

F A I R A C R E S
C H R O N I C L E



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COMMUNITY NOTES

DEAR FRIENDS,

In the midst of life we are in death

(Prayer Book Burial Service)

I have found myself frequently pondering the words above in recent months. The next few paragraphs may explain why this is so.

Sister Mary Magdalene of the Resurrection died on 6 December 2013, aged 101. She was the first SLG centenarian, although she frequently forgot that she was of such venerable years. On her 100th birthday she could not make out why the Queen had sent her a card! Sister was cared for in her final years in St John's Home. The address Sr Avis Mary gave at her requiem is included in this *Fairacres Chronicle*.

Sister Edwina of the Resurrection died about three months later, on 16 March. She was 95 and she, too, had spent some months in St John's Home, where she died. It was lovely that her niece, now living in Portugal, was able to be with us for the funeral, as well as some good friends. The homily Sr Clare-Louise gave at the requiem is also included in this issue. Another elderly Sister was very seriously ill in February, but she has made a remarkable recovery.

Several close friends of the Community have also died, including Wendy Robinson and Jim Cotter. As well as being a Companion of SLG, Wendy helped individual Sisters and the Community as a whole. Jim celebrated the Eucharist at Boxmoor when he was a curate at Leavesden, and occasionally at Fairacres when he stayed. An appreciation of Wendy by Sister Susan, and one of Jim by Sister Christine and Sister Avis Mary appear in the *In Memoriam* section.

Another old friend, Ann Bonsor, died early in May. She was an Oblate Sister for some years, and continued to visit us after she withdrew from Oblature. She often drove for us, and I particularly remember her driving Mother Jane. Three Sisters attended her funeral at the church of St Mary Magdalene here in Oxford, where she had been a faithful member for many years.

On 11 June Oblate Sister Gill died after a long battle with cancer. She had been an Oblate Sister for a number of years, and was well known as a spiritual director and retreat leader. A long-standing member of staff, Helen Hedges, has died after over fifteen years' service at Fairacres. The mother of one Sister has died and another's father had a close brush with death.

The above are individuals closely associated with us. There are also the thousands whose earthly lives end suddenly through one of the many conflicts taking place at present, particularly in parts of Africa and the Arab nations. Recently there have been events marking the seventieth anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, where many died as the Allies began invading German-occupied Western Europe. This year marks also the centenary of the beginning of the First World War, in which nine million combatants and countless civilians lost their lives. The first shots were fired on 28 July 1914, but throughout August that year more countries were drawn into the conflict. Michael Paternoster's article, 'Survivors' is about those who survived the First World War, rather than those who lost their lives. Bonnie Thurston's poem, 'Tymawr: *Campo Santo*', also refers to the 1914-1918 conflict, which profoundly influenced the spirituality and vocation of both SLG and the Society of the Sacred Cross at Tymawr. We will be holding a night vigil of prayer for world peace in August. While remembering those who are dying in current conflicts, we cannot forget those who died during World War I.

The quotation with which these notes began can, I think, be reversed: 'In the midst of death we are in life'. The Community had

a very blessed Holy Week and Eastertide. Although we celebrate the same Triduum liturgies year-on-year, often in a very similar way, each time they are different and ‘new’. It is surely part of the mystery, and one of the gifts of our faith, that it is so; and so it is with each celebration of the Eucharist.

The natural world follows this pattern of life and death, death and life. After such a wet spring that the garden was waterlogged, it is now yielding delicious soft fruit and beautiful roses. In mid-June we joined the local Residents’ Association Open Garden afternoon by having our garden open to neighbours to enjoy. We plan to open it again in September, this time serving tea in the garden. We hope people will also visit the SLG Press shop. We not only share the grounds with which we have been blessed, but in a tiny way it makes the Religious Life better known.

Sister Catherine returned to Fairacres after nearly two years at Lambeth Palace; she writes about this time in ‘Living Prayer at Lambeth’. Archbishop Justin Welby said near the beginning of his term of office that one of his objectives is the renewal of the Religious Life. On 28 March he hosted a day conference, ‘Religious Life and Renewal: Exploring Roots and Shoots,’ which Sister Catherine and I attended. The day was carefully organised so that members of both traditional and newly-formed communities overlapped in discussion groups and there was much lively exchange, both in the groups and during breaks. Archbishop Justin gave the first keynote speech in which he said:

It is—or should be—impossible to imagine a church that flourishes without the flourishing of Religious communities as an integral part of the body of Christ.

It is—or should be—impossible because, it is our life in Religion, in contemplation, in prayer and community around a Rule and around worship, that makes us more than an NGO with loads of pointy-roofed old buildings. ...

Life in Religion is the ultimate wager on the existence of God.

Towards the end of his address he asked, ‘What re-imagination do we need?’ That is hard to answer, but the second keynote speech from Father Étienne Vetö of the Chemin Neuf Community gave some clues. Having acknowledged that many branches of the Religious Life in the western church are in crisis, because that is the state of much of the western church, he suggested some approaches:

The general idea could be expressed by a verse in 2 Tim. 1: 5, ‘Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.’ In a crisis situation, it is important to go back to what gave life at first, to what is essential, But at the same time we are going to put new wood into it.

A little later he said

The best way and only way to renew religious life is to become better Christians, better disciples of Christ. The advantage is that it is very simple; but so difficult to act out.

This applies to each individual Christian and every group of Christians. It was an inspiring day; those of us who attended hope its themes can be pursued. For those who live in community, being able to pursue the vocation to which we feel called is like finding the ‘pearl of great price’. An aspect of thanksgiving for our vocations is to enable others who also feel called to find out about this way of life. It is clear that many people are unaware that there are Anglican religious communities. If you are a Vocations Advisor or have any contact with people discerning vocation, please help to make sure that the religious life is not overlooked. Often only ordination is mentioned or encouraged in the discernment process. The Ministry Division at Church House is very aware of the Religious Life and is recommending to some people that they visit

communities. But this practice needs to be happening within each diocese, which it seems not to be.

Soon after Sister Catherine's return to Fairacres, Jessica, our postulant, decided to leave the novitiate. We were sad to see her go, but glad that God's will for the immediate future had become clear to her during her time with us.

Two further articles in this edition which have not been mentioned yet are by Sue Morgan (Oblate Sister Sue SLG) and Kenneth Mason. The former has recently retired as priest-in-charge of St Thomas, Kirkholt, Rochdale. She writes about ministering in this parish, which is 'among the most deprived in the country'. Kenneth Mason's article, entitled simply 'Agnosticism' examines the importance of questioning one's faith: unknowing is a constant, indispensable element in the knowledge that accompanies faith.

From 7-10 July Bishop Michael Lewis, our Bishop Visitor, and his team are conducting a Visitation to the Community. A fortnight later we have a Community retreat, led by Brother David Vryhof SSJE. We would value your prayer particularly for these.

In the midst of death there *is* life, something which so many writings and stories from times of conflict and life-threatening circumstances illustrate. Indeed death is necessary for new life; as St John's gospel says:

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12: 24)

We remember all who mourn, and pray for the peace of the souls of those who have died, that they may come to the fullness of that Paschaltide joy which we have recently celebrated once again.

With all good wishes,

SISTER MARGARET THERESA SLG

**SISTER MARY MAGDALENE OF THE
RESURRECTION SLG**

(Mary Lindsay Wright)

5 July 1912 – 6 December 2013



**ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL REQUIEM MASS
16 DECEMBER 2013**

SISTER AVIS MARY SLG

I BEGIN this tribute with two scripture quotations for us to have in mind; the first, 2 Corinthians 5, is referred to in the Community's Rule, Chapter 3, on 'Reconciliation':

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. ... We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. (2 Cor. 5: 18-20)

The other quotation comprises extracts from the second chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians:

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has ... broken down the dividing wall. ... He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace. ... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God. ... In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom

you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place
for God. (Eph. 2:14-15, 19, 21-22)

In May 2012, after a time in hospital, Sister Mary Magdalene went to live not far from Fairacres, at St John's Home, founded by the All Saints' Sisters. We were sad that we could no longer care for her; though physically very active for her age, she needed supervision, especially at night, to keep her safe from falls. She died at St John's, where she was much loved and received superb care throughout. We are very pleased to welcome today three All Saints' Sisters and representatives from the Home. Sometimes my visits there included a meal with Sister Mary Magdalene in the dining room. At the same table was a lady who kept saying, 'You are *so* like your mother!' I don't know if it was our black veils and brown habits, or our physical appearance, or something else; but it signalled something for further reflection.

I did not regard Sister Mary Magdalene as a mother, nor a grandmother, figure. But we had a bond which defies analysis. Baptised as a young adult, I had no godmothers, yet perhaps the godmother archetype would fit: a person who cares for you and helps you on your journey, makes interventions for you, sometimes in decisive ways, sometimes without even realising it; and who, as she grows old herself, in turn needs your help and support, leading to a role reversal.

I'd like to share two significant interventions which Sister Mary Magdalene made for me. In my Novitiate years, 1978-83, the Novices and Professed Sisters had 'Recreation' together once a month on a Sunday. This could be quite strained on both sides, as the Novitiate was much more separate then, and we didn't know each other well. It could feel as if there were a solid dividing wall between us. But Sister Mary Magdalene always reached out, simply and warmly, ignoring any tensions in the situation. She and I often ended up together, and we had some good, long, important talks. Some talks, in 1980-81, were about the Carmel at Dachau in

Germany. I knew of it because before I entered SLG I had read in a Redemptorist magazine a moving article by a priest who had visited there. Sister Mary Magdalene had been in touch with the Carmel from about 1966. Sadly the contact fizzled out in about 1972, but she shared with me all the letters and papers she had received. Later, in her old age, she gave them to me. The information was a lifeline for me; it touched upon my own vocation.

In the mid-1960s Mother Mary Clare had encouraged the Professed Sisters to seek and develop ecumenical contacts with other communities. Sister Mary Magdalene knew what she wanted. She received permission to attempt a correspondence link with the newly-founded Carmel at Dachau, and was successful. She had lived through not one, but two, World Wars. Her brother Nick became a prisoner of war in 1940 after Dunkirk and did not return until after the end of the Second World War. For a long time the family had no news as to whether he was alive or dead. Although she spoke no German herself and would never travel to Germany, this contact with another community of reconciliation in that country was at the deepest level a sharing in the ministry of reconciliation.

