

COR Newsletter – 15 October 2008

Dear all,

Last Saturday

The news anchorman from Antenna 1, **Lucian Mindruta and Ioana** had their wedding blessing in our church today at 1pm. A dear friend of this church, **Stan Platt** was the best man and his lovely wife **Camelia** read 1 Corinthians 13 in a moving service.

Last Sunday in Bucharest

was Harvest Thanksgiving. Several people forgot to bring their dry produce and asked me to keep the basket there until next week - so that is what we'll do even though I'm not there. A healthy congregation with visitors today from Zimbabwe and the USA.

Last Sunday evening and Tuesday night in the COR

Sunday We held the first of two "early music" concerts in the church with the four piece "**Ansamblul Baroc Transilvania**" from Cluj. Both the organisers and myself were caught out by underestimating the popularity of the concert (they estimated 60 people). Every spare plastic seat was brought out and still there were lots of people who had to stand. About 130/140 people were treated to a virtuoso performance and the crowds added to the atmosphere.

Tuesday. I have just got in from a organ and Harpsichord concert by **Irina and Vlad Nastase** which was even more full than Sunday. I couldn't get in and had to stand in the vestibule!

Mike Yallop

Mike is back in the UK now, and probably won't be back with us this year, but distance is nothing when you pray for someone. Mike is undergoing another operation this week so we pray for him

Next Sunday the 19th in the COR.

I will be celebrating with our sister congregation in **Sofia**. The service today in Bucharest will be taken by the **Reverend Steve Hughes**, who many of you will be familiar with.

Thought for the day

Oh Jesus! Do you love me?
Will you ever set me free?
I've built myself a prison,
I've thrown away the key
I'm weeping in the darkness,
Yes, I'm longing now to see
The plans you have for both of us.
Please come and visit me

This is a part of a poem written by Adrian Plass, and deals with the phenomenon of Christians who bury themselves in busyness, or outward observance, to the detriment of a personal relationship with God.

Actually, I used to live near to a Christian healing centre on the South coast and knew the wonderful spiritual leader there Fr. Patrick Jones and I was party to what was for me at the time pretty shocking information. Patrick because of his personality and position was confided in to an extraordinary degree. What distressed him most was the number of serving priests who had long since lost their faith, but because of a lack of viable opportunities were trapped into going through the motions of faith Sunday by gruelling Sunday. The numbers involved were large enough for him to write a concerned confidential letter to the then Archbishop of Canterbury - to which the reply was basically "Only that many!!" That is certainly one form of imprisonment. There is yet another phenomenon of Christians so wedded to various dogmas, or certain outward forms of religion, that they profess loudly and confidently when in the right company, but in the deathly silence of two o'clock in the morning find themselves hedged in, "imprisoned", choked, by the type of faith they espouse. They truly find themselves "weeping in the darkness" because their faith is acting like a straightjacket. The awful reality of a faith that is meant to set us free, yet keeps us behind bars, unable to be our true selves, a slave to the party line, frightened to honestly express ourselves for fear of being labelled a heretic or whatever by our peers. This is obviously a horrible parody of the way of Jesus Christ.

Totalitarianism, with which Romania is all too familiar, has a perverting effect on the human psyche - it crushes the spirit. Totalitarianism works by demanding conformity and control. It does not take a brain surgeon to see the inherent dangers of religions that all have the capacity to lean towards totalitarianism - building a prison for the human spirit to urge conformity and therefore make people easier to control. It is no accident, it is a historical fact that most German protestants were natural and enthusiastic allies of the Nazis (Dietrich Bonhoeffer is famous simply because he was such a rarity). It is no accident that the Roman Catholic Church was an enthusiastic supporter of Franco's fascists against the republicans in Spain. And it is no accident that the leaders of the Jewish religion conspired to have Jesus murdered.

He was a threat to the power structures, to the status quo, a threat to organised religion that crushed the people

"Jesus replied, And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them"(Luke 11: 46)

He was an outsider, a free spirit, a man true to himself which in turn meant being true to God. They conspired to crush him, to snuff him out, but the resurrection is the sign that the Spirit of Jesus can never be snuffed out.

We all unwittingly have a tendency to build religious prisons for ourselves - perhaps we find it hard to handle freedom. Perhaps we can't handle truth easily. Like the institutionalised orphans of Romania, one horrendous legacy of Romania's totalitarian past - damaged individuals who find it difficult to live in normal society - we find our prisons strangely comforting and familiar. But Jesus did not come to us to reveal to us a way to make our captivity more comfortable - he came that we might have life in all its fullness, which is a very different thing. He longs for us to break out from behind those bars.

For our **prayer for today** I have chosen this prayer from Ephesians chapter 3 verses 14-end

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and earth derives its name.

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.
And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints,
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge -
that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.
Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,
according to his power that is at work within us,
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever, Amen.*

Love and peace

Martin