

FR HOYAL WRITES

Engage - Enjoy - Encourage

A good many have been working hard in preparation for our festival this month celebrating our 140th anniversary.

Even before the launch I am sure we all want to recognize the commitment and contributions making this major initiative possible, and to express our warmest thanks to those who are doing so much on our behalf. And it is not too late to offer help – do add your name to the lists in church if you can assist in some way.

In the programme are elements to attract and engage a wide range of people – worship, music, meals, receptions, exhibitions and displays, children’s events. We have specifically sought to contact and provide for those in the wider community as well as for existing All Saints friends and regulars.

It is felicitous that the festival week includes Bristol Doors Open Day, for our festival is a very much an All Saints Doors Open Week.

We are fortunate in being able to keep our church doors open for much of the time. But the festival blesses us with opportunities for reaching out and welcoming in with much more profile, and more provision for guests and visitors, than is usually possible.

Do take advantage of all that is on offer. Do see you play your part in ensuring that all we are doing is underpinned by prayer as we celebrate All Saints past, present and future. But not least, do commend and invite, do promote and encourage. Do be around to welcome and befriend, keeping in mind those challenging words: They will know we are Christians by our love.

Please God, it will be so as from our hearts we celebrate Christ our past, Christ our present, Christ our future, with faith and thanksgiving.

Neil and Tony

ALPHA AT ALL HALLOWS EASTON

No doubt many of you will remember the Lent Course on Tuesday evenings at All Saints' this year, based upon the suggested areas for consideration in the Diocesan Growth Plan. At All Hallows' we had a similar exercise, and one of the suggestions to emerge was an *Alpha* course. As most of you will know, *Alpha* is a tried and tested introduction to the Christian faith, endorsed and used by all denominations. There is a good supply of resources to get us going, and we are planning to run the course on ten Thursday evenings, starting at 7.30, from 25th September. The format of the evening is a meal, followed by a talk, followed by coffee and discussion on what we have heard. The evening finishes by 9.30.

Anyone is welcome on an *Alpha* course and people attend for a wide variety of reasons. Some want to investigate whether God exists and whether there is any point to life. Others are concerned about what happens after death. Still others may have attended church on and off all their lives but feel they have never understood the basics of the Christian faith. *Alpha* is free, though guests are invited to make a contribution towards the cost of the food. There is also a Day Away at Trinity College on Saturday 25th October.

If you are interested in coming down to Easton to join us for this venture, then please have a word with Father Richard or with Jessica Smith. We should be very glad to have support from All Saints'. If you feel you have what it takes to be a Leader, (essentially a kindly welcoming presence at table and a facilitator during discussion time), then let us know about that too. You would be asked to come along the previous week, 18th September, for some modest training. You are not expected to be experts in the Faith or to be able to answer difficult questions, just to move the discussion along and see that people are engaged. If you feel more drawn to practical help – mainly centred around the food – then that, too, will be most welcome. However you choose to be involved, you are most welcome!

*Jessica Smith,
Lay Minister in both Parishes*

Sermon preached by Fr Brendan Clover on the Feast of the Assumption 2008

I'm making an assumption tonight – forgive the pun - that you are here on Mary's Feast because you love her, and hold her in honour, and believe with all your heart that God took her to himself in a special and unique way when she died. I certainly do all that. That's why I am here. 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women'.

From the vantage point of her falling asleep and being taken by God body and soul into the glory of heaven to be placed at her Son's right hand, as we look back over her life, we should acknowledge that the most remarkable thing she ever said occurs in the Gospel of Luke. After her cross-questioning the Archangel (a thing remarkable in itself) she utters the words – '*Be it unto me according to thy will.*'

Looking back at that moment, and conscious of all the Gospel scenes that flow from it, there's one question I think we cannot help asking:

What if she had said 'no'?

What if her reply to the announcement of the Archangel had not been 'let it be it unto me according to your word' but 'buzz off!'

What if she'd been too busy; or too conventional; or too afraid? There were a hundred ways to get out of it: 'It's market day'; 'I'm not that sort of a girl'; 'It's the wrong time of the month.'

For a fleeting moment that consequences of saying 'yes' did flash before her; the stranger saw the fear and panic in her eyes and hasten to reassure her. 'Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favour with God.'

Well God's favour was one thing: an important thing I'm sure and thank you very much; but I've got to go on living in this community, with these particular neighbours, in this one tight-knit, traditional, hard-working peasant village. I'm not sure that saying 'yes' to you will find favour with them.

And the shape that God's favour would take? To be the Mother of God's Son. The joy of a Jewish woman's heart was to be a mother: to put off the shame of virginity or sterility and join the matriarchal throng; responsible for the continuation and nurturing of the covenant people of God. But what sour joy – to be an unmarried mother in a Jewish village; more degraded and ostracizing than simply being an unmarried virgin. Double, double shame.

So what if she had said 'no'?

No one would have blamed her; in her position we would have done the same. And although Christian iconography has persuaded us that this particular woman was God's only choice, it is possible that the stranger had knocked on several doors first before he found someone prepared to say 'yes'. After all God's plans have been thwarted by men and women – even highly favourable ones – saying 'no' before. Perhaps in this Mary the barrel was being scrapped and God really was exalting the humble from their low estate.

So what if she had said 'no'?

All heaven held it's breath as God's mighty plan for the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ hung upon the 'yes' or 'no' of a slip of a thing from Nazareth. That perhaps is the most remarkable thing about this whole episode: that all the divine eggs were put in this one highly vulnerable basket.

I suppose there might have been a contingency plan but nothing could ever change the fact that God tethers himself and his good purposes for the world to the 'yes' or 'no' of the beautiful creatures he has created in his image and likeness. Their cooperation, their participation, their freely given yes to him was a crucial and indispensable ingredient in whatever redemptive plans the great God might have. And if you read the Old Testament you will see how his plans were thwarted by human no's time and time again.