One Lenten Sunday in 1981 she announced to me that she would write again to Dachau to ask if the correspondence could be resumed, but with me instead of herself—and maybe I would get something for Easter! In fact, the reply came months later, in September that year. It was immensely worth the wait! I have visited Dachau three times now, and a Sister from Dachau lived with us for five months in 2011. Without Sister Mary Magdalene, the precious links with Germany, and with the German language, which I now have would probably not have happened—but I cannot imagine being without them! For me she has certainly been an ‘ambassador for Christ’, who enabled me to find my vocation.

All her life she was an exceptionally able, practical person, and even in her final days I saw evidence of that. Her second major

intervention came in May 1981 when I had, as a Novice, a big work change, after two-and-a-half years in the kitchen. I went to the laundry, where she was in charge. She welcomed me, and I haven't forgotten her first words. At that time I went out to a weekly appointment on Thursdays. She said that, as our big weekly wash day was on Thursdays, please could I try to change the appointment to Wednesdays? Hardly a life-changing remark, you might think! But for me it brought liberation on a scale impossible to understand now, when Novices have much more personal autonomy. Here was a senior Professed Sister calmly suggesting that I, a Novice, might arrange this for myself! Suddenly I felt I was my own person again. She had simply 'broken down the dividing wall. ... to create a new humanity ... making peace'. Through *her* humanity, I felt—at least with *her*—no longer a stranger and alien in SLG, but a member of the 'household of God'. I still fold and iron clothes exactly as she taught me. I still look at the height of the clouds, to assess whether I should hang out or bring in the washing. I know I am not the only one who benefitted from all her kindness.

About ten years ago, she was given the opportunity to choose a particular Sister to be a friend/companion/mentor. It was especially important for her, with her already advanced years and increasing deafness. She asked for me. I was surprised, and still don't know exactly why. But you will realise from what I have said what a role reversal it was. The strong, capable person was now frail and vulnerable and was saying I made her feel 'safe'—yet we have also seen her vast inner strength to the end. I *have* tried to be there for her, but sometimes Community responsibilities have not enabled this as much as I would have liked.

She always gave thanks for her early years and for what she called her 'happy childhood', to which she ascribed her ability to be content with her lot wherever she was. In the situation of a rapidly changing world, with her very critical intellect and her deafness she

might have become hard and bitter. Instead we have watched her mellow and flourish from day to day, an example to us all.

I've tried to say something of how in hidden ways a faithful Sister of the Love of God can have a profound influence. I could say so much more about Sister Mary Magdalene, but unfortunately time doesn't permit, so I'll just add some concluding words.

She had a very strong sense of 'community'. Her family meant a great deal to her, increasingly so as she grew older. Every spring she would be particularly homesick for the fresh air and open spaces of her native Northumberland. The poor air of the Thames Valley, together with the relative confinement of Fairacres and its urban setting, were particular sacrifices for her.

Her practical side was balanced by a deep prayer and spiritual life. She was given much responsibility within the Community—she was in charge of our houses at Burwash and Boxmoor, was Guest Mistress at Fairacres and cared for the Companions—but she might perhaps have been given more. Again, those were different times and circumstances. Her experience of working for the Church in various dioceses prior to her entry at the age of forty informed her life, prayer and ministry. She read very solid theology until well into her nineties. She ploughed her way through many tomes by the Swiss Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, especially his series, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. Another firm favourite was the Anglo-Catholic Austin Farrer.

Four days before she died, she woke up and found me sitting with her. My community cross was at her eye level, and she said, 'You are wearing a cross!' I said, 'Yes', and she went back to sleep. The image of the Cross has been very important to her this last year. As other things became minimal, that remained.

She was more than ready to die, although she did enjoy her life despite the restrictions of old age. For many years she hoped to die

quietly in her sleep. I have a note of her saying on 27 July 2010, ‘I must admit, I do drop a few hints [to God]!’ On 14 June this year, I said to her, ‘I think God wants to keep you here!’ She replied, ‘Yes, I seem to go on ...!’ But finally it has come about.

Sister Mary Magdalene of the Resurrection, faithful follower of the Cross and firm believer in the Easter hope; worker for reconciliation and harmony; supporter of, and intercessor for, your family, your Church, your Community and those around you: may you rest in peace.

ASSOCIATES

New

FLG

Jane Yeomans
13 June 2014

RIP

Oblate Sister

Oblate Sister Gill (Gilleen Russell)
11 June 2014

Companion

Wendy Robinson
12 December 2013

FLG

Sister Patricia England OP
17 December 2013

The Reverend Julie Hulme
15 January 2014

**SISTER EDWINA
OF THE RESURRECTION SLG**

(Margery Edwina Sampson)

23 May 1918 – 16 March 2014



**ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL REQUIEM MASS
1 APRIL 2014**

SISTER CLARE-LOUISE SLG

'Your life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. 3:2)

WE HAVE GATHERED today to commend to God the soul of our Sister Edwina of the Resurrection, to give thanks for her, and to recall her life.

Sister Edwina was a beloved Sister (in the family sense too!), aunt, godmother and friend, a person of many talents, and a person whose life was 'hid with Christ in God'. Born in 1918 as Margery Edwina Foster, she attended a finishing school in Switzerland, then served during the war as a WRAF driver. She was an excellent driver, a function she often performed in Community. A Sister recalled that when a delivery man left his van in the way in the drive, with the keys in the ignition, Sister Edwina jumped in and backed it out!

She was always a gracious and graceful person and she trained at an early age in eurhythmics, which uses harmonious bodily movement to express creativity. Its influence was still visible as she underwent rehabilitation after her first broken hip, and amazed the physiotherapist with her flexibility.

In 1947 she married Godfrey Sampson, a talented composer whose work was played at The Proms in 1928. Sister Edwina was herself very musical, with a lovely singing voice; her ability to sing a part as the Community sang hymns, (often, as far as I was able to tell, making it up as she went along) is still much missed. Sadly she was widowed after only two years, and one can only imagine what that must have been like for the young Margery.

After becoming a widow, she tested her vocation first at the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage, but transferred to this Community while still a Novice, in June 1964. The final fifty years of her life were to be spent as a Sister of the Love of God.

She was a woman who enjoyed nice things and had many creative abilities; she arranged flowers exquisitely, with an understanding of flowers which enabled her to produce lovely arrangements even when there was little in the garden to use. When I put a flower in a vase it moves around; when Sister Edwina put a flower in a vase, it stayed put! She was often outside, walking to and fro along the garden paths, or, in later years perched on her walker in a patch of sun—until she had a fall which led to a second broken hip and hospitalisation.

I have already mentioned the fact that Sister Edwina was a dearly loved friend, and it is good at this point to remember Pat Nicholls, a particularly dear friend over many years; her godchildren and, of course, Jean, her sister, and her niece, Janey. She kept them all, their concerns and families, in her thoughts and prayers. She was also strong-willed and independently-minded, something which, at times, caused her difficulties in Community. But these characteristics were very much part of the person she was. Her strong-mindedness, however, enabled her to cope as she was faced with the increasing limitations of old age, deafness and poor sight. Not always a patient person, she nevertheless lived through years of increasing frailty with spirit intact.

Spiritual food came to her in many ways, including through her sympathetic interest in the work of Dr Kenneth McCall, a Christian psychiatrist with a ministry of spiritual healing. She was very much in tune with this ministry, and corresponded with Ken, then with his wife, Frances, over many years. For as long as her eyesight allowed it, she enjoyed reading. She read and re-read *Return to the Centre* by Bede Griffiths, and appreciated William Johnston's books. A notebook among her possessions was full of biblical quotations in her—always rather illegible—handwriting. She listened avidly to the radio, and would spend the week meditating on what she had garnered from *Desert Island Discs*, and waiting for the next episode. For her, God was never just in the obviously holy things but could be found everywhere.

In the final stages of her life she was beautifully cared for by the Staff of St John's Nursing Home, where she was very happy. To the end continued to greet visitors with a smile.

True to her dedication to the Resurrection, Sister Edwina was prepared for and unafraid of death. In fact it was something of a joke that she wasn't always very patient about waiting for it. Regularly for many years she would make comments like, 'if I'm still here'; 'if I haven't died by then'; or, 'I don't *think* I'm going to die today.' I remember going to see her in her cell on one occasion, when she announced to me: 'I have been lying here waiting to die for forty-eight hours and nothing has happened yet; I'm going to get up!' There was nothing morbid about this; it was the comment of a woman who had lived a long and full life, and was looking forward to something even better in the Resurrection.

That is a brief and incomplete summary of the events of her life, and it is only the tip of the iceberg—her life is hid with Christ in God. Whenever we look back at the life of someone just departed, we are aware that there is so much we do not know, so much known only to God. Sister Edwina was dedicated to, and lived her life in, the hope of the Resurrection. That hidden life of

prayer and faith was something we were only privileged to catch glimpses of, as is true of each of us in our intimate relationship with God. Incorporated into the Body of Christ at Baptism, vowed to him in the particular way of a Sister of the Love of God at her Profession, she was nourished by the Eucharist. For me an abiding image of Sister Edwina is that of taking Communion to her cell and finding her ready, radiant, waiting and expectant, hands held out, totally focussed on receiving Communion. She didn't want or need any extra words or prayers when she received Communion from the Reserved Sacrament; simply to receive her Lord was enough for her. The Eucharist was central to her life and prayer.

These are just my particular thoughts; each of us could add memories and stories. The major part of her life, spent as a Sister of the Love of God, was to all outward appearances relatively quiet and uneventful, passed in the convents of the Community. Her inner life was hid with Christ in God and was an unimaginable journey. Now she has reached journey's end, and we rejoice for and with her. May she rest in peace, and rise in glory.

LIVING PRAYER AT LAMBETH

SISTER CATHERINE SLG

IN AN INTERVIEW for the *Financial Times*, Archbishop Justin told a little story about getting pizza delivered.

So they ring up and say, ‘This Lambeth Palace, where is it?’ And I say, ‘Where are you?’ ‘I’m by Lambeth Bridge.’
‘OK. Can you see a sixty-foot-tall red brick gatehouse?’
‘No.’

