THE Newman

THE JOURNAL OF THE NEWMAN ASSOCIATION

May 2014 Issue No. 92 £3.00

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Printing: Silver Pines Services, Sevenoaks

Articles, comments, etc.: Should be sent to Barry Riley by email at editor@newman.org.uk – items should be sent in Word format as an attachment or as an embedded text within the email. Hard-copy items may be sent by post to 17 Mount Pleasant Road, London W5 1SG. Tel: 020 8998 5829. Articles should not normally exceed 3,000 words.

Copy Deadline: for next issue is **July 15th 2014**.

The Newman: is published by the Newman Association, 20-22 Bedford Row, London WCIK 4JS. **Website:** http://www.newman.org.uk.

Email: info@newman.org.uk

British Library Reference Number: ISSN-0951-5399

Back numbers: copies of a number of previous issues of The Newman are available from the editor - see contact details above.

The Newman Association Charity No. 1006709

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Cover picture: *Heythrop College, London*

Comment

In his Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium Pope Francis set out two great issues: the inclusion of the poor in society and the achievement of peace. Indeed, poverty has become a key theme of his papacy. As he said last year: "A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being".

Growing inequality of wealth and income is one of the troubling features of our modern age. But relative differences are less threatening than the absolute level of destitution which can afflict the poorest. The growth of food banks in the UK is a warning of sickness in our economy and society.

But although concern about poverty is growing this is an age-old problem. In Deuteronomy, thousands of years ago, Moses addressed the theme vigorously. "Of course there will never cease to be poor in the land. Always be open-handed with your brother." Jesus picked up this theme when he was being anointed with expensive ointment just before he was seized in Jerusalem. No fewer than three Gospels report his comment as he rejected complaints that the use of such ointment was wasteful when the money could have gone to help the poor. As Mark put it: "You have the poor with you always and you can be kind to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me."

In the past support for the destitute has been linked with the concept of the "deserving poor"; the gaps in society are unjust and wealthier people carry an obligation to make amends. In our culture today, however, there are jealousies when poor people appear to be taking advantage of handouts — in the kind of "Benefits Street" culture of scroungers about which the tabloid press becomes so incensed.

Is poverty the result of misfortune or exploitation, or can it be self-inflicted amongst the "undeserving" poor? Today's politicians have developed the cliché of "hard-working families" in order to define a kind of implied personal responsibility. Benevolence is a natural Christian virtue, and yet there looms the danger of moral hazard: if society is too generous to the poor it may encourage people to adopt poverty as a way of life. In helping people out of poverty we must also somehow provide them with a dignified route to self-sufficiency.

So Pope Francis has added the ingredient of solidarity; we are all part of society. "Solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them."

Barry Riley

Sacramental Living

The London Newman Lecture for 2014 was given at Heythrop College, London, on March 6th by Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ

The second decade of the third millennium can look like both the best of times and the worst of times to be thinking about sacramental living in the body of Christ. It looks like the worst of times because that body has perhaps never looked so battered, bruised and fragile in this country. We are living with the results of devastating scandal within the church and widespread contempt or indifference towards it from outside. Our national media and large parts of contemporary society are hostile to any mention of faith or religion, except as a barely tolerable private eccentricity among consenting adults. Numbers are falling within the worshipping community and when I recently asked an Irish vocations promoter how things were going over there, he answered, "Like a wake without the booze!"

