

Fr Hoyal Writes

God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son. *Hebrews 1.1 (from BCP Epistle for Christmas Day)*

People think God is remote and silent, so silent that they doubt his existence. Certainly, God does not bawl and shout, he is not shrill and strident, he doesn't force us to listen, he doesn't make us obey. He doesn't even make us believe in him.

But he does speak to us. Listen, and those with ears to hear will receive his word. God speaks in many ways, in fact.

For many people God speaks through the wonder of the created order. Don't the beauty and brilliance of creation give us clues about the creator, just as paintings can reveal something about the artist?

As the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us, God certainly speaks from time to time through the lives and teachings of great human souls, prophets if you like – individuals of religious sensitivity and prophetic vision. They challenge us, and they inspire; they raise our sights, they help us come alive spiritually.

Also many of us are individually aware of that quiet but insistent voice within, the inner moral prompting which tells us, "Yes, that is good, go ahead," or "No, think again, that wouldn't be right." So does God speak to us through our consciences?

Again, we've all known people of goodness and integrity, people with a compelling down-to-earth holiness that tells us they live close to God. The testimony of their lives speaks to us of God.

In times past and present, and in ways such as these, God has spoken to our ancestors, and he continues to do so with us. But we are very good at blocking out the message or sidelining it. That is why God chooses to go further.

God is good and generous and exuberant and loving. It is in his nature to want to express himself, to communicate himself, to share himself with the creation he has brought into being so that we can enjoy something of his own amazing divine life.

Al too often the lives and words of saints and prophets have failed to touch us with God's presence as they should, and we've been stubbornly deaf to the inner word of conscience too.

That's why it was almost inevitable that, sooner or later, God would humbly choose to reveal himself in a personal way, and at a level we can really understand. And that is why in these last days – that is, in our own era – God has spoken to us in his Son.

Very shortly we shall be celebrating because 2007 years or so ago at Bethlehem in Palestine the Logos himself as we say - the Mind of God reaching out, the Word of God, God communicating his inmost being and reality, God the Word - expressed himself most fully in the human reality of the Christ Child.

At Bethlehem, the Word that at the beginning already was, the Word that was with God, the Word that was God, the Word through whom all things have their being – at Bethlehem, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. At Bethlehem God spoke to us in the most compelling human language possible; he spoke to us in his own dear Son. You can't get more personal than that.

Jesus is not a list of rules and regulations, he's not a complex theory or a high-falutin' concept, he's not a set of complicated equations or a fearsome moral code, he's not tablets of stone, or a book, or a supercomputer.

He is the Word made flesh – God lovingly embracing our humanity, God relating to us in a truly personal, truly human way so that we can really understand, really be moved, and really respond.

That child is the Word of God. It is futile to argue with an infant, especially an infant who is God made flesh. We can only marvel and adore. And, come Christmas, that is precisely what we must do.

With prayers for a Holy and Happy Festival,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Hoyle".

A Night at the Shelter

Deep in the centre of Bristol stands a warehouse where something quite remarkable happens every night. Well strictly speaking actually not every night; sometimes due to a shortage of volunteers the only 16 free beds in Bristol for the needy are not available. I suppose this is what motivated me to say I would do an overnight. I also knew when doing an evening shift just how upset the guests get when we have to feed them at the back door, and can't offer them a bed.

As the evening shift draws to a close those guests who are not going to stay the night depart with varying degrees of enthusiasm, much depends on the weather, and on my first night I was lucky it was dry and relatively warm. Those who stay look forward to a shower, good nights sleep and clean clothes in the morning.

Being used to doing an evening shift, generally behind the counter serving, I was sure that dealing with the guests face to face was going to test my interpersonal skills, and yes I was right. Strangely I did not feel as vulnerable as I thought I might, mind you even a "Martha" is allowed to ask for divine help.

Armed with their wash kits and towels off they go to the showers which have just been unlocked.

Hey the showers are cold!!! “Oh not again” says Vera “we have called the engineers, sorry boys, you’ll just have to get on with it.” They accept this with relatively good humour even a cold shower is better than none at all.

Requests for clean underpants, socks etc. roll in and I am diverted from taking in the washing, a task which requires a strong stomach and a pair of latex gloves. *“Remember Chris write down each item carefully or there is hell on in the morning if they don’t get the right clothes back”* Vera warns as she hands out the blankets. They were so grateful that we care and they pranced around in their PJs like little boys, there was a lot of good humour. *“Lights down boys in 5 mins “was the call!*

One rather clean lad asked if I could keep his shoes, mobile phone and mp3 player safe, it was obvious he had a job. *“What are you doing here?” “ I usually stay at the back packers hostel but I lost all my money in the casino , Its my first time down here” “Well why don’t you try and make it your last”* I wonder as I walk away how many more gamblers we will get?

They are reminded yet again that there is no smoking and the lights go off for the night. Vera and I retreat to the laundry room to get the washers going, while Amy the other volunteer goes off to bed for a sleep and we get on with the tidying up, washing and drying of the clothes and the floor.