So what is she had said 'no'?

She had no choice. When your vocation and calling is held so tangibly before your eyes in the end you have to say 'yes'. But on another level she had all the choice in the world; she could have said 'no' or 'I'll let you know' or 'perhaps'. She saw something however fleetingly of the consequences of saying 'yes' but when the angel and

the girl are met, when the moment comes, there is no possibility of saying ‘no’ for either of them.

And while all this is going on people outside are getting on with their lives, the day goes on like every other day, work and play, eating and drinking, living and dying.

And the chance for us to say yes or no too comes to us in the everyday. God asks us to do His will in the places we inhabit. And he does it when the warm glow inside has gone, and the day is upon us with all the demands of work and family and friends. The story of this woman saying a heartfelt yes is not simply a tale of two thousand years ago for us to embellish and gaze at like some old master and turn away: it is the most relevant story for us today: just outside God waits. The question is not what if she had said ‘no’, but what if we say ‘no’?

Or more importantly what if we say ‘yes’? The events of Our Lady’s life, looking back, are events in the past. And yet every single day God encounters us, addresses us, discloses his love for us and longs for us to say ‘yes’, ‘Amen’, ‘Be it unto me according to thy will.’ The excuses will form on our lips but our saying yes would give God such great pleasure.

So on this day when heaven itself resounds with God’s ‘YES’ to Our Lady ask yourself if you would like to be in on the act.

FESTIVAL CALENDAR

Saturday 6 September

Theme: God's Blessing on our Festival / Overseas Mission

9.30 am on Making of Festival Banner

Young people - of all ages - invited to take part. Refreshments provided.

Ceremonial hanging at 12 noon

**12 noon Blessing of Banner followed by
Mass (said) for those wishing to stay**

4.00 pm EVE-OF-FESTIVAL CONCERT MATINEE

Ian Yemm Tenor with Andrew Wilson-Dickson Piano

Fauré La Bonne Chanson - Nine Songs on poems by Verlaine
Vaughan Williams Songs of Travel - words by Robert Louis Stevenson

Free admission Retiring Collection in aid of All Saints Afternoon Tea

Sunday 7 September

ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING SUNDAY

Theme: Celebrating the Faith / Thanksgiving for Founding of All Saints

8.00 am Mass (said)

9.30 am FAMILY SERVICE CELEBRATION
Half-hour family-friendly Festival Thanksgiving

11.00 am OPENING FESTIVAL MASS Fully
choral

The Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Mrs Mary Prior OBE, is kindly attending

Guest Preacher The Rt Revd Edwin Barnes, former Bishop of Richborough

Bishop Edwin is President of the Church Union. He was Bishop of Richborough from 1995-2002 and before that he was Principal of St Stephen's House in Oxford.

*Kyrie and Agnus Dei Monteverdi Mass Gloria Lourdes
Sanctus/Benedictus Darke Motet Locus iste-Bruckner Voluntary Widor -
Symphony No.6 (Finale)*

Lunch Celebration follows: Hogroast (vegetarian options) & live jazz – Ticket £5 (family ticket £15) from 0117 9741355 or allsaintsclifton@tiscali.co.uk or on the day. Wine kindly donated by Rodney King.

***6.00 pm FESTIVAL EVENSONG &
BENEDICTION Fully choral - augmented festival choir***

Guest Preacher The Ven Alan Hawker, Archdeacon of Malmesbury

*Canticles Dyson in F Responses Clucas Anthem O Thou the central Orb
– Wood Tantum Ergo Palestrina*

*Monday 8 September Birthday of the
Blessed Virgin Mary*

Theme: Thanksgiving for Our Lord's Mother / Local Businesses

7.30 am & 10.30 am Mass (said)

6.00 pm PARISH BUSINESSES RECEPTION

Wine and cheese as local business people enjoy the chance to meet in the inspiring surroundings of their local parish church. All welcome to bring business cards etc. The Lord Lieutenant is attending. For an invitation please contact Alan Rundle: 01275 374994 or alan@rundlebrownswood.com.

Tuesday 9 September

Theme: Founders and Former Members of All Saints / Our Loved Ones

7.00 pm Mass of Requiem (said)

A quiet opportunity to commemorate and pray for loved ones and all former worshippers and parishioners of All Saints. If there is someone you would like us to remember by name, please contact Fr Richard Hoyal 0117 9706776.

Wednesday 10 September

Theme: The World in Need / Local People with Difficulties

9.30 am Mass (said)

6.30 pm “ORGAN FIREWORKS”

Dazzling selection of popular organ works

MARK LEE Director of Music, Bristol Cathedral

Tickets (including glass of wine): Providence Music 0117 9276536 or sales@providencemusic.co.uk; or at the door

Programme to include: Pièce d'Orgue Bach Clair de Lune Vierne Praeludium in G Buxtehude Vater Unser Bohm War March of the Priests Mendelssohn arr Best Imperial March Elgar arr Martin Chanson de Matin Elgar arr Brewer

Thursday 11 September

Theme: Bristol City Council / Local Care & Health Services

7.30 am Mass (said)

Friday 12 September

Theme: Children and Young People / Our Schools & Colleges

10.00 am on “KINDERMUSIK” - Open Sessions

Popular weekly music-and-movement morning for infants and toddlers with their parents/carers. This is an open taster session for interested families and guests. Refreshments served during the morning. Details from Hannah Loach: 0117 9245455

10.30 am Mass (said)

7.30 pm VICTORIAN THEME FESTIVAL DINNER

Prepared by Canon Brendan Clover and Fr James Patrick of All Saints

Tickets (bring own wine) £7.50 - concessions £5 - from 0117 9741355 or allsaintsclifton@tiscali.co.uk