New Age Spiritualities

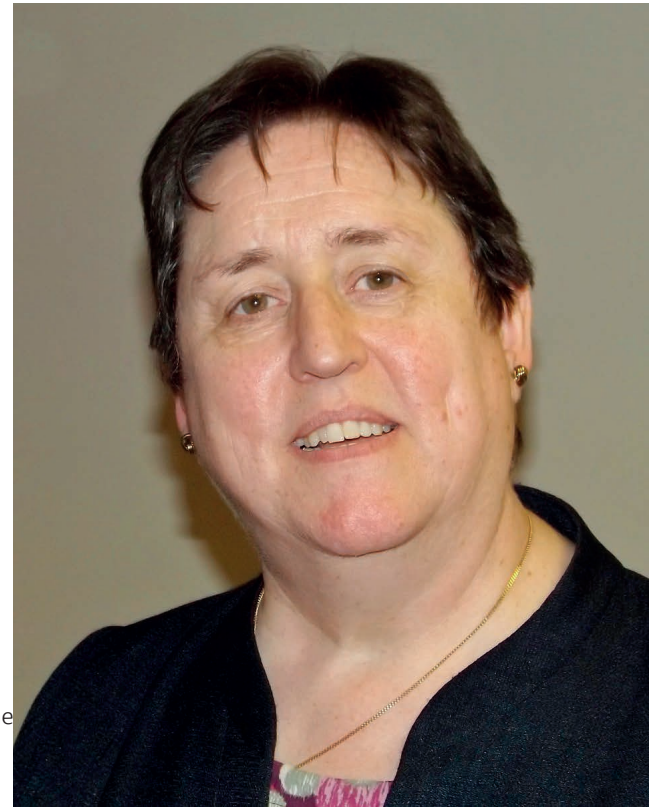
At the same time, it is also the best of times. The proliferation of self-help industries, of new age spiritualities and of process-based theories of management and group dynamics shows that people are hungry for what helps them to connect to themselves, to one another, and to some higher purpose in life than a spiral of ever-increasing and pointless consumption. If many of our young people are impervious to the lure of organised religion they are often passionate and generous in their commitment to causes for the betterment of the world. Although they see little reason for regular attendance at liturgies which they experience as lifeless and devoid of meaning they may nevertheless spend hours in prayer and meditation once they understand their need and their innate capacity for it. If they are reluctant to sign up to the communities which we have formed in parish, religious life or national movements, they have a strong sense of belonging. They want to belong, even if they don't want to join.

Into this world come Catholic Christians, energised — even 50 years on — by the Second Vatican Council, trying to live our faith with positive energy. How do we build up the body of Christ within this context and become not just receivers of sacraments as religious commodities, but livers of sacraments, outward signs of an inward grace, who have learned to make real what we signify? In sacramental forms of Christianity the story of salvation is mediated by means of signs and rituals through which we express our deepest religious convictions and longings. These signs articulate our prayerful search for God in a way that is "too deep for words". They are a way of communicating with God through an understanding that ordinary, everyday things can alert us to the deeper reality of God's presence among us. Bread, wine, oil, water — and the human body itself — can all speak of a greater mystery that shines through, and is encountered in everyday life.

A sacramental Church

The theologians Edward Schillebeeckx and Karl Rahner brought us back to an awareness of the sacramental nature of the church as rooted in the Incarnation. They reminded the church that symbolic expression is at the heart of human knowing and loving. Their insights transformed "the language of sacramental theology into more personal and dynamic terms, [challenged] the radical distinction between sacred and

secular, [reintroduced] the language of symbol, and [made] sacramental praxis the action of the whole church and not just of the clergy."[1] On the other hand, in an article on the sacramental body Tina Beattie warns that whereas a sacramental understanding of the Christian faith "can give rise to a heightened sense of religious experience and responsiveness, it can also have an infantilising effect if it is not tempered with a mature and reasoned ethical awareness".[2]



The reforms of Vatican II aimed to clear away the undergrowth of devotional accretions in order to make sufficient space for a faith based on the word of God and on patristic traditions to flourish. This made an important contribution to the development of a more adult, theologically-informed, Faith; but the conciliar reforms sometimes had an unintended effect in removing what was instinctive and intuitive in popular religion in the name of what was controlled by reason: by word instead of sign, by theology instead of devotion. This led in some instances to something dangerously Pelagian in its insistence on working to redeem ourselves and our world. Sally McFague claims that "God's presence is not only to be found in Scripture, or in the established sacraments of the church, but God is also present in each and every being in creation. From this incarnational base, the sacramental tradition claims that, in analogy with the body of Jesus Christ, all bodies can serve as ways to God, all can be open to and give news of the divine presence."[3]

In the eco-feminist theology that McFague espouses traditional sacramental teaching is important because it is arguably the foremost way in which Christianity has preserved and developed an appreciation for nature, encouraging Christians to value the natural world and look upon it as holy. This stands in contrast to other perspectives on nature within Christian history which devalue the natural world and seek to secularise, dominate or exploit it.[4]

