

COR Newsletter – 24 September 2008

Dear all,

I am now back in Bucharest after an exhausting trip to Britain, settling in Claire to Stirling University and then immediately travelling to Sofia to celebrate the Eucharist in Bulgaria last Sunday, so it is with Sofia I start.

Last Sunday in Sofia

This chaplaincy is going from strength to strength with twenty three people meeting in the catholic chapel in Oborishte this Sunday. It would have been twenty six had Friedrich not required urgent dental treatment, but we met up with him his wife and young son anyhow in a monastery after the service. As important as the numbers was the spirit. This is a community that looks out for each other and meets socially as well. Because we are growing our "after service coffee" is now quite noisy and the Catholics are now having to ask us to keep the noise down - but I'd rather have to cope with problems attached to growth than problems of decline!! Special thanks to Chris for her company and booking our hotel - and looking forward to seeing the rest of the crew who couldn't make it this time in October.

Last Sunday in Skopje

Yes - that's right - Skopje. Our reader John Barker held the very first service since he and Ela moved there in the British ambassador's residence and seven people gathered to worship. This is just the start of John's ministry there under the guidance of Fr. Robin Fox in Belgrade and two services a month are planned from now on. Let us pray for the Anglican witness in Skopje.

The last two Sundays in Bucharest.

Thank you to Alison Mutler, Nicholas Hammond and everyone else who contributed to celebrating Morning prayer these past two weeks in Bucharest.

Next week in Bucharest

Holy Communion at 10am as usual with **Sunday school**.

Speaking of Sunday school

Check out the new "Sunday school" page on our website, <http://www.churchofthesurrection.eu> Great pictures and an informative page for anyone wanting to know what goes on in the newly refurbished Sunday school room. Thanks to Jo and Frans for putting this together. It looks great!

Air conditioning

I was only back in Bucharest for one day before disappearing again, so popped in to church to pick up my robes and lo and behold - an air conditioning unit is attached to the back wall!! This was not entirely unforeseen. One of the brides from a televised wedding at our church some months ago, Israela, had promised it to us - but I had no idea when. I was on the M1 motorway in the midlands when I got the call from Israela that it was now ready. Thanks must go to Lillah Houghton for organising the delivery in my absence and I am going to hazard a guess that it was Ian (?) who took care of the installation. Thanks for a job well done for whoever was involved.

It's a dirty job but someone's got to do it

As part of my representative role here in Romania I have been invited to an ecumenical conference from Wednesday to Friday at the monastery of Sambata de Sus, where I am required to speak about the Anglican church's involvement in ecumenism. Needless to say this means that unless extremely important I am effectively not really in communication for these days and also rather obviously not available in church. Sorry that I seem to be more away than in Bucharest just recently, but this is unavoidable I'm afraid.

This joke was told to me by some *Romanian* priests (so no outraged letters please)

An airliner with George W Bush, Vladimir Putin and Traian Basescu was flying to a very top level conference. During the flight, George Bush put his hand out of the window, brought it back in, put his hand to his face and exclaimed - "Ah, we are over America". How did you know that asked the other two? "My hand smells of corn and oil and freedom" the president replied.

Then Vladimir Putin put his hand out of the window - brought it back in and put his hand to his face and exclaimed "Ah, we are over Russia". How did you know that asked the other two? "My hand smells of Natural Gas, great literature and culture" he replied.

Then Traian Basescu put his hand out of the window, brought it back in, put his hand to his face and exclaimed "Ah, we are over Romania". How did you know that asked the other two. Oh, he replied "Someone's stolen my watch"

Thought for the day

An interesting discussion ensued while I was in Sofia that concentrated on the merits of new liturgies as against the older ones, and particularly the merits of new wordings of the Lord's prayer as against the older versions. There is undoubtedly a certain resonance, a feeling of solidity, of "tradition", about the older versions that doesn't excite the same sort of response as the new versions. I recognise that, even though I am usually a champion of the new, and actually feel it myself. But why?

Especially in the Lord's prayer, I and this other person, are always wanting to say "trespasses" instead of sins or debts, but this we decided was more than just greater familiarity or a sentimentalist approach. The argument put forward was that the older wordings actually provoke more thought, more reflection, than the newer plainer renditions, and I think I might just concede that.

Perhaps it has something to do with our perception nowadays that "new" invariably means "disposable", or worse "shallow". New or updated versions don't have to be either, and our modern Common Worship liturgy is proof of that, but something within our psyche pulls us backwards to a time when we imagine people were more solid, more dependable, more sound in their thinking, more rooted in what we imagine is the true tradition and that new things are ill thought out, pale imitations, or at least clumsy.

I am sure that for some modern translations this may be true. Perhaps as I get older I too am getting nostalgic - even though paradoxically I never really knew the old versions - originally schooled in a modern evangelical tradition. Can you be nostalgic for something you never knew? Probably, which is why we have organisations like the "sealed knot" that dresses up in period costume and re-enacts long forgotten civil war battles in Britain. I was told by a very high ranking Roman Catholic cardinal at Patriarch Daniel's enthronement that all the most enthusiastic catholic priests wanting

to return to the Latin Mass were not the old priests who actually grew up with the Latin Mass but young conservative priests who could never have actually known these rites themselves which he thought quite odd. A case of loving the old simply because it is old.

That said, I am moving to a position that sees that we cannot afford to confuse the medium with the message. Modern texts, updated versions, new idioms will undoubtedly have the better capacity to connect and move most people closer to God, but I accept that for some other people these innovations have the opposite effect. And surely from an evangelistic point of view, the message must take precedence over the medium?

I am sure that modern liturgies are the way to address most of the contexts that I have come into contact with but I can conceive that in some places, perhaps with a much older population, the BCP *could* be the most evangelistic service you could provide.

The **prayer for today** is the BCP collect for this coming Sunday

*O God
forasmuch as without thee
we are not able to please thee:
Mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit
may in all things direct and rule our hearts:
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen*

Love and peace

Martin