How can you miss seeing a palace? Quite easily, if it’s just a little one. Grand as Lambeth Palace would once have seemed, it is now dwarfed by the buildings around it: St Thomas’ Hospital, a luxury apartment block, an office building, a hotel—and the Palace of Westminster across the river. Westminster is the reason why, since the end of the twelfth century, the Archbishop of Canterbury has had his home here as well as in Canterbury, because for much of the mediaeval period the archbishop and the other bishops were closely involved in government. A good many held the position of Chancellor, and Lambeth Palace was well placed for access by river to Westminster and to the other royal palaces.

One such was Cardinal John Morton, famous for his tax-raising ability: he reckoned that a man living modestly must be saving money and could afford taxes, whereas if he was living extravagantly then he was obviously rich—and could afford taxes. He was responsible for building the Gatehouse. Come with me to see where I lived and worked for two years as a ‘Lambeth Sister’.

Through the wicket gate and under the archway is the Great Hall, rebuilt after the Restoration and now the home of Lambeth Palace Library. Through another archway, and we are in the Courtyard, with Palace buildings on two sides and the converted stable block on the third (the fourth is the church of St Mary at Lambeth, now the Museum of Garden History). Most of what can

be seen dates from major rebuilding in the nineteenth century: in his survey of the Palace, the architect Edward Blore found the old residential parts of the Palace 'miserably deficient', and pulled most of them down. The oldest surviving (but much altered) parts of the building are in the environs of the thirteenth-century Chapel and Crypt.

The Sisters' cottage is reached through an arch in the Courtyard wall. Cottage 5 is one of eight cottages, forming three sides of a square facing Lambeth Road. We were often aware of passers-by peering through the rather impressive wrought iron gates, clearly puzzled by what they could see—an alms house, perhaps? The cottages date from Blore's rebuilding in the 1830s: at that time they were the stables and coach house, with an adjacent wash house, and the dairy opposite. The Sisters' cottage had a kitchen with a dining area and a sitting room/oratory, with three bedrooms (one doubling as an office) and a bathroom upstairs, so there was room for an occasional third Sister or visitor.

It was Archbishop Robert Runcie who invited Anglican Sisters to be resident at Lambeth Palace: the first Sisters were from the Order of the Holy Paraclete, and in 1994 the role was taken on by the Community of the Holy Name. Ordinarily there would be two Sisters resident in Cottage 5, forming a small community within the larger community of Lambeth Palace. Towards the end of 2011 CHN asked the other Church of England communities if there were a Brother or Sister who could join Sister Edith Margaret. I was just coming to the end of my time as Prioress at Fairacres, and this was a providential invitation which would take me from under the feet of my successor!

Our principle purpose was to be a 'praying presence': attending worship in the Chapel and officiating at Evening Prayer, acting as sacristan and praying CHN's community Office in the cottage. The main focus of our intercessory prayer was the Archbishop, his family and his staff. And, radiating out from this prayer, a whole

range of concerns integral to his position as Primate of All England: as first among equals of the Primates of the Anglican Communion; as a member of the House of Lords; Privy Counsellor; Bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury; Visitor, Governor or Patron of a long list of institutions; and member of many ecumenical and inter-faith bodies. We had access to the Archbishop's diary (containing a very great many more engagements than appeared on the website), and to a list of the week's events in the Palace so that we, and whoever was leading intercessions, could include them, along with the Anglican Communion and Canterbury Diocesan cycles of prayer. We also kept up to date a list of the staff, grouped according to their area of work, and prayed for a department each day. Many of those who work for the Archbishop devote much of their time to keeping open channels of communication within the Anglican Communion, with our sister Churches and other faith communities, and with the world at large, so would often pass on requests for intercession.

The Sisters provided informal pastoral support to the Lambeth Palace staff and residents, perhaps by no more than a wave or a quick word, sometimes by a hospital visit or a longer chat. We were also invited to some receptions and other events, including the hospitality offered to bishops and their families on the eve of their consecration. We attended the consecration itself, and it was especially moving to see the assembled bishops, many of whom I knew, gather round their new brother, and then to meet people from both the 'sending' Church and the 'receiving' diocese.

Less than three months into my time at Lambeth Palace, Archbishop Rowan announced that he would be standing down at the end of 2012. Before Archbishop Justin took up his post at the beginning of 2013, Sister Margaret had been recalled to her community's mother house in Derby to be the Assistant Provincial. It seemed important that, if possible, I should remain for the rest of the year, which would be a time of transition for everyone.

The fundamentals didn't change, but a number of significant details did. Archbishop Justin particularly wanted to make the daily times of prayer in the Crypt as accessible as possible to staff and guests, so Morning Prayer was separated from the Eucharist and the time changed to 8.40 a.m., enabling those who wished to attend before they began work. The Eucharist was moved to 12.30 p.m., and was often attended by those who had had a late-morning appointment in the Palace, or were invited to lunch. The custom was maintained of a monthly Eucharist celebrated by the Archbishop, followed by a buffet lunch for staff. Evening Prayer continued to be at 5.30 p.m., said in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer. I found this an interesting experience: certainly Archbishop Cranmer achieved his aim of simplifying the order of service which is unvarying: if you know what day of the month it is, you know which psalms to use, and only the officiant and reader need to find the few things that change, namely the first collect and the readings. But this simplicity comes at a price: put positively, it is an austere form of worship by comparison with the richness of the SLG or CHN daily Office, and with Common Worship, which we used for Morning Prayer.

This pattern of worship, and the fact that I was on my own, made it less possible for me to do other things. I had gone some way towards training as a tour guide, but never took the qualifying test—conducting a tour would have meant finding someone to do some of my other duties—although, like everyone on the staff, I did my share of imparting bits of history and information about the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. I was able to take part in a chain of prayer at Church House for the November 2013 session of the General Synod, a visible representative of the very many people throughout the country who were holding its deliberations before God.

Among the memorable events of my time at Lambeth were the visit of her Majesty the Queen at the beginning of her Diamond

Jubilee year, and the river procession which we watched from the roof of Lollards' Tower (also a good viewpoint for fireworks displays). The following year I was able to attend Archbishop Justin's Confirmation of Election at St Paul's and Enthronement in Canterbury Cathedral. One of my regular jobs was to take care of the Archbishop's robes and to pack them for occasions when he was away from Lambeth, whether locally or on a visit to the other side of the world, so I felt a certain sense of responsibility for how he looked on these grand occasions. I remember ironing the Archbishop's rochet for his enthronement while watching the broadcast of Pope Francis' inauguration—and being glad it wasn't the Pope's robes I was looking after!

It was at the ironing board too that I had a particularly strong sense of history, thinking of all the local girls and women who would have worked in the Wash House (now offices, still known by that name) wielding flat irons on the immense sleeves and ruffles of an eighteenth-century rochet, as worn by the archbishops whose portraits line the Palace corridors.

Of course there was history at every turn: in the Crypt, the oldest part of the Palace and now used as a chapel; in the Chapel above, overlooked by Cranmer's study; at the top of the main staircase where there is a bell marked 'Footman'; in the garden, a massive fig tree descended from one planted by Cardinal Pole in the sixteenth century.

Among the other things I treasure is the enrichment of my prayer for the Church. As a community we have a strong sense of connection with the Church of Aotearoa/New Zealand through Sister Anne at St Isaac's, and with other Provinces through our Sisters here. We, too, use the Anglican Communion prayer cycle in the intercessions at the Eucharist. Most of the dioceses pass me by in a blur of unpronounceable names, but in the little gathering of staff and visitors in the Crypt at Lambeth there would often be a flash of recognition: this was a place someone had visited or a

bishop they knew. I think of it as a spiritual application of the idea of ‘six degrees of separation’: I know, or know someone who knows someone who knows ...

Another gift was my discovery of being lector, reading the scriptures in the liturgy, as a ministry. I’ve always enjoyed reading aloud, but without distinguishing between reading the lection in chapel and a biography or travel book in refectory. I was surprised by the very clear and strong sense at Lambeth that the allotted scripture was heard as containing something God had to say: a word of guidance or encouragement, or a comment on the day’s tasks. For instance a passage from Chronicles 24 (‘When the sun goes down, you shall restore to him the pledge that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the Lord your God’) was appointed the day the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards met; or a reading from Lamentations was a parallel with the morning’s news of atrocities in Syria. Perhaps this was simply what one would expect in someone with Archbishop Justin’s evangelical roots, but now that I am much more often the hearer than the reader I remind myself that if I am inattentive to the Word of the Lord, the reader cannot fulfill her ministry.

With the blessing of the community I had agreed to continue at Lambeth Palace until just before Christmas 2013. The date for my departure came closer and closer, and still when people asked, ‘What happens when you go?’ I had to say, ‘I don’t know’. When the announcement came it was greeted as a bold and creative move: Archbishop Justin had invited a Catholic community to take up residence at Lambeth Palace. Chemin Neuf (www.chemin-neuf.org.uk) was founded in France in 1973 and from the beginning has had an ecumenical vocation. Its members, both men and women, married and single, belong to many denominations and countries. The Archbishop said: ‘The church is constantly called to realise its God-given unity. The Holy Spirit blows through our lives

and our structures and impels us into new ways of learning to love each other as Christ loves us’.

My leaving in December 2013 marked the end of almost twenty five years of sisters at Lambeth Palace. Members of all three communities were able to attend a Eucharist in the Crypt. In his sermon Archbishop Justin restated his commitment to the renewal of prayer and the religious life in the church. At the lunch afterwards there was an opportunity for palace staff, some of whom remembered the first sisters, to greet old friends. It was good to have with us two of our successors, and for me to be able to hand over to them something representative of the Sisters’ ministry from Cottage 5. I chose, not an icon or a bible, but the ironing board. In January 2014 Alan, Ione, Oliver and Ula moved into an apartment in the Palace to continue the tradition of lived prayer in new ways.