The understanding of sacramental faith described above brings with it moral consequences. There is no more room in Christianity for seeing the natural world as a resource to be used and manipulated for human purposes. This is described by Ross as a profoundly anti-sacramental attitude.[5] A conscious return to traditional sacramentalism can be one way in which Christians might begin to change their exploitative, utilitarian attitudes toward nature, as well as toward other human beings.[6] The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales affirms that creation "has value in itself", and "has its own relationship with God, in some measure independently of humankind and beyond human understanding". Such a perspective "challenges our narrowly economistic view that the gifts of creation have value except as a 'factor of production' ".[7]

The Bishops add that each Eucharistic celebration is a reminder of the precious gifts of creation.[8] If the Eucharist and other liturgical rituals are seen in this way, through such a sacramental consciousness, then human minds and hearts can more easily make the link with sacramental moments of everyday life.[9] Therefore the sacramental principle that human beings can find God not by rejecting the world but by becoming immersed more deeply in it becomes more apparent. This is a direct consequence of the Incarnation. Once God chooses to dwell among us, sharing our human condition, all of creation is profoundly affected. St. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Romans when he speaks of all creation groaning in one great act of giving birth to the new life of the resurrection, experienced as an eschatological sign of God's presence both here and now and not yet fulfilled.

The eternal creator

The doctrine of the Trinity has been said to preserve the otherness of God.[10] In the Trinity, God is completely other to humans, unlike any created creature, in particular a male or female created creature. The Trinity is described as the eternal creator who chooses to be fully present in human history, to the point of taking flesh and dying on the cross, and continues to be fully present now in the Spirit who is with us always. This doctrine can only have been formulated by those who are convinced of the closeness of God to all of creation. The doctrine of the Trinity affirms the fundamental goodness and beauty of each human being. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity is fully human, and fully divine. This suggests that matter and humanity are not intrinsically evil or inferior (as some of the dualistic thinkers would have us believe) but that it is good with the potential to be an image of the divine. The doctrine of the Trinity as traditionally understood challenges us to embrace difference without hierarchy. The persons of God are different and distinct, yet one is not better or higher than the other, and there is a profound unity among them. This can enable us to understand that the diversity within creation does not need to lead to hierarchy, but can be a source of unity.[11]

These arguments point to the Trinity as a model for humanity. If humanity follows this model of love then it will reject any form of hierarchy, and will celebrate the goodness of all created beings in their diversity while holding on to each other in unity. St. Paul understood this when he warned the Corinthians against eating and drinking their way to damnation through unworthy reception of the Eucharist. It is perhaps an indication of our genius for turning our attention into less threatening directions that generations

of Catholics have focused this unworthiness principally on questions of sexual morality, when the context to which Paul was referring was the introduction of social and economic differentiation into the *koinonia*, the community of Christ.

What we have above all, in the sacraments, is embodied forms of divine human encounter. In order to understand what sacramental living might mean, we need to look at our own bodies, at the way in which we personally embody the "hope that is ours". It is part of the message of Catholic Christianity that matter matters, that there is — and needs to be — an embodied dimension to the faith we proclaim. The signs that we give, the signs we live need to be incarnated in the actual, physical lives of those around us. This is why Jesus himself took on human flesh, so that we could see and touch and know in our bodies the love that God has for us and the saving power that is at work in our lives.

My understanding of baptism is that it is the embodiment of a vocation built on an intimate, personal relationship of each one with God in Jesus Christ, incarnated within our own particularity. How does this work out in our lives? At one level it is fairly simple. We live in the dispensation of grace bought for us in the human life, death and resurrection of Jesus, brother of our blood and bone. This allows us to experience and understand the ordinary life of our work, skills, relationships and our capacity for playfulness and enjoyment as consecrated and as a means to holiness. In a communion which effects what it signifies the rhythm of conversion is constantly enacted by our small efforts to respond to the invitation of God to union with God's self. This understanding of the Incarnation sees a huge importance in what is apparently insignificant.

