

COR Newsletter – 19 March 2008

Dear all,

Last Sunday in Sofia

This month I was accommodated by Jonathan and Tsveta - thank you both. After the service I had *three* offers of a bed for next time, including one from a brand new lady, Sharon from the US Embassy, so thank you to everyone for your kind support. We awoke to Blue skies, twenty degrees, and snow on the top of Vitosha mountain - beautiful. We heard the passion according to Matthew read by Lionel, Pat, and Jonathan and this month we even had musical accompaniment from the woman who normally plays in the Roman Catholic service. It was sad to note though that the Papal Nuncio, who has been so helpful to us in Sofia is leaving very soon. His next appointment will be in Ireland. But he assured us that our arrangements would proceed just as they have done.

After the service we were taken for a tour down one of the tunnels that Lionel is constructing for the Sofia Metro system, and then we drove to Vitosha mountain and then walked to Dragalevski monastery, and after that a superb lunch in a traditional Bulgarian restaurant. Incidentally, a full page article about me had just appeared in the Sofia echo, and was titled "the radical priest" (the journalist emailed me to say that the title was not his doing) so no prizes for guessing what I was called for the rest of the day. The next service in **Sofia** will be on **the 20th April**. Contacts for Sofia can be found on our website <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> and clicking on the "Sofia" button.

Last Sunday in Bucharest

Special thanks to Lillah, John and Victoria (and anyone else who helped) for making up the palm crosses - well done! Like Sofia, the congregation heard the passion according to Matthew with four voices, Alison, Nick, Philip and Lelde. I look forward to seeing everyone again next week. Pictures of Palm Sunday in Bucharest are already on John's Blog. together with photos and commentary from John's recent travels to the USA and Italy, so go and take a look! Go to <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> and then click on "COR Blog"

Monday night Lent course

This week saw the Lent course come to an end. There will now be a short break. I have been asked to start another study group so I'll take a little time to choose something to get our teeth into and we will re-convene very soon - probably at the same day, time and place.

Today

I am going to visit Adrian Wilson in Rahova prison who has had his seven year sentence confirmed. Please remember him in your prayers. Please also remember K.C. - our Nigerian member of COR - who has been languishing in Rahova prison for over a year without trial.

Easter Services

We are now in Holy Week of course and as announced the services are as follows;

Maundy Thursday Eucharist at 7pm

Good Friday liturgy starts at 2pm. The final hour
Saturday service of light and renewal starts at 7pm
Easter Sunday Eucharist at 10am.

And as last week, I am attaching the A4 poster to this email for display wherever you can pin it up.

Thought for the day

Making connections is what I want to talk about today. This came to me when I was listening to the passion narrative last Sunday. Traditionally, a sermon does not have to be preached because the story can be left to stand on its own two feet. For those from a Christian tradition this can be fine but for those who don't have a firm grasp of the whole story, just listening to a man being taken for execution is terribly incomplete. What led him to that point? What happened afterwards? What does it mean for us? Jesus' passion did not happen in a vacuum. Using another more well known understanding of that word *passion*, Jesus' *passion* for the kingdom of God, his *passion* for truth, his *passion* for inclusion, his *passion* for justice, led him to that place. His *passion* led to his "passion". That connects the cross to what went before, but what about afterwards? Jesus is raised from the dead on Sunday and this leads to the early Christian affirmation that "Jesus lives" and "Jesus is Lord". Saying that Jesus is Lord is God's "yes" to Jesus and "no" to the Empire and their religious collaborators - If Jesus is Lord, the emperor cannot be! "Jesus lives" means just that, and that God is God of the living not the dead and his spiritual presence is with us always. But the most important connection is to you and me. How does all that connect with us?

For some the resurrection is kept locked firmly in the past. It is something wonderful but it is something that happened to Jesus 2000 years ago and so however momentous it was, it is just history. For others it is a promise of something that may happen to us in the future when we die - so the resurrection is kept locked in the future. But the presence of God abiding with us eternally happens in the here and now. As Jonathan said to me in Sofia this weekend "You cannot inherit eternity some time in the future, eternity is here and now and always". The presence of Christ is current, living and active. His comfort and guidance are always near. God connects with us through Christ in a very special way.

The prayer for today is the Easter Sunday prayer from a book called "The wisdom of Thomas Merton"

*Reconcile today, Lord Jesus all things and me
to your Father in the power of the Holy Spirit
whom you have sent to renew us in freedom and joy
through the mystery of your resurrection from the dead.
In the words of Saint Patrick, hear my Easter prayer:
"Christ, as a light, illumine and guide me.
Christ as a shield, overshadow and cover me,
Christ be over me. Christ be under me.
Christ be beside me on my left hand and my right.
Christ this day be within me and without me
Christ the lowly and meek. Christ the all-powerful.
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak, and*

*in the mouth of each who speaks to me,
in all who draw near me, or hear me, or see me." Alleluia.*

Love and peace

Martin