of remembrance for you, our dearest Sisters of the Love of God, we friends who gather around you give thanks for your one hundred years of faithfulness and fragility, your own witness of being broken and broken open for the love of God. Your community’s own history is as glorious and disappointing as the rest of our lives. You have known the best of times and the worst of times, like the rest of us. And I want to say: amidst all the words of celebration that are being said about you on the occasion of this your centenary, if there is any reserve in your own souls; if you in any way find yourself reticent or timid to hear these great words of gratitude and praise being said about you because of what *you* know about the religious life and what *you* know about your own Community; if, amidst the praise, you find yourself in any way quietly saying, ‘If they only knew...!’ then I want to say, ‘*We do!*’ In some ways, quite paradoxically, we probably know you better than you know yourselves. We see this great cross that you wear

⁸ Quoted from the Collect for the Day.

atop your monastic habit, giving witness to the daily dying and rising with Christ, and it has been your breaking and your making.

We cannot predict your future as a community. But I will say—and I say this confidently on behalf of all of us here and so many whom we represent—that the past hundred years are unimaginable for us and for the Church without you, your life, your witness. The past is unimaginable without you, our dearest Sisters of the Love of God. We have needed you, your life and witness. We are here today to remind you of that. And we need your life and witness in the future.

Thank you for who you are and what you are, and for the cost of your discipleship. It has borne so much fruit, into this day. We here, and so many whom we also represent, give witness to it. We thank you—God thanks you—for your life and witness, for your laying down your lives daily, and for your rising again and again and again. Thank you!

Fr Curtis Almquist SSJE, at the Eucharist at Fairacres for the Feast of the Holy Cross, 14 September 2006 (Centenary Day).

‘THE PASSING OF THE FATHER FOUNDER’

AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEATH AT FAIRACRES IN 1914 OF
FR GEORGE SEYMOUR HOLLINGS SSJE

FROM THE COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

‘UNTO GOD’S GRACIOUS MERCY I commit you, to the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ I commend you.’ Such were the words of the general blessing of the Father Founder on what proved to be his last visit to the Convent. On the previous Tuesday in Passion Week he had suffered from a ten hour’s attack of his old enemy *angina pectoris*, and though he came to the Convent on the following Thursday it was evident to all how very ill and exhausted he was. He saw only a very few of the Sisters and when he gave us his blessing it was with a faltering voice, and he paused as he seemed to remember every need, to gather it up into that fatherly blessing, which those who received it can never forget. He celebrated at the Convent on Friday, April 3. On Sunday, April 4, he went to see his London doctor who could not have realized the urgency of the case as he gave him permission to fulfil his engagements for Holy Week which included preaching the Passion at Pinner, near Harrow.

So he came down to Oxford and the Convent on the Tuesday of Holy Week, after a second heart attack, to hear confessions. He gave a beautiful address to the Sisters, with words here and there almost prophetic of the end. It opened with the thought of the joy it must be to God to bestow the Beatific Vision on his faithful servants, and then he passed on to the subject of suffering in union with our Crucified Lord. He spoke of death as a painless thing in itself, though the act of dying was generally painful, in connection with the subject of mortification. And he told us towards the end if anything came which seemed to spoil our Easter joy, it would show there was a true religious joy, if we allowed it to do so. He reminded us of the Treasury of the Sacred Passion, and in the closing words of

the address he bade us gather up the Lenten thoughts he had given us, and bring them to our Good Friday's meditation, and with *forgiven souls* (he laid stress on that) to enter on that Great Day with no anxiety and with an entire abandonment, and so find our Easter joy in union with the Cross of Christ.

His voice was very weak, but he sang a hymn with us, as he loved to do, and it was, 'All ye who seek for sure relief'. The previous week he sang kneeling with us 'Sweet the moments, rich in blessing' and as we look back into Lent we can remember how the Thursday before his bad heart attack he gave his address on 'Peace'. In the latter end of Lent too, he read us the part about the particular Judgement in Newman's 'Dream of Gerontius' and an account of the 'Death of St Richard on Good Friday'. The Father was able to hear confessions and stayed on at the Convent afterwards, but asked for a cab to be ordered to fetch him for Mass the next day which was very unusual for him.

He came into Chapel on Wednesday for Mass, looking painfully ill and weak, and leaned on the altar for a moment. He hardly seemed able to move to the step in front of the altar from which he made his last act of preparation. He then began the service and turned round for the Commandments, saying them with his eyes shut and his hands folded together. Just as he began the fourth Commandment 'Sabbath Rest', the well loved voice faltered, he opened his eyes, looking in front of him as though he suddenly caught sight of Someone, a swift change came over his face, he caught at the altar for support, and then, turning round, he fell unconscious to the ground, facing the altar and crucifix.

A doctor was fetched as soon as possible but the Father had passed away almost immediately, and lay still before the altar in the violet chasuble, folded to rest. The sun shone brightly into the simple Chapel, the birds sang on, and the dear Father lay at rest, no sign of struggle or pain to mar the '*Pax, Ordinis, Tranquillitas*' so characteristic of his life on earth. Something of the same spirit fell on his spiritual children as they knelt on in silent prayer, hushing any sound of grief that would break the stillness of the 'sleep in Jesus'. After a short interval Fr Maxwell, the Superior General of

the Society, who had been sent for, arrived and in a voice broken with sorrow, said the last prayers.

And so the end had come, not altogether as a surprise, to those who had seen the patience and fortitude with which the Father had struggled through that last fortnight upon earth. As it was beautifully said of him, 'His face was set to go to Jerusalem'... His passing was so swift we could scarcely say 'he died', before he lived again in the fullness of Eternal Life. He had died at his post and laid down his life for his friends. It was his loving custom to write a fatherly greeting to the Branch Houses of the Sisters of Bethany as their Warden, and this year the Easter greetings were all there and the letters already directed. 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.'

The Father Founder was laid out in the Visitors' Room at the Convent, in the habit of his Community, his hands crossed upon his breast and a majestic look of peace upon his saintly face... It was indeed a privilege for his 'little Religious Family' to have him with them to the last and to perform the last offices for him with loving hearts and reverent hands. The Reverend Mother laid him out, assisted by a Sister, a nurse, and another Sister made the shroud of fair white linen in which according to the Rule of his Order, the Father was buried.

Owing to the refusal of the London doctor to give a certificate of cause of death, the painful necessity of both a post mortem and an inquest ensued, and therefore the body could not be moved from the Convent to the Mission House of his Society. It seemed worthy to note that the preparations for the post mortem took place at five minutes past nine on Good Friday morning, the same hour that our blessed Lord himself submitted to the preparations for his crucifixion. When the Father fell at the altar his face struck against it, leaving a scar, so he bore to the grave the mark of the Altar of Sacrifice.