Living a human life

Jesus didn't just save the world by dying on the cross and rising again: he saved it by living a human life. Tradition tells us that Jesus lived until he was 33. We hear about his birth, there's a fleeting appearance at the time of his Bar Mitzvah, then a period between 18 months and three years of his public life; otherwise, nothing. What was he doing all that time? He was saving the world by living and doing ordinary things well, and this is how we are called to share in his saving work.

We do not exist for ourselves as individuals or as a body as if that were an end in itself: we exist in order to be *sent*. That is the meaning of belonging to a body that



is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. It is also the meaning behind the final words of the Mass, *"ite, missa est"*, which is not best translated as "Go, the Mass is ended" as if to say, "you've had the holy bit, now go off and get on with your real lives". It is best translated as "Go, you've been sent", or "Go, the *real* Mass, the sending, has begun". The incarnation, and being part of the body of Christ, means that we ourselves embody that presence of Christ in the world; we don't *have* a body, we *are* a body, so how we are in our bodies and in our human reality and context matters. In the grace of Christ and his Spirit all our wounded humanity is reordered to become genuinely what it was created to be and, in quiet ways, this is the heart of our religious understanding of reality.

In the secular world everything has to be supercharged and reinforced and artificially flavoured before we can begin to savour it. In the kingdom of God, however, the "ordinary is experienced as full of grace". In our One Third World our every need can be instantly satisfied. Christmas advertising asks: "What do you give to the person who has everything?" The only answer can be more nothing, more desire, a sense of wanting and needing something so badly that we cannot rest until we have it.

St. Augustine might be called the patron saint of desire. It was he, after all, who coined the honest prayer, "Lord, give me chastity, but not yet". In one of his sermons he also wrote: "The whole life of a good Christian is holy desire. What you desire you cannot see yet. But the desire gives you the capacity, so that when it does happen that you see, you may be fulfilled....This is our life, to be exercised by desire."

It is ironic that so many in our world are *deprived* of their most fundamental needs while the West is *sated* with consumerism. The huge rise of depressive illness in the West has been related to our having too many choices, too much of everything. Our market-driven culture suffers from "affluenza", from inflating desire so that we are more conscious of what we don't have, rather than what we do have. This means that we have a permanent sense of lacking something that is vital to our happiness, welfare and security. "Affluenza" is one of the main reasons why we remain insensitive to the environmental consequences of our actions.

Our being Christians in the Catholic tradition requires us to live sacramentally, to understand that the ordinary tasks within our ordinary lives are signs that signify that life matters and that being human makes a difference. The mystery that lies at the heart of our Christian life hallows the ordinary and gives it its proper value without any false inflation. When we have learned truly to tell the difference between the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God it introduces a transformational power into all aspects of our lives: personal, domestic and social. This runs counter to the patterns of instrumentalisation that have become the hallmark of the kingdom of this world, because it has the vision to see all human persons, whatever their race, age, gender or ability, as of supreme value within an eternal perspective.

"This is My Body"

For many centuries now we have been in danger of turning the Eucharist into a holy fetish, an object of decontextualised adoration instead of a dynamic encounter with Christ who calls us always into a process of transformation. Today, more than ever, we are called to a deeper understanding of the words "This is my body". The life and death and teaching of Jesus point us towards a multiple understanding of those words which

will empower us to live justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with God.

In the first instance, of course, they point to the actual sacrifice which Christ made of his human life, embodied in flesh, for the saving of the world. He teaches us to see Him in a twofold perspective. Firstly, there is the identification with all distressed humanity: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do unto me". Then there is the identification with the One God: "Whoever sees me has seen the Father, for the Father and I are one". In that simultaneous divine and incarnate perspective the words "this is my body" point to the invitation, made at the prayer of the offertory, that we should share in the divine life of the one who humbled himself to share our humanity. Gerard Manley Hopkins says:

> "—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces."[12]

When we receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist we are invited into a transformative process which draws us into the divine life of the Trinity itself, but which by that token also draws us into a share in the way that the threefold God comes close to and identifies with our human reality and context. Through our participation in the sacramental signs of the divine presence among us God is transforming us into people whose deepest instincts are communicative, mutual, giving and receiving. This makes us radically one with all humanity in the incarnate Christ, and especially with humanity in distress. To deny that mutual solidarity — through indifference, apathy or the inability to see the sacred embedded within the ordinary — is to deny the meaning and value of this sacrament, the purpose of which is to enable us to live justly, love tenderly, walk humbly.

