

COR Newsletter – 17 December 2008

Dear all,

Ding dong merrily on high.....

Sofia

It may still officially be advent but Christmas came early in Sofia, and we are now firmly in the Christmas spirit. We held a **dinner party** in the British Ambassador's residence on Saturday evening, courtesy of Steve and Fiona Williams. Sunday Morning we held the monthly **Eucharist**, hearing Isaiah 61, which Jesus quotes from in Luke 4, and then in the evening we were back in the Ambassador's residence for a lovely **carol service**. Children read all the readings, we heard traditional Bulgarian Orthodox music from a wonderful choir and sang carols - an event that drew 90 people. Silent night was sung in English, Bulgarian and German. At the closing collection 700 Leva was raised for a local charity. As ever we must thank Jonathan and Gino for all their hard work, the children of course and Steve and Fiona for all their gracious assistance. Our prayers were also with absent friends in various far flung parts of the globe.

Bucharest

I have heard from both Alison and Lillah and hear that the **Nativity Play** was simply wonderful. I was sad to miss it obviously but will look forward to seeing all the photos. Thank you to all the children and special thanks to Frans and Hankie and to Dagmar and anyone else involved that helped to make this morning such a great event.

Skopje

Fr. Robin Fox visiting from Belgrade presided at their **Christingle** service. 15 people came to this young community in the catholic chapel and John Barker has sent me some photos that show an enthusiastic and happy collection of people. Let us continue to pray for this congregation, that they will grow in numbers and depth.

And don't forget the following.....

Wednesday the 17th December (Tonight) at 7pm - nine lessons and carols followed by mulled wine and mince pies provided by chez Marie"

Sunday morning - Advent 4 - Eucharist at 10am and in the evening at 6pm the Romanian carol concert which starts at 6pm.

Christmas eve - 11.30pm "midnight mass"

Christmas day - 10am - Holy Communion

The church Christmas party

This is on this **Saturday the 20th December at 43G Iancu Nicolae**. Entrance fee 50RON - children free. Drop me a line by email if you intend to come along so we can gauge numbers. See you there!

Bollards!!

No seriously - the promised bollards to keep cars away from the church have just appeared around the entrance of the church so probably went up on Monday, courtesy

of the Primaria. But in true Romanian fashion, yesterday morning a car was parked on the pavement between the new bollards and the church notice board!! How the owner got it in or will get it out I'm not sure. Nice to be back....

This may be just what you are looking for.....

1 Bedroom flat to rent, very close to the British Embassy.

Fully furnished, in excellent condition throughout, minimum rent: 6 months

Contact: Stan Platt 0744 541774 for details

Thought for the day

I've just put a skylight in my ceiling.

The people who live upstairs are furious. (Steven Wright - US comedian)

"I'm in a funny mood..... I do hope it lasts" (RIP Frankie Howard)

"Infamy, infamy.....they've all got it in for me" (Kenneth Williams in Carry on Cleo - recently voted the funniest line ever in British cinema)

Does God have a sense of humour? I do hope so - I don't think I could face eternity without a good laugh. Where on earth do we get these images from of a heaven filled with earnest dull golden locked cherubs plucking harps sitting on clouds? Probably the same place we get horned devils with tridents stoking furnaces I suppose.

I hope that humour persists in heaven, otherwise the Germans will have the place to themselves and the British will be warming their feet elsewhere. Only joking. Sorry to sound facetious - if anyone wants a serious discussion on heaven - see me after Christmas.

I have a series of around thirty images of Christ culled from around the world. They include the profound, the harrowing, black Christs, Indian Christs, Christ as a wanted outlaw, a female Christ, Christ as Che Guevara, Christ in Hindu garb, but the one that seems to consistently provoke the most reaction is usually the "laughing Christ" from South America. We really do find it difficult to relate to a Christ enjoying the moment, the ridiculous situation, the laugh out loud joke, a funny remark. I'm not a psychologist, but I wonder why this is?

We are about to celebrate in the Christian year the time when God became "fully" human. If he is fully human surely that must include a sense of humour, or do we suppose that laughing is sinful and unbecoming to the Son of God?

Laughter is strong medicine. It is hard to hate someone you have laughed with - because in shared laughter you have established a connection. I cannot believe that Jesus never joked or smiled or laughed - that to me would be less than fully human. Part of being human is sensing the ridiculousness of ourselves and our predicament - Self depreciating humility rather than po-faced pride. Surely Jesus perceived that?

A long overdue slice of Adrian Plass from a skit called "Books" which was written to be presented to a church on the Sunday before Christmas and seeks in a humorous way to poke fun at the tendency of Christians to try and find final solutions in the printed word rather than the person of Jesus.

Everything's in paperback

All you need to know,

little gems of cosmic truth

at fifty bob a throw.
We cover every subject
from repentance to the pill,
If no one's done a book on it
we'll find someone who will.
The formula's a piece of cake
it always seems to work
I'm good and happy nowadays
I used to be a berk.
This one says "seek unity"
from heart to heart should speak
And this one deals with other faiths
and why they're up the creek.
And if you fear old Martin Jacques
is stringing you along
Well this one claims he could be right
and these five prove he's wrong.
Here's a book that frowns on drink
but tells you how to search
for pubs that don't get visited
by people from the church.
Books for Sunday, books for Monday
Books for North and South
Books that tell you when to speak
and when to shut your mouth
Books that don't say very much
and books that say a lot
books that say the church is dead
and books that say its not.
Books on love and books on praise
and lots of books on prayer.
Books on how to eat and sleep
and how to wash your hair.
Books on life and death and piles
and drains and constipation
One on how to tell yourself
you don't like fornication.
Books on washing Christian shirts
and treating Christian 'flu
On how to shut the Christian door
and flush the Christian loo.
Books on sinners, books on saints
con-men, cads and crooks
Books on everything in sight
there's even books on books.
Jesus? Well he's not in stock
I'll get him - well I'll try
But is he fact or fiction?
And who's he published by?
I've got a book about him

**or a pamphlet or a tract
He may be here for all I know
this box is still unpacked.**

**No thank you, Mr Booker sir,
Despite your verbal sprint
I don't believe I'll find him here
Perhaps he's out of print.**

The **Prayer for today** is by Hugh Dickinson that sees God's blessings in every facet of life - including I'm glad to say, laughter.

*Lord of all blessing
As we walk about your world
Let us know ourselves blessed at every turn;
Blessed in the Autumnal sun and leaves;
Blessed in the winter wind;
Blessed in the rain and shafts of sunlight;
Blessed in the moving stars;
Blessed in the turning of the world beneath our feet;
Blessed in silence;
Blessed in sleep;
Blessed in our children, our parents and our friends;
Blessed in conversation and the human voice;
Blessed in waiting for the bus, or train, or traffic lights;
Blessed in music, blessed in singing voices,
Blessed in the song of birds;
Blessed in the cry that pierces the heart;
Blessed in the smile of strangers;
Blessed in the touch of love, blessed in laughter;
Blessed in pain, in darkness, in grief;
Blessed in the desert and the frost;
Blessed in waiting for the spring;
Blessed in waiting, and waiting, and waiting
Lord of all blessing, we bless you.
Amen.*

Love and peace

Martin