

Dear all,

Easter Sunday

Broke all recent records at our church. My daughter Claire, was recovering from an operation on her knee, but if she had been able to come along there would have been **100 people** (!) in church to celebrate the **resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Extra chairs had to be put out so that everyone could sit down. Frans, our Sunday school teacher had the pleasure (?) of dealing with 16 children in Sunday school - rather him than me! This morning's service was a truly joyful occasion punctuated by some great surprises and great singing. At the end of the service, we were presented with two beautiful paintings by a well loved member of our church - Eugeniu Grigorescu. One, of Christ, will be displayed permanently in church. The other will be sold, in aid of church funds. Florin, our organist also got a round of spontaneous applause for his playing during the service. Jesus is alive and well and living in the life of the church, which is *all of us together*. Plenty of pictures were taken of the service and I'm sure they will be appearing on a website and Blog near you very soon. <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> . though John is away in Iasi for a few days so they may take a little longer but I know there are already scenes from Easter eve and my last visit to Sofia already Blogged. Go to the web site address and push the button "COR Blog". Thanks to everyone who read, and served, and to Lillah and Johanna who provided the wonderful fresh flowers.

Holy Week.

As John said to me on Maundy Thursday, our church never looks better than in the evening and the pictures on his Blog shows off this fact. We held a service on each day from Thursday onwards and every service had a certain something and a message and atmosphere all its own.

Next Sunday

Holy Communion at 10am with Sunday school. The second Sunday of Easter.

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After the proclamation of the cross on Good Friday I walked to the back of the church to be greeted by a Bucharest fireman who wanted to inspect the church to see how it complied with regulations! Apart from some things that we have to do, and will be dealt with promptly, he wanted me to make known to the congregation the **112 emergency number** that you ring for the emergency services - which I am now doing. This is a number that is common to the whole of Europe (with the exception of Bulgaria I think) so you don't need to remember any other emergency number.

Do you need a nanny and/or housekeeper?

I have received a wonderful reference from Rachel Lee and an advert for a woman called **Violeta** via Ela Stan, the community liaison officer at the British embassy. Violeta has been working as a nanny and housekeeper for two British teachers at the AISB who are soon leaving Bucharest, so obviously Violeta is now looking for a new position. Her reference is first class - Interested? Both the reference and the advert are attached to this email.

Only in Romania.

One of the secret pleasures of ex-pat life is swapping horror stories that while they might happen in other places as well.....well they didn't happen to any of us *before* we got here. During John's sermon on Thursday (which was excellent) he brought to mind a Bucharest taxi driver, cigarette in one hand, mobile phone in the other, making the sign of the cross whilst changing gear - which brought knowing smiles from most in the congregation. My tap (yes my tap) in the bathroom sink exploded on Thursday sending two fierce jets of water to the ceiling (ironic really as we have only managed to get a trickle out of it for months). I'd only gone to fill up the dog's bowl. Standing like a drowned rat in an inch of water I managed to eventually turn off the supply. At church on Sunday this was topped by Jo and Rene whose fuse box in their apartment caught fire on Friday. Rene rushed down some pretty steep stairs to get to his car where he has a fire extinguisher. He rushed back to his apartment, aimed.....fired.....nothing. It didn't work. Not knowing what else to do he filled a vase full of water and threw it over the fuse box. He knew that Water and electricity don't mix but took the chance. Thankfully it worked - Alls well that ends well, I suppose.

The radical priest.

This is the title that the Sofia Echo attached to the article they wrote about me a short while ago. People in Sofia and England who have read it say that it encapsulates me quite well and is actually quite insightful. If you want to take a look, the direct link is www.sofiaecho.com/article/the-radical-priest/id_28142/catid_29

Claire

Thank you to everyone for their prayers and their concern for Claire. Thanks also to Jonathan and Johanna for a lovely cake given to us on Sunday. Claire is now recovering at home after an operation in Spital CFR nr.2 on her knee. Another operation is due in about a month's time when this one has healed.

AGM.

There was a bit of confusion over the date of our AGM on Sunday. But I have checked and it is definitely the **6th April**. Next Sunday (Traditionally called low Sunday) was the original idea but it was changed to the **6th April** to maximise the number of people who might be present. This being the case, you still have two weeks in which to either join the electoral roll or propose yourself for the church council.

Thought for the day

Carrying on what I was saying last Wednesday - Jesus' passion led to his "passion" and Jesus had a *passion for justice* amongst other things. My visits to Rahova prison to meet Adrian Wilson, and knowing also that a Nigerian member of our congregation, "KC", has also been in the same prison for over a year without trial has convinced me that Justice is at the very least not being *seen* to be done in either case. (My heartfelt thanks to those who I know are working behind the scenes to get some movement in KC's case.)

Adrian's situation is a case I know more about and this is the version of events that I have. Adrian's offence allegedly occurred a couple of years ago. He was allowed to leave Romania but then unknown to him he was tried "in absentia" to seven years prison - and at no time did he ever appear in any court to defend himself. Then, last year, despite a Spanish court ruling (He was working in the Canaries) that the Romanian government *had not enough evidence* for an extradition - the ruling came

after he was already on the plane and he was extradited from Spain regardless - an extraordinary occurrence in itself. All the evidence against him seems to be either circumstantial or contradictory, as the Spanish judges obviously recognised.

According to Adrian he has never, in the entire process ever been asked for his side of the story - there simply "wasn't time" at his appeal. The only two words he has ever spoken in any court are - "not guilty" - when asked how he pleaded.

I have no idea if Adrian is guilty or innocent of the charge against him, but the way he has ended up in Rahova prison leaves an awfully uneasy feeling in my stomach.

Part and parcel of being a modern democracy within the EU must mean having an impartial and just judiciary, but if these two cases are at all representative (and I do stand to be corrected) the system leaves a great deal to be desired.

Adrian is accused of a sexual offence and because the victim was under sixteen he is classified as a paedophile. And who cares if a paedophile is locked up until he dies? Which is exactly what the justice system (all justice systems perhaps?) relies on people thinking. As soon as people hear the word, their revulsion makes them feel they can safely turn off. Who cares if he received justice or not? He can rot as far as most people are concerned. But a society can be judged on how impartially and fairly it deals with such things. If I am right (and I am prepared to be wrong) and Adrian and "KC" did not receive justice, just what exactly makes us think that any of us would get justice either, or that we would receive fair impartial treatment if push came to shove?

Are we perhaps too rich? Too important? Too white? Too nice? that we think that we will be afforded justice even when it isn't afforded to others. Adrian is a white, middle class, well educated, well mannered British citizen as well.

If a system is prepared to trample over the rights of just one person, *whatever you think about them or their alleged offence*, it will do it to anyone. Justice must be blind. It must be afforded to everyone or it ceases to be Justice at all. We cannot afford to be mesmerised by the nature of the alleged offence and think that it doesn't matter how someone is treated because in our eyes they are "not like us" and have somehow forfeited their right to be treated as an equal human being. That is a long and very slippery slope.

As has been said so eloquently and in a different context before.....First they came for the communists, and I did nothing. Then they came for the homosexuals, and I did nothing. Then they came for the gypsies and I did nothing. Then they came for the blacks, and I did nothing. Then they came for the Jews, and I did nothing.....and then they came for me.

The prayer for today

*Almighty God,
your Son Jesus Christ
came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life a ransom for many:
help us to love others as he loved us,
and make us responsible citizens of earth,
as in Christ we are made citizens of heaven;
for his sake. Amen.*

Love and Peace

Martin