

Dear all,

Last Sunday in Bucharest

Luckily I decided to print 99 pew sheets because in the end, we only had five left over as the service got under way! Our numbers were swollen of course by a party of people from Trinity Episcopal Church in Connecticut, USA (though when speaking with them afterwards many were American ex-pats from all parts of the world). Frans and the family returned from Holland and so our popular **Sunday school** swung back into action with 10 youngsters benefiting from Frans' careful direction. This was a joyful occasion - and this being the first Sunday of the month it was also the occasion for our **produce sale**, and the church responded to the challenge of extra people by lots of people bringing extra produce and cakes to sell after the service. There was so much quality and variety (I certainly enjoyed our tea that evening) - thanks to everyone who contributed to the most successful produce sale *ever!* - over 500 RON in produce was sold.

This was also the first Sunday when I printed all the hymns on a separate sheet. I think this worked very well, so may well do this as a matter of course in future. This joyful service has already been Blogged. Look at the pictures and further commentary by clicking on <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> and clicking on "COR Blog".

Last Saturday in Sofia

Congratulations to **Gino and Mira** - key members of our congregation in Sofia as they were married in the Greek catholic church in Sofia. (It's complicated (!) - Gino was baptised catholic and confirmed Anglican, and Mira is from an Orthodox family. Special thanks to the Eastern rite Catholics who were able to satisfy the demands of both families and were very helpful to our happy couple). Photos of the event are also already available on John's Blog which can be accessed via our website <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> and clicking on "COR Blog". Unless my eyes deceive me Gino appears to be wearing *a kilt* - close questioning will be required the next time I see him. While on the subject of our website, our figures just go from strength to strength with 567 separate computers logging on in April and 831 hits in total.

Next Sunday

is **Pentecost**. This celebration is the climax of the Easter season. The death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus and then finally the giving of the Spirit and the formation of the church as the *people of the Holy Spirit* completes this particular liturgical expression of our faith. **Holy Communion with Sunday school** at 10am as usual.

Standing orders to our church

We have been blessed that just recently someone has taken out a very generous standing order to our church - Our grateful thanks to that person and to all the other people who contribute in this way. This method of contributing to our church is so helpful to us that it is difficult to overestimate. It means we have an income that we can rely on month by month. It means that our members, many of whom are extremely busy and internationally mobile can contribute to our church even when you are abroad on business or on holiday. It makes sense! If you have been

considering taking out a standing order to our church, everything you need to know including our bank account details are also on our website.

<http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> Click on the button "Support us" and follow the instructions.

BBQ

As previously announced, this will take place after our service on the **25th May** at Nancy and Eugeniu's house at Peris. Bring and share food and drink. Car sharing also please. Children welcome. Come and have some fun and get to know people a bit better!

The Rusenski Lom

At risk of turning this email into a travelogue - I can recommend the national park of Rusenski Lom - and the Rock churches of Ivanovo and the medieval fortress at Cherven, (both within the National park) within two hours of Bucharest, in Northern Bulgaria about 20km south of Ruse. A great day out if you haven't been there before.

Thought for the day

I was watching that great actor Sidney Poitier being interviewed the other day and he started to talk about the millions of different choices and decisions people make every day that bring us to where we are today. Change any one of them and our present might be radically different from how it actually is. He gave the example of a man leaving for work in the morning who had a crash on the way to work. He had stepped out of his house and realising that he had left his keys behind had to go back inside to pick them up. That one act, lasting about 17 seconds, meant that he met the other driver at the exact spot where they collided. If he hadn't had to go back inside for his keys they would never have collided that day. Life is a complex web of millions of chances, decisions and happenings multiplied by the number of people on the planet and influenced by the natural world about us. The mind boggles.

Where is God in all these chances and choices? Well I can believe that in some way God's influence comes to bear, unacknowledged, unheralded and unseen. This would certainly explain a lot of uncanny coincidences. But much more importantly if your decisions are directly affected and tailored to your central belief in a good and loving God and motivated by sacrificial love and if guidance in our actions is sought and aligned to what we believe is God's will as revealed in Christ then your decisions and choices will be affected that way - and thus other people will be affected by them as well. If twenty, thirty, a thousand, or a million people are doing the same thing then this cumulative effect will ensure that God's will and influence will certainly be felt in the world. God will be influencing things *through us*.

What I would say it *doesn't* mean is that there is a divine blueprint for your life already mapped out that if only you could find out what God's will and plan for your life is, then you would be happy. I was helped enormously to this point of view by the priest/ scientist Rev. Dr. John Polkinghorne. I am an avid fan of his work and have been privileged to hear him in person a couple of times. One premise put forward by John is that the future is genuinely, gloriously and absolutely open and relies on us, in our free will, to *co-operate* with God's will to build His kingdom. In this controversial worldview God does not know exactly how the future will unfold! (Controversial because it suggests that God is not all-knowing). We collaborate with God and so become co-creators with God. He, and we, know the *absolute* end - resurrection,

salvation, healing, peace - that "God will be all in all" as St. Paul puts it. But in between time we have absolute free will to follow or not follow in his Spirit. On Sunday we will celebrate the giving of the Spirit - at Pentecost according to Luke - on Easter Sunday according to John (We have both versions set in the lectionary). The important fact is not the date but the very fact that God's spirit is available to the church to follow or not to follow. There is no guarantee that we will. Following God's will can lead us into uncomfortable places and no-one likes to be uncomfortable. In my experience of so-called "spirit filled" churches I have come across, people generally use the Spirit solely as a means to feel good about themselves. Warm, fuzzy feelings are top of the wish list closely followed by something "supernatural" to gawp at.

Being led to do the right things, to make self-less decisions, often uncomfortable decisions that will affect others for good (but not necessarily yourself,) to add to the general good in the world, to act collectively in the cause of love, whose cumulative effect of *co-operating with God's Spirit* will build God's kingdom - to be light and salt in the world - *This* is Pentecost.

I was lead to use this **prayer for today** by the chance meeting with one of our American guests on Sunday who had been impressed with a sermon given by our very own Bishop Geoffrey a week before (in France I think) where Bishop Geoffrey had talked about "not high church nor low church but for a need for *deep* church." It is by Richard Harries.

*Lord,
you are the deepest wisdom,
the deepest truth,
the deepest love,
within me.
Lead me in your way.
Amen.*

Love and peace

Martin