THE CHALLENGE OF STAYING FAITHFUL

Ministry in the Parish of St Thomas, Kirkholt, Rochdale

SUE MORGAN

AT THE END of January 2008 I was appointed priest-in-charge of the parish of St Thomas, Kirkholt, in south Rochdale, where I ministered until July 2013. The post was half-time and I accepted the appointment as both a call from God and a way of living out my joint vocation as Oblate Sister and priest. What follows is primarily a tribute to all those people, both laity and clergy, who have faithfully prayed, loved, and ministered in the parish since its inception in the mid-1950's. Every parish is unique in its history, demography and interpretation of ministry, but Kirkholt was and remains for me a special place.

The parish is small, with a population of 4,200 or so, situated to the south of Rochdale at the junction of the M62 and A627M. When one Reverend W. H. Vanstone came there as curate-in-charge of the new parish in 1955, there was no church building and no vicarage, just a rather bleak hillside with a new Corporation housing estate in process of construction. This parish became the inspiration for his award-winning book, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense*,¹ and he raised the funds for building the parish church which he designed. Consecrated in 1964, it contains a twenty-foot wooden preaching cross, an enormous aluminium crown of thorns suspended over the altar (both commissioned by Vanstone) and Sheila Wrigley's wooden sculptures, known as the 'Icons of the Passion'. These had previously hung in St Peter's, Horbury, and are the subject of Vanstone's reflections in a book of the same name.² Today the parish, increasingly impoverished over three decades, has statistics which mean that it is the most deprived parish in the

¹ DLT, 1977, awarded the Collins Religious Book Prize in 1979.

² *Icons of the Passion: A Way of the Cross*, W. H. Vanstone, DLT, 1999.

Diocese of Manchester. It is also a place where the love of God is experienced, and where I and many others have seen the signs of his kingdom in the most powerful way imaginable.

What are some of the lessons for the whole Church of God that can be learnt from poor and seemingly insignificant parishes like Kirkholt? We increasingly hear that the Church of England is moving beyond a parochial model, and my purpose here is not to argue the merits or demerits of that movement. But, as I reflect on the parish pastorally, liturgically, and theologically, I want simply to say that what is unashamedly incarnational has wider significance too.

As I write, BBC2 is about to run another series of *Rev*, described by Hugo Rifkind in *The Times* as ‘quite the most sympathetic portrayal of the work of the C of E in years’ (*Times*2, 20 March 2014, p. 8). The fictitious vicar, Adam Smallbone, is ‘the custodian of a crumbling urban church. His congregation is tiny, and he seems never happier than when sitting on a bench smoking fags with Colin, a local tramp and dealer’. I have laughed and cried over *Rev* because it is, exactly, St Thomas, Kirkholt, and I, like the Reverend Adam, seemed to spend an inordinate amount of time on ‘social work, debt and fuse boxes’—or, in our case, heating systems and leaking roofs.

In January 2013 the Church Urban Fund published its Poverty Indicators and stated that ‘on the overall deprivation scale ... the parish of St Thomas, Kirkholt ranks 12,700 out of 12,706 parishes in England. This means that the parish is among the most deprived in the country’. The telling statistics below continue to have an impact on the parish:

- 42% of the workforce is receiving out-of-work benefit.
- 49% of children are living in poverty.
- 51% of working age persons have no qualifications.
- 43% of lone parents are bringing up a child.
- 66% of households live in social rented housing.

Manchester diocesan statistics show that the parish ranks within the most deprived 1% of parishes in England.

In 2011 I described the daily reality of our ministry in an article for Manchester diocesan magazine, *Crux*, entitled, ‘Bread and Soup, Tea and Coffee, and Prayer: Life on Kirkholt’. In it I listed the sort of things we were doing all the time: advocating for people, and accompanying them to court; writing letters; giving out ‘tuna, cheese, spaghetti and bread at tea-time at the vicarage door to a homeless male parishioner’ and, a day later, giving out ‘lentil and bacon soup to two families’. We never had more than two people in the congregation in paid employment, and many, especially from 2013 onwards, who experienced benefit sanctions and delays. The number of people using food banks is growing. In February this year twenty-seven Anglican bishops challenged the government about this in a letter to the *Daily Mirror*:

We must, as a society, face up to the fact that over half of people using food banks have been put in that situation by cutbacks to and failures in the benefit system, whether it be payment delays or punitive sanctions.

In the parish, I was increasingly aware of the deep connection between the mundane, prosaic—often daily—giving out of bread, and the giving out of spiritual bread, Eucharistic bread. The pattern of food distribution, and the stories that were shared in those five minutes on the vicarage doorstep (‘my boyfriend died last week of an overdose and I want to self-harm ... look at my wrists’) occurred within the underlying pattern of a Wednesday and a Sunday Eucharist, a Tuesday silent prayer group, and saying the Office publicly in the chapel in the vicarage on four days each week. Many who came to the door turned up at church, if only for a week or two; I concluded that they also saw the wider significance of bread, however well they were able to articulate their understanding.

The six Holy Weeks and Easters of our time together were of a depth and significance that I simply cannot put into words, except

to say that we were always—all year round—about death and resurrection. Why? Because sickness and physical death were so frequent in the community, but also because the search for *hope* was so urgent and strong that we could identify deeply with the realities of Good Friday, and the need for Easter day. In addition, it was obvious that we were never going to be successful in terms of parish maintenance (there was a constant lack of adequate finances, transferable skills, administrative back up, sustainability of the church structure, etc.), so any justification for our existence had to be sought elsewhere.

I remember the foot washing on Maundy Thursday, where the priests (I had four different colleagues over the years) would kneel, and shuffle from foot to foot down the line. One female black foot—manicured, delicate, beautiful; one elderly foot—showing the signs of water retention and varicose veins; one male black foot—athletic and powerful; one male foot of a disabled person—flaccid and weak; and so on down the line. After the Eucharist we watched with the Lord till midnight, in a darkened church lit only by the bank of candles by the Altar of Repose. Each year I would hang on the wall above one of the Icons of the Passion—the first and most beautiful one, Christ in Gethsemane, with Vanstone’s commentary: ‘All lovers come at last to Gethsemane, and wait there for the outcome of their loving.’ Each year, in spite of ours being the smallest of parishes, people came to the watch. Many stayed till midnight: new and old Christians together, young and elderly, all united in silent waiting and watching.

Within the Good Friday Liturgy we always had some focus for our meditation at the foot of the cross. In 2010 the focus was especially meaningful, a pit full of rubbish from the streets of the estate (and there was no shortage out there!) on the floor in front of the cross. The preacher began by referring to a *Church Times* article entitled ‘Salvation is found in the pit of death’ by Giles Fraser, then Canon Chancellor of St Paul’s Cathedral:

He wrote of a European bishop who had just returned from a visit to Haiti. He had preached at St Paul's Cathedral and at lunch afterwards told the story about how bad things were in Port au Prince, the capital of Haiti. He had come across an open pit of bodies that people were also using as a rubbish tip for household refuse. All the bishop had wanted to do was to climb down into the pit and clear out the rubbish.

The preacher went on to say that Christ jumps into the pit of death to claim even the grave for his victory. And then recalled the story of the rubbish collector in *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense*—a story which was very important in my own spiritual formation, and which contributed significantly to my motives for accepting the post on Kirkholt. Vanstone describes his encounter with a very troubled alcoholic in St Thomas' church one Christmas Eve. He went to sleep that night and dreamt that a rubbish collector came to him and told him that he had been clearing up after a riot. Vanstone could see the huge pile of stones and cans and waste paper and scrap metal that he had collected. 'Then the man touched my arm and said, "But what am I to do? For deep within the pile, buried at the bottom of it, I have seen a living face."' Vanstone concluded, 'Though my own eyes did not see the face, I knew in my dream that it must be the face of God.' He went on to write of the God who, in Christ, is so exposed to tragedy that he appears to be buried and submerged under the waste, the rubbish, the tragedy, of our world (pp. 21-22).

The preacher continued, '... from under the rubbish of our lives, he will rise triumphant, defeating the powers of death and darkness and lifting us with him into the light and hope and eternal joy of his resurrection.' And then quoted Vanstone's hymn:

Therefore He Who Thee reveals
Hangs, O Father, on that Tree,
Helpless; and the nails and thorns
Tell of what Thy love must be.

Thou art God; no monarch Thou
Thron'd in easy state to reign;
Thou art God, Whose arms of love
Aching, spent, the world sustain.

Ibid. p. 119

Everyone could apply the sermon to themselves, everyone could experience the Lord coming down to where they were, could know that he knew of their 'rubbish', their tragedy and all that weighed them down. The congregation were invited to gaze in silence at the pile of rubbish, and identify what part of it was theirs. They were invited to come forward, to make the rubbish their own, and gaze at Jesus on his cross; Jesus who, out of love, jumps into the pit for us. Everyone had seen a copy of the Orthodox resurrection icon and everyone was invited to allow Christ to get hold of him or her like that, to raise them up with him at Easter. As I sat and watched people come up I was moved to tears—most knelt, some wept, and they held bits of rubbish up to the cross as a sort of oblation.

The symbol of rubbish worked well because it was so much part of life on Kirkholt. For the unemployed young men in the congregation the hope of becoming a 'scrap man', if a second-hand van could be acquired, was a sort of ambition—it represented some chance of an income. When a young female parishioner was evicted from her council house, I stood on the pavement in the drizzle observing three vans circling like vultures. As I watched, two of the drivers got into an altercation about who had the right to the 'spoils'. For the first three years of my ministry the Council provided community rubbish skips every fortnight, one of them stationed on the corner opposite the vicarage. It arrived by 8 a.m.,

was full by 10 a.m. Then, as the day wore on, folk would pull out the rubbish, pick it over, take some away and then dump their own rubbish. By evening, there was often more stuff on the grass alongside the skip. A homeless male parishioner spent the winter of 2012 sleeping in the rubbish-bin chutes of a tower block in the town: and he was not the only one to do so. Vanstone's dream of over thirty years before had a strangely contemporary feel on the Kirkholt of 2008–13.

Holy Saturday night saw our Easter Vigil start around a fire bucket in the churchyard, often observed by curious children who would roam about on the estate at night. The marking of the 'wounds' on the candle rang true in much the same way as the symbolism of rubbish had the day before. As we carried the marked and lit paschal candle into a dark church, and solemnly raised it three times to sing 'The light of Christ', it did indeed seem like a bold statement of the faith that hope overcomes despair.

