

NEWSLETTER 20 : July - Sept 2007

Monastery of St. Barnabas the Encourager.

DIARY DATES

Our Monthly Eucharist/Communion

will be on the third Sunday of each month at 8.00 am.

July 15th, Aug. 19th, Sept. 16th - The service is followed by Communion Breakfast in the Community Kitchen.

Eucharist can be celebrated at other times by arrangement.

The Resident Anchorite's Report

We had our annual community Open Day on Saturday 9th June (the nearest Saturday to the Patronal feast of St. Barnabas 11th June). At 12.30 pm, we commenced with a half hour of silent reflection, which was followed by a bring and share lunch. As it was a beautiful sunny afternoon we were able to sit in the garden. The day was rounded off by a Eucharist celebrated by Rev. Leonard Parry-Jones.

The monastery seems to be becoming better known more locally and used by locals. Recently, we were visited by the local W.I., I also spoke at two Mothers Union groups and was interviewed by Jamie Owen on BBC Wales.

Letter from Resident Anchorite: Father Bryan

I try to pray and hold God at the Centre of my life. Having committed my self to Him, he meets me at the point of where I am, in the Present.



Being aware of the manifestation of God in Jesus, I am able to comprehend Him as Person, Divine Human Being. This reminds me of the line from a song, *'He walks with me, He talks with me along life's*

narrow way.' I have a very down to earth spirituality and faith, which keeps me renewed in Spirit. It is an understanding of God that I believe people from all walks of life, whether single parents, students, labourers, professionals or academic can relate to. It is a working faith, which George Herbert expresses in one of his hymns as, 'The daily round the common task will furnish all we need to ask.'

Jesus said to his disciples before his crucifixion and resurrection, *'On that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.'* (John.14:20). Although this appears to be a simple statement, its deepest meaning can take a lifetime to comprehend and realise.

I meet many people looking for spiritual

experience and nourishment but they are searching outside of themselves. They overlook the treasures that are available to them in the here and now, right where they are. David Pawson describes such searchers as seeking 'Bless-ups'.

The 17th century mystic, Jean-Nicholas Grou underlines the importance of being firmly in this world in his book, 'How to Pray'. Both he and Watchman Nee, stress the centrality of contemplating on the deepest level that part of the Lord's Prayer which says, *'On earth as it is in Heaven'*. We have tried to emphasise this in our Compline Service Prayer Book at the Monastery where you will find this line repeated in the Lords Prayer as suggested by Grou and Nee:

'Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your Name,
On earth as it is in Heaven,
Your Kingdom come,
On earth as it is in Heaven,
Your Will be done,
On earth as it is in Heaven'

Keeping the spiritual life grounded in the every day life, was an important lesson stressed made many times over by the very revered Saint Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983). She spent a number of years in German concentration camps during the war where she had her faith truly tested by what she experienced and witnessed, no more so than when her sister and father perished in the

camps.

A brief anecdote suggests that in the 1960s a number of young charismatic clergy who were spending regular prayer time together, invited the then elderly but highly-respected Corrie ten Boom to one of their meetings. She was renowned for offering pearls of wisdom. When the meeting finished, two of its members escorted Corrie back to the train station so she could catch her train home. But as the train was pulling out of the station, Corrie leant out of the window to wave goodbye. Her two escorts keen to hear any last words of wisdom from her, ran alongside the train calling, 'Please don't go Corrie without giving us one last word of wisdom?' to which the wise sage answered meekly, 'Remember to keep it simple!'

The main message I want to pass on to you is 'Remember to keep it simple!' There is no need to search far and wide for God, chasing one rainbow after another, He is here with You Now. ***Be still and know that I am God.*** Let Him in. He is waiting to open your life to Him in this moment and is Present to You.

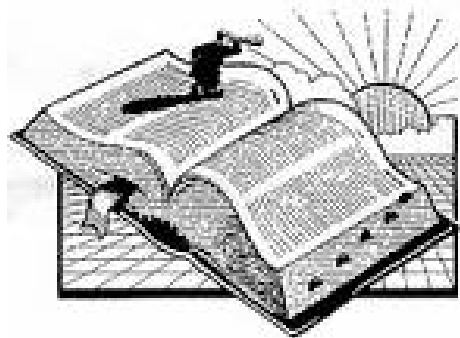
The deep spiritual experience of knowing God, comes only with Trusting Him regardless of what life throws our way. Glimpse His Presence in the daily round and through daily prayer. Open your eyes and see, open your ears and hear - God Bless You - Amen!



Your World is a Lamp to my Feet (Psalm 119)

Many of us pray have and have had some experience of God's guidance especially when contemplating the Bible. Sometimes it is only at our lowest point that we feel His touch upon us and are open to the reality of Jesus.

I try to encourage those who read the



Bible to read it with contemplation and devotion on a daily basis, and to try to avoid approaching it with an analytical mind. Certainly with a maturing faith, the Bible can act as a divine channel of communication. Many Christian authors such as Watchman Nee have been deeply inspired by it using it to inspire others in their own works.

For those wanting to analyse texts, the Bible may not seem to make much sense and for those searching for mystical experiences the Bible may not seem attractive. Others have approached the Bible looking for a quick fix to their problems and have been disappointed when none has been found. And there are those who have told me how they struggle with the Old Testament while others have commented how profound they have found the stories of a Jewish understanding of God's inspired Truth.

For the Christian seeker of God, the Bible is one of His essential tools. It is one of God's lines of communication through His Word. And it is through Him He speaks to our hearts. Recently, there have been three amazing things which have happened to people whilst reading the Bible. I would like to mention these because they have shown me and them just how wonderful the Bible can be as source of a Divine inspiration.