This transforming and transformative grace is not given for our personal satisfaction or fulfilment. It is given for the gradual transformation of the world. In India there is a greeting which, translated, means "the God in me greets the God in you". What an entire revolution in our way of thinking and acting could be brought about if we said and truly believed that each time we encountered other human beings whose outlook or mode of being we find alien? Sacramental, Eucharistic and reconciled living would become a reality capable of changing our entire reality.

We don't have to look half way across the world to find life diminished, opportunity denied, talent and energy wasted. I believe that it is at the point of the gathering disenchantment with market-driven capitalism and the degradation it has brought in its wake that Christianity intersects in a critical engagement with modernity. This offers not an outright condemnation of it but a fruitful synthesis which rejects a non-sacramental conception of human existence while appropriating the best fruits of modernity's understanding of humanity and its project. A sacrament, as anyone reared on the Catechism will remember, is an outward sign of inward grace — a signifier that says "God is here". A sacramental conception of human existence sees grace and nature as not alien from one another, but grace as being constitutive of human nature.[13]

The grandeur of God

This means that we need to learn to "greet Him the days we meet Him and bless when we understand".[14] "The world", Gerard Manley Hopkins, the Jesuit poet, tells us, "is

charged with the grandeur of God".[15] It is also charged with God's pain as the Christ who plays in ten thousand places is crucified again each day within the misery and degradation that we inflict on one another. The sacramental vision of reality means that if there are many opportunities for us to live Eucharistically there are also repeated moments each day for us to live reconciliation and healing and to exercise the priesthood of all believers through our confirmation in the Holy Spirit received at our baptism. Whether we are married or not there is also the invitation to live an intimate encounter in love with the Other who frames our lives as sexual, gendered people called to choose life at every moment.

There are multiple understandings of the primordial vocation to be fully human in baptism, to be reconciled reconcilers, to be healed healers and above all to see the body of Christ within all humanity: this is what it means to be a sacramental body of believers. The indigenous cultures of our world tend to appreciate far better than we do in the "sophisticated" West the radical closeness between human beings and the earth from which the Bible teaches us we are made. This is not just airy-fairy land, a green, bean-scene hippy survival representing another escape from the realities of the world. It lies at the heart of the Eucharist itself, where we are united to the powerful dream of the Creator God and invited to become co-sustainers of that creation, living justly and sustainably, loving tenderly and with intention, walking humbly and with purpose.

The world is in a mess — we know it. The systems we have created for understanding and conducting ourselves have brought great and wonderful advances, but at a terrible cost to the majority. What re-membership into God in the body of Christ is all about is the transformation of our deepest desires so that we become not consumers identifying ourselves by what we can acquire and possess, but creators of a world after the mind of God.

Notes

1 Susan A. Ross, "God's Embodiment and Women" in Catherine Mowry LaCugna ed., *Freeing Theology: the Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, (San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1993), p.191

2 Tina Beattie, "The Sacramental Body: Symbols of a Gendered Church" in *The Way Supplement* , 101, 2001, pp. 73-87

3 Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: an Ecological Theology* (USA: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 183-4

4 Ibid, p.184. See also Lynn J. White's famous critique of Christianity and its role in sanctioning the domination of nature through a misinterpretation of Genesis.

5 Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: a Feminist Sacramental Theology*, (London, Continuum, 2001), p. 178

6 McFague, *The Body of God*, p. 185

7 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *The Call of Creation*, 2002

8 Ibid.

9 Christine E. Burke, "Globalisation and Ecology" in Denis Edwards, ed., *Earth Revealing, Earth Healing: Ecology & Christian Theology*, (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2001) p. 41

10 Janet Martin Soskice and Diana Lipton eds., *Feminism and Theology*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 139

11 Ibid, pp. 139-143

12 Gerard Manley Hopkins, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire", see https://www.poets.org/media/pocket/pocket_dragonflies.pdf

13 Many of the ideas engaged with here are echoes of James Hanvey and Anthony Carroll, *On the Way to Life: Contemporary Culture and Theological Development as a Framework for Catholic Education, Catechesis and Formation*, (Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life).

