

COR Newsletter – 22 October 2008

Dear all,

REMEMBER - The clocks go back this coming Saturday night. (If you forget, I usually get to church for 9am anyway so can let you in!!).

Last Sunday in Sofia

was yet another very well attended and spirited service. A strong community is emerging here. The camaraderie is very special and special thanks to Sharon for providing my accommodation this weekend. Gino led our noisy lot out to a local restaurant to give the Catholics some peace for their own service, where we continued to chat - though I had to leave early for the long drive home. Thank you to Gino's mum and Dad for their fulsome compliments and we pray for Chris who almost immediately after the service had to start the long haul back to Australia. William and Pat continue to be in our prayers both in Sofia and Bucharest.

Thursday before that...

I was invited by the British school in Pipera to lead their Harvest Festival assembly alongside a woman called Madi who was speaking on behalf of **St. Stellion's** charity. All the food collected was being directed to them. St. Stellion is the Orthodox patron saint of children!

Next Sunday in Bucharest

Holy Communion at 10am. President and preacher will be our Archdeacon, the venerable **Patrick Curran**, visiting us from Vienna.

Pray for John and the new congregation in Skopje

The congregation is now finding its feet and in future is now going to meet in the catholic cathedral on Mitropolit Teodosif Gologanov in Skopje and the next service is next Sunday the 26th October at 9am. I know there are some people in Sofia that go to Skopje occasionally so for your information the next confirmed services are as follows 9th November Remembrance day parade, 23rd November at 12 noon at the cathedral, and 14th December at 12 noon at the cathedral.

Council meeting

Speaking of the Archdeacon's visit, please remember that the wardens will meet with Patrick at 10am in church and the full council at 11.30am on Saturday 25th October

Well done Christian!

Our treasurer, Christian Dickson ran in the inaugural Bucharest marathon and came a highly commendable 29th place (Blimey!!) in a time of 3hr 25 mins. Even better, he raised £1500 for the charity Casa Sperantei by his efforts.

The Britannia Ball

People have been awaiting eagerly for the second Britannia Ball ever since our first Ball last February was such a stunning and enjoyable success. What I can tell you for now is the date of the second one - **FRIDAY 20TH FEBRUARY**. Put that date in your diary and if something is already in there for that night - take it out!!!!

You can now spread the news of the date and generate interest with friends and colleagues.

What we now need is a **planning team** to make sure that it takes place and is as good as the last one, so I am asking that anyone who is interested in joining the planning team should contact me by email. When we have a working team I will call our first meeting. The success of this event is absolutely essential especially in light of the fact that just this week we have been informed that **we have lost** our Diocesan grant for 2009 which adds £8000 in unforeseen costs to our chaplaincy. Now we are *really* on our own, so we sink or swim together!!

Greetings from Bandung

I have received news that **Noldy and Lafi**, now finally reunited with **Esther and Melody** are safe and sound back in Indonesia and want me to extend their greetings to the rest of the congregation. They simply want to say "God bless you all".

Thought for the day

Whiling away some time before going to bed in Sofia I got reading the National Geographic magazine and was taken by an article about the tiny land locked Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan. Reading the whole article certainly left one certain that the small nation is far from being a perfect Shangri la - high infant mortality rates and poverty and lack of education, including religious strife with Hindus etc..but there is one thing that did leave a strong impression on me - the way the reformist monarch has chosen to describe the way he wants to measure the national well being - not in terms simply of money as we tend to do now (Gross National product) but in a way not dependent on income - Gross national happiness.

This is especially pertinent in these uncertain economic times for the global economy. We tend to measure our wellbeing, our worth and our own self image, by how much we have or earn or own, both personally and nationally.

Measuring our worth by wealth is certainly not Christian in any way, but Christians are not immune from falling into the same trap, using the world's values rather than God's values as revealed by Jesus of Nazareth. If we grade people by wealth in any way, the bible has harsh words for us, yet the temptation is always there.

Also in using wealth as an indicator of esteem (rich=good), well being, fulfilment, success or happiness would mean that the USA is the happiest place on earth, Japan next, then Germany, the UK and so on and so on, and worth the most as human beings. The other side of the coin of course using this measure means that the populations of most of the rest of the world are progressively more and more miserable, and more and more worthless. Bhutan is an absolute failure using this measure and will always be an absolute failure using this measure, never being able to match anyone in the monetary success stakes, so does this mean that they are intrinsically failures, will always be failures and must be miserable? In terms of happiness - well being - a difficult thing to measure in any situation the people generally don't appear to be any less happy than anyone else.

I don't want to suggest that economic success or money are bad things in themselves. They are not. Money would certainly benefit the people of Bhutan immensely - but I am suggesting (as the king of Bhutan is suggesting) that it is not the *only* factor in measuring well being - something perhaps that the developed world is losing sight of. In the oft misquoted verse from the Bible it is *not* "money" that is the root of all evil it is the "love" of money that is the root of all evil -a profound difference. Money is a tool, not our God.

There is an old joke that "money can't buy you happiness but at least you can be miserable in comfort" and there is much truth in that. But where does our misery come from? In part I would say from seeing everything, and everyone, in terms of monetary value, economic advantage or disadvantage, of gain or loss, and thus seeing life solely as a competition to be won and our fellow human beings as our competitors. This misses the God given worth of everyone made in the image of God, and that true happiness (peace?) depends on the quality of our relationships with each other and with God.

This lovely **prayer for today** is here not just because it is from India - a historically poor country on the verge of becoming an economic power house but because it speaks about the human potential and gifts of any country and the overwhelming theme is one of thankfulness and finding fulfilment in Christ.

*Father in heaven, we give you thanks for life,
and the experience life gives us.*

We thank you for our joys, sorrows, trials, failures, and triumphs.

Above all we thank you for the hope we have in Christ that we shall find fulfilment in Him.

We praise you for our country, its beauty, its riches it has for us, and the gifts it showers on us.

*We thank you for your peoples, the gift of languages we speak,
the variety of races we have, the cultural heritage we cherish, and the latent possibilities*

there are for our country to be great.

Grant that we accept these gifts with thankfulness, and use them for the good of the human race,

and to bring glory to you.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Love and peace

Martin