A dear Friend of the monastery who has multiple cancer tumours continues to miraculously survive whilst undergoing aggressive chemotherapy. Her latest dose of chemotherapy precipitated a serious heart and blood malfunction that coincided one morning with her Bible reading.

The reading however, drew her attention to her heart condition and prompted her to call the emergency services. Her situation was critical. The medics needed to re-set her heart-beat but her life was saved. She had been reading Psalm 27 and its references to the heart had spoken to her:

Psalm 27 Of David The Lord is my Light & my Salvation

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh,
when my enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

3 Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

4 One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

5 For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock.

6 Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD.

7 Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.

8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
O God my Saviour.

10 Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.

11 Teach me your way, O LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.

12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
breathing out violence.

13 I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

The second mention, concerns a committed Christian who realised that it might be necessary to return home to Africa to complete a number of formalities. This was complicated by a lot of unknown circumstances, not least whether or not it was really necessary to undertake the journey.

On the morning approaching the deadline for making the decision, this person while having some time with God felt prompted to open the Bible at St Luke's Gospel (Ch.2). The reading was the Nativity story in which the secular rulers of the land demand all citizens of Israel to go to their towns of origin to register. Joseph and Mary had to go just when Mary's pregnancy was making it most inconvenient to travel – we all know the Christmas story!

The person in question also asked Christian friends to pray about the situation and through the Biblical passage they found meaning in their own situation and a sense of peace about the decision to make and recognised God's prompting to go to their country of origin.

The last mention, concerns that of a busy man with many commitments. He happened to be reading one of the best known of Jesus' parables, the parable of the sower (Matthew, Ch.13). In this parable, Jesus explains to his disciples how weeds coming up can choke a seed's growth. The man was especially challenged by one of the verses, which seemed to be speaking volumes to him. It encouraged him to devote less time to work and more time to his spiritual and devotional life.

When I speak of the Bible as being a source of Divine guidance and inspiration. I am not suggesting that people take a pin, prick a verse at random then go ahead with what it says; that would be foolish and dangerous. Using the Bible as a genuine source of help can only come with regular reading and contemplation.

It may help to use a Biblical guide book or contemplate the Bible with another person or group by praying about it. When a verse(s) seems to be speaking to us or prompting us into an action, it can often be wise to share one's understanding with another mature Christian. The Holy Spirit using the words of the Bible is always waiting to offer us help, we only need to open up our hearts and minds for Biblical encouragement along the Way - Blessed Be!

Who was Corrie ten Boom?

For her efforts to hide Jews from arrest and deportation during the German occupation of the Netherlands, Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983) received recognition from the Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority as one of the "Righteous Among the Nations" on December 12, 1967. In resisting Nazi persecution, ten Boom acted in concert with her religious beliefs, her family experience, and the Dutch resistance. Her defiance led to imprisonment, internment in a concentration camp, and loss of family members who died from maltreatment while in German custody.

The ten Boom family were members of the Dutch Reformed Church, which protested Nazi persecution of Jews as an injustice to fellow human beings and an affront to divine authority. In her autobiography, ten Boom repeatedly cited religious motivations for hiding Jews, particularly her family's strong belief in a basic tenet of their religion: the equality of all human beings before God. Their religious activities had also brought the family a history of personal connections to the Jewish community. Corrie's grandfather had supported efforts to improve Christian-Jewish relations in the nineteenth century. Her brother Willem, a Dutch Reformed minister assigned to convert Jews, studied antisemitism and ran a nursing home for elderly of all faiths. In the late 1930s that nursing home became a refuge for Jews fleeing from Germany.

After World War II began, members of

the ten Boom family became involved in resistance efforts. Two nephews worked in resistance cells. Various family members sheltered young men sought by the Nazis for forced labour and assisted Jews in contacting persons willing to hide them. Corrie became directly involved in these efforts when, along with her father and sister Betsie, she decided to hide Jews in the family home in Haarlem, the Netherlands. Using her job as a watchmaker in her father's shop as a cover, Corrie built contacts with resistance workers, who assisted her in procuring ration books and building a hiding place in the family home.



Six people, among them both Jews and resistance workers, hid in this hiding place when the Gestapo (German secret state police) raided the house on February 28, 1944. Those in hiding remained undiscovered. Several days after the raid resistance workers transferred them to other locations. In the meantime, however, the

Gestapo had arrested Corrie ten Boom, her father, her brother and two sisters, and other family members. In addition, the Gestapo arrested several resistance workers who had unwittingly entered the house during the raid, as well as many family acquaintances who had been attending a prayer meeting in the living room. Altogether, the Gestapo arrested

some 30 people in the ten Boom family home that day.

After holding them briefly in the penitentiary in Scheveningen, a seaside town close to The Hague, the Gestapo released all but three of the ten Boom family members. Corrie ten Boom, her older sister Betsie, and her father Casper remained in prison. Casper ten Boom became sick in prison and died in a hospital corridor only ten days after the arrest. The sisters remained in the Scheveningen prison until

June 1944, when officials transferred them to an internment camp at Vught, in the Netherlands. In September 1944, the Nazis deported Corrie and Betsie ten Boom to the Ravensbrueck concentration camp in Germany. In Ravensbrueck, the sisters managed to stay together until Betsie died that December.

The camp administration released Corrie ten Boom in late December 1944. Along with other released prisoners, she traveled by train to Berlin, where she arrived on January 1, 1945. From Berlin, ten Boom journeyed across Germany by train until she reached the Netherlands, where she reunited with surviving members of her family.

After the war, ten Boom advocated reconciliation as a means for overcoming the psychological scars left by the Nazi occupation. She later travelled the world as an evangelist, motivational speaker, and social critic, referring to her experiences in Ravensbrueck as she offered solace to prisoners and protested against the Vietnam War.



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