When we hosted two diocesan training sessions for junior clergy on 'Ministry in Context' we gave them the Church Urban Fund deprivation statistics for Kirkholt and challenged them with the question: *How do we as church both live and proclaim and sustain HOPE in this community?* Hope was also the theme of a short film which the BBC made about the parish, and which included parishioners being interviewed about their experience. It was shown at the leaving service for the then National Bishop for Urban Life and Faith, Bishop Stephen Lowe; as I write it can still be viewed on the Diocese of Manchester website, under the sub-heading 'Serving Communities'.

Easter Day's visual highlights included a huge Easter garden outside the front door of the church. There, at the end of the Easter Day service, the Good Friday cross, now festooned with flowers and utterly transformed, was gloriously displayed, and the garden and flower-filled cross remained on public view all through the

Easter season. Needless to say, and very importantly for some, there was also an Easter egg hunt in the vicarage garden!

I take heart, and hope is sustained, by my knowledge that Kirkholt will have a new priest-in-charge from June 2014, and that Holy Week 2014 will be led by Bishop Mark Davies, Bishop of Middleton, Suffragan Bishop of Manchester, who is a friend and supporter of the parish.

I conclude with a brief quotation from an unpublished paper entitled ‘So Yesterday: Urban Ministry 25 years on from *Faith in the City*,’ by the Very Revd Adrian Newman (A Sabbatical Reflection, August 2010):

... that the church in the inner cities may have to lose itself to find itself, to disappear in order to be true to its calling. This idea, based on the theological and christological notion of kenosis, suggests that we are called as a church to ‘give ourselves away’. It is a counter-intuitive calling for the church, not necessarily to grow and be strong but to be faithful. (p. 11)

‘Faithfulness’ may be a better aim than ‘success’ in urban landscapes such as Kirkholt, and Vanstone’s chapter on ‘The Kenosis of God’ in *Love’s Endeavour, Love’s Expense* a better theological resource than models of strength. The poems of Edward Shillito were published shortly after the end of the Great War under the title ‘Jesus of the Scars’. The gospel story of St Thomas and his coming to faith through touch and sight of the wounded Christ comes to mind as we reflect on Shillito’s first poem, headed by the text, ‘... he showed them his hands and his side’ (John 20: 20):

The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;
But to our wounds only God’s wounds can speak,
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.

AGNOSTICISM

KENNETH MASON

In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.

Four Quartets, T. S. Eliot

WHEN Jesus is tempted by the proposal that the true Son of God will take God at his word and cast himself off the pinnacle, he resists it with the word—which is also God’s—‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’ (Matt. 4: 7). When Moses asks God for a vision of his glory, he is told, ‘You may not see my face and live’ (Exod. 33: 20). As soon as you set yourself to turn faith into experience, you fall into something that is less than faith, and not more.

Jesus had several occasions when others proposed an action and he followed it, but only after he had thought it through himself (John 7: 1-10; Matt. 15: 22-28). Faith—even the personal faith of Jesus—does not convey certitude. It explores, it wrestles, towards assurance. God is both revealed and veiled in Jesus. It follows that agnosticism of this kind, exploratory and wrestling, does not so much oppose faith as express it—in truth it is required by it.

Whether the story to which faith responds is taken straight, embroidered with legends, or reduced to putative essentials, we still have to ask what is going on in the mind that entertains this story. Faith, we may say, accepts the story as God’s account of who God is, but how does it move beyond the story to the God who tells it?

Faith here requires agnosticism as it recognizes that the mind must reach out beyond the form it has grasped toward God whom it cannot grasp. Knowledge—and it does not matter here what guarantees we have that it is real knowledge—is never more than a pointer to the glory that shall be. Unknowing is a constant, indispensable element in the knowledge that accompanies faith.

But now that we speak of agnosticism some clarification becomes essential, for agnosticism is often, and rightly, seen as an opponent of faith, or as indifference to it. There is an agnosticism which is really practical atheism, combined with a lofty dismissal of cosmic questions as too great for the likes of us. There is an agnosticism that finds plenty in religion to discuss, but nothing to compel decision. And there is the agnosticism which denies in detail each element of the faith that was once assented to, but tries to say that the essential is still there. In the heart nothing has changed. These are all tragic conditions, and God has no desire to leave anyone trapped in them.

Nevertheless, there is a fashion of not-knowing, of being agnostic, which is not self-deceiving, which is seriously affirmative of truth. Can we make the distinction we need to make by attempting to give an account of it?

Whether on the side of faith or the side of unbelief, a positivistic attitude would have us think that the propositions of a religion must be either altogether true or altogether false, in either case contained within a wholly self-consistent system. This may be where some believers, and perhaps some unbelievers, start. A faith that admits inconsistency within its beliefs, or allows the line of conviction to be blurred, is not worth subscribing to or, on the other hand, attacking. And there are, it seems, just about enough people striving ingeniously to defend such brittle systems as to show that this description is not merely an ideal construction; people really do live with such beliefs, and press them upon others.

But the same evidence that demonstrates the existence of such positivistic faith also shows that people seldom adhere to it beyond the period of first discovery. The believer comes, with experience, to see that the evidences that minister to faith—the images, narratives, traditions, and even the dogmas of faith—are not all of a kind. Witness, testimony and direct experience mingle with historical hypothesis and traditions of interpretation. Stories may be

chronicles or personal confessions; they may be parables or myths. Images may be received as powerful symbols with transformative potential, or as memorable and enlightening figures of speech. All these things may be acknowledged as truthful in some way—truthful, that is, as representing and communicating God’s way with humankind—but the kinds of truth involved and the relationships between them are sure to be beyond enumeration.

The decisive truth for the believer is that these are all evidences in God’s own testimony, consistent with God’s being and with the way God works. For us its consistency is more like that of a social network than that of a mechanical device. And because God’s supreme testimony was made through Jesus Christ, some of the truth within this system of truth will be of the kind we call fact. With this admission, the positivist in us will make a desperate demand for a clear statement of naked facts. We have to disappoint such a demand. There are no naked facts, except perhaps immediate sensations. Beyond them everything is commentary, everything is interpretation. The stories, images, analogies and comparisons are all there to help us to contribute to that commentary by our own faith and prayer and action.

Here agnosticism is called for in at least two ways. We might like more facts, or at least greater certainty about alleged facts, and have to be content that we can’t have them. But beyond that, we have to recognize that what we know in faith about God can never be more than analogically related to God as God in an absolute sense. Revelation cannot bridge this gap because the human mind, however well it is enlightened, cannot comprehend the full majesty of God’s reality. Part of the effect of real revelation is to convince us of this unbridgeability.

Further, just as there are no naked facts, there are no clear boundaries to the region of truth as perceived in faith. The believer is not someone who possesses a store of certainties in case they are needed, as it were. Rather we pray, worship, and live in trust,

guided and formed by the images and doctrines that speak of Christ, discovering in the course of experience how resourceful these images are. It is not a matter of walking a clear path, maintaining an even course, keeping firm control. There are bound to be challenges, ambiguities, and doubts, but these do not frustrate the venture of faith; the human body can suffer weaknesses or pains and still be a long way from dying.

We have approached this comprehension of faith as though it resulted from a process of maturation: a zealous youthful enthusiasm is chastened, informed and developed through experience. The resulting conviction is less hasty, but much more resilient and resourceful, knowing better through experience who it is that Christians believe in.

But it is possible to see the same state of faith as something one could approach from the other direction. Unbelievers too, beginning from a position of denial, may nevertheless find that the images and testimonies of faith engage them, fascinate their imagination, and begin to shape their responses to life. Even while holding back from actual worship, since their starting point assured them that there is no one to be worshipped, they may come to occupy the same imaginative universe as the believer, moved and inspired by the same symbols. Perhaps this is why, in the New Testament, salvation is pledged to those who explicitly confess faith in Christ, and also to those who respond in love to his presence without knowing that they are doing so.

SURVIVORS

MICHAEL PATERNOSTER

IN her recently published autobiographical novel, *The Image of Survival*, Jeni Oborn describes what it was like to be diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma at the age of fourteen, followed by months of extremely unpleasant treatment. She is now thirty and apparently healthy; however, since cancer patients are never 'cured' but only 'in remission,' she still has a check-up every two years. She says, 'It always feels to me like a kind of interrogation: what have you done with the life we have blessed you with?'¹

Reading her book, in the centenary year of the outbreak of the Great War, made me reflect what it must be like for people who have faced death and yet continued to live. What meaning have they been able to attach to their survival? The past hundred years have seen so many lives cut short, often after terrible suffering, that those who in some measure shared the suffering but came through must have lived the rest of their lives with a great burden of trying to justify to themselves their continued existence; trying to find some sort of meaning in what has happened to them, and to their lost friends and family members.

One very large group of survivors of the First World War was the huge number of what Dorothy L. Sayers called 'superfluous women'. With nearly a million young men sent to their deaths, there were in the nineteen-twenties a whole generation of young women who could not look for fulfilment in marriage and child-bearing. Either they had lost husbands or lovers in the War, or they were coming to maturity in a society with an acute shortage of eligible young men. I remember in the seventies of the last century an old lady speaking most movingly about being an involuntary celibate. The novelist Elizabeth Goudge, born in 1900, knew she

¹ Jeni Oborn, *The Image of Survival*, MALT Publishing, 2013, p. 5.

stood little chance of marriage but could write towards the end of a long and productive life,

I am one of the many who have found great joy in work and in building up a career. I have lived to thank God ... for the single state. Though you have to be fairly old before you can recognize and deeply prize the blessings of a single life, for up to that point the deprivation of childlessness is hard to bear.²

The Home Front in the Second World War was different, but British women of the generation of Goudge and Sayers had rarely had first-hand experience of the horrors of war, unless they had taken up nursing. Some owners of stately homes, having turned them into makeshift hospitals and convalescent homes for the duration of the War, expected the daughters of the family to play their part, and so they encountered men shattered both physically and mentally by their experiences. One such temporary hospital was Glamis Castle, and the young Elizabeth, later Queen and Queen Mother, did not forget the men she had met then. She and her future husband, George VI, subsequently found jobs for some who in the post-war world had faced long-term unemployment.

