

COR Newsletter – 28 May 2008

Dear all,

### **Last Sunday**

The first Sunday after Trinity. Our Eucharist was followed by a lovely Barbeque in the beautiful setting of Nancy and Eugeniu's garden in the village of Periş. This was a lovely way to wind down and relax - (all except for John who sweated over the Barbeque in some severe heat! - Thanks John.) Pictures of this lovely afternoon are already on our rapidly expanding website on <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> and then clicking on our "picture gallery".

### **Next Sunday**

The 1st June is the second Sunday after Trinity. Holy Communion at 10am with **Sunday school** and **produce sale**. Lillah is not in Bucharest this Sunday so the baton is passed on to all of us to make the effort and bring some delicious produce to church to sell.

After the morning service we pray for **Martin and Alina** who will have their wedding blessing service at 1.30pm.

### **Two dates to remember!**

**Thursday 19th June** at 6.30 pm - former Archbishop of York and former chaplain of our church, David Hope, will preside at a Eucharist in our church. I would like as many people as possible to be there to welcome him and break bread together.

**Friday 27th June**. Our Garden party starts at 7pm. 60 RON for adults, 30 RON for 12-18 years, under 12s free.

**"Tickets are now on sale"**. See me on Sunday to buy your ticket. We will be relying in no small part on the congregation to sell these tickets. Invite your friends and colleagues along for a lovely evening! If you think you can sell some at work - take some from me on Sunday as well.

### **Where does God live?**

In the year 2000 I organised and led a parish pilgrimage to the so-called "Holy Land" - and event still talked about at my old parish by all accounts (in a *good* way I hasten to add).

We did all the famous sites even including the ones deemed "unsafe" at the time to normal tour groups such as the Haram el Khalil in Hebron. The Holy Sepulchre, Church of the Nativity (Claire, who was only ten years old then, read Luke's birth narrative at the supposed very spot), the church of the Annunciation, Jacob's well and a whole cart load of other sites from both the Old and New Testament.

Although it was a nice feeling being there, and we all undoubtedly learned a lot, the point I want to make is that at no time did I ever feel that I was on "Holy Ground".

The very idea of one place being more "holy" than any other place is alien to me and I often recall Jesus' words - obviously in a different context - in Luke 17 when he says "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say "Lo here it is!" or "There!" for behold, the kingdom of God is within you"

God is no more in Jerusalem than in Bucharest or Sofia.

*Note: There are many apocryphal stories that recount how in seeing the obvious mismatch in Jerusalem being continually soaked in the collective prayers of Jewish Muslim and Christian believers also being such a violent, unjust, oppressive and disordered city that it has turned people into atheists.*

The same is true of church. We need order, I appreciate beauty and quiet to collect my thoughts and to pray - I quite like objects that can serve as a focus for prayer (but not always). A church building as a home for a particular community is actually I think quite necessary as a focus. I suppose this is a defence of "sacred space" but none of those things mean that I think God is more present in a church than elsewhere. God is everywhere and within us. The Jews of course believed that God lived in the Holy of Holies at the centre of the temple in Jerusalem. The folly of this belief is the meaning behind the tearing of the curtain that separated the holy of holies from the rest of the temple from top to bottom that we read of in the New Testament when Jesus was crucified.

Indeed in the letter to the Hebrews Jesus' own body is called the curtain! "Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us *through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.....*" Hebrews 10: 19-20.

The same is true of the Eucharistic elements themselves. I have explained this at much greater length elsewhere. To recognise the presence of God in a piece of bread is not to say that God is in the bread and no-where else. I come from it the other way around. Of course, God is present in the bread and wine - he has to be - if he is not there he isn't anywhere! God is everywhere and within us.

I was the object of much curiosity (and undoubtedly scorn) at Mirfield because of my refusal to genuflect in front of the "blessed sacrament". As I say I have mellowed over the years. My objection was based on not wanting to be a hypocrite. As a focus I now have no theological objection to genuflection in front of the Eucharistic elements - I do so myself after the Eucharistic prayer - but as a general rule at no other time. To realise the presence of God in bread, wine, water or oil is merely to recognise that God is in all things and when we invoke God and see him and relate to him through these specific things we call them sacraments. I said a couple of weeks ago in introducing a certain prayer that there is a paradox in that God is in all things yet we need to be shown where to look. In using such ordinary basic everyday things like bread, wine, oil, and water, the church is already making a gigantic statement as to where God can be found. He is everywhere and within us.

**The prayer for today** that reflects some of the above was written by Anselm (1033 - 1109)

*O supreme and unapproachable light  
O whole and blessed truth.  
How far thou art from me, who am so near to thee!  
How far art thou removed from my vision,  
though I am so near to thine!  
Everywhere thou art wholly present,  
and I see thee not.  
In thee I move, and in thee I have my being,  
and cannot come to thee;  
thou art within me, and about me,  
and I feel thee not.*

Love and peace

Martin