In those days of the still week, the little Convent of Fairacres, so dear to the Father's heart, remained wrapt in the peace of Paradise, whilst so swiftly was every need supplied and arrangements carried out with such promptitude and order, that the Angels themselves

seemed to minister round the saintly figure of the Father Founder, and his children went in and out fearlessly and lovingly to kneel beside their Father, and with awe and filial love were allowed to kiss the holy hands which had so often ministered to them and blessed them in his life.

Others came besides... Day by day, the look of triumphant joy deepened on his face. On Good Friday he rested in his coffin, the standard lights at his head, beautiful and radiant to the end, and early on Holy Saturday the inquest was held. Before the coffin was closed, a chalice and paten were placed in it, the paten under the Father's hands, the small chalice in his girdle.

At 10.30 a.m. the procession was arranged to leave the Convent. One by one his 'little Religious Family' gathered together in the kitchen to be in readiness to follow him as far as their Rule of Enclosure permitted. The crucifer went first with the thurifer and incense and then the coffin covered with a simple pall, surrounded by the brethren of the Society of St John the Evangelist. The pall-bearers were Fr Puller, Fr O'Brien, Fr Hodge and Fr Pridham. Fr Maxwell was vested in the violet cope.

Mrs Hollings, the Father's sister-in-law, and her niece followed the coffin. Then came the Reverend Mother and the Sisters and Novices of the Community of the Love of God, walking as far as the drive within the Convent grounds. As they stepped back and left the procession to pass out of the Convent gate, the Oblate Sister took their place as their representative at the funeral...

And what of Easter Day? We were not left comfortless, for in the early light of the Festival of Life, the little Chapel seemed full of the presence of the Father Founder at the Sacred Feast. It seemed to us that he did indeed give us our Easter Communion in a very real and spiritual manner, and all that day and week it was as though he went in and out among us.

The Requiem Mass at the Fathers' Church was held at 11 a.m., on the Tuesday in the week of Easter, all the Masses of the day being for the repose of the soul of Fr Hollings. In the Convent of the Sisters of the Love of God there was a requiem without music at 7.15 a.m.

May he rest *in pace*.

An article in the *Church Times* concludes with: ‘In his own beautiful words we commend him to the King of Saints’:

Faith and love transform our grieving,
Since he hoped in Thee, believing
In Thy will and power to save.
Light perpetual forth sending,
Grant him, Lord, Thy rest unending
Joyful rising from the grave.

Soon our life His ransomed bringeth
Soon the Bride her Mattins singeth,
Swift the destined hour wingeth
Speeds the Vision of God’s Face.

ASSOCIATES

FLG

Revd Margaret Raven
Revd Isabella Landreth

(We apologise for mistakenly listing Isabella as a Companion in the last edition)

RIP

Revd Charles Murray Rogers FLG

SLG CHARITABLE TRUST LIMITED

The Community and the Company

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

FOR MANY YEARS NOW, one of my tasks has been to write the annual report of the Board of Management of SLG Charitable Trust Limited to accompany the Company's accounts for the previous year. A space of time is blocked out in early February each year, and for those days, the report on our activities becomes my work priority. It is a complex task in the twenty-first century and, as the Trust is registered in England both as a limited company and as a charity, the report is written with an eye to the requirements of company and charity law and of the Charity Commission. About two years ago, I was telling one of our oldest Sisters what I happened to be doing at the time. I explained that, according to the law of England and Wales, *prayer as such* has never been recognized as a charitable activity. This is because—at the kind of level which the law can recognize, and the law does have to be objective—you cannot actually *prove* that prayer does *anyone else* any good, that there is any degree of *public benefit*, and proof of public benefit is essential for something to be charitable in law. Indeed, the degree of proof required is becoming more and more stringent. (You might, of course, yourself benefit in some way from praying, whether by becoming more peaceful or through altered mind states, or whatever, but that is not a wide enough section of the public!) The Sister with whom I was speaking looked aghast at any notion that prayer was not 'charitable', and she quoted to me the sentence which will be familiar to many readers: '*Of your charity, pray for the souls of [the departed.]*' I replied, 'Well, if prayer in itself and praying for the living are not regarded as charitable, then still less is praying for the *dead* regarded by the law as "charitable"!' Although it has actually been held by the courts that praying for the dead is not charitable in the legal sense, yet one of the particular spiritual concerns of this Community *has* always

been to pray for the dead and dying. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that by this time I had completely ‘lost’ my Sister...!

We have, however, arrived at a theme which I should now like to develop a little. We are the Sisters of the Love of God, and particularly meaningful to us is the plainsong offertory we sing at the Maundy Thursday Mass each year, *Ubi caritas* or ‘Where charity and love are, there is God.’ Charity, or *caritas*, is one of the three theological virtues and is understood to be love, or loving kindness, exercised towards others. More recent translations of the Bible use the word ‘love’ in place of the ‘charity’ of the King James Version, since the meaning of the word charity *is* changing. The Community answered a call ‘to go out into the wilderness for the sake of God alone’, as one of our founders expressed it, and subsequently grew rapidly in numbers in the shadow of two World Wars, when women were feeling called to offer their lives in prayer and for reconciliation in the aftermath of the senseless slaughter which had taken place. It was a radical call—to ‘live in the world while not being of it’—and it still is, particularly in present day society which, far from assuming the presence of the Christian religion as an underpinning element, is now frequently inhospitable towards it. The fact that prayer—the Sisters’ central *raison d’être*—cannot be accepted as being *of itself* ‘charitable’ in the legal sense causes us tensions—which are as varied as we are! For instance, it may be hard to realise that what is vital to all of us is not comprehensible to some people outside the Community. For some Sisters, there may be a degree of acceptance that we have to ‘render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s’, while other Sisters are concerned that the requirement of charity law for all charities to justify their existence and activities will create an imbalance in our lives, in which the emphasis shifts from our primary vocation of prayer to activities providing tangible results. We have each of us felt called to offer our lives to God, rather than in the first instance to do ‘good works’. If we had wished to do good works, then we might well have continued with the careers which we had before we entered. Yet the ‘good works’ *are* indisputably there, as a natural overflowing of the love of God lived out in this Community.

