

COR Newsletter – 14 January 2009

Dear all,

### **Last Sunday in Bucharest**

You might be sorry that your holidays are over but I can assure you that the church is glad that you are back! After a couple of meagre weeks we were treated to a pleasantly full church. It is especially good to have all the children back - it was very quiet without you. There were ten children back into Sunday school. Visitors are also turning up and we welcomed a group of psychology students from Ohio state in the USA (I AM mad apparently). We talked about the baptism of Christ and our own baptisms. Should there be a sign of authenticity as Luke implies, such as speaking in tongues? Without going through the whole sermon again - I will state that the only sign of authenticity that matters is LOVE. Read 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3. I will though repeat the view of my training vicar Brian (recovering from a heart attack) about charismatic gifts generally. "They are like cream on top of a pudding. The cream can add something to the pudding but the pudding is perfectly wholesome and filling on its own. The cream without the pudding though is sickly and insubstantial!" For me the pudding is LOVE.

### **Next Sunday**

Snow permitting I will be driving to **Sofia** to celebrate the Eucharist with our growing congregation in the Bulgarian capital. Therefore, there will be a service of **Morning Prayer in Bucharest with Sunday school at 10am.**

### **The week of prayer for Christian unity**

is almost upon us, but with a special little twist this year!

I was at an ecumenical meeting yesterday which decided that the very last service of the week which runs from the 18th - 25th January - that is.... **the service on Sunday 25th January at 4pm..... will be hosted at our church.** This is quite a change as the opening and closing service are usually at the Orthodox Patriarchate and/or St. Joseph's catholic cathedral. We will also be expected to provide light snacks and wine and juice after the service.

Traditionally the services have been full, and usually include Orthodox Bishops and the Roman Catholic Archbishop as well as the representatives of all the other denominations and starts with a procession into the church. Quite a colourful occasion with the Knights Templars in white cloaks usually present as well. The Hungarian reformed pastor will preach.

For info. here is the whole programme - location and preacher: All start at 4pm

19th Jan. Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate (RC preaching)

20th Jan. Armenian church (Greek catholic preacher)

21st Jan. German Lutheran (Armenian preacher)

22nd Jan. Greek Catholics (Orthodox preacher)

23rd Jan. Hungarian Calvinists (I'm preaching)

24th Jan. RC cathedral (Lutheran preacher)

25th Jan. The Anglican church (Calvinist preacher)

**The BRITANNIA BALL.**

Poster attached. This will become normal for the next few weeks. We NEED bookings, we NEED auction prizes, we NEED raffle prizes. In the immortal (if slightly amended) words of JFK. "Ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church"

### **Coincidence or God-incidence?**

Last week I concluded with a lovely prayer by Vienna Cobb Anderson, without having a clue who he or she was! I received a lovely email from a dear old friend of this church, Dennis, now back in Washington DC who tells me that Vienna (she) was his spiritual director for some years in Washington and wondering how on earth I got hold of it? Well Dennis, it was included in a compendium of prayers that was given to all ordinands at our ordinations in Canterbury diocese and simply called "the SPCK book of Christian prayer".

### **It's a boy!!**

Congratulations to Gino and Mira in Sofia. We have been waiting with great anticipation for news that just came through this morning. Love to all.

### **Rest in peace**

I also heard this morning that Pat Bevin died yesterday surrounded by her loving family. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

### **Thought for the day**

#### **What is a blessing?**

I ended Sunday's sermon with the hope that every single person there would hear those words spoken to Jesus being spoken to them. "You are my child, the beloved, with you I am well pleased", and said that the motivation to let others hear those words spoken to them was the entire reason for my being in ministry. After church it dawned on me where I had heard and read this first (there is nothing new under the sun - Ecclesiastes). There are certain people and their books that are so important, pivotal and life changing they become a part of you, and over the years I have shared some of them - Harry Williams CR being one of them. I can't remember if I have ever mentioned this one, but it is lodged so deep inside me that as I say, it has become a part of me, and my Christianity. It is called "Against an infinite horizon" by a Roman catholic priest called Ronald Rolheiser. I found it and thumbed through it and there on page 19.....*"Several years ago, I preached a sermon on the baptism of Christ within which I remarked that the words that God speaks over Jesus at his baptism "This is my beloved child in whom I take delight" are words that God daily speaks over us....."*

This was also at the forefront of my mind because in a very recent conversation it was noted that a lot of Romanians actually have a low opinion of themselves and their country, a feeling of low self esteem that colours so much of what we see and hear on a daily basis. They feel, in common with a lot of western people actually that nobody has ever been pleased or delighted with them. Nobody has ever taken delight in anything they have done. In short they have never been BLESSED.

Ronald explains what a blessing is like this: To bless someone is, through some word, gesture or ritual, to make him or her aware of *three* things, 1) the goodness of the original creation, where after making the earth and humans, God said that it was good, *very* good. 2) that God experiences the same delight and pleasure in him or her that he experienced with Jesus at his baptism when he said "This is my beloved child in

whom I take delight" and 3) That we who are giving the blessing also recognise that goodness and take delight in him or her.

So in every ritual blessing that a priest gives at the end of a service what he or she is saying is this, "As we leave this celebration, let us feel deeply and take with us the deep truth that we, the world, and our lives are good, very good. There is no need to live in guilt or depression. We are despite our faults, very good and delightful to God. Let us therefore take delight in each other and ourselves. We are after all, extremely pleasing to God"

To be unblessed is to be bleeding in a very deep place. So much of our sadness comes from the fact that nobody has ever taken delight and pleasure in us in a non exploitative way. When has ever made you the object of delight? When has anyone ever taken, in a non exploitative way delight in your body, your beauty, your person? When have you last felt that you are someone in whom others, and God, taken delight?

How many of us live life in the joy, confidence and grace that comes from knowing that they are people in whom God and people take delight? How many more of us live depressed, bleeding, less than whole, unconfident lives, going through life without a sense of its goodness or our own goodness?

The bible says that the spirit descended *in bodily form* and said "this is my beloved child, in him I take delight".

We, as Christians need to give *bodily form* to this blessing. We need daily within our families and relationships in general to do and say things that help people around us to believe that life is good, that their lives are good, that they are good and that we and God look on them with great pleasure and delight. This is what a BLESSING is. This is what it means to BLESS.

The **prayer for today** is by Judah Halebi.

*Lord, where shall I find you?  
High and hidden is your place.  
And where shall I not find you?  
The world is full of your glory.  
I have sought your nearness,  
with all my heart I called you  
and in going out to meet you  
I found you coming in to meet me.*

Love and peace

Martin