Of those traumatized by the War, it is tempting to take Ivor Gurney as an example, since undoubtedly, after he was invalided out, his early promise as a poet and composer was never fulfilled, and he spend long years incarcerated in an asylum. Certainly the stark contrast between the remembered beauties of the Gloucestershire countryside and the horror of Flanders mud preyed on anyone as sensitive to natural beauty as he was; but there is evidence that for him a mental breakdown was simply waiting to happen sooner or later. One of my oldest friends, whose funeral I took a few years ago, had won a place at Cambridge before starting National Service, but only a few weeks into basic training he broke down

² Elizabeth Goudge, *The Joy of the Snow*, Coronet, 1997, p. 156.

completely, was discharged after a spell in a military hospital and never fully recovered. I was inclined to blame the sudden plunge into the alien and uncongenial world of Catterick Camp, but his father assured me that it would have happened anyway; had he been excused military service he might have found the stresses of university life too much for him. He was luckier than Gurney; rescued from being permanently institutionalized, he lived a reasonably placid and contented life in sheltered housing. How many, like Gurney, might have lived happier lives had they had more enlightened treatment, it is difficult to say. As Ronald Blythe remarks, ‘Mental health between the wars, when it was most needed, was most neglected.’³

Ralph Vaughan Williams was over forty when war broke out, and could reasonably have been excused military service. As his second wife, Ursula, says, he and his first wife

were old enough to remember the many young men that the South African war had claimed, the casualty lists and the losses, and though war was still the business of the professional soldier and sailor, it was also a lure to other young men, a siren voice that called to adventure and honour.⁴

Almost at once many of Ralph’s younger friends enlisted, and those who could not get commissions went as private soldiers—among them George Butterworth, who died in 1915 on the Somme. ‘For Ralph the loss of Butterworth’s friendship and the unfulfilled promise of his music was a profound sorrow.’⁵ Even closer was the loss of his brother-in-law, Charles Fisher, killed in the battle of Jutland, a blow from which Adeline never really recovered.

³ Ronald Blythe, *Aftermath*, Black Dog Books, 2010, p. 288.

⁴ Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.*, OUP, 1964, p. 115.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 122.

Although not obliged to, Vaughan Williams decided to enlist. Parry thought that people with unique gifts like his should be sheltered from risk rather than exposed to it, while admitting the generosity of impulse that made him volunteer. Working with an ambulance unit gave Ralph a vivid awareness of how men died. Writing to his great friend, Gustav Holst, he said, 'I sometimes dread coming back to normal life with so many gaps. ... Out of those seven who joined up together in August only three are left.'⁶ Vaughan Williams was demobilized in February 1919. His second wife wrote:

He knew he could have stayed in England. He knew also that had he done so he would not have been able to write: he would have been burdened with a sense of evading his responsibility as a man, his duty as a citizen. Return was not a simple joyful release. He had gone back to a world that lacked many of his friends, and in familiar surroundings their loss would be more vivid than in the separation of war.⁷

Out of his war service came the Pastoral Symphony. It is not, as one might think, a nostalgic picture of an idealized pre-war countryside. It had its roots in the soil of Flanders. The denigration of his work as belonging to the 'cow-and-gate' school could not be more wide of the mark. He had known suffering, and had found a way to transcend it.

It has been glibly said that there were no atheists in the trenches. Vaughan Williams, despite being the music editor of *The English Hymnal*, and the composer of some of the finest religious music of the twentieth century, was a lifelong agnostic. Others who went through the war either lost their faith or found it strengthened. At the time of his war service C. S. Lewis was a convinced atheist, and it was not his experience in the trenches that made him a

⁶ Ibid. p. 122.

⁷ Ibid. p. 132.

Christian, but rational argument, Tolkien persuading him that Christianity was a myth that had really happened. His army career was relatively short; as a second lieutenant in the Somerset Light Infantry he reached the front on his nineteenth birthday, in November 1917. He was wounded in April 1918, and the war was over before he was fit for service again. Yet, writing to Bede Griffiths in 1939, he said, ‘my memories of the last war haunted my dreams for years.’⁸ In 1940, in another letter to Griffiths, he said,

I am chary of doing what my emotions prompt me to do every hour: i.e. identifying the enemy with the forces of evil. Surely one of the things we learn from history is that God never allows a human conflict to become unambiguously one between simple good and evil.⁹

It may have been his first-hand experience of the reality of war that prompted such thoughts. Ronald Blythe notes, ‘There was universal loathing of the patriotism-mongering journalists by the fighting poets and novelists, and the war-crazy popular press generally was regarded with revulsion by the men in the trenches.’¹⁰

One of the most significant works of literature to come out of the First World War was *In Parenthesis* by David Jones, a London Welsh poet and artist. It is a minutely detailed account of life in the trenches by one who served as a private soldier. He wrote subsequently:

As far as I am able to judge my own case I should say that the particular Waste Land that was the forward area of the West Front had a permanent effect on me and has affected my work in all sorts of ways—so much so that it is impossible now for me to imagine myself without that period in the *fforsydd* in Gallia Belgica.¹¹

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Letters*, ed. W. H. Lewis, Geoffrey Bles, 1966, p. 166.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 183.

¹⁰ Ronald Blythe, *Aftermath*, p. 298.

¹¹ David Jones, *Epoch and Artist*, Faber, 1959, p. 28.

It took him a long time before he was ready to publish his thoughts about the Great War. He did not begin to write until nine years after the Armistice, and *In Parenthesis* finally came out in 1937, by which time it was only too clear that 1914–18 was not the end of the War.

For me, an image that has stayed in my mind over the years since I first read *In Parenthesis* is the sight of a village *curé* in a shattered landscape quietly saying his Office. It must have made a strong impression on Jones, since he tells us that it was some time in 1917 in the neighbourhood of Ypres that he first started wondering about the Catholic tradition. Four years after the War he was received into the Church, and thereafter, as David Blamires comments, ‘through the Catholic tradition David Jones found a mode of seeing things which made sense of the variety of human experience.’¹² It is a profoundly sacramental view. As Blamires says, ‘the loving attention paid to the particular has as its aim a depiction of the universal, and that the tangible world points beyond itself to the transcendental.’¹³ This was his way of forming a coherent vision of what he had seen and lived through. He is the only writer about the First World War who consistently places events in the long perspective of a literary tradition that included Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur*, *The Song of Roland*, *The Battle of Brunanburgh* and the old Welsh poem that begins ‘Men went to Catraeth’ (Catraeth, incidentally, is Catterick). His characters, Lance Corporal Lewis, and Dai with the ill-fitting greatcoat, are aware of living in a world where, as Blamires says, ‘myth is a reality and not a poetic fiction.’ Robert Graves, reading English at Oxford after service in the War, found the lecturer in Anglo-Saxon almost apologizing for his subject as something obsolete and irrelevant, but claimed that on the contrary:

¹² David Blamires, *David Jones, Artist and Writer*, Manchester University Press, 1971, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 1-2.

Beowulf lying wrapped in a blanket among his platoon of drunken thanes in the Gothland billet; Judith going for a ‘promenade’ to Holophernes’ staff-tent; and Brunanburgh with its bayonet-and-cosh fighting—all this came closer to most of us than the drawing-room and deer-park atmosphere of the eighteenth century.¹⁴

It is interesting that many authors who in the last century have had close personal contact with the horrors of war have turned to writing fantasy and fable, not as a form of escapism from a reality too harsh to be endured, but as the only idiom in which to say what they wanted to say. One obvious example is Tolkien. He graduated in 1915 and was immediately thereafter commissioned in the Lancashire Fusiliers. From July to October 1916 he was an infantry subaltern on the Somme. During that time he lost two of his closest friends. He was invalided out with trench fever. Having fought in ‘the war to end all wars’ he saw his sons fighting in the one after that. The ruined landscapes, with their pools of water and their mutilated trees, which made such a permanent impression on Jones and Tolkien, are hauntingly evoked in the paintings of John and Paul Nash, who not only fought as infantrymen in Flanders but also worked as official war artists.

Memories of that ravaged landscape, so vividly depicted in a painting such as *The Menin Road*, seem to me to lie behind Tolkien’s description of the dead marshes on the frontier of Mordor. Something of the disillusion of returning soldiers with the post-war world comes out in the final episode of the cleansing of the Shire. In real life, of course, the Shire was not cleansed, and there was no return to the way things were before the war. Tolkien, like Jones, is steeped in the literature and mythology of past heroic ages, but whereas Jones quotes directly, creating a kind of verbal collage, Tolkien creates his own language and mythology out of

¹⁴ Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, quoted by Tom Shippey, in *J. R. R. Tolkien*, HarperCollins, 2001, p. xxviii.

traditional materials in order to create a coherent and believable world of the imagination.

Critics who are unable to understand or accept the huge success of *The Lord of the Rings* dismiss it as juvenile fiction, a straight fight between impossible good and impossible evil. In fact, Tolkien's understanding of evil is far subtler than that. He would have accepted C. S. Lewis's contention that no human conflict is a straightforward issue with all the good on one side and all the evil on the other. His central image of the Ring is, as the film version made clear, a study in addiction. The only people uncorrupted by it are the people who refuse to touch it, like Faramir, who would not pick it up if he found it lying by the roadside. Even Bilbo found it terribly difficult to give it up, and in the end it mastered Frodo. Gollum is tormented by an unsatisfiable craving for what, in fact, destroying him. Reviewing the book, W. H. Auden commented:

Evil ... has every advantage but one—it is inferior in imagination. Good can imagine the possibility of becoming evil—hence the refusal of Gandalf and Aragorn to use the Ring—but evil defiantly chosen can no longer know anything but itself.¹⁵

Like *Animal Farm*, *The Lord of the Rings* bears out Lord Acton's dictum that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely—the terrible lesson of the twentieth century, which has seen politically good intentions lead to appalling results. Among those unforeseen results can be counted the rise of Hitler in Germany and Stalin in Russia, and several lesser Hitlers and Stalins in other places. I turn, then, to examples of those who survived the concentration camps and the gulags, and can tell us what enabled them to survive and find meaning in their experience.

¹⁵ W. H. Auden, quoted by Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, Grafton, 1992, pp. 3-4.