When the Community began, such assets as it then possessed were held by trustees, by some of the first Sisters, and this continued for some decades, even as Fairacres itself was bought and other houses were acquired for the growing Community. The next step was that, while retaining those trustees, the Community for a short time also paid for some degree of professional oversight. By the end of the 1960s, though, it had become clear that the Community urgently needed to increase its income, in order to make ends meet. This was also the time of a certain flowering in SLG and of outreach in many respects. SLG Press had begun quite naturally in 1967 with the gift of a printing press and then a legacy from Fr Gilbert Shaw, our Warden, and the *Fairacres Chronicle* and 'Fairacres Publications' were beginning to reach many people. Bede House was opened in the same year and set up as a charitable trust, with its unique contribution to the life of the Church. The number of people coming to stay at the various houses was increasing, as were ecumenical contacts and support for other religious communities. Looking at details of the accounts for 1968, our expenditure was somewhat in excess of our income, and 1967 had been even worse. Of our outgoings in 1968, something over 7 per cent was expended on income tax and local rates. Furthermore, a time of rapidly rising costs had begun. The average annual rate of retail price inflation in the United Kingdom between 1968 and 1980 was to be 11.9%, in contrast to an average annual rate of inflation in the years between 1958 and 1967 of 2.9%. If we could be relieved of the burden of the income tax and local rates, we might be much nearer to breaking even. Fortunately, this was not a time in the Community's history when we were *selling* properties—indeed Bede House had recently been opened and an appeal made for that—so we did not then even have to *consider* whether there might have been a massive tax bill on sale, due to increasing property values.

Into this situation stepped an Oblate Sister, Evelyn Christina, who had made her life promises as an Oblate in August 1961 and who was the Secretary of the Diocese of St Albans. Ten years on from those 1968 accounts, in 1978, the balance sheet could hardly have looked more different. It was she who realised that the

overflow from our prayer of 'charitable activities' had recently become such that it would be possible to qualify for and apply for the charitable status which would enable tax and rates exemptions and other concessions. Evelyn Christina became the 'Consultant Bursar' (the 'Bursar' now being Sister Ruth), and a short service of 'commissioning of the Consultant Bursar' took place in Chapel in 1969; a copy of this interesting service is to be found in the archives!

Things then proceeded fairly rapidly. On Evelyn Christina's advice, Mother Mary Clare produced a list of 'works undertaken by SLG as an expression of the overflow of their life of prayer'. The first item on the list was the running of Bede House and the second was the work of SLG Press. It concludes with the words: 'It is to be stressed that this work has developed over the last five years especially within the context of the Community life and does not mean that anything different is being undertaken because the question of charitable status is under discussion.' Evelyn Christina sought the opinion of Counsel (a friend) about the possibility that SLG might acquire charitable status on the basis of the work it had undertaken, and she received an encouraging reply. The Chapter of the Community approved with no hesitation whatsoever the taking of steps to form a company and to apply for charitable status. The Charity Commission wrote on 7 August 1970 that 'the information given on 20 July confirms that there is sufficient public benefit present to enable the proposed company when formally established to create a valid charitable trust'. SLG Charitable Trust Limited was incorporated on 24 September 1970 and applied for registration as a charity. The archives yield an 'Announcement' which was circulated to various people who were in touch with SLG:

It is with much thankfulness that we are able to announce that the Community's application for charitable status has met with success. A Company has been formed of members of the Community with the title of SLG Charitable Trust Limited and this Company will hold the Community's assets and manage its finances. One of the advantages of becoming a charity is, of course, that we shall now be able to accept subscriptions made under a deed of covenant for the maintenance of the Community,

and will be very grateful if anyone can help us in this way. This and the other financial benefits which we shall derive will relieve the acute anxiety which we have experienced of late. We are particularly gratified that it is by our being able to show that what we have undertaken in the convents of the Community as a natural expression of the overflow of our life of prayer has formed the acceptable basis of our application. It is also significant that the official Memorandum of the Company, which sets forth its establishment and states its objects, contains the words, in relation to what the Community will do in the charitable field, 'but nevertheless so as to preserve as its essential character a life of prayer and monastic discipline'. Thus the ethos of the Community is unchanged, and the special character of SLG is maintained.

The assets of SLG which had been held by trustees in an ordinary (unincorporated and non-charitable) trust were now transferred to the Company, and were therefore handed over to become charitable funds in perpetuity. The members of the Company were the Sisters in Life Vows, and the directors and trustees were chosen from those Sisters, with the Reverend Mother chairing the Board. Mother Mary Clare reported to the Chapter in June 1971 as follows:

The year 1970 stands out in the history of SLG as the year in which the Community was granted charitable status. This to a certain extent made history, not only for SLG itself, but for the contemplative orders in general, provided that their life of prayer and withdrawal can be seen, to use the legal phrase, to be 'of benefit to the public'. On October 12 a sung Mass of the Holy Trinity was celebrated at Fairacres in thanksgiving for the granting of charitable status to the Community and a solemn *Te Deum* was sung. The next day the first meeting of the SLG Charitable Trust Limited was held, at which Oblate Sister Evelyn Christina was formally appointed Secretary to the Board. The immense debt of gratitude we owe to her and to Mr Carter [the Community's solicitor] has been recorded elsewhere. It was largely due to their zeal and experience and much hard work that these negotiations reached such a successful conclusion.

The documents of the time seem to evoke a past age, one in which structure and authority still had a settled place—as we can also see from nostalgic series cast in the 1960s currently popular on British television, such as ‘Heartbeat’ and ‘The Royal’—and that is slightly unexpected, when it is an age which many of us can remember well. How carefully and with what authority Evelyn Christina taught the Sisters what it meant to be members of a company and to gather and to make decisions at the Annual General Meeting! She became ill in the mid 1970s and died on 22 January 1977. The Community followed a recommendation to choose a Company Secretary from among the Sisters. The Secretary was, and still is, also the administrator and looks after the finances of the charity, with professional assistance as required.

The Company is still constituted wholly by the Sisters in Life Profession, and the Board is still chosen in the same way as in 1970, but in the early 1990s, we began to *employ* a Company Secretary and Administrator (who is not a member of the Board). Training for all of us has to be ongoing, in this rapidly changing world. For example, there has been a slight shift of emphasis for the members of the Board over the years of the Company’s life, from the role as the successor of the Community’s finance committee, through the role as the Board of Management of a limited company, to our role as the trustees of a registered charity. All of these things have of course been true from the incorporation of the Company, and we are no more and no less responsible now than in the past—but emphases change. Over the past decade or so, the work covered has increased exponentially. I could give many examples. The accounts were computerized in 1997, which is as well, since the number of financial transactions made has now increased greatly. About 10 years ago, we had the planning and execution of major renovations at Fairacres. We had had little option with regard to these; the Community had been at Fairacres since 1911 and major repair work had over the decades been limited to necessities, so the buildings had caught up with us. We were thankful that our charitable status had given us the financial means to take this step. We have sold Bede House and Boxmoor, a process which has taken several years

and was extremely complex. The amount of work necessitated by compliance with legislation has increased for us, as for so many other people in our society—examples being data protection, testing of electrical appliances, risk management, disaster recovery, fire regulations and health and safety compliance. Although we often feel ‘taken over’ by these external rules and requirements and that they are changing our monastic culture—and perhaps not for the better—yet all is not loss, and there has been a shifting of priorities, often from one perceived ‘good’ to another. For instance, twenty years ago, a major positive value in SLG would have been saving on electricity through using a smaller light bulb; although that is of course still true, yet now it would be more *clearly* recognized as the higher and paramount good to care primarily about the person who might stumble on the stairs or walk into a glass panel if the lighting is too dim to see properly. Again, twenty years ago, it could have been a positive value to share someone’s address with another person wishing to get in touch; now the right to privacy of personal information is recognized more clearly and we have to think first of how to preserve that.

