

COR Newsletter – 04 June 2008

Dear all,

Last Sunday

This was a busy day. After our morning Eucharist, we held our produce sale. A big thank you to everyone who brought things to sell - over 200RON was taken again. Later on that afternoon the wedding blessing of **Martin and Alina Stobbs** took place in church. The flowers were really beautiful for the wedding, but I don't know if they'll last until next Sunday.

On Monday

I arrived to meet with a wine merchant to discuss supplying the Garden Party - more on that later - and I was confronted by a man digging a big hole in front of the church. Low and behold, it transpires that the long awaited **statue and fountain!** - about two years in the planning, is going up **this week**. The statue if I remember rightly is of a woman and a child, and the sculptor was actually digging the hole for the foundation plinth himself together with a neighbour of his. We look forward to admiring the finished product - which should be ready by the weekend.

Yesterday

One of the teaching monks from my old college Mirfield was in Bucharest planning a conference of Monks and Nuns in Transylvania for next year. It was wonderful seeing **Fr. Nicholas Stebbing** again, not in plain clothes as I expected, but in full Mirfield cassock and scapula, which caused me a few flashbacks.

Next Weekend - a festival!

The meeting with **Virgil**, the sculptor digging the hole outside our church was fortuitous because it was only through speaking to him that we learned that this weekend is apparently the time for the **Verona street festival**. - an arts festival that spreads over Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday and when Strada Verona is closed off to traffic. Unfortunately we have received no warning at all. I will endeavour to keep the church open as long as possible during the festival, because we are quite a popular place to come in and nose around - about 600 people last year came through our doors. There will be stalls and concerts etc over this period but the **Sunday service will take place as normal**.

Next Sunday

Holy Communion with Sunday school at 10am as usual. The 3rd Sunday after Trinity. Dr John Barker and Ela are in Skopje this weekend - we pray for them, their present and their future.

Next Monday - the 9th June

Stuart and Ana Bruff will have their marriage blessed at 1pm today. We pray for them and their families.

The Garden party

Get your tickets and please spread the word amongst your friends and colleagues. This promises to be a great night for the church but only if we get out there and let people know that it is happening and how good it is! Only 60 RON for adults, 30RON

for 12-18 years and under 12's Free. This is of course on **Friday 27th June from 7pm**. Pictures from last year's event are of course on our website <http://www.churchoftheresurrection.eu> and then click on the "picture gallery" button. A simple advert containing all the information is attached to this email.

How old do you have to be to participate in Holy Communion and do I have to be confirmed?

A family on Sunday asked about confirmation or religious education for their children which raised some important issues that we should all be aware of. The first thing we need to be aware of is that in this multi national and multi denominational church we recognise BAPTISM as the "full and complete" rite of Christian initiation. This means that anyone, no matter how young, if they are baptised, is welcome to receive the bread and wine at the Eucharist. They are welcome because they are baptised so they are full members of the body of Christ. Pastorally there will of course be parents (and children) who want their children to wait - that is their right and I respect that, but I always encourage participation if asked.

The custom of waiting for confirmation as an entry to the Eucharist only occurs in Western Christianity and arose by accident. In Orthodoxy, a child is baptised and "chrismated" (which means confirmed - anointed with oil as a sign of the seal of the Spirit) at the same time. The child then takes their first communion at their baptism service. This can happen because in the East any parish priest can anoint with oil.

In the West, this rite was reserved for Bishops, which was fine when the church was small but when the church grew bigger and bigger, the time gap between a baptism taking place and when a bishop could physically get there to anoint with oil (confirm) grew longer and longer. Eventually this gap became years. In the fullness of time this rite, which became known as "confirmation", assumed a life of its own and was then became linked to the right to receive communion.

This has never happened in the East and now the situation has started to be amended in the West also. Roman Catholics have already broken the link by separating "first communion" from "confirmation", emphasising that they are two separate and different things.

There *are* of course issues involved with very young children receiving bread and wine, but not being good enough, not being a full member of the community or not knowing enough are not among them (How truly prepared and comprehending are any of us come to that). Also, In practise the Orthodox in general don't participate in communion very often and so it may be many years in practise before a baptised child actually participates in communion again

This doesn't mean that confirmation is meaningless - quite the reverse - instruction in Christian beliefs and values is always valuable and confirmation can be a powerful statement and demonstration of belief that many feel compelled to make. You are after all having a Bishop's hands laid on your head and being prayed for personally to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and anointed with oil in Biblical fashion - that is a powerful thing - but it is not the passport into full belonging (and therefore participation in communion). That already took place when you were baptised.

The prayer for today was written by Thomas Cranmer (1489 - 1556)

***O Lord who hast taught us that
all our doings without love are nothing worth,***

*send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts
that most excellent gift of love,
the very bond of peace and all virtues,
without which whoever liveth is counted dead before thee;
grant us this for thy Son Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen*

Love and peace

Martin