They are short of a cleaning team on Wednesday so all the committee members have elected to do extra cleaning on an over night so Vera takes to cleaning the kitchen floor.

I get the breakfast things ready out for the early start 6.30-7.30. Just like being at work really.

Before I know where we are its 3.00 am and time to go and have a nap, I snuggle down gratefully for a few hours and have no trouble sleeping.

Morning starts with a knock at the door and after some basic ablutions; it's a very dozy Chris which opens the hatch up at 6.30 for breakfast. The clean clothes are out in their bags, the toast is put on and the porridge is in the microwave. I'm not sure who looks most wrecked the guests or me; thank goodness we don't have mirrors in the place. The pleasure on their faces when they put on their clean clothes gives me a warm glow of satisfaction. So you see it is not true altruism. Then it is time for them to go so we again can clear away and lock up. My bed and breakfast are calling me.

"I hope the day is good to you" I say as they are asked to leave, mind you I not sure this will be such an easy task when it is cold and raining but today the sun is shining, they have clean clothes and food inside them and many of them are desperate for a smoke.

LET'S CELEBRATE

Put on your dancing shoes and
dance in the New Year

7.30 pm – 1 am
Monday 31st December
At
Redcliffe Bay Hall

Music styles to include:
Rock and Roll and Ballroom
A demonstration of Breton dancing
And Ceilidh (barn dancing) to be called by Chris

LIGHT SUPPER PROVIDED –
BRING YOUR OWN DRINKS

Tickets £5 – Proceeds to Julian Trust

Tickets available from:
Chris Paul – 01275 844070
Sue Tassell – 01275 818332

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AWAKE! LISTEN! REPENT!

*‘ADVENT
VOICES’*

COME! PREPARE! REJOICE!

**CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF
MUSIC & READINGS FOR
ADVENT SUNDAY
6.00 pm 2 DECEMBER**



**FEAST OF
THE CONCEPTION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
12.00 NOON
SATURDAY 8 DECEMBER**

**CONCELEBRATED
FESTIVAL MASS**

C of E Catholic Societies attending

Sermon Fr Andre Hart

Vicar of Westbury-on-Trym

All most welcome. Wine and Refreshments afterwards



***ALL SAINTS CHILDREN'S EPIPHANY
PARTY***

Our ever popular children's party is at 3 pm Saturday 12 January in the parish room, preceded by short Epiphany Celebration in church. If you would like an invitation for your child, or would be willing to help with preparations or on the day, please contact Frances Perkins 0117 9735865. Our warmest thanks to Mothers' Union members for making this splendid occasion possible.

LOVINIA MILLER Church members will be saddened by the news of Lovinia's death, following a short illness. Lovinia's Funeral Mass will be at All Saints Margaret Street in central London on Saturday 8 December at 3 pm. We hope to arrange a coach from Bristol.

IN THIS MONTH...DECEMBER 1966

Two excerpts from the Vicar's (Fr A H Luetchford's) Parish Notes

Ordinands

We are privileged to have no fewer than six of our men among their number. Robert Yeomans and Stuart Morris are at Kings' College Warminster; Martin Jarrett is at King's College London; David Herbert is at St Stephen's House Oxford; *John Morley-Bunker* is preparing to go to Wells Theological College next summer; Edward Gibbens with a late vocation has been accepted by the Bishop for an auxiliary ministry at Manor Park Hospital in the Parish of St Mary Fishponds. He is to be made Deacon at the Advent Ordination in the Cathedral on Sunday 18th December. Do give thanks to God for these men and pray regularly for them as they offer their lives to serve in the Sacred Ministry.

Rebuilding

Good progress has been made with the new church and we can but admire the skill with which the men have produced so interesting a building. We would like to pay tribute to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, who have taken great pains on our behalf to see that all will be worthy of God's house. A small committee has been set up

to make plans to ensure that the great event of the church's consecration shall make a real impact upon all who live in the parish.

MCW's notes

23/10/7 You may address me as Wee Willie Winkie, though skip the nightcap and nightgown – unless the nightcap is the traditional adult style. I found two distressed phone calls on the voicemail, telling me that the lights had blown on the stairs and in the kitchen. Intrepid as ever, I went and checked. Yes, Blackout Bristol had struck ASC a week early. Nothing had tripped in the Tower. So where could the trip switch be? To the delight of the Sacristy, I got the Sunday School candle, lit it and set off upstairs. No sign of a Phuse Box. So I rang the Warden Emeritus. It was all a bit garbled, as his 'phone was on Very Soft and I kept entering cupboards, but he talked me down, as they say, into the depths of the store cupboard, and I threw the switch. Fiat lux.

When Latin has finally been done to death, I wonder what people will make of a saying that greets switching a light on with 'Small Italian motor car washing powder'?

The heating programme has got as far as electrical work. We progress.

26/10/7 Fiat calor as well. We have no fans yet, and the electricians are vestigial, but a test run is allowing us background heating this weekend. A portent. But still a long electrical road to follow ... What I cannot account for is the haze (no incense

has been employed since last Sunday) and the attendant smell of Parmesan cheese.