These are some of the ways in which the Company makes itself felt day by day in our Community life. We give thanks that, by reason of our charitable status and the tax concessions which it brings, not to mention the generosity of our benefactors over the last 100 years up to the present day, we are not under the financial strictures experienced at the end of the 1960s, although careful stewardship is always needful. We are also able to share what we have with others: for instance, through the work of SLG Press, through hospitality and through the making of grants in accordance with our ‘charitable objects’. The Community and the Company exist side by side, in parallel as it were—and not without tensions. It can sometimes seem to Sisters that ‘business’ and ‘administration’ and ‘computers’ are taking over, or that our standard of living is higher than some would wish—although when the chips are down, the Community would not necessarily wish to be without the opportunities which the Company brings and the available finance and care when things are needed. The challenge, affecting us

particularly at the level of our Vow of Poverty, is to find a way for us to hold together our dependence on the Company for our material existence—along with the legal requirements, and being ‘real’ about this fact—with the ‘entire dependence on Christ’ which our Rule enjoins.

These concerns also present a challenge to the administrators of the Company, which leads me on to mention—and I have left them to have the last word, as it were—the members of the other ‘community’ here at Fairacres, living alongside us day by day. I am speaking now of our staff, employed by the Company, without whom this article would not be complete. For many decades SLG has employed gardeners and chaplains at its different houses, but at the beginning of the 1990s, the effects of increasing age and a slowing down in the number of applicants for admission to the Community were beginning to be felt. We began to look at how some of the tasks which we had always done ourselves could be done by others. We began then by employing a Company Secretary, and the present holder of that office, Anne Champness, has now been with us for very nearly 10 years. At the other end of the scale, we also began to have the windows at Fairacres, or at least the outside ones, cleaned occasionally by contract cleaners.

From those beginnings, we now have staff helping us in many areas of our lives, many of them part time—and of course, we continue to work hard ourselves, but often with and alongside them in a mutual interaction and sharing of skills and wisdom. We have help with sewing our habits, in the bursary, doing housework, caring for the elderly, typesetting in SLG Press, cooking and doing kitchen preparations and with management of the computer network and telephone system, in addition to the traditional gardening and the services of our Warden. This has been a huge adjustment for us, and we have also had to learn all sorts of new skills in being employers! We must not underestimate the ongoing adjustment for our staff, either, as they work alongside us, standing as they do at the interface between our way of life and outside influences. On the one hand, they have to adapt to our—admittedly marginal!—culture and the rhythms and pace of our life, whilst on the other hand they

have to help us to interpret the ever-shifting culture ‘outside’, so that we may all know how best to respond. It might be interesting sometimes to be a fly on the wall and to hear about ourselves as our staff see us—but one thing which is clear is that a network of loving interdependence has come into being here at Fairacres, where staff do come and go up to a point, yet a large proportion stay for years and hope to be with us for the rest of their working lives.

CHARLES MURRAY ROGERS RIP

WE REMEMBER MURRAY ROGERS, who died on 17 October 2006 in Oxford. He has been known to the Community for many years and was a member of the Fellowship of the Love of God. Our Warden, David Barton, has described him as a faithful witness of the gospel, a life long disciple of Ghandi and a pioneer of interfaith encounter. His last years were spent near Fairacres, in a flat in the grounds of All Saints’ Convent. He is survived by his wife Mary and their three children.

Murray Rogers was ordained in 1940, the year of his marriage. He and his wife Mary spent the years 1945-71 in India and founded the ashram Jyotinetan (Hindi for ‘House of Light’) near the village of Kerali in Uttar Pradesh. In 1971 Murray responded to a call to move to Jerusalem and open an interfaith centre there, moving to an interfaith centre in Hong Kong in 1980 and then to Canada in 1989. He returned to England in 1998 to be near his family, joined by their close friend Heather Sandeman, an early member of the Jyotinetan community.

SLG Press was glad to welcome him as an author. Together with David Barton, he contributed an article to the Winter 2005 *Fairacres Chronicle* about Brother Roger, Prior of Taizé, who was murdered in the church at Taizé on 16 August last year. In 2003, SLG Press published a pamphlet which David Barton and Murray

Rogers wrote together, *ABHISHIKTANANDA: A Memoir of Henri le Saux*, the Benedictine monk from the Christian west, who became the *sanyassi* Abhishiktananda. David Barton's biographical introduction is followed by an interview with Murray Rogers about his personal memories of Abhishiktananda, a man of exceptional holiness and a pioneer of interfaith understanding, and the book ends with selected extracts from the works of Abhishiktananda (Fairacres Publication No. 142, £2.50).

BOOKS

The Mystical Language of Icons, by Solrunn Ness, Canterbury Press, 2005, £14.99.

This is a beautiful book in all its aspects, both form and content, a meeting place of a remarkable person, artistic creation, and religious belief and inspiration. Through it the icon becomes a gateway into the heart of the Eastern Orthodox Church, its history, faith and worship.

Solrunn Ness is described on the jacket as an art historian, freelance lecturer and writer, and one of Europe's most admired iconographers. The book is illustrated with over fifty of her own works which have great depth and beauty and are executed with clarity and brilliance of colour and simplicity of line. They are a feast in themselves.

The first part of the book, entitled 'The Icon—a glimpse of the divine', is an overview of the history and context of the icon, its meaning and purpose as a sacred art, its liturgical and teaching function, its use for private devotion. There is a detailed, illustrated description of the technique of icon painting. The iconographer works according to strict rules and follows carefully laid down models. It is an art marked 'more by discipline than inspiration'. But, at the same time, it is a living tradition involving a creative dialogue with the model. All the icons reproduced in the book have a note of the models used, mostly Greek and Russian.

Of the 110 pages, nearly 90 are devoted to reproductions of the author's own icons, with expositions of their meaning and composition. To take one example of her method: The Icon of the Transfiguration. First there is a quotation from the Orthodox liturgy for the feast. This is followed by a description of how the three synoptic gospels portray it, with Scriptural quotations. Then the composition of the icon and the meanings of its various motifs is explained, for example the mandorla and the rays of light, and its theological significance: '[the disciples] were not blinded by natural sunlight but by the uncreated light that has its source in God's own being. Because of his divine identity, Christ is himself that light.' Then a reference to Colossians 2: 9, 'For in him the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily'. The exposition closes with a reference to supernatural light in the Old Testament: the burning bush, the pillar of fire, etc.