*Guest Speaker Jonathan Price, Director of Music,
Christ Church, Broad Street. Diners are invited to attend in Victorian dress.*

Saturday 13 September S John Chrysostom BpDr

Theme: Parish Outreach / Community in the City

Participating in Bristol DOORS OPEN DAY

*Children's activities from 10.00 am - Refreshments all day
from 10.00 am - Exhibition of rarely seen church treasures -
Exhibition of Victorian paintings*

12 noon **Mass (said)**

7.30 pm "SANCTUARY" CHRISTIAN FORSHAW

Haunting collaboration of saxophone, voices, church organ and percussion

"Simply glorious" Simon Bates, Classic FM

"Music with a heart-rending simplicity...very beautiful, very different" Sean Rafferty, BBC Radio 3

Christian Forshaw Saxophones Natalie Clifton-Griffith Soprano Alex Mason Church Organ Ian Cape Percussion The Sanctuary Voices directed by Nigel Short

Tickets: £15 (concessions £12, under 16s £1) are obtainable from Providence Music 0117 9276536 or sales@providencemusic.co.uk or at the door

Sunday 14 September HOLY CROSS DAY

Theme: Living the Faith / Lifting High the Cross

8.00 am **Mass (said)**

9.30 am FAMILY SERVICE CELEBRATION
Short family-friendly Festival Eucharist

11.00 am CLOSING FESTIVAL MASS

Fully choral

Guest Preacher Fr Alan Moses

Vicar of All Saints Margaret Street, London

Setting Darke in F Gloria Aston Most glorious Lord of life - Harris

This service marks the official inauguration of the parish's Growth Plan. Like all parishes in Bristol diocese, All Saints was recently asked to identify areas where we can work to promote growth in partnership, in influence, in numbers and in commitment. Drinks and celebration send-off afterwards.

IN THIS MONTH ... SEPTEMBER 1984

A letter to the Editor of the Parish Magazine.

SIR,

Regarding Stella Shute's plea for silence before Mass, I heartily endorse her comments, particularly the "clatter from the atrium".

I also find it disturbing to hear loud conversation before the service, which occurs frequently around me. I have always understood that the period before the commencement of a service was to allow participants to have a time of quiet for prayer, and to attune one's thoughts to the act of mystical communion. It is very difficult to do either when surrounded by constant noise.

I have attended various churches regularly all my life, and can truthfully say All Saints' is the noisiest I have known.

Might it be possible to keep the atrium doors closed until just prior to the entry of choir and clergy, and to remind all worshippers that

This is none other than the house of God?

I am sure no conversation is so important that it cannot wait until after the service.

A little co-operation all round would make the world of difference, and I am sure we should all benefit from a little more quietude within our church.

Margaret M. Garner

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FESTIVAL

These days the majority of my post consists of advertisements and charity bumf so I was delighted to receive the All Saints' Festival programme. We are semi-detached members of the congregation. Over twenty years ago we were regular worshipers and actually lived in the parish. Now we worship at All Saints, Wraxall, which is a rural church. But we still love our occasional enlivening visits to you.

To us the programme represents all that is so remarkable about All Saints', and it is with great relish that we are anticipating attending the various 'dos'. As a congregation, you are so fortunate in the quality of your priests and their skills. We have had the privilege of worshipping during the ministry of Father Norton, Jeremy Younger, Peter Cobb and now Richard Hoyal. All so different, but each bringing a prophetic vision, (an essential part surely), to their task of ministering to the diverse, and widely disparate needs of the congregations of All Saints' and All Hallows'.

Many congratulations to the planning group. Have fun and we hope to see long standing friends during the great week.

Carol Sapsed

Reflections

John Bradley

‘When you retire, would you like to come and look after my diocesan training centre?’ The flattering invitation came from Henry Orombi, then Bishop of Nebbi in Uganda. I didn’t take it up, not only because it didn’t sound much like retirement, but more because I didn’t think the bishop would approve of my approach to the Bible and much else. I don’t like labels but if someone were to call me a liberal catholic I wouldn’t deny it. It would be fair to describe Henry Orombi as a conservative evangelical. I believe evangelicals and catholics have much to learn from each other, and both bring their gifts to enrich our fellowship within the Anglican Communion. Our visits (in each direction) through the diocesan link have done much to deepen our understanding of each other and our shared mission.

The present crisis within Anglicanism has been brought to a head following the consecration of an openly homosexual man as bishop of New Hampshire. It led to the boycotting of the Lambeth Conference by about a third of the bishops in the Anglican Communion. They had an alternative conference in Jerusalem and one of their leading figures is Henry Orombi, now Archbishop of Uganda.

I first met Henry in 1985 when I was part of a Partners in Mission conference in Uganda. He was then Diocesan Youth Officer in the diocese of Madi and West Nile. He came to me and said ‘Other dioceses have a link with Bristol. Why don’t we?’ I told him they had a link, with the deanery of Westbury and Severnside. This was news to him, but he soon became a keen supporter of the link.

Another memory of him at that time is connected with a concern for human rights. The external partners at the conference were concerned about the way Milton Obote’s government were arresting and detaining whole villages alleged to be supporting the guerrillas in the bush led by Yoweri Museveni. There were disturbing reports of ill-treatment and torture. We wanted the conference to issue a statement expressing our concern. The then

archbishop, Yona Okoth, adamantly refused. He said it would be better if he had a quiet word with the president. (They had been to school together). So we formed a small sub-committee: Festo Kivengere (Bishop of Kigali), Dinis Sengulane, (Bishop of Lebombo in Mozambique), a priest from Tanzania called Simon, a bishop from California, Henry Orombi and myself. It took some courage for a young priest to defy his archbishop and his president. Our paper was issued as a statement from the External Partners.