First there is the Austrian Jew Viktor Frankl, already eminent before the War as the founder of a new school of psychotherapy. He was fond of quoting Nietzsche's saying, 'He who has a *why* to live can bear almost any *how*.' As a result of Hitler's drive to eliminate the Jewish race, Frankl spent years in concentration camps separated from his first wife, who did not survive. As he said, 'We who have come back, by the aid of many lucky chances or miracles—whatever one may choose to call them—we know the best of us did not return.'¹⁶ The tiny percentage of prisoners who survived afterwards found life very difficult; he says of himself that it was a long time after his release from camp that he resumed normal life. He found, however, that the lessons learnt were applicable in almost any situation. His position can be summed up in two brief quotations: 'We must never forget that we may find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation,' and 'It does not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.'

In his introduction to Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Gordon W. Allport wrote, 'to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering.' Thinking particularly of the Great War, but with a much wider applicability, David Blamires writes:

One of the most marked features of the poems, novels and autobiographical accounts that were published was the attempt to make some kind of order out of what appeared to have none. Where could any sense or meaning be found in the dislocation of ordinary life and the dismemberment of families? To what could the shock and brutality of war be related?¹⁷

¹⁶ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1964, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷ David Blamires, *David Jones: Artist and Writer*, Manchester University Press, 1978, p. 78.

A Russian émigré who had lived through the upheavals of post-1917 Russia found an answer given her. Iulia Kazarina was born in 1893 of wealthy parents in St Petersburg. She was only twelve when, within earshot of her home, a crowd of unarmed workers, staging a peaceful demonstration and led by a priest, were fired on. From then on she realized that ‘things were sliding in a gigantic landslide which nothing would stop.’ Just before the abdication of the Tsar she married Nikolay de Beausobre, a Russian of Huguenot descent, a man of her own class and background, a diplomat who almost at once found himself without a job because no other country recognized the Bolshevik government. Their life over the next decade was one of poverty and near-starvation. Iulia bore a child, who died after four months. The de Beausobres were only nominally Orthodox, but they were patriotic Russians. Nonetheless, because of their background they were classified as ‘enemies of the people’. Nikolay was sent to Siberia and after many months Iulia learnt that he had been shot. She herself spent time in the notorious Lublianka prison and in a labour camp, but eventually was released and allowed to emigrate. She came to Britain determined both to open people’s eyes to the reality of life in Russia, and to share with western Christians something of the Russian spiritual tradition. Her Orthodox faith was by then at the centre of her life and thought. During the Second World War she was married again, to the historian Lewis Namier, by origin a Polish Jew but by then a Christian. A talk she was asked to give to theological students was subsequently published under the title *Creative Suffering*.¹⁸

The turning point of her life had come when she was at the end of her tether, with Nikolay in prison and daily life a perpetual struggle. Rebellng against the idiotic and pointless torment she asked, ‘To what end?’ and it seemed to her that Another answered with these words:

¹⁸ Iulia de Beausobre, *Creative Suffering*, Fairacres Publications FP88, SLG Press, 1984.

‘Of course it’s of no earthly use to any one of you. It can only cripple your bodies and twist your souls. But I will share in every last one of your burdens as they cripple and twist you. In the blending heat of compassion I will know the full horror of your deliberate destruction by men of your own race. I will know the weight of your load through carrying it alongside of you but with an understanding greater than yours can be. I want to carry it, I need to know it. Because of my Incarnation and your baptism there is no other way—*if you agree.*’

The conditional request, linked with my privilege of choice, revealed and stressed my instant re-orientation. Later I saw that the simultaneous question and answer had made of that fleeting moment a first day.¹⁹

From then on, she never looked back, even though the worst horrors she had to face were still to come.

We have looked at the stories of people who witnessed unspeakable suffering and violent death and survived to build a new life for themselves and be an inspiration to others. As they tried to find some sort of meaning in what they had been through, no more profound meaning can be found than the answer given to Iulia de Beausobre: an invitation to share in the passion of Christ and his victory over the world’s evil.

¹⁹ Constance Babington-Smith, *Iulia de Beausobre*, DLT, 1983, p. 27.

Tymawr
Campo Santo

(*In Memoriam*, 1914-2014)

Every village
no matter how small
has a World War I
memorial: a plinth,
or pillar or plaque,
a statue or slab of stone
on which too many
names are inscribed—
sons, brothers,
husbands, lovers.
How can a tiny island
have sustained such loss?
I never cease to sorrow
over the slaughter,
think of them here
beneath the Living Cross
where there are no stones,
no names written,
only the plantings
of holy women—
daughters, lovers,
brides of the Son
known to God alone
and that more than enough
to sanctify this tiny plot,
to soothe the war weary
with the promise
of peace at the last.

Bonnie Thurston
5/9/2014

'Campo Santo' is the garth in the grounds of Tymawr Convent, the home of the Society of the Holy Cross, which was founded in 1914. We are grateful to the Bonnie Thurston and the community for permission to publish the poem.

IN MEMORIAM

WENDY ROBINSON

1 July 1934 – 12 December 2013

MANY READERS of the *Fairacres Chronicle* will have known Wendy Robinson, or known of her by reputation and as the author



of two Fairacres Publications, *Exploring Silence* and *Sounding Stones*, and the Epilogue to *Out of the Depths* by Gonville French-Beytagh. She first encountered our Community in the 1960s, and became a Companion in 1971. I can remember her telling me how important it had been for her to share our morning prayer-time in chapel; praying with others had provided a support and structure as she established her own prayer life. Her connection with

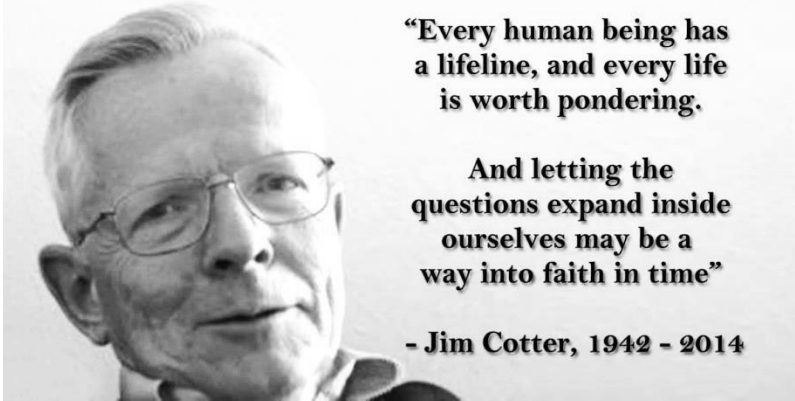
the Community continued through a long friendship with Mother Jane and Sister Mary Magdalene, and through Sisters who went to her professionally for help and therapy. Her warmth and wide range of interests attracted people to her, and it is not a coincidence that one of the photos chosen for her funeral service leaflet show her reading a book. She had a huge collection and she lent them generously. I first got to know her myself in 1981.

Wendy gave various talks to the Community at Fairacres. The first that I remember was on anger, given originally to the Oblate Sisters in March 1988; it gave rise to a small discussion group among the nuns, which Wendy attended. A later one, on feminine spirituality, became the pamphlet *Sounding Stones*. But her ability

to communicate was valued more widely, in many different religious communities and in her professional milieu as a psychotherapist. She was one of the main speakers at several conferences of Novice Guardians, and at the Novices' conference. The Novice Guardians' conferences were ecumenical, attended by both Anglicans and Roman Catholics from contemplative communities. It was clearly Wendy's own calling and commitment to contemplative prayer, as well as her skill in personal relationships, that enabled her to strike the right note so readily when she talked to us. On one occasion she told us how she set aside time to pray for all her clients, laying them before God one by one, and how sometimes she found a new glimpse of understanding in that time. It was clear to the conference participants that she cared about every member of the group. In all these conferences she produced a great deal of material which she delivered with humour and a lightness of touch. And they well repaid more prolonged thought after the conference was over. At one conference, I remember, we pursued the 'passions' in the form of dragons, and she illustrated them with pictures, icons and sculptures of Christian saints with dragons. It is surprising how often these occur!

In what would turn out to be the last years of her life, Wendy worked with us over the implementation of our decision to adopt a new community cross, and helped us considerably. We were not alone in receiving this sort of help; she formed a close friendship with many Anglican and Roman Catholic communities, including a Cistercian Monastery, Tautra, in Norway. Perhaps in the end it was her gift of friendship, and, as Bishop Kallistos said in his eulogy at her funeral, her dependability, which so many people valued. Dependability may seem a dull virtue, but in the stress of life in the twenty-first century it is a very precious gift to receive, and surely a manifestation of deep love. Many people will miss her greatly.

SISTER SUSAN SLG



JIM COTTER

23 August 1942 – 16 April 2014

SOME PEOPLE'S LIVES intertwine with the life and work of the Community for many years and in mutually enriching ways. Jim's relationship with us was of such a nature. We first knew him as a celebrant at the convent at Boxmoor, when he was a curate at All Saints, Leavesden, a post he combined with Assistant Principal of the Ministerial Training Scheme for the diocese of St Albans. One of the flagship programmes of theological training for laity and ordinands unable to attend a theological college full-time, his creative gifts were used to develop the content of the course and encourage the students in their quest for God. In due course he became the Course Director, until it united with a similar Scheme in Oxford Diocese.

During these years he was laying strong foundations for his own spiritual life, visiting Fairacres regularly to meet with Mother Jane and Mother Mary Clare, and to celebrate the Eucharist when he stayed. He was a regular visitor to Bede House. Several years after Sister Jane's death, as a gift to the Community for its Centenary, and in recognition of her influence on himself and the many hundreds of people her life affected, he and Sister Avis Mary

edited *Loving God Whatever: Through the Year with Sister Jane*, which was published under the imprint of Cairns Publications and later by SLG Press (FP155).

By the time he left St Albans he was clear that the Church needed a new way of expressing its beloved and basic sources, the Psalms, Morning and Evening Prayer, and Compline in particular. He had been writing hymns and extended reflections in prose and poetry for some time, and with the founding of his own publishing company, Cairns, he was able to share these with a wide readership. Mother Jane wrote the Introduction to one of the first, *Prayer at Night*.