There are icons of most of the Great Feasts, of Christ, of the Mother of God and of a number of saints.

This is a book to inspire and inform, a resource for prayer and contemplation, a celebration of the unity of beauty and truth.

SISTER ADRIAN SLG

The Lord's Prayer, by Gerald O'Collins SJ, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006, £9.95.

This relatively slim book of 132 pages contains much which can supplement our understanding of the central prayer of Christianity and nourish our praying of it. Many books are currently being written on the Lord's Prayer, and new ones have to be able to offer fresh insights or original ways of presenting existing scholarship and knowledge; this book is more than justified. It is written by a leading theologian and biblical scholar: the Australian Jesuit Gerald O'Collins holds a Cambridge doctorate and is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the Gregorian University in Rome. He is an influential contributor in the field of ecumenical relations and a prolific author and popular speaker.

The concluding paragraph of the book contains the statement that ‘the Lord’s Prayer summarizes the message of the kingdom and of the Gospel’, and Professor O’Collins endeavours to show this. In the first two of the book’s four sections, namely ‘Addressing God’ and ‘The “You” Petitions’, he considers the one who is praying (Jesus), the Father to whom Jesus prays, and their relationship. These two sections look at the historical context and the faith into which Jesus was born, with its concept of the Fatherhood of God, and also at the novel way in which he addressed his Father as ‘Abba’ or ‘dear Father’. Dr O’Collins shows us that Jesus applied the religious language of ‘divine sonship’ to himself, presenting himself as the Son of God. This book does not evade the related issues with which Christians struggle today, including the question as to whether the Fatherhood of God is an acceptable model in these days of feminist equality. The author argues that the Fatherhood of God is to be understood as metaphor rather than as simile, which avoids direct comparison with images of human fatherhood and allows room for the motherly as well as fatherly love of God. It does not matter that human fathers may not be perfect: ‘No passage [of scripture] suggests that human fatherhood, even when virtuously practised according to the domestic code of conduct, provides the source and standard for naming God “Father”.’

The words of the Lord’s Prayer encapsulate not only the relationship of Jesus with his Father, but also his mission and message. We can connect the petitions of the prayer with the message of the kingdom of God which Jesus preached and dramatized in his own person. Dr O’Collins says that ‘Jesus revealed the divine mystery as the Father to whom he himself stood in a unique relationship as the Son. Acting with filial consciousness, he manifested the Father.’ We are also invited to remember *how* Jesus revealed the Father to us—through his Gospel message, namely through his life, his passion and death, and his resurrection.

The third section, ‘The “We” Petitions’, deals with the four petitions in the second half of the Lord’s Prayer. Each of the verses is taken in turn and there are illustrations drawn from a variety of sources, including films and literature. The final section addresses

the fact that the Lord's Prayer as such does not appear in Mark and John and also explores the doxology often added to the prayer.

Gerald O'Collins says, 'Jesus asked his followers to pray, "May your name be made holy." He himself was that holiness in person.' This book helps us to see that it is this holiness which made Jesus so attractive to his followers at the time and which leads us to follow him even now, seeking to pray the prayer which he taught us and which contains his message of the kingdom and of the Gospel, helped by insights from Christians right up to the present day.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

Firmly I Believe: An Oxford Movement Reader, by Raymond Chapman, Canterbury Press, 2006, £16.99.

Dean Church of St Paul's, who as an undergraduate had heard Newman preach at the University Church in Oxford, later wrote of the experience: 'He set the heights of religion very high.' Mother Kate SSM of St Saviour's Priory in Haggerston made her first confession in her late teens and wrote of having been on her knees for three hours and having 'a fearful headache' afterwards. Fr Raymond Chapman, priest and retired Professor of English in London University, is well-equipped to enable our experiencing of the former without the pain of the latter. Yet to say that is itself misleading. The Oxford Movement was nothing if not intent upon restoring to the Church of England a sense of profound reverence in the practice of the Christian life. To read almost any page of this volume is to find oneself rebuked by the simple means of being reminded that we are called to nothing less than encounter with God. The first monks of the Egyptian desert asked 'What must I do to be saved?' and the Tractarians, by their reading of scripture, the Fathers, and a somewhat partial interpretation of Anglican history, liturgy and formularies, showed themselves prepared to indicate just what was necessary for salvation. And they believed that by God's providence the necessary means of salvation—sacraments, doctrine and spiritual calling—had been preserved, although frequently neglected and overlooked, in the Church of England.

Chapman himself contributes a concise opening chapter in which he sketches out the personalities involved and the history of the first Tractarian period from 1833 to 1845, when Newman finally made his submission to the Catholic Church. Over the course of eight further chapters he allows the principal spokesmen of the Movement to speak to us of their concerns, each extract having its own brief heading by way of introduction. Good academic that he is, Chapman makes us read the primary texts—the *Tracts for the Times*, Hurrell Froude’s *Remains*, the sermons of Pusey, the Lectures of Newman, the verse of Keble and others. The content is not surprising; we may well have some awareness of it already, but it can only do us good to be exposed to the steel of its spirituality. Particularly useful is the selection of extracts on the doctrine of Reserve, that veneration of the heart of the faith which requires caution in speaking of the divine fire and its work within us.

A final chapter by Chapman is entitled ‘Assessment and Legacy’. Here the Oxford Movement’s place and contribution is not assigned principally to the development of theology: ‘the emphasis was on belief expressed in worship, its moral imperatives, and the reference of all aspects of life to the experienced presence of God. The rule of prayer, *lex orandi*, for [the Tractarians] was not only linked to the rule of belief, *lex credendi*, but assayed and guided it.’ So where does this leave us nowadays? The author’s judgement is eirenic, even extremely so: ‘the heirs of the Movement would recognize themselves in the Evangelical organization “Reform” as well as in “Forward in Faith”. Yet many “Affirming Catholics”, supporters of the ordination of women and a more inclusive morality, would also acknowledge their debt to the Tractarians’. Perhaps the last word must come from Newman: ‘The very posture of the mind in worship is necessarily reverential. In this way Christians receive the Gospel literally on their knees ...’

Readers may be surprised by one statement in the book, that Fr Vernon Staley ‘was a member of the Anglican community at Clewer’ (p 161); he was, of course, chaplain to the sisters CSJB there.

JOHN SCOTT

Doing Theology in Altab Ali Park: A project in Whitechapel, East London 1990-2004, by Kenneth Leech, Darton Longman and Todd, 2006, £19.95.