14 See Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Wreck of the Deutschland", http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173668

15 Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur", see http://www.bartleby.com/122/7.html

The Handmaid of the Lord

A poem for the Feast of the Annunciation

What wondrous gift to come to such a maid,
And she unknown and all unknowing.
Yet, in that moment when the angel spoke,
The whole of human history changed its course
Because she answered yes, whilst
Pond'ring in her heart what it might mean.
How could she know the greatness of the news
Conveyed by Gabriel's words? Not only
Hope of bliss in life to come, but in this world,
If they would only heed her son-to-be,
A transformation made from strife to peace,
Peace grounded on His justice, truth and love.
And only later would she understand
That henceforth all would call her blessed
For those great things that God had done to her.

John Mulholland, March 2014

The Incarnation of the Word in words

by John Huntriss

Author's note: After I spoke in November 2013 to the North Gloucestershire Circle about the Vatican II document Dei Verbum I was asked if I would submit a written version for publication. My response was that I would rather concentrate on just one point from that fine document: it is found in Chapter III, encapsulated in the words that "in Sacred Scripture God speaks through men in human fashion".

It was Pius XII who first taught me to connect the inspiration of Scripture with the Incarnation (in Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1943). Benedict XVI (*Verbum Domini*, 2010) traces this teaching as far back as St Ambrose in the fourth century. It is explored in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and I think it is particularly clear in Part Two of* The Gift of Scripture*, the teaching document published by our bishops in 2005 (CTS).*

In the Divine Praises we say: "Blessed be Jesus Christ, True God and True Man". This crisply and memorably states our belief. Jesus Christ is not part God and part Man, or sometimes God and sometimes Man. He is True God from before eternity; and True Man from the moment of his conception. We know that is so whether we think we understand it or not.

In the body of human flesh which he took from Mary he ascended into heaven; but he is still with us in ways that we can touch and hear and see with our physical senses (cf the beginning of I John): he is physically present with us in the sacraments, in the Church, in my neighbour... These may be seen as extensions of the Incarnation. Scripture, too, should be seen through the lens of the Incarnation. John Paul II said that the writing of the words of God "was the first step towards the Incarnation of the Word of God".

Jesus Christ is not partly or sometimes God and partly or sometimes Man, but he is True God and True Man. Likewise, Scripture is not partly or sometimes the Word of God and partly or sometimes the words of Man: it is the Word of God incarnate in human words, wholly the Word of God and wholly human words. This, too, is true whether we understand it or not.

Speaking through events

There seems to be a parallel with the way that God is understood to speak through events. At the beginning of II Kings 17 we read how Hoshea, king in Samaria of the northern tribes of Israel, was a vassal of King Shalmaneser of Assyria and paid him tribute, but then he tried to get better terms from the other great power, Egypt. This unsurprisingly provoked Shalmaneser who invaded and crushed Hoshea and his kingdom. So verses 1-6 have told us plainly why the catastrophe of 721 BC happened; only for verse 7 to say we are now to be told why it happened! Here history and politics are not mentioned: the reason was that God's people had sinned against him. We are given two quite different reasons, historical and theological, of man and God; but we are not to choose between them for both are valid. What happened is authentic human history – the exercise of free will by fallen men; and at the same time God is speaking through these events.

Again, at the beginning of Luke 13 Jesus is asked about two recent catastrophes: were

the victims greater sinners than others who were not killed? "No," says Jesus, "but all of you take these events as a call to repent." So, presumably, Pilate behaved brutally because, as we know, he could be a brute; and the tower fell because it was poorly built or maintained. These were authentically human events and the question to ask is not "What was God doing?" but "What might God be saying through what happened?"

We might ask "Why our economic woes of recent years?" Did God (as it were) write the whole script? No: he has given us free will and this has been authentic human history, a tale, perhaps, of greed, of incompetence. But then we do well if we go on to ask "What might God be saying to us through these events?"

