

NEWSLETTER 23 : Apr - May - Jun 2008

Monastery of St. Barnabas the Encourager.

DIARY DATES

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

20 April - 18 May - 22 June 2008

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

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

'OPEN DAY' - Saturday 14 June - (mid-day Eucharist 12 noon.)

ACTING WARDENS REPORT

The Chapel:

We continue to hold the usual services each day in the chapel and regularly receive requests for prayer from people who want support in their own prayer or want prayers to be said for themselves or others who are sick, bereaved or in various kinds of trouble. Our main intercessions are said each day during the 5.0pm. service but critical situations are prayed for at each service. We include prayers for the persecuted church several times a day.

Eucharist services have been held on the third Sunday of each month and have been attended by visitors as well as guests. These services have been followed by breakfast for all who wanted to join us.

Meeting Room

This has been well used since it was so beautifully decorated and carpeted by Sian and Gary Hiscott.

Gary and Sian organised and led a retreat on Saturday 8th December using the meeting room and other parts of the house as people were encouraged to go off by themselves to meditate using paint or clay. People had a bring and share lunch in the kitchen. This seems to have been much appreciated by those who came. Several other groups have used the meeting room and kitchen for days of quiet or praise and prayer.

Guest Rooms

In addition to those guests in residence, who booked the rooms for a few days, several ministers and local church people from various churches, have used them for a day of quiet retreat and have found Brynmawr to be an excellent place to come for a few hours of prayer and reflection.

Retreat Association

We have received a number of enquiries from people who found our entry in the Retreat Association Directory.

The Library

Just as you will have read in Newsletter 21 that we converted an upstairs room into a meeting room so we have changed the downstairs sitting room into a library/ reception area. It has been redecorated and had additional bookshelves built into it.

First Floor

The whole of the first floor has now been redecorated and a sewing corner put in place.

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



I seem to be reflecting lately on the subject of eternity: a subject which becomes more relevant as I get older and attend the funerals of my contemporaries. Connected with this consideration of eternity, over the past months, I have be-

come very aware of the subject of forgiveness. When trying to share with others the importance of forgiveness to our health I have scrutinised my own feelings about it, especially in the light of my thinking on eternity. Archemandrite Sophrony, when talking of his death, uses the phrase "When I stand before God's dread judgement seat"

Those people who say that God isn't a judging God are probably reacting to the days of Victorian hellfire preaching and the view of God as a God of wrath and judgement. Any reading of the teaching of Jesus makes it abundantly clear that, although he is just in his as-

essment of us, God sees us as his children and is ready to forgive those who turn to him. In the New Testament we see that forgiveness and healing go hand in hand. In fact, the one is often connected to the other. (Luke 5 v20.)

Our relationship with God helps us to recognise our sinful state; we begin to see ourselves as God sees us. We need to be open to the peace of God, a peace which can be blocked from us if we are carrying resentment and unforgiveness. The idea of our being needy sinners needing repentance and forgiveness is not popular. To many people the teaching of church about sin is seen as irrele-

vant but possibly the idea of forgiveness is comforting. (Romans 3v12.)

I believe that we can pray for forgiveness to Jesus the 'person' of God. We need to see the importance of accepting him into our daily lives and developing a relationship with him. This relationship will be different for all of us, of course, but remembering that he is our Heavenly Father, full of love towards his children, may make it easier to chat with him in an informal way about all that concerns us. In many instances we need to ask the forgiveness of the 'person whom we have wronged or to make a reconciliation with someone who has wronged us. This can be very demanding: We may have a very legitimate reason to be aggrieved by a person yet we may have to ask their forgiveness for the anger we have towards them, legitimate or otherwise. (Matthew 5.v.21-24) The Testimonies that completely blow my mind are by those who have been tortured for their faith in Jesus Christ. The emotional healing and psychological value of this forgiveness is impressive and to be quite honest, beyond my comprehension. They testify how

they received God's peace in the act of forgiving their persecutors. Many have been given divine grace to behave in the same way that Jesus forgave his torturers. (Luke 23 v34)

In an articles I read on pastoral care, and in some of the situations I encounter, the inner healing received by forgiving those who have roused us to anger, wittingly or unwittingly, is a really an amazing experience. I must admit that this can take a lot of courage, particularly if the offending person is unaware of their offence. Asking God's forgiveness for our bitter feelings towards another person brings healing to both soul and body. This process of forgiving is enabled by seeking the face of God in Jesus Christ. The peace of God is the peace of eternity. By accepting this peace we receive an inner strength.

Some time ago I read about a total change in behaviour among prisoners in a Japanese war camp the change came by a prisoner who was a Christian doctor who was able to forgive all that was being done to him. When this doctor was released he wrote a book dealing with healing the family tree.

I am currently reading a book on the necessity of confession in the healing process of mind and body by Martin Israel. He particularly stresses the importance of forgiving in the interrelationships within home and family. He stresses the fact that forgiveness is one of the major factors in healing, both psychologically and physically, of those whom he counsels. After all, the injunction in the Lords Prayer, which most people know, is: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" (Mt.6:12). A key phrase in the Lord's Prayer (In the words of the Book of Common Prayer) is 'Forgive us our "trespasses" as we forgive those who "trespass" against us'. This can be seen as asking a person's forgiveness for insensitively intruding into their space or forgiving them their intrusion into our own space'. One well known prayer expresses it as 'Our unwitting sins'. Trespass is, in my experience, more often at the root of bitterness and resentment than overt violence.

Fr Bryan

An Extract from the Writings of Watchman Nee, a Chinese mystic:

Comment on the verse Mark. 6: verse 56.

As many as touched him were made whole.

Recall the incident of the Pharisee and the publican at prayer in the Temple.

The Pharisee understood all about tithes and offerings, yet from him there was no cry of the heart to God. It was the Publican who cried 'Lord have mercy on me'. Something went out to God from that man which met with an immediate response, and Jesus singles him out as the one whom God reckoned righteous. For what is it to be reckoned righteous? It is to touch God. The great weakness of so much preaching of the Gospel is that we try to make people understand the plan of salvation, and all too often to see little or no results. Wherein have we failed? I am sure it is in this, that our hearers do not see him. We have not adequately presented the person. We point them only to their sin or God's salvation, whereas their real need is to see the saviour himself, to meet him and to make contact with him.



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