Someone said to me recently that a review is, at least in part, telling others what is in the book. Kenneth Leech expresses a dislike of reviews which only commend, saying that the critical ones are the most useful. I shall be hard put to it to respond to either of these points; I can only give hints of what is in the book from the things which struck *me*—every page is packed with the author’s wisdom, insight and experience (together with quotations from many others across the centuries to the present day)—and I can also commend unreservedly!

The first question which arises, of course, is what the title means. ‘Doing theology’ refers to the work of the author (an Anglican priest) as a community theologian at St Botolph’s, Aldgate, London, 1990-2004. This post was created for him; central to the concept is the reality that to be a Christian at all is to be a theologian. To enable him to develop his role, the brief was very wide, yet also flexible: theological reflection in an urban environment, coupled with its application in ministry and action. Altab Ali Park (formerly known as Itchy Park) was where Ken Leech lived over those years, and it received its name after the murder of a young Bengali clothing worker, Altab Ali, who was crossing the park to vote in the local elections. Ornamental gates were also erected in his memory, and these inspired the cover picture.

There are fascinating insights into the locality; for instance, I did not know how ‘Whitechapel’ actually got its name. It is also good to meet again friends from past centuries and the present day, members of a vast reflective community brought together by this ‘community theologian’. I was glad to encounter (in the chapter on prayer) our Bede House—as the author says, sadly now closed.

This book can be used in various ways. Read though from beginning to end, it is a fascinating story. It is possible too to select chapters and read them individually. A third possibility is to take the

book slowly and meditatively, packed as it is with the fruits of a lifetime of reflection and meditation. The first chapter I read was *'Doing Theology on Our Knees': theology and prayer*. It is helpful to read of some of the author's own struggles with prayer and of the things which he has found from experience to be of use. I found plenty in the book to make me smile, such as his comment:

One of the most serious dangers confronting those who minister in the city is that their lives come to be built on frenzy and compulsive busyness. This usually leads to a lack of focus, a tendency to accumulate more and more things, a collapse of reflection, and the cultivation of a personal lifestyle of obligatory tiredness. This then becomes socially infectious so that one may communicate little to others other than one's own exhaustion—not a very kind gift to people who may already have enough problems of their own. (pp.115-6)

He is describing ordinary human experiences, from which even nuns in contemplative orders may not be entirely immune! We are advised that if we aim to pray without ceasing, we only reach this by praying some of the time... I turned next to the chapter, *'We Preach Christ Crucified': theology and the cross*. Ken Leech asserts the centrality of the cross, not only in preaching and liturgy, but in pastoral care, pointing out the danger of making the cross into a symbol or standard which bears no real relation to the historical cross. The emotions aroused in celebrating Holy Week, for instance, raise all the major issues of life and death, of violence and cruelty, of darkness and desolation, of hope and hopelessness, of dying and, hopefully, rising again.

I then read the chapter *'Outside the Gate': theology on the margins*. Jesus suffered outside the city gate; Ken Leech writes in this chapter about the location of St Botolph's outside the ancient gates of the city of London. He found that he was called to minister primarily with people for whom the church itself was a barrier. As a white male Christian priest based in a mainly Bengali and Muslim area, one which was mainly disconnected from the Christian community in institutional form, he himself was for the most part a

minority figure. This book is about his ministry in that context. As he said in his book, *We Preach Christ Crucified*:

It is here, on the margins, in the shadows, that priestly ministry is most urgently needed, but it will often be a ministry marked by silence, intercession and solidarity in pain and desolation. Priests are liminal people, living and operating on the margins between the city and the dark forest, between stability and madness, between the structures and the chaos. But the real home of the priest is outside the structures.

(Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992, p.78).

Some of the chapters (including two of those mentioned) are quite short, since Ken Leech wishes not to repeat material from earlier writings and to focus mainly on the urban work as it developed. He tells us about the challenges and also about frustrations and failures in his work. I hope that some of our readers might be able to obtain this book for themselves.

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

The Truth Seeking Heart: Austin Farrer and His Writings; ed. & intro. by Anne Loades and Robert MacSwain, Canterbury Press, 2006, £16.99.

Readers of the *Fairacres Chronicle*, it may be presumed, have at least some interest in news of SLG's contemplative comings and goings; beyond that it is to be hoped that the *Chronicle* assists that loving of God with heart, soul, mind and strength which is the first commandment for Christians. Fr Austin Farrer, Nonconformist by upbringing, was quite well enough grafted into the Tractarian rootstock to know that those four means of loving could only succeed in mutual integration, but his especial gift to us will most likely be in engagement of the mind. The editors of this volume have divided it into three sections, Scripture, Tradition and Reason, with some twenty-nine extracts in all from Farrer's writings. Only one of them, a Sunday homily from *The Crown of the Year*, demonstrates to the full his remarkable powers of concentrating the essence of the gospel into the fewest possible words. This reviewer

is disappointed not to find here a sample homily from the posthumous collection of homilies *Words for Life*. A little longer (they could hardly be briefer) than those of the earlier volume, they nonetheless display the distilled fruit of a mind steeped in the words of scripture and their interplay in Testaments New and Old.

The very first piece in the collection causes pain to one often asked by, and falteringly responding to, new or would-be Christians, 'How shall I read the bible?' In the late fifties Farrer put together a selection of scripture under the title *A Short Bible*; a resource to be desired even more nowadays than then, but one made more valuable by his extended essay of introduction. Some of his dating of texts or description of synagogue practice may be open to more recent scholarly critique, yet one could hardly emerge from reading the essay without having been made to think why scripture is central and how we may understand its inspiration by God. It is a very typical Farrer remark that the Old Testament passages included 'are not an anthology of the most uplifting passages the ancient scripture contains. They are the background to the New Testament mind.'

For those of us not immediately attracted to the Philosophy of Religion, Farrer was graced with a certain playfulness. Thus a piece called 'A Midwinter Daydream' features a discussion between Theology and Philosophy personified, as only they could be in a rather rarified Oxbridge setting, with a further figure, ('who had thought of an Intelligent Question'), appearing halfway through. Perhaps we shall not all persevere with the more explicitly philosophical pieces in this anthology, although the editors have been crafty enough to ensure that no less than half of the pieces in the section headed 'Reason' are, in fact, homilies. Unless we put the volume down, Farrer will make us think, one way or another, even as he deepens our faith.