Jesus Christ is True God and True Man. Heresy comes in when either of these is undermined. Scripture is the Word of God and human words. Again, errors come in when either is understated. Liberals may become uncomfortable when we say that Jesus of Nazareth is not merely a good man but God; and that Scripture is not merely human words but the Word of God. Fundamentalists proclaim that Scripture is the Word of God but are distinctly uncomfortable when we say it is also human words.

Either they may be radical protestants who believe that the Fall corrupted us not just beyond the point that we could save ourselves but totally, so that there is nothing good left in us. The idea of a human contribution to Scripture is therefore very suspect to such people. Or else they may have a sort of misplaced over-piety like that of people who are uneasy with Jesus's humanity. ("Do you think Jesus grew over the years in his understanding of who he was?" we ask. "No, he is God so he always knew everything." "Everything? Was he born already knowing how to walk, and talk, and feed himself?" "Well, learning things like that is part of being human." QED! You have to be firm but gentle with such people.)

Instruments of the Holy Spirit

Pius XII describes the human authors as instruments of the Holy Spirit, but *living* instruments with the use of reason. To get the full meaning of a passage of Scripture we have to consider the character of the writer and his audience, the context, circumstances, and cultural background, the literacy and linguistic conventions and so on.

If you wish to know what the Old Testament prophets were about you must study the historical background and the conventions of prophecy; the Pontifical Biblical Commission says it is wrong to see such prophecies as "photographic anticipations of future events". So when Isaiah wrote of the sufferings of the "servant of God" which God would use for the salvation of others it is true, to a greater or lesser extent, of all who serve God. We do not have to suppose that the Holy Spirit revealed to him all the events of Holy Week. But when Holy Week came, more than five centuries later, it was seen that he had been enabled to speak more truly than he himself knew.

It is because Scripture is human words as well as the Word of God that we have to keep asking ourselves: "What kind of writing is this?" Do it more or less subconsciously, as you do many times a day with human words, whether written or spoken, as you have done from early childhood. When the Psalmist speaks of hills skipping like lambs recognise it as poetic language just as you do when it is not between covers marked HOLY BIBLE. It is the error of fundamentalism to say that because this is the Word of God it must be literally true. It is the Word of God, but

incarnate in human words – and human words are used in many different ways.

Insist on this: we are not wriggling but interpreting human words as we always do. We are not being dishonest if we refuse to defend as literally true the story of two nudists in a garden having a conversation with a snake; we may say, rather, that this is colourful and folksy fiction, used as the vehicle to convey some important truths about how our first parents' total loyalty to God began to be prised apart; and that mistrust and envy were among the first seeds of sin. Fiction is not lying for there is no intention to deceive. But good fiction is a mirror held up to life.

Science and scripture

One can see why an earlier generation was so concerned when it looked as though we had to choose between science and scripture: was the world made – or not – in six days? The concern is: once you admit that one thing is not literally true where does the rot stop? Where does the garment stop unravelling? If the Creation story is not literally true can I believe in the Resurrection? Pius XII pointed the way to answering this concern: the Word of God is given in human words and we must distinguish the ways in which these words, being human, are used. The opening chapters of Genesis are of one genre, the later chapters of another; then we have law, folklore, history, poetry, prophecy, wisdom writing, Gospels, letters and so on. And when you move from one genre to another that is where the garment stops unravelling: *this* is literally true, *that* was never meant to be.

As I said, I find this teaching most illuminating with its various implications. Benedict XVI shows that it was already at least sixteen centuries old when Pius XII wrote. Historians may tell me I am wrong but I have the impression that Pius blew a lot of dust off it and made us think again about what it means: that the Church has been thinking more boldly about Scripture as human words while keeping a firm hold on the equal truth that it is the Word of God. There is no new teaching then, but there is an element of rediscovery.

