

NEWSLETTER 22 : Jan - Feb - Mar 2008

Monastery of St. Barnabas the Encourager.

DIARY DATES

In the next quarter our monthly Communion Services will be:-

January 20th. February 17th and March 16th

There are no other planned events within the first quarter of this year.

Just to remind people again; that our last service (Compline) is now at 9.0 pm.

ACTING WARDENS REPORT

Again we thank those who have given help and support in the maintaining of the Monastery.

We would thank our chaplain, Rev. Nicholas Monk for providing a communion service on the 3rd Sunday of each month. (We also thank Nicholas and Fenela for bringing a trailer load of logs for our fire)

We thank Rev. Leonard Parry-Jones for providing a communion service on other occasions. Actually the liturgy we use for our communion service was written by Leonard.

The Advent day retreat led by Gary and Sian Hiscott on 8th December was very special. and most inspiring. We had a full house and it was the first Advent in our newly refurbished Meeting Room mentioned in the last Newsletter. We look forward to similar retreats throughout this coming year.

This past year there have been fewer people making personal Day Retreats. also not so many residential guests as in previous years. We have had a few parties of visitors from Mothers Unions. The largest single group of visitors was the Kerry WI.

This Newsletter must contain our thanks to all those who planned and carried out their mission to surprise us on the occasion of our Golden Wedding. Left to ourselves, Dorothy and I would have let the day go by quietly. Thank you for your lovely cards with such good wishes and kind words. Thank you to those who planned and organised a surprise party and to those who came to it. We felt surrounded by your love; it was a day we shall always remember.

These quarterly monastery Newsletters are available to anyone wishing to keep up with what we are doing: (a) By post on receipt of a donation of £3 to the warden or (b) Free by furnishing Gary Hiscott on 01686 627 470 with your E mail address.

Letter from Resident Anchorite: Father Bryan



The aspect of faith which seem to be occupying my mind at this time is the SIMPLE FAITH ; that uncomplicated belief and trust which becomes a real and personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Also occupying my mind at this time (having been recently involved with those who have died or are terminally ill) is the prospect of ETERNITY.

Perhaps it is natural that, as one grows older and perhaps more infirm, that one is apt to become apprehensive about ones future. The Christian is not hopeless, of course, but is more inclined to examine the reality of his faith.

My recent involvements with the sick and dying have made it forcibly clear that

our four score years and ten are only a very short time indeed. The word eternity has registered in my mind with fresh impact. But I think, above all, as I reflected, on my experiences and encounters that one of the most noticeable differences between Christians and none Christians is their attitude to death. The latter saw death as being defeating and the fearful end and seemed to clutch at straws. But in my experience, although often in physical distress, Christians took on what one can only describe as a Divine peace.

The New Testament is just packed with the concept of death being the real future and this life being terminal. St. Paul wrote that he did not know whether going on living in this world was the best option, given the choice. 'Or whether it was not better to go to be with the Lord' (Philippians 1:23.). One of the major statements of Jesus when standing before Pilate was "My kingdom

is not of this world ". There is the statement made by St John, 'The beloved disciple' In his letter he says, reflecting on the prospect of eternity "We shall see Him as He is". My mentor Archemandrite Sophrony used this quote from John's letter as the title for his biography. The Archemandrite was very aware of the eternal dimension. In fact he exhorted his readers to say a daily prayer, a quarter of which consists of the daily preparing of ourselves for dying.

David Watson, once regarded by some as Britain's Billy Graham died in 1948. While very ill he was interviewed by the BBC. When pressed by the interviewer about his feelings he made quite clear his pains and fears, yet he confidently said more than once. "The best is yet to be!" The calm confidence in which he made this statement had quite a profound effect on number of his listeners.

Another thing which keeps me constantly aware of the heavenly perspective, the eternal dimension, is praying for the Persecuted Chris-

tians, in countries where Islamic extremists or atheist dictators hold sway: particularly where Christians know that the next hour may be their last. The testimonies of these Christian brothers and sisters bears witness to their sure belief in the promise of Jesus to the thief on the cross, when Jesus said: "This day you will be with me in paradise".

We see the persecuted living under a cloud of imminent death but they do not seem to see it as such, but as part and parcel of their total commitment to God in Jesus Christ.

Their commitment is an awareness of total belonging to Christ involving sacrifice of their material security, but promises of an eternal security. That was the situation which prevailed in the emergent New Testament church: it was the real dynamic of the church of the early Martyrs.

Today, many of us church goers regard church life as a comforting adjunct to our social and cultural life. For some older persons, perhaps, there is a sense of duty about attending church. What happens in church does not meet all needs. it can be beyond comprehension, or not stimulating enough. There is not always the will to get help and try to understand what it is all about. In fact some non-church goers have jokingly suggested that those who do go to church see it



as an insurance policy, a sort of collecting of good points which, if needed, will stand them in good stead at the end.

One of the most potent sermons I ever heard was given by a Bible courier. He had just returned from taking Bibles into one of the persecuted churches of believers in a country under an atheistic dictatorship or militant Islam. He got into the pulpit and started telling us of his journey to Birmingham from somewhere in South England. He had travelled past a number of churches on the way and could not help but notice people gathered outside churches after morning service. He noticed how they gathered, all smiling laughing and chatting away dressed in their Sunday best. He became increasingly aware of how this scene contrasted with the persecuted church he had been visiting with his Christian literature,

where to go to a Christian church was dangerous, a life or death situation.

He became increasingly distressed by the stark contrast between these different gatherings of Christians, here in the UK and those in the countries he had been visiting. Those persecuted people were hungry to know more about their Lord and to have fellowship with other believers. The committed Christians in the countries he had visited walked along, furtively look-

ing over their shoulders on way to some cellar or the middle of woods or in derelict buildings. He spoke of how these believers had received Bibles and literature and were keen to get home and read the precious word of God. A number of us realised he was describing the New Testament type church: people desperate to learn more about God and, at personal risk, to be obedient to the commandment of Jesus to Go into the world and share with lost souls. This courier contrasted the experiences he had with those desperate to share the Good News of Eternal Hope, those thirsty for God with the people in the churches of the UK. He exhorted us to pray for the church here. He was rather saddened by the fact that many who go to church in the safe UK probably don't read one of the numerous translations of the Bibles available to us in the West, or pray continually as the scriptures exhort us to do. Then unable to hold back his feelings he started to cry. When he composed himself he began to preach from a passage of scripture in the Bible. I must confess I don't remember much of his actual sermon. Perhaps a number of us felt somewhat convicted when reflecting on our own degree of commitment to prayer and devotion to God.

Fr Bryan

SOME THOUGHT ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Quotes by John Trapp and D.L. Moody

'We need more Christians for whom Prayer is the first resort, not the last.'

'Prayer and a holy life are one. They mutually act and react. Neither can survive alone. The absence of the one is the absence of the other.'

'It is foolish to pray against sin and then sin against prayer.'

Those who say they will forgive but can't forget simply bury the hatchet but leave the handle out for immediate use'.

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