A prime concern for one of his academic and biblical bent proves to be in consideration of what can be meant by 'fact' within the scriptural narratives. The extended essay on 'Mary, Scripture and Tradition' is a fascinating study of how the Church comes to accept and believe certain teachings. He is definitely unhappy with certain forms of the 'It was fitting, and so it was the fact' argument, and yet

‘we cannot help supposing that the path of God’s will from one revealed action to another, when the two are in series, was continuous; nor can we withhold ourselves from conceiving the bridge, or transition, between the two’; but behind all this Farrer’s own faith shines through: ‘the relation of Mary to Jesus is an endless subject of fruitful contemplation... Her glory is that she is the virgin mother of God; what more can be added to it?’ Are we then a little surprised to turn a few more pages and find that a paper of 1968 on Infallibility and Historical Tradition concludes with the Western teachings on Mary’s Conception and Assumption being described as having ‘the alarming appearance of an infallible fact-factory going full blast’? But here is a philosopher at work in great neatness of distinctions and, more than that, we have here this and other pieces pre-dating much recent Catholic (and Anglican) re-formulation and re-visioning. One would dearly love to have his comments on the (now rather sidelined) ARCIC conversations and documents.

If Farrer is not already on your shelves, your choice is to buy this book, or one of those books of his collected homilies that may still be available. He can only stimulate mind and heart.

JOHN SCOTT

The Enduring Melody, by Michael Mayne, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006, £10.95.

Another gently powerful and moving book from Michael Mayne, former Dean of Westminster, the bulk of it his diary as his cancer took hold and he knew that he was dying. He is open and honest in the way of contemporary spiritual autobiography, knowing that this is not far from self-indulgence. I guess he would not be cool and reticent enough for some of the Sisters of Fairacres! But he touched this reviewer’s heart by saying that any piece of writing that is put into the public domain makes the author vulnerable. After all, it is an act of love. He writes that he was amazed at the number of letters he received after he wrote about his ME in the book *A Year Lost and Found*, and he may be relieved now, that the postal arrangements between earth and heaven are not yet efficient. I

suspect that many people will be encouraged by this book, for the hidden ‘fellowship of suffering’ is numerous indeed.

JIM COTTER

Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practising the Presence of Jesus with Young People, by Mark Yaconelli, SPCK, 2006, £ 8.99.

I first came across this book during a discussion with a youth worker in Longsight, Manchester, after a widely publicised series of incidents of gun crime in that area. It was this book which spoke to him powerfully.

Mark Yaconelli lives in Oregon and teaches a youth and spirituality project at San Francisco Theological Seminary. His book is an attempt to connect the contemplative tradition to contemporary youth work. So, not surprisingly, he stresses presence more than words, though being well aware of the dangers for pastors within capitalist and consumerist cultures.

If you’re a pastor in a church, one sure way to get fired is to set aside two minutes of silence in a worship service for people to just ‘be’ with God. Try this a few times, and soon the church leadership will be inviting you to just ‘be’ somewhere else (p 3).

While this is addressed to the USA situation, Christians in Britain have the same problem in different forms.

Yaconelli has wise words about the place of anxiety in youth work: ‘most ministries with youth in the West are ministries of anxiety’, he claims (p 16). From his perspective the purpose of youth ministry is ‘to help them enter into the alternative way of life that Jesus offers.....to help young people unmask the principalities and powers that seek to bind us, to help them live into freedom.....to help youth learn the practices, understandings and disposition that will keep them close to the source of life revealed in Jesus Christ.’ (p 19)

The influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Richard Rohr and others is very clear. And, with a foreword by the amazing Anne Lamott, the book should sell. It

should sell in Britain, and should be read, and read contemplatively and repeatedly.

My only regret is that it was published in Britain, a far more secularised society than the USA, with a much lower incidence of church membership, without some reflection from a British youth worker on how it can apply here. Maybe a thought for the second edition?

KENNETH LEECH

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

REINHARD KÖRNER is a Carmelite priest who has for many years run the priory and retreat house at Birkenwerder, north of Berlin.

ROWAN WILLIAMS is Archbishop of Canterbury.

CURTIS ALMQUIST (Superior) and ELDRIDGE PENDLETON are members of the Society of St John the Evangelist in the United States of America.

JOHN SCOTT was Chaplain at Bede House 1991-2003. On weekdays he looks after the English Chapel at Christ the King, Gordon Square in central London, where students, office workers, tourists and others come for silence, space and prayer. Sundays are his day off; sometimes he preaches, but is often happy to hear others do so.

JIM COTTER, a friend of the Community for nearly thirty years, presbyter of the Church in Wales, 'hospitaller' of a small pilgrim place, St Tecwyn's Church, Llandecwyn, writes and publishes as Cairns Publications, enjoys theatre, hills, and friends.

KENNETH LEECH, a Priest Associate, lived for many years in the East End of London. He was Community Theologian, based at St Botolph's Aldgate, 1990-2004. He now lives in Manchester and writes and gives lectures.

BOOKS RECEIVED

From The Boydell Press:

The Eucharist in Romanesque France: Iconography and Theology, Elizabeth Saxon, 2006, £50.00.

From Canterbury Press:

Ordained Local Ministry, edited by Jeffrey Heskins & Malcolm Torry, 2006, £14.99.

Living Bread: Prayers and Preparation for Holy Communion, David Goode, 2006, £8.99.

Here I am: Reflections on the Ordained Life, Richard Giles, 2006.

Homely Love: Prayers and Reflections Using the Words of Julian of Norwich, Sister Penny Roker RSM, 2006.

Invincible Spirits: A Thousand Years of Women's Spiritual Writings, Felicity Leng, 2006.

From SPCK:

Rumours of Life: Transforming Wounded People, David Runcorn, revised ed. 2006.

New in December from SLG Press

Suffering

Why all this suffering? What do I do about it?

REINHARD KÖRNER OCD

Christians have frequently suffered from a distorted and ambivalent image of a God with two sides, one light, loving and forgiving, but the other dark, threatening and punishing, and the side encountered may be entirely arbitrary, or at best dependent upon personal behaviour and taking appropriate action to avert God's wrath and punishment. Dr Reinhard Körner, a Carmelite well-known across

the denominations in Germany for his many published books on topics of spirituality, and for his retreats and courses at the house of his Order at Birkenwerder, north of Berlin, is a leader of a movement in Germany away from such an image and its consequences, including the ascription of suffering to God.

No one in the history of humanity has yet found a satisfactory answer to the question of suffering. Dr Körner makes no attempt at slick answers, but rather wrestles honestly with the theological issues—not just from a theoretical point of view, but from personal experience of grave illness. Protesting against any notion of a God who keeps a score of rights and wrongs and who has to be appeased and ‘bought off’ through sacrifice and suffering, Dr Körner preaches the God of unconditional love whom Jesus proclaimed and addressed as Abba, ‘dear Father’. He points the reader to Jesus, as a pattern and example for suffering humanity.

SLG PRESS welcomes this opportunity to publish some of Dr Körner’s work, particularly a book which attempts to help people with real issues in their Christian lives.

Fairacres Publication 150.
Price £3.00.