John Huntriss is a member of the North Gloucestershire Circle

Giles Hibbert OP – Funeral Homily, January 15th 2014

Fabian Radcliffe OP

Had Giles lived another 12 days he would have reached the age of 85. That's quite an achievement for someone who in the last two decades of his life suffered severe arthritic and neuralgic pain and kept going largely on morphine. He was certainly tough. Still, we have not come here simply to congratulate him on living beyond the four-score years that the Psalmist allotted to the strongest of us. No, we have come here primarily to commend Giles to the mercy and love of God and to pray that he will enter into the fullness of Christ's risen life for which he longed.

So if that is the purpose of a Requiem Mass, then the homily should not just be a eulogy about the dead person. At the same time how can one preach a funeral homily without saying something about the one who has died? And if you are to speak about him, you will certainly want to speak well of him, which is precisely what a eulogy is. Incidentally, that word "precisely" was one of Giles' favourites. But, as he ruefully remarked, Edmund Hill, in his review of Giles' book, gently pointed out that his use of the word was usually in inverse proportion to the clarity of his thinking.

Giles came from what we can call an "establishment" background. His father had been a General in the army and his grandfather an Admiral in the navy. He followed his father into the army and saw service in North Africa, and also in Korea, where, like Julius Caesar, he threw bridges across rivers. After a few years the army sent him to Cambridge to do a degree in engineering. It looked as though he was set for lifetime in the army. But that was not to be.

Captain to Brother

What was it that transformed Captain Robert Hibbert of the Royal Engineers into Brother Giles Hibbert of the Order of Preachers? It's not easy to say, because he never really talked about it. I sometimes left openings in conversation so that he could reveal more, had he wished; but he never did. But from what little he did say, we know that at Cambridge he had a "Damascus Road" experience: Christ came to meet him, and overwhelmed him, and he was convinced that his only possible response was to become a Catholic and a Dominican.

We tend to compare experiences like this with St Paul's conversion. I think Giles had some reservations about St Paul, but he loved St John; and perhaps John's story of the call of Nathanael is closer to Giles. Nathanael had scoffed at the suggestion that the Messiah might come from the wretched little town of Nazareth. But then Philip took Nathanael to meet Jesus; and Jesus said: "Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no guile".

Nathanael was astonished. "How do you know me?"' he said. Jesus replied: "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you". Just what that means we can never know. But it overwhelmed Nathanael. "Rabbi", he replied, "you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel". Cambridge, it seems to me, was Giles' fig tree, where Christ saw him, and knew him, and called him. And like Nathanael he replied: "You are the Son of God".

This experience seems to have come to him out of the blue. But his response must have been a wholehearted "yes" because he never seriously wavered, either as a

Catholic or as a Dominican. That's not to say, of course, that he didn't have difficult moments, periods when he was exasperated with the Church and with the Order. But then, surely, we all experience that. He always knew that for him any alternative way was simply not possible.

Unconventional life

His life in the Order was characteristically unconventional. He studied in Louvain, taught in the *studium*, was Regent of Studies for a short time, and worked on a long-drawn-out doctorate with a typically vast theme: the doctrine of man in St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas and St John of the Cross. At one point he received a letter from his supervisor which began: "Dear Mr Hibbert, I do not seem to have heard anything from you for over a year". He cherished this letter with a mixture of pride and shame.

Round about this time he became involved with the peace movement, and made links with peace groups in East Germany and with the communist party in Britain. All this was inspired by his sense of justice. But politics was not his strength. He was essentially a highly intelligent engineer, witness his complex model railway set-up in the cellars of Blackfriars, Oxford, and his intricate electric bell system in the Priory entrance hall there. Years later, when Giles had moved away from Oxford, the electrician who dismantled the system marvelled at its sophistication, and could not imagine how anyone could have devised it.

In the late Sixties he and I embarked on a series of epic holidays: canoeing down the River Severn, exploring the north-west of Scotland, five times to the west of Ireland, and then to Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. In the early Eighties he moved into university chaplaincies at Sheffield and, briefly, York, and became a strong supporter of Student Cross. Later he moved to our house in south Manchester, where he began Blackfriars Publications, printing and publishing small theological pamphlets which he saw as his contribution to our preaching apostolate. He became the national chaplain to the Newman Association and chaplain to its Manchester and North Cheshire Circle.

After the closure of the Manchester house he moved to Chapel-en