I represented Bristol Diocese at his consecration and enthronement as first Bishop of Nebbi in 1993. It was then I shared for the first time in his Night Prayers. About 10 pm he would gather family, visitors, servants and other dependants in his sitting room and lead us in joyful prayer and praise. Henry would lead the singing and accompany us on ukulele or banjo. There were readings from the Bible and prayers and then we were all sent off to bed.

Henry has a passion for evangelism and great gifts in this area. He was often away, elsewhere in Uganda or abroad, conducting missions. Even as archbishop he will, after preaching, invite his hearers to come forward and give themselves to Jesus. He still has a great concern for young people. He once said to me he was very worried about the future of the Church of England. Why? ‘Because it’s so liberal - and there are so many grey hairs’.

In 2002 Rowan Williams told me he was going to visit Nebbi Diocese (which also has a link with Monmouth Diocese). I asked him to let me know how he got on. It was his first visit to Africa. He was overwhelmed by the welcome and the hospitality. I asked if he and Henry had any problems or unresolved differences in their discussions. ‘None at all.’ Soon afterwards the Archbishop of Wales became, reluctantly, Archbishop of Canterbury.

In 2003 Henry came to Bristol. We met for a time, just the two of us, in my sitting room. He was very much identified with Nebbi. I asked how he would react if he was chosen as the next Archbishop. ‘If I am chosen, it will be God’s will, and I will be

happy to go. If I am not chosen it will be God's will, and I will be happy to stay'.

He was chosen, and it seemed to me a positive thing that the new Archbishop of Canterbury and the new Archbishop of Uganda had forged bonds of understanding and friendship in their previous positions. It augured well for the future. Or so I thought.

To be continued

SUMMER FUN: the Gopher's eye view

We welcomed 11 children, with 6 parents, grandparents or carers plus a parishioner who came to enjoy the chocolate cake and the fun, and we had 14 hands on helpers plus Liz who arrived breathless with 2 new First Aid boxes and a chocolate cake. And believe me, we needed them all, especially the cake.

Three tables carried the music making equipment (Scrapstore tubes, beads, and general junk), smaller games (hoops, skipping ropes, Frisbees) and painting equipment (cardboard, ad hoc paint trays and squeezy paints). The atrium floor sported giant snakes and ladders, giant Jenga, Twister (I got three extremities on the circles and fell over), and two huge line drawings for painting. This was supervised by one of our gentle, caring and child friendly leaders ('Paint outside the lines and DIE' Taylor). Children of all ages lay on the floor, stuck their tongues out of the sides of their mouths in an excess of concentration and emulated Michelangelo. Credit must go especially to Miss Griffiths (the elder), Miss Benton and Chorister Trude.

Three more tables were arranged for name label making and consumption of food and drink, and staffed by welcomers. The piece of resistance was the Churchwardens' Memorial, number one problem in our risk assessment and therefore draped with green cricket netting adorned with luminous lace. This was to be the focal point of the treasure hunt and final story, at which time we discovered that the 'safety netting' easily transmogrified into the sort of stuff paratroopers swarm up.

By 11 am, the floor was awash with beads, the music making gear had produced two sea monsters, a megablaster and a lot of drums and rattles, so we emulated Psalm 150 and drowned out the organ with jigs and reels, led by our other loving leader ('You aren't playing LOUD enough' Bradley). The prize here goes to the recent Chair of the CYP Committee and doyenne of the Sunday School, who took a blue plastic container, three rubber bands and to our surprise and delight produced an arpeggio. Fuelled by tea, we played footer, with Charlie and Isobel defeating all comers, Jenga, skipping, hoops, Frisbee (basically, if we went into the garden it rained and if we stayed inside the sun came out, so we ignored the weather completely) and a new game called fetching the ball back off of the roof. And a Treasure Hunt, which everybody won, and a story with furry animals to feel to round off the day.

But for me, the cream of the day was opening the old Flower Room First Aid kit to make sure it contained nothing salvageable:
something unlabelled in plastic
short life triangular bandage, pins and tape needed but not supplied
extra large sterile unmedicated dressing (open at one end)
sterile wound dressing with bandage, and a diagram of the human knee to illustrate its use
eye pad
antiseptic wipe in yellowing foil

TCP, unused but faded as to the label
tincture of iodine, third of the bottle left
Savlon antiseptic cream in old style metal tube
SMELLING SALTS, in full working order and with a kick like a
mule

Anne

SERMON FOR 11am Mass 17 August 2008

Matthew 15:21-28 - The Canaanite Woman (see Mark 7:24-30 –
The Syro-Phoenician Woman)

Well, what a provocative and disconcerting gospel reading that we've just heard. Provocative? why? Well, Because of the situation and its outcome. Disconcerting? why? Because we see Jesus in a very human light, and are convinced of his true humanity.

I like this gospel reading for those very reasons. They make us think and shake us out of our cosy visions of Jesus, and dare I say, our cosy visions of ourselves. Some commentaries say that Jesus didn't really intend to insult the woman, he was just sparring with her. Others say that it was only a temporary refusal to heal her daughter, which it was in a way, but think of the effect on the woman.

So what was happening? Jesus and the disciples went out of their territory into the area of Tyre & Sidon, in modern day Lebanon, - gentile territory. We are not told why they should wander off into this area, but we are just told that they did. It was a wealthy and sophisticated area and definitely not Jewish. The customs, the food, the dialects, the clothing all would be different. The Jews looked

down on the Gentiles and Jesus believed he had come only to save Israel. All this is building up to a difficult encounter.

A local woman calls out to him ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy, my daughter is tormented by a demon.’ She recognizes that he has some sort of healing power over and above that of the healers she meets in her own territory, and she believes that he will heal her daughter, and she cries out to him in her need.

First of all he ignores her.

Is this really the Jesus we know and love? Then worse still, the disciples ask him to send her away because they think she is a nuisance and Jesus tells them – and her – that he has only come to save the lost sheep of Israel. So if that is the case, why was he in gentile territory?