ISBN 978-0-7283-0168-9
0-7283-0168-7

Recent from SLG Press

Hymns of St Ephrem the Syrian, translated by Mary Hansbury, £3.00.

St Ephrem the Syrian (306-376), a great visionary poet and spiritual teacher of the early Christian centuries, is known chiefly as the author of numerous hymns recalling the events of salvation history and combining lyrical delight in creation with an outpouring of praise and thanksgiving to their Creator.

Kabir, by Sister Rosemary (Reverend Mother SLG), £2.50, reset, with a new cover.

A study of Kabir, the fifteenth-century poet of Varanasi in North India, who is loved and venerated as poet, saint, and guru by Hindus and Muslim alike. He was born into a family of Muslim weavers and believed to have been a disciple of the Hindu guru Ramanand, but he cannot be classified as Hindu, Muslim or yogi.

Forthcoming from SLG Press

From the Elixir to Perfection: George Herbert, by Ben de la Mare: publication approximately January 2007.

Ben de la Mare's inherited, deep understanding of poetry is shown in this sensitive examination of the spiritual journey reflected in George Herbert's development and revision of the poem 'Perfection'—well-loved in the hymn version 'Teach me my God and King'. The last two lines of the final version, 'The Elixir', 'For that which God doth touch and own/ Cannot for lesse be told', as Ben de la Mare says, 'gives all priority to God, making the famous stone into an image of God's grace'. The book ends by giving 'the last word to one of the greatest poems of his (Herbert's) maturity', 'The Glance'. 'This rare and beautiful narrative should convince even the most sceptical that our poet was a changed man. He had indeed felt the touch of God.'

A True Easter, by Sister Benedicta SLG: publication Spring 2007.

Sister Benedicta has given a fascinating 'inside' account of the happenings at the Congress of Whitby in 664, held to discuss the date upon which Easter should be celebrated and other matters of variance. She refutes a fairly widely held modern view that the Congress was a battle for the upper hand between Irish-Celtic Christianity and English-Roman Christianity, and describes how the difficulties of different calendars and different personal styles were resolved in friendship by means of patience and accommodation—a useful lesson for today.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE SISTERS
OF THE LOVE OF GOD

Some significant events 1906-2006

- 1906 On 14 September three women begin SLG at 18 Leopold Street; Fr George Seymour Hollings SSJE is the 'Father Founder'.
1908 Move to 349 Cowley Road.
1911 Move to Fairacres (rented at first).
1914 Fr Hollings dies; Fr Lucius Cary SSJE becomes 'Father Director'.
1915 Fairacres purchased.
1916 Sr Hilda becomes Sister Superior.
1920 M Mary Frances elected Revd Mother.
1923 Dedication of Chapel and St Mary's building at Fairacres.
1928 Convent of St Mary & the Angels, Boxmoor, opened.
1935 Convent of St Mary of Nazareth, Dudwell St Mary, Burwash, opened.
1939 Trunks packed for SLG to found a house at Ain Karim, Jerusalem, but war breaks out and it does not happen.
1950 Fr Cary dies; Fr William O'Brien SSJE becomes Chaplain General, in later years succeeded by Fr David Hemming SSJE.
1954 M Mary Clare elected Revd Mother, after M Mary Frances.
1959 Dedication of St Joseph's building at Fairacres.
1964 Fr Gilbert Shaw succeeds Fr David Hemming as Warden.
1967 Bede House opened; SLG Press begins; Fr Gilbert Shaw dies. Fr Donald Allchin becomes Warden, following Fr Gilbert.
1970 SLG Charitable Trust Limited formed.
1973 Sr Jane elected Revd Mother, following Mother Mary Clare.
1974 Mother Mary Frances dies.
1988 Sr Anne elected Revd Mother after M Jane; M Mary Clare dies.
1989 Boxmoor leased to the English Cistercians until 1991.
1992 Burwash sold; Dedication of St Raphael's building, Fairacres.
1995 Sr Jane dies; SLG sends Sisters to St Isaac's, New Zealand; Fr Richard Buck elected Warden, following Fr Donald Allchin.
1996 Sr Rosemary elected Revd Mother, following Mother Anne.
2001 Fr David Barton elected Warden, following Fr Richard Buck.
2003 Bede House sold.
2006 Boxmoor sold; withdrawal from St Isaac's: Sr Anne remains.

RETREAT OPPORTUNITIES IN 2007

Friday 20 July (evening) to Sunday 22 July (afternoon)

at Chester:

The Retreat House
11 Abbey Square
Chester
CH1 2HU

Led by Brother Nicholas Alan SSF

*Those who have visited Chester Retreat House previously
may be glad to know that there is now a small lift to the first floor.*

Cost: £81

Friday 5 October (4 p.m.) to Sunday 7 October (2 p.m.)

at Ely:

Bishop Woodford House
Retreat & Conference Centre
Barton Road Ely
Cambridgeshire
CB7 4DX

Led by Sister Edmée SLG

Cost: £94 or (en suite) £104

Booking forms available from:

Miss Judith Lloyd Thomas
32 Holcombe Drive,
Llandrindod Wells,
Powys LD1 6DN
Telephone: 01597 823020

Are you thinking of making a financial contribution or leaving a legacy to the Community?

We are a registered charity: No. 261722

Donations

Please make cheques and donations for SLG payable to SLG Charitable Trust Limited.

Gift Aid

If you pay UK tax, you can increase the value of your donations by Gift Aid: currently, for each £10 given to SLG, we can reclaim a further £2.80 from the Inland Revenue, making the gift worth £12.80. If you are a higher rate tax payer, you can claim relief on the difference between the basic rate and higher rate of tax. If you do not pay tax you should **not** use Gift Aid.

Gifts of land, buildings shares and securities

If you give us land, buildings, shares or securities, you can claim tax relief: the amount of relief you can claim is the value of the net benefit to the charity at the time you give or sell the assets to the charity, plus any incidental costs, less any disposal proceeds or other money you or a person connected with you receive in consequence of you giving or selling the qualifying investment to charity.

Payroll Giving

If your employer runs a payroll giving scheme, you can nominate SLG. A small fee is deducted from the gift for the service by the administering agency. It is easy and quick to administer for you and helps us by providing regular income.

Legacies

If you wish to remember SLG in your will, please make the bequest in favour of SLG Charitable Trust Limited. Bequests to charities are entirely free of inheritance and capital gains tax. There are two main ways:

A residuary legacy gives SLG a proportion of your residual estate after debts and specific bequests and usually maintains its real value over time.

A pecuniary legacy gives SLG a specific sum of money, but does not change with time or take into account the effects of inflation.

For further information or assistance, including suggested wording of legacies, contact Mrs Anne Champness at:

Convent of the Incarnation Fairacres Oxford OX4 1TB.
email: annechampness@slg.org.uk