27/10/7 'Grond rolled on'. Or possibly, pinning the tail on the serpent, depending on whether you go for Tolkien or children's games with a hint of Revelation. It's My Colleague, of course. Give him a roll of gaffa tape, 2 fascas of garden canes and a woolly duster, and what do you get? A huge long flexible black ringed snake. The anti-cobweb device to end them all. Leaping over the High Altar it ran up the wall, until gravity overcame it and it threatened to crash downwards and devour its minions. Then we dealt with the Piper windows in the Baptistery. Less room for manoeuvre. I was Tail End Charlie. We took out two Buddhist monks, an Ikea lamp and a flower arranger. After that I removed Our Wands to a place of safety. The cheers when Grond's head actually hit the ceiling!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Meanwhile, at ground level, Henry and the Dyson ate everything we dislodged, and more. It was fun, and I only have one very small hole in my right hand. Anyone caught running its finger along a shiny surface, looking for dust

28/10/7 Nearly warm enough to take my coat off, but not quite. Nearly **safe** enough for Father Imperial Storm Trooper to take his crash helmet off, but no, in the presence of All Saints Young he needs his protective gear. (I just rely on personality. And bribery.) Earlier it would have been a clash helmet. The pink cincture, with 8" fringe, and the scarlet buttoned hassock. Over this, a cotta. Over the cotta, a scarlet stole with a 6" fringe, just *kissing* its fuchsia counterpart... There was gold thread in the equation too. If this is in honour of SS Simon and Jude, ASS and Christmas will be spectacular.

While I remember, who fancies a trip to Prague?

29/10/7 No pleasing some people. Lovely Autumn day, but COLD. Fr Recorder arrives for Mass, enthusing about the light morning. Yes, I say brightly, and we have heating as well. Heating!!! Shock, horror! and the window of the Lady Chapel is flung wide to dissipate the noxious fumes. Don't know why I bother.

1/11/7 Patronal Festival, with Confirmation on the side. Father Bishop is an incense enthusiast ('Oh look, a smoking handbag') and I was glad I had mentioned gently ('You will die') to the Head Server and Thurifer, that loading up the smoke under the smoke detector was asking for trouble. We certainly had three spoons for the Trinity, one for the Saints and one for Our Lady, before the fumes overpowered me and I lost count. My Colleague and I were of course present in order to protect/control Father + with our Wands. I wore an Episcopal purple tank top to blend into the background, but achieved a Clerical Clash with my red wand and the pastoral Episcopal pink which was still in favour. I also wore pink sox, but a quick comparison in the atrium showed that Fr Bishop out pinked me there too. Everything went ever so well, except for the Curse of the Fatima Chasuble. It's very beautiful, but with that quantity of gold wire on its orphrey, the microphones didn't stand a chance. This was emphasised on

4/11/7 All Saints Sunday, when even Father-Owner-of-the-Fatima-Chasuble had to keep his chin at an angle of 180 degrees to avoid cutting out. Shame.

There is a new St in the calendar, St Power Ranger. You learn all sorts at the 9 30.

I'M SORRY IT'S SO HOT. BUT COME JANUARY YOU WILL THANK ME.*

For once St Paul spoke truth unto me. One morning last week, we had a chunk of Romans 12, about gifts and grace. Prophecy, no, preaching, certainly not, but listen, 'If your gift is administration, then use it for administration'. So next time you see me bawling out some hapless plumber, I'm using my gift!

18/11/7 The Baptism Bonanza. Congratulations all round, and thank you very much, Charles and Isobel, for the evidence that the family tradition of hospitality will endure.

23/11/7 * Actually, it already feels a good bit less like a glass house, possibly because of the thick frost. Most of the heaters now have their fans installed, and we await the Control Panel.

My fellow warden and I spent a happy morning talking to prospective architects: knowledgeable peetle who will lead us through the Quinquennial. Arising from the first interview, we may have been observed taking an unhealthy interest in the roof – you know, crossing Pembroke Road and pointing earnestly to Heaven. This had nothing to do with concern over cracked slates or soggy masonry or such. We were exercised over the lighting. But, I hear you say, the lighting is inside. True, dear Fiends, true. But a whole load of the light bulbs have to be changed from outside. Up a ladder, up the slate roof via a rope handrail, up to the window. Open the window, and then we understand, haul the lights to the window, change the bulbs and Bob's your uncle. I commented, in my innocence, that it seemed strange that Mr Potter had worked out the clever system of pulleys for the lights, but had left the worker to clamber as best she might over the rooftops. My Colleague replied, robustly, Think what it would have been like in Medieval times. Yebbut, I said, in those days Peasants were regarded as expendable. Still, if you feel minded to tangle with

the Wardens, remember that we now have the power of Trial by Light Bulb. And then we have the Spire. But that's another story.

24/11/7 12 noon Low Mass at the High Altar. Three Bell Badman went wild, lined up the Single Brass, the Quadruple Silver, and the Push Button Electric. She was ever so happy.

Seems a bit early to wish you all a Happy Christmas, but I do, heartily. Any volunteers to shin up the roof and decorate the ceiling with fairy lights? Think what we could achieve with a trapeze!?!