

NEWSLETTER 25 : Oct - Nov - Dec 2008

Monastery of St. Barnabas the Encourager.

DIARY DATES

The Eucharist (Communion) will be celebrated on the third Sunday of each month and will be followed by Communion breakfast in the main kitchen. There will be the usual OPEN CHRISTMAS DAY for those who are without family connections.

ACTING WARDENS REPORT

The older we get the longer everything seems to take hence the delay in this quarter's issue of the news letter. Of course the constant contact with people and responding to their situations must take priority over other important work like writing the newsletter, therefore newsletters have to become deferred jobs. So, many apologies to those of you who accessed our web site at the beginning of this quarter expecting the autumn issue to be available.

As you know the news letters past and present can now be read by accessing our web site. Those, who, like us, and have not got the internet, can still have the news letters mailed to them upon payment of a subscription of £3 per year, payable in January. Needless to say we are still on the look out for a suitable person to join us and share our work.

FATHER BRYAN'S LETTER

I would like to apologise for this Newsletter coming out so late, in fact being a month behind schedule. As the News letter has to start with me, I am the culprit.

A PERSONAL AWARENESS OF THE PERSON OF GOD

I ask myself why so many people struggle to experience God when God is around us and in us, ever present and unfailingly available. I realise that some of the difficulty might lie in the direction of wanting to maintain absolute control over our own lives: there is an avoidance of any form of discipline which threatens to order our lives. The saints of old used to speak frequently of the struggle against the flesh, as they expressed it. So the struggle is against our self indulgence and self centredness, a struggle involving discipline. There are those who try, by various exercises, to force an experience of God, and who may mistake mystical feelings and spiritual experiences for an encounter with the person of God.

The Christian way of finding a relationship with God begins with our acknowledgement of our need of him, and then being open to the working of God's Holy Spirit within us. This is allowing God to do his work of love in our inner lives. In short, surrendering all our personal endeavours, methods and ideas and just inviting God into our lives. We ask God for his gift of the Holy Spirit and open our hearts to receive it. We need to remember that Jesus said 'When you have seen me you have seen the Father.' As we read about the life of Jesus we see how he lived and what he taught and through him we begin to

comprehend how to have a relationship with God through Jesus. It is then, and not before we are committed to him, that discipline and certain practices are useful in holding our attention, in enlarging our vision of him and in deepening the relationship with him. Then we become aware of God's guidance as the Holy Spirit prompts and urges within us the process of giving up our own will and accepting his. This is a life-long experience but as it is established we are enabled to allow God to guide us in our daily walk with him and so we draw close to him and he to us.

The practicing of this committed life allows God to teach us how to walk in faith in ordinary day to day situations. This is expressed in the classic book by Brother Laurence, 'The Practice of the presence of God'. As I understand it Laurence took out of the cloister all the complexities of the religious practices and practiced God's presence in everyday life, amidst the heat and clatter of the kitchen, the bustle and noise of the streets as well as the quiet of his prayers.

The daily discipline of reading a portion of scripture and finding therein direction and encouragement and discovering that it is a fact that God can speak to us through a few verses of a story in either the Old or New Testaments, becomes a source of wonder and delight. Reading and time given to prayer is a very active way of finding God's will revealed to us. This reading and contemplation contributes to the discipline in which we practice the presence of God in every situation and within every activity in which we are engaged.

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