She knelt and begged him again. He then insulted her by referring to her as a dog – was he calling her a bitch to her face?

If I shock you, I must ask you to think again for a moment on that sentence of his in the gospel,

‘It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs’. In other words he was saying that he was only there for the Jews - ‘the children’ – and not for any others of inferior race, ‘the dogs’, and so he throws that insult to her.

It is shocking, isn’t it?

But in case you think I am preaching a hard-line feminist sermon, let me say categorically that it was not a sexist slur. Jesus loved women and we see from the Gospels he was surrounded by, and encouraged women – most of them feisty and outspoken!

It is a racist and a religious slur. But she responded calmly, quietly, tactfully. She doesn't respond with another insult back, as you or I might. No, she answered him theologically as an equal.

Touché.

She is determined to get healing for her sick daughter at whatever cost to herself. She, a pagan, and what is worse a woman, is prepared to argue with him because she really believes he can heal her daughter. She made an impression on him and he realized in her great faith that he had come to save all, that God is there for *everyone* and he told her that her daughter was healed.

I see something of myself in this woman, like most mothers, I am determined to go to the limits for my family and even my friends, even facing insults and rejection and sometimes physical attack.

This story is amazing in that Jesus shows his humanity in a strange situation. He did not suddenly (as I was taught as an Evangelical teenager), *zap*, at conception, have all knowledge and spend the whole of his adult life floating 6 inches above the rest of us. No, he had to grow into his knowledge of his divinity, some modern scholars say. Of course he was the Son of God, he was truly remarkable, but to be truly human he had to learn that for himself. He had doubts, like us, but as Luke said 'he grew in stature' and this would take his lifetime.

Modern theologians are now teaching this, even conservative ones like the current pope

The woman wasn't supposed to have faith in him, but she did. Stubborn faith. What an experience for Jesus. What an experience for the woman.

They, and we today, have inherited ideas of who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’. These attitudes become so ingrained that we don’t even realize they are in our make-up. They are so natural to our being human, so natural that even Jesus had to have his mind changed by this woman. Thinking of our present differences in the Anglican communion, especially with some of the African churches, we can see examples of these inherited ideas.

Over the years the churches attitude has changed over who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’. Some years ago it was women who were out, now it is, in fundamentalist communities of all traditions, the gays who are ‘out’. We’ve all been ‘in’ or ‘out’ at various times for various reasons. As in Jesus’ time the Jews believed they were the ‘in’ crowd and the gentiles ‘out’, so we in our different traditions in the church each seem to think we are the ones who are ‘in’.

We should be challenged and try to see that God is there for all of us. If Jesus heard his Father through the persistence of this gentile woman, if Jesus could have got such important things wrong, couldn’t we the Church have also got some things wrong?

In all of us there is suspicion of the stranger, some of us are more suspicious than others! I have difficulties sometimes reaching out to certain people on first meeting. I am stubborn and have certain set ideas, but I do like to be challenged by people! But if Jesus was persuaded by this stranger, shouldn’t we all be open to being persuaded by one another?

So though Luke tells us that Jesus ‘grew in wisdom and found favour with God’¹ tradition also tells us that he remained sinless. But he called this woman a ‘dog’ – that’s a sin isn’t it? Well, yes, in our eyes it is a pretty big sin. But remember that for us mortals moral good is not set in stone, societies views change. They change across

¹ Luke 2:52

time, across cultures, within religions, within communities. Though for God it does not change. So in Jesus' time in that situation it was not so terrible as it seems to us now.

God does not require us to be ahead of ourselves and to know what is unknowable, what will be unacceptable in the future. God's expectations of us change as we change and as our world changes. 'The challenge for us is to set up conditions and structures so that new and better things become imaginable, become conceivable, and so become do-able.'² This is at the heart of the justice tradition, in the teaching of Roman Catholic social teaching.

Jesus' meeting with this gentile woman changed his options. Once he realized her real faith, then his calling her a dog was no longer an option – his horizon shifted and so his range of options shifted. So if Jesus' encounter with the Gentile woman changed his options and her faith made him respect her and heal her daughter, the challenge for us is to dream of what could be and to have our horizons shifted and widened.

Let us be open to the kind of reversals we see in the Magnificat, where the proud are scattered, the mighty put down and the rich sent away empty. The challenge to us is for us to be open to the Canaanite women of this world today and to have the humility to ponder on the grace we unexpectedly and inexplicably discover in them.

The grace that is active even in those we are tempted to think of as 'dogs'

AMEN

Liz Badman

² Joseph P. Cassidy '*Who's in and who's out?*' Sermon preached on 7 Sept 2006 in Durham Cathedral (Affirming Catholicism Conference)

TRAVELS WITH A JAGUAR IN THE VENDEE

With apologies to R L Stevenson.

For Hugh.

27 July 2008 Mass at Luçon Cathedral. The readings included one of my favourite passages, recognisable even in the French tongue, ‘grincement des dents’. I’m afraid we then grinded our own dents over paté de fois gras and confit de canard. And, o dear, we had thought we were far from wine growing regions, but no, the Vendée boasts four local vineyards, so we have begun experimenting. ‘Stay me with flagons, Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.’ We also found a friendly nature sanctuary, where a White Admiral landed on Margaux’ headlamp and a Comma on Sarah’s daisy sunhat. Haven’t seen either in England for a while – nor indeed the brown with dark spots member of the ‘blue’ family, of which more anon.

28 July A grande orage. We got soaked and retreated to our gîte. The extended Charolais family opposite our front door remained unmoved, even the babies. I received a telephone call from the Stained Glass Window Society whom we are hosting in late September asking if we do teas. Free advice on our Piper windows, so yes, we does!

