

COR Newsletter – 02 April 2008

Dear all,

Last Sunday

Considering the road closures due to the NATO summit, and the clocks going forward and this being traditionally low Sunday, a robust congregation of about 50 found their way to church (and only one or two an hour late - you know who you are!). Thank you to Lillah for the roses in church this morning. It is of course always good to see new faces and I hope the new people felt welcome.

The website

The amount of different computers and separate hits on our website for March has simply rocketed this month. **538** separate computers logged on to our site <http://www.churchofthesurrection.eu> with **759** visits from 24 countries. This is marvellous news in itself but Jo is already planning improvements and new additions - including more pictures and links to other sites and also an information page giving newcomers lots of basic information for newcomers to Romania. Watch this space!

Next Sunday

10am Holy Communion with **Sunday school** and **Produce sale**. Lillah is having an operation on her foot today - keep Lillah in your prayers - so she doesn't know for sure if she can make it this Sunday (if she does she'll be hobbling), so to ensure the success of the Produce sale please try and contribute cakes or produce to sell at this popular monthly event. After the sale we will then convene for our **Annual General Meeting** - see you all there.

Note: Great news - Andrew Littauer rang me last Friday. After his operation in the U.S. he is finally back with us in Romania. All things being well, we will welcome Andrew back into the fold on this Sunday.

Today and tomorrow

Because of other commitments I will not be available in church on Wednesday or Thursday. Sorry for any inconvenience.

Thought for the day

What is the difference between *the Word* and just words, even if they appear in the Bible?

Well did God write the Bible? Well obviously not. Every single word in the Bible from start to finish was written by human beings just like you and me. God did not dictate them word for word either - the Bible is not the Koran. Even, and this is perhaps the most important and highly significant point I want to make is this - Jesus, who we call "Son of God" never as far as we are aware ever wrote a single word.....ever.

Don't you think that is strange? There must be a reason for that. If words, and the words of the Bible - the word of the Lord - are *so important* why didn't we get given the gospel according to Jesus when he had the chance? He lived for thirty three years after all.

The strongest clue we have comes I think from within the pages of the Bible itself and was written by St. Paul. He writes "The letter kills, it is the Spirit that gives life". (2

Corinthians 3:6). The letter *kills* or at least it has the potential to kill, both literally and metaphorically.

Given the hundreds of thousands of Christians who have died at the hands of other Christians down the centuries over different interpretations of scripture and resulting doctrines the phrase the letter *kills* becomes horribly literal. Words are metaphors and as such they can truly open us up to the mystery of God, but they are not mathematical formulae.

Words can only ever approximate to God - they can never completely encapsulate or totally explain him. Words in the Bible can lead, inspire, comfort, invoke, provoke, move to tears, enlighten, but they cannot completely contain or pin down and comprehensively explain God.

The inherent danger in thinking that they can is exactly what Paul was saying - that as soon as words are written down, they can be given a permanence and status they do not deserve - in short they can become law, and the Spirit can be quenched. In fact the danger is that words can actually *replace* God!

The New Covenant, by comparison *is written in a life* - the word made flesh - as John puts it. The Word in that context means also the *wisdom* of God - Holy Wisdom is an early way of talking about Jesus. The inadequacy of words on their own is why we are a sacramental church. Sacraments - physicality - actions with words - speak to us at a different and more profound level than bald words on their own ever can. Symbols and sacraments, like bread, wine, water, oil, the peace, are words made flesh and speak to us in a different way. They have multiple meanings that point beyond themselves and they speak to us - and touch us - in deeper ways that it is impossible to put into mere words.

"This is the word of the Lord" can be said with integrity when we understand that the writer(s) in the Bible believed that they were inspired by God to write about and interpret their personal and communal experiences in the light of their belief in God. They have authority but this does not make them without error or not bound by culture, context, or their own personal understanding of who God is. Their words can of course certainly lead us to that much greater revelation that is The Word made flesh.

The **prayer for today** comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians chapter 1 verses 9 to 11.

*And this is my prayer:
that your love may abound more and more
in knowledge and depth of insight,
so that you may be able to discern what is best
and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,
filled with the fruit of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ
to the glory and praise of God.
Amen.*

Love and Peace

Martin