

COR Newsletter – 30April 2008

Dear all,

Last Sunday in Bucharest

Dr John Barker led the service because I am currently on holiday. Thank you to John for leading and preaching. I have spoken to John who reports that it was a good service. It was of course also Orthodox Easter Sunday. Happy Easter -again - to all those amongst our congregation (not just from an Orthodox background) who will also have celebrated Easter by joining in the services of light in the Eastern tradition on Saturday night.

Next Sunday

The seventh Sunday of Western Easter. Holy Communion **at 10am**. I will be back after a couple of weeks' absence. We also hope to welcome to our service **30 pilgrims** from Trinity Episcopal Church in the USA. The end of the local holiday season will see a lot of our regulars return and also bring Frans, Hankie and the family back from their holidays so our popular **Sunday school** will resume. We also have our popular **produce sale** this Sunday as well, which will need a lot more produce to sell as our American guests are staying after the service as far as I know. Please bring something to sell if you can!!

B-B-Q

Here's something to get your mouth watering! The church is having a bring and share B-B-Q after the service on the **25th May**. As soon as the service is over we will depart - car sharing please to make sure nobody gets left behind who wants to come - to the lovely home of Nancy and Eugeniu in the country **village of Peris**. Any food brought will be appreciated and shared, though Nancy and Eugeniu will provide the BBQ meat. Though no-one is going to stop you bring meat (or wine and beer for that matter) if you have it. These are always enjoyable occasions and also a chance to get to know people a bit better. Children welcome of course. I'll give precise directions nearer the time for drivers.

The Great British Garden party

The next Garden party which is now an annual event will of course be held on **Friday 27th June**. The first planning session for this event will happen very soon. Put the date in your diary if it isn't already there. This is a hugely enjoyable night which I for one am looking forward to.

Website

As noted last week - not a week seems to go by without some sort of addition or upgrading of our site. Now we have a new section called "News" and on it there are stored back editions of this weekly newsletter and also a direct link to the article "The radical priest" about yours truly, which appeared in the Sofia Echo recently. There is also a link so that people can be added to our newsletter mailing list if they want to. (This service has already been used!) Pictures now adorn the sight where they didn't previously and John's popular Blog can also be reached via <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> . Special thanks as ever to Jo Kinberger who makes sure all of this happens.

Veliko Turnovo

On Monday we visited Veliko Turnovo in Bulgaria as tourists. It is a beautiful place - the town hangs from spectacular ridges, there is an atmospheric old fortress and the Yantra River meanders along the valley floor. The cobbled streets of the old quarter make this place a lovely day out. *Note: This place is only three hours from Bucharest - as close as Brasov!!* The borders are now easy as both countries respond to the demands of EU membership. This wasn't just a nice day out though. This place is so spectacular that it has attracted a large British ex-pat population of 3000 people - 10% of the population, so this was also a rece to see for the first time the lay of the land, to start to explore the possibilities of starting an Anglican church there. Starting a church from scratch will not be an easy task. The most difficult thing will be to actually let people know that we are here and willing and able. Then competent and enthusiastic local contacts for any nascent congregation will need to be identified and sanctioned and of course there is a small matter of a location for services! None of this will be easy. Your prayers in this matter are appreciated.

Thought for the day

I have written before about the relationship between man-made traditions and *the tradition* (the gospel) and how the traditions (what we do and say and dress) are merely the carriers of *the tradition* and the method by which it is carried forward from one generation to another. This was brought home to me again when I saw a programme about John Wesley and how he introduced the then new and radical policy of singing hymns in church in the 18th century. Up until then only psalms had been sung in Anglican churches. What we understand as being commonplace and typically Anglican today was brand new only a couple of hundred years ago. At college, for example, I had to sing plainsong - a much older form of monastic psalm singing and when people sometimes ask for more traditional forms of worship I often toy with the idea of making people sing it but have resisted the temptation so far! An even younger tradition for Anglicans than hymns is the priestly clerical collar - commonly called the "dog collar". This is of Victorian origin again for Anglicans - the detachable collar was invented in 1827 and its original purpose was to prevent the cassock from chaffing the neck. Organs in church are also Victorian in origin. The fact that Christian clergy in the historic churches dress according to the style of a "hip" 4th century Roman nobleman is another accident of history when Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman empire. (We are obviously waiting for it to come back into fashion - it *will* I tell you - what goes around comes around!!) Traditions like these and many more besides are not to be dismissed too lightly - there is nothing wrong with them in themselves, but their usefulness surely should only be gauged by how much they encourage a closer walk with God. If they do that - Amen! But unfortunately these things also have the awesome ability to become an end in themselves and then risk becoming a barrier to meeting God. Things like worrying about who goes first (or last) in a procession, whether incense should be used, what is being worn (or not worn) by the priest, whether the elements should be raised during communion, who can (or can't) read the gospel, whether a woman or a gay man or a married man can be ordained at all - all have a certain limited importance perhaps but that importance pales into insignificance against the importance of people realising the all embracing nearness and love of God. The usefulness of our traditions, some of which are actually comparatively modern, is best measured by the yardstick of whether they bring people into a closer relationship with God. If the combined weight of them all does just that, then they are doing just

what they are supposed to do. If some are benign and do neither one thing nor the other - surely we can just live with that as well, but if they start to get in the way, if they actively turn people off, if they start to come *between* people and God then *at that point* they have obviously outlived their usefulness - they have become unfit for purpose, at least for a certain constituency. As Pablo Picasso said in one of my favourite quotes "Tradition is a new born baby, not wearing your Grandfather's hat".

The **prayer for today** is, like last week's prayer by Thomas Merton but taken from a Roman Catholic compilation called "The treasury of the Holy Spirit"

*My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot see for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this,
you will lead me by the right road though
I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always
though I may seem lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

Love and peace

Martin.