Like Wendy Robinson, Jim gave much to the religious life, both through his writing and through talks. In the early 1990's he and Wendy collaborated on addresses at the annual conference for Anglican religious, reflecting on how sexuality is expressed through and in a vow of chastity. The conference ended with an open-air Eucharist led by Jim in the grounds of Chichester Theological College. It says much for the depth of his life of prayer and knowledge of liturgical texts that the prayers were all composed by him *ad hoc* as the celebration unfolded. It was a memorable occasion.

After some years spent in Exeter and then in Sheffield, during which time he continued his pioneering work, and established and developed Cairns Publications, he moved to Harlech in North Wales. There he became increasingly convinced of the need for small places where 'prayer has been valid', giving much time himself to simply being present in the little church at Llandecwyn. This eventually led him to set up the Small Pilgrim Places Network (www.smallpilgrimplaces.org).

Always a person to surprise us, in 2008 he returned to parish work, and became priest-in-charge of Aberdaron. His ministry was greatly appreciated and the numbers attending church rose. He was also very aware that he was following in the footsteps of another

priest-poet, R. S. Thomas, who had been the incumbent during the 1970s. In 2011 he discovered that he had leukaemia, and after some time he resigned the post. In early December last year, he moved to Llandudno, in order to be nearer to hospital and hospice care. Many attended his funeral at Aberdaron, from all over the world.

His originality of perception about the things of the spirit, his great gift for friendship and his gentle courtesy will be greatly missed. But we thank God that we knew him and received so much from him.

SISTERS CHRISTINE & AVIS MARY SLG

BOOKS

Redeeming the Past: My Journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer, Michael Lapsley SSM, Orbis Books, 2013, £12.99.

ISBN: 9781626980433.

Redeeming the Past begins with an autobiographical account of the journey which led Father Michael from being a militant member of the African National Congress exiled from South Africa in the 1980s for his anti-apartheid stance, to a reconciler and healer of the memories of that infamous era in South African history. Many will be familiar with the earlier story, when he lost both hands, an eye and much of his hearing after a letter bomb exploded in his face. It is ironic that it happened almost on the eve of Nelson Mandela's release from Robben Island, with the consequent crumbling of the structures that upheld apartheid.

It was not certain that Father Michael would survive the bombing, but he did. He has used the years since both in learning to forgive the unknown perpetrators, and teaching others to live with painful memories. To live with daily reminders of injustice requires a particular redirection of the mind and emotions in order that the victim does not live from a place of bitterness and resentment.

His own wrestling with the atrocity committed against himself led to the foundation of the Institute for Healing of Memories (www.healing-memories.org), which holds workshops for people who have suffered similar and worse atrocities. They are given a safe place to speak about the unspeakable. Strong bonds are forged between the participants which bring renewed hope and self-respect into their lives. The work of the Institute began in Cape Town, but now holds courses in some of the most unsettled and war-torn parts of the world, as well as in prisons and amongst HIV/AIDS sufferers. The second half of the book describes this work, and includes short accounts from other contributors about the effect the workshops have had in their lives.

It is likely that Father Michael has been described in many ways in his life, both complimentary and defamatory. But the truest word must go to Bishop Desmond Tutu, who writes in the Foreword:

I have watched his work with a growing sense of awe and admiration. Although he was broken physically, he has become the most whole person I know, truly a wounded healer.

This is a book which deserves a long and thoughtful review; alas, this one does not do justice to the author, his life or his subject. However, I hope this brief notice will encourage you to read it.

SISTER CHRISTINE SLG

Infinite Horizons: Scripture Through Carmelite Eyes, James McCaffrey OCD, Teresian Press, 2013, £8.00.

ISBN: 9780947916138.

In *Infinite Horizons* Father James McCaffrey puts his deep knowledge of Scripture and the Carmelite saints to use as he reflects on biblical themes relating to the spiritual life and explores the process of *lectio divina*.

The saints of Carmel were formed by Scripture, even when they had only limited access to the Bible as a whole; their works are full of direct quotations and scriptural allusions. Father James relates their understanding and practice of prayer to some fundamental biblical themes: prayer as taught by Jesus; Mary as an example of the prayer-full life; the mystery of human suffering; prayer in the Holy Spirit. Combining exploration of these themes with reflection on the lives and writings of St Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, St Thérèse of Lisieux, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity and Edith Stein (St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) makes for a book which reveals the richness of the material and which rewards pondering reflection. It could profitably itself be read in the manner of *lectio*.

In the final chapter, entitled ‘Pondering the Word: A Carmelite Slant’, the author gives an account of the stages of *lectio divina*, and then, in the Epilogue, a meditation on the Emmaus road story. The full text of the main biblical passages referred to are given in the appendices, plus a guided *lectio* on John 15: 1-9, and a suggested pattern for group *lectio*.

Father James himself is steeped in the Bible, and through this book enables us to share his love for, and knowledge of, the saints of Carmel and the Scripture that formed them. Like the saints to whom he refers, he reveals the ‘infinite horizons’ which open up when we spend time praying with the Scriptures.

SISTER CLARE-LOUISE SLG

Richard Hooker and the Vision of God: Exploring the Origins of ‘Anglicanism’, Charles Miller, James Clarke and Co. Ltd, 2013,
£25.00. ISBN: 9780227174005.

This is a book of historical theology for which many of us have been waiting; for it is both a model of meticulous academic research, *and*, through its structure, language and style, enlightening to the non-specialist reader.

The promise of Charles Miller’s Introduction, entitled ‘Why Study Richard Hooker?’ in which he outlines four responses to the question, is fulfilled in the way the text is set out, shaped, and referenced. His thesis is clear and any church-goers, and many non-church-goers, will find their attention caught. For the academic and those who wish to explore further, his arguments are referenced and can be followed up in the careful footnotes and the Appendix.

Miller, considering Hooker as a theologian, writes:

While we will be trying to understand the mind of one of the most profound Elizabethan divines in the formative years of the independent life of the English Church, we will at the same time be surveying the science of theology as a

distinct field of study. We will be experiencing the shape of theology as it seeks to give coherence to the mystery of God and God's action in the world, and we will enter into concept and language worlds that connect us not just with Hooker and his age, but with the great Christian tradition.

Perhaps because he was set in a society and culture so recently Catholic, yet himself formed in the context of continental Calvinism, Hooker had an extraordinary historical sense of the way theology develops as he tackled the issues of his time: Scripture and its authority; the place of reason in our understanding of God and the world; the nature of grace; and what worship is all about.

As Miller describes it, the entire eight volumes of *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*—Hooker's enormous book—'is an extended treatment of the proper authority, place and function of Scripture in Christian life'. He concludes that it is mainly spiritual, 'nothing less than the union of God through Christ by the Spirit'. It is to feed our worship so that we may receive grace and the salvation proclaimed by the Gospel.

That, of course, means that there are a lot of things that Scripture is *not*, and for which it is not designed, which brought Hooker into conflict with the Puritans of his day. 'Scripture,' says Miller, 'requires interpretation, both exegesis treating literal meanings and potential senses, and theology exposing implicit meanings by probable deductions.'

While the emphasis of the book is on Hooker *in context*, we are treated to a final chapter, 'Hooker, 'Anglicanism' and Us'. While avoiding the trap of seeking the 'lessons of history', he gives us pointers towards a consideration of Richard Hooker's legacy for a Communion that Hooker never could have imagined. Like him we continue to engage with and understand those issues of humanity and discipleship which confronted him in a very different age and context.

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Bloomsbury:

Pope Francis: My Door Is Always Open, with Antonio Spadaro,
2014, £12.99. ISBN: 9781472909763.

Scars, Paul Murray, 2014, £12.99; eBook £9.99.

ISBN: 9781441175632.

The Bloomsbury Guide to Pastoral Care, by Bernardette Flanagan
& Sharon Thornton, 2014, £35.00. ISBN: 9781441125170.

The Heart in Pilgrimage, ed. by Eamon Duffy, 2014, £20.00.

ISBN: 9781408183991.

Women in Waiting, Julia Ogilvy, 2014, £12.99; eBook £9.99.

ISBN: 9781472901774.

From Canterbury Press:

A New Monastic Handbook, Ian Mobsby & Mark Berry, 2014,
£16.99. ISBN: 9781848254589.

Julian of Norwich: The Showings, Mirabai Starr, 2014, £12.99.

ISBN: 9781848255937.

The Canterbury Companion to the Book of Common Prayer Gospels,
Raymond Chapman, 2014, £16.99. ISBN: 9781848255685.

From Grove Books:

Waiting on God, Brian Bridge, 2014, £3.95. ISBN: 9781851748747

From St Andrews Press:

A Simple Life: Roland Walls & the Community of the Transfiguration,
John Miller, 2014, £14.99. ISBN: 9780861537136.

Iona: The Other Island, Kenneth Steven, 2014, £14.99.

ISBN: 9780861538300.

From Teresian Press:

John of the Cross: Seasons of Prayer, Iain Matthew OCD, 2014,
£5.00. ISBN: 9780947916145.

The Writings of St Teresa of Avila, James McCaffrey OCD, 2014,
£5.00. ISBN: 9780947916152.

From Paraclete Press:

O Taste and See, Bonnie Thurston, 2013, £10.99.
ISBN: 9781612614076.

Idiot Psalms: New Poems, Scott Cairns, 2014, £10.99.
ISBN: 9781612615158.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

KENNETH MASON, a former Principal of the Episcopal Theological College in Edinburgh, now lives in retirement in Ripon.

SUE MORGAN, is an Oblate Sister of the Sisters of the Love of God.

MICHAEL PATERNOSTER retired to Wells in 2000 after spending the greater part of his active ministry in Scotland.

VINCENT STRUDWICK was a student and tutor with the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham. Later, he and his wife were associates in life and work with the Society at Willen Priory. He has taught historical theology in Oxford.

SISTER AVIS MARY is Sub-Prioress at Fairacres, and the former Editor of SLG Press.

SISTER CATHERINE is now resident at Fairacres after two years at Lambeth Palace. Amongst other tasks she keeps the Community website up to date.

SISTER CHRISTINE is the current Editor of SLG Press.

SISTER CLARE-LOUISE is Prioress at Fairacres.

SISTER SUSAN is Bursary Sister, Librarian and Garden Sister at Fairacres.

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Sisters of the Love of God

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