29 July Missed the PCC meeting. Well I missed it, but I didn’t miss it, if you follow.

30 July Returned to Luçon for the market; bought phenomenal cheeses and lit a candle to Our Lady. Spent leisure time counting brown butterflies (Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Wall Browns; no Speckled Wood; also a Brimstone) and rescuing Suicidal Cedric the Stupid Frog from the pool. He only tried it on when I was around to

save him, but this attention got him nowhere, ‘No crown, no kiss’ I told him.

31 July Mareuil sur Lais Church sports purple external doors. Nice. Romanesque Church with good animals, a sort of sheep-horse and a griffin. Its original ceiling has been obscured with a later, lower wooden effort, presumably so that some poor soul has to scramble above it to change the light bulbs. You know, I used to regard Churches as works of art to the greater glory of God. But now I see nowt but a network of traps, pitfalls and H & S queries. The Cave (Mareuil wines) next door sells Anticonformist wine and the shop across the road deals in Pompes Funebres. I acquired the one, but not the other. Idling along lovely lanes no wider than my plump little car, we visited another Romaneasque Church with a lovely stumpy tower, but it was closed.

1 August To Fonteney le Comte. A Renaissance Church (so *flashy* but it had a lovely R_m_n_sq_ crypt) with the St Matthew Passion playing a tad inappropriately in the background. The pulpit was a tribute to tact, diplomacy and the ecumenical movement. The pulpit itself is set on the shoulders of Atlas, and it is surmounted by ‘The Catholic Church beating down Protestant heresy’, that is to say, a Britannia like lady with a cross in her right hand and a chalice in her left, enthroned over a masculine figure flailing desperately under her feet. I lit a candle to St Francis of Assisi. The side door depicted the wise virgins (lamps right way up) and foolish ditto (lamps upside down) in the flamboyant style. After steak frites we found a 1542 fountain FONTANACUM FELICIUM INGENIORUM FONS ET SCATURGO 1542 and thence to the next of our vineyards, Pissotte. Lovely name, lovely wine, lovely family. Monsieur pressed an extra bottle into my paw.

2 August To Rosnay, another Mareuil cave, actually pron. Ronnie. In the afternoon we headed for the third vineyard, Brem, but fell into

the toils of a supermarché instead and then followed France's version of Interesting Hysterical Monument signs through a working farmyard to an abbey. The abbey was closed to the publique owing to travaux, and it was guarded by a vicious brown donkey which guilt tripped anyone without sugar lumps, but frankly I reckon the ruins were inhabited (*curtains* at the windows??) and it was all a con. Home via the salt flats (is this where lamb pré sale would come from? I saw no sheeps. Just goats.) and the outstanding Church of our trip. The village was Angles (*not* Angels) the roof pinnacle was surmounted by what looked like a lamb but turned out to be a bear that lived off the beauty of the local maidens, and there were stalls for thirteen canons. A relative of Margaux parked nearby but it was French and looked blokish and would not make friends.* Wonderful altar linen and an atmosphere and ambience which so reminded me of All Saints. I lit a candle and began to feel in charity with the world.

*Almost everyone we met was incredibly friendly and helpful. Our lack of French was a source of joy and fun. Bless them.

3 August Moutiers les Mauxfais. Messe in the parish église at 11 15 accidentally avec l'Evecque de Luçon; why, we wondered, was he not at the joint messe for all the Luçon parishes, of which Moutiers was not one? Again I thort of my own dear parish, as +Luçon picked up the crooner mike to begin his sermon, spoke into it and YYYYYEEEooooOWWWWWWWW resounded through the Church. After a cheery jest on the lines of 'better stand well back' (advice I have unsuccessfully pressed upon our own Fathers) he produced a sermon of which I understood not one word except a reference to feeding the five thousand. (I'm afraid we just had fois gras and duck again.) I did like the Offertory procession. Twenty to thirty children, some with the elements, some with unidentified vessels, some with nightlights, all bearing down upon the altar and surrounding it. The nightlights infested the altar but did not consume it. I liked the Bp too, in his green Roman tent chasuble and Ebbsfleet pink skullcap.

The youthful acolytes doubled as sidespeople, one with a lit candle, one with the pew slips and one with the giggles. The oldest young lady was also the Bp's chaplain, handing mitre and crozier as and when. Church very full, with lots of people arriving late and having to stand. Not unlike Edington Priory which I shall have visited later this month, with a door at the foot of the nave through which the procession left the Church, thus trapping the populace through the final hymn and nearly causing a panic. Romanesque with late additions.

The fourth vineyard, Vix, produces an excellent white. But I kept thinking of that well known line from Terence, 'Vix sum compos mentis'. Evening jaunt brought a sighting of a herd of cerfs – fallow deer, I think, and home through Rosnay, recte Ronnie.

4 August Brimstone and common blue at the gîte, and on the sand dunes a silver studded blue. The big notice board ignored this rarity but boasted the Black Tailed Godwit and the Twany (sic) Pipit. Swimming forbidden owing to 'Courants violents and sables mouvant'. There must be a sermon there, Fathers. A cauldron of moules in fromage sauce for lunch. And a bowl of frites.

5 August To Coulon, in the Venise Verte ie instead of salt flats, canals through the woods and fields. I'm oozing Vitamin B from every pore, but I did wonder about the mozzies, and I was dead right. We spent an hour on a Petit Train. Result? Five several attacks. There should have been swallowtails; I sensed them, but saw none. Coulan Church had been 'improved' but it had a lovely atmosphere, a statue to Our Lady, the most prepossessing statue to the Little Weed I have ever seen and best of all a statue of St Joseph. Pyromania rampant. Wonderful flower meadow en route, another ruined abbey, and the Vix cave. Commercialised but good product. I have learnt to study cépage. Then we found St Nicholas of Maillevaux, with its amazing range of animals, grotesques and portraits, and a splendid notice reminding us that this was a Church,

not just a Squelette of Pierre. Answers to that one on a postcard. You might get a sip of the méthode champenoise if you're good.

Went to a very posh restaurant for lunch, ordered the thing with the longest name and it turned out to be circular upside down shepherd's pie. One lives and learns. Got home, removed dead fauna from pool. Swam.

6 August You remember that butterfly? We went back to the place, found a colony of Heath Fritillaries – real show offs – and there was this little brown job again. A Sooty Copper, unknown in the UK, but flying with its better known aggressive little cousins, Small Coppers. Ever so nice.

Saw plenty of birds from the gîte too, cormorants, herons, buzzards, kites, kestrels, and owing to Mr Bull, his wives, sons and daughters, more cattle egrets than ever before.

And so to England, via the ramparts of St Malo. The Vendée is lovely, and Margaux loved French roads. Nobody harassed us, which is a first, and mercifully I got away with a slight misunderstanding. It had never occurred to me that it is cruising peacefully up the outside lane which is Wrong. One is indeed intended to drive up to within six centimetres of the bumper in front, whiz out, whiz past and cut back in. Little whizzy French cars can do that. Little fat Jags have a problem. And now so do I. Owing to the excellence of the food, I am now a little fat Churchwarden. But glad to be back.

10 August 2008 Trinity 12 Home again. No change, I stood watching the rain lashing the forecourt as I waited to hand out the Family Service pewslips, bouncing off the flagstones (the rain, not me) and forming lakes. It always seems to happen to the 9 15.

17 August 2008 Except that today it was at 7 50, and caught the 8 am family instead. ‘Never mind’, one young optimist consoled, ‘there’s blue sky in the distance.’ There usually is. Jam yesterday, jam

tomorrow, but never jam today. But it gave me a chance to be Useful. A large blue brolly approached the doors, and recoiled. ‘It won’t close,’ cried its occupant. Seizing it, I ruthlessly reduced it, to receive this year’s compliment, ‘Now I know what churchwardens are for.’ I had wondered

Then we got the immoral biscuits: ‘Whipped creams, buttery shortcake biscuits caressed with cream and lustfully lemon curd. Naughty!’ Reproved for touching such sinfulness, the 9 30 clergy helped himself to a second one.

Yesterday we visited Scrapstore, to acquire usefulnesses for Summer Fun. My sitting room, never an oasis of gracious calm, now looks like a rag ‘n’ bone man’s back yard.

18 August Sorting out pix for the Festival, I came across one of our more eccentric archives: patterns from the St Mary’s Linen Society for cotta necks. No ladies, my dears, but all sizes of boy up to Large Boy, followed by, o joy, ‘Man or Priest’. En passant, there were embroidery patterns too. I intend to arrange a workshop next year, when the chains of office fall from my shackled limbs, so that we may use such things and consider our vestments.

24 August The sorry story of poor St Bartholomew aka Nathanael Bar-Ptolemy. Two Fathers extended themselves on this one, and the children at least seemed to lap it up.

I’m still wondering about the loo roll behind the left hand sanctuary radiator; to this is added the mystery of the galvanized metal trunking by the choir stalls. The front garden has a fairy ring. I do not recommend the fungi, however. It is one’s considered opinion that they are toadstools, and hallucinogenic. Well *that* beat the spell chequer!

Madame la Guillotine awaits my efforts, so that’s it for now.

ONE WORLD ONE DREAM

The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games

Sermon preached at Solemn Mass 10 August 08 by the Revd Kim Taplin, Chaplain of Clifton College

The Beijing Olympic Games begin in 5 days time. Many of us will be religiously running every race and swimming every stroke from the sanctuary of our living rooms. The athletes themselves will be idolised as demigods as they strain muscle and sinew in their quest to be *Citius, Altius, Fortius* – swifter, higher and stronger.

My use of religious imagery is quite deliberate because the original Games were themselves part of a religious ritual. The most famous Games, first held in 776 BCE at Olympia in Greece, provided an opportunity to worship the pantheon of gods. They had a spiritual purpose – to teach that it was through the *contest* that Man could ‘raise his game’ above the animals, and could develop his physical and mental powers.

Particularly venerated were the god *Agon* (Contest) and the goddess *Nike* (Victory). Although success in the Games was regarded as the highest good, competition was never for financial reward – the prize for winning was a simple crown of wild olive. The motivation was glory not gold. How times have changed!

The modern Olympic Games were also planted in the soil of moral idealism. As part of the Olympic Oath, all of the athletes swear to take part in the Games, “*in the true spirit of sportsmanship.*” One of the enshrined values of the modern Olympics is “*to promote the development of those physical and moral qualities which are the basis of sport.*”

The ancient Greeks insisted upon a *sacred truce* for the duration of the Games; all military conflicts and hostilities were forbidden.

Similarly, the modern Olympic movement aims to help to “*build a better and more peaceful world*” by “*spreading the Olympic principles throughout the world thereby creating international goodwill.*” The slogan for the Beijing Olympics is “*One World One Dream*”. The official website claims that this phrase “expresses the common wishes of people all over the world, inspired by the Olympic ideals, to strive for a bright future of Mankind”. Hmmmm.....tell that to the people of Tibet, or the thousands suffering human rights abuses in China!

The trouble is that we fallible human beings are much better at devising lofty ideals than living up to them! Politics has always tried to gatecrash the party. Since the Second World War, the Games have been dogged by protests and boycotts. The Melbourne games in 1956 were snubbed by Egypt, Lebanon, Holland, Spain and Switzerland because of the Soviet invasion of Hungary. In Mexico City in 1968, two African-American sprinters wore black gloves for the 200 metres medal ceremony in support of the Black Power movement. And four years later, of course, 11 Israeli athletes were gunned down by Palestinian terrorists in Munich.

Twenty African countries withdrew just two days before the Montreal 1976 Games in protest against the New Zealand rugby tour of apartheid-dominated South Africa. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 led to a boycott of 45 countries, including the USA, from the 1980 Moscow Games. Then, four years later, the USSR and Eastern European countries repaid the compliment when the Games were staged in Los Angeles. So much for a *sacred truce!* The ancient Greek Olympians have turned in their graves many times!

Jesse Owens, the renowned black American sprinter, put the politics into perspective a year before he died (you’ll remember that he won 4 gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics and that Hitler refused to

be photographed with him). Owens said, “*The road to the Olympics doesn’t lead to Moscow. It leads to no city, no country. It goes far beyond Lake Placid or Moscow, ancient Greece or Nazi Germany. The road to the Olympics leads, in the end, to the best within us.*”

At this point you might well be wondering how on earth the preacher is going to derive some spiritual message from this Cook’s tour of Olympic history. Good point. Well...bear with me, because I believe that an athletic contest has much to teach us about our relationship with God and our Christian pilgrimage. This morning’s Old Testament and New Testament readings point the way. They juxtapose theology with those most ancient of Olympic contests – a *wrestling match* and a *foot race*.

Genesis chapter 32, verses 22 – 31 contains one of the strangest stories in the Jewish Scriptures. Some 25 miles north of the Dead Sea, a desert wadi (or river valley) meets the River Jordan from the east. The seasonal stream in this wadi is called Jabbok.

At a ford across the Jabbok, the patriarch Jacob wrestles with an unknown stranger until dawn. Neither prevails throughout the night, although in the course of the struggle, Jacob’s thigh is put out of joint. But he refuses to release the stranger until he receives a blessing. In response, the stranger asks his name. “*Jacob*”, was the reply.

“*Then the man said, ‘You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.’*” (v. 28).

After giving his blessing, the mysterious stranger leaves, and for Jacob (or should I say, Israel) the penny drops. With the dawn comes the awesome realisation of his opponent’s identity. Israel names the place *Peniel*, meaning ‘face of God’.

The very name *Israel* means “*he who struggles (or wrestles) with God*”. How appropriate for a people who have found themselves in so many arenas of conflict throughout their history. And yet, they have tenaciously and belligerently clung on to their faith in God during the darkest times imaginable.

Many of us also know something of the agony of life’s struggles and battles. There are times in our lives when we are tested almost to breaking point, when God’s silence is deafening. On occasions, we cling on to our Faith by our finger nails. Like Jacob, we may get badly injured physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually along the way. And yet cling on to God we must, because it is only in and through the struggle that the blessing ultimately comes – if not in this life, then certainly in the next.

If our relationship with God can sometimes feel like being embroiled in an Olympic wrestling match, we are also encouraged, as Christians, to put on our running vests and our spikes.

St Paul would have been very familiar with the Greek and Roman Games. He used imagery from the Games in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 24 – 27 to coach the Corinthians Christians to greater devotion to Christ. He urges them to run and train, for there is no automatic connection between starting and finishing, between performing and winning. The athlete is exhorted to compete with purpose and self-discipline. In the Christian life, it is precisely these qualities of commitment, determination and moral steadfastness which are required to achieve the goal of faithful discipleship. And remember, our race is not a sprint, it’s a marathon!

But let me encourage you. To be a vital and valued member of God’s Olympic squad, we are not required to be the spiritual equivalent of Sir Steve Redgrave or Dame Kelly Holmes! In God’s eyes, charisma is never placed above character; talent cannot replace tenacity; giftedness never supersedes godliness. The Church is a community in

which *all* belong. The squad qualifying standard is accessible to all of us. What God requires of us is willingness and obedience; that we participate with our whole heart and that we are humbly sustained by the Bread of Life.

My favourite Olympian of all time is the Scotsman, Eric Liddell. His remarkable athletic exploits inspired the Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire*. Liddell, a former rugby international, was selected for the 100 metres and 200 metres at the 1924 Paris Games. But on hearing that the 100 metres heats were to be run on a Sunday, he withdrew, causing a media sensation.

Liddell, you see, was a very committed member of the Scottish Congregational Church. His parents were missionaries in China. For him, Sundays were to be devoted to God and family. This ruled out both work and organised sport. Now many of us (including me, if I'm honest) may struggle to appreciate such a viewpoint today. However, in the 1920s this Sabbatarian position was very widely held, and consequently Liddell was admired by many for his stand on religious principle.

As an alternative, Liddell lined up for the 400 metres, but he was considered a virtual no-hoper because of his limited experience at the longer race. Also, his unorthodox running style was thought to be too stamina-sapping for success at longer distances. Drawn in the worst possible lane, on the outside of the bend, he shot out of the blocks into an early lead. He ran the first half of the race in a time only marginally slower than that recorded by the 200 metres gold medallist. Everyone in the crowd waited for him to blow up and come back to the rest of the field, but he just seemed to keep going faster. As he crossed the line in 47.6 seconds, far ahead of his rivals (and shattering the world record by almost half a second), he appeared to be looking directly skywards.

Eric Liddell ran a great race....and I'm not talking about the Olympics. He followed his parents into missionary service, ironically, in China. He knew much of God's testing and what it meant to wrestle in his Faith. He died of a brain tumour in a Japanese internment camp in China on February 21st 1945 – just five months before liberation. Evoking the language of ‘the contest’, his final words were, “*It’s complete surrender.*”

Eric Liddell has touched the lives of millions since as an example, not only of a true athlete, but also of a committed Christian disciple who was willing to take up his cross and serve his Lord.

Twenty-one years earlier, just before the start of that epic 400 metres race in Paris, Liddell was handed a piece of paper by a member of the US team. On it was scribbled a Bible verse – 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 30. Liddell clutched this paper in his hand as he ran. The verse simply reads:

“*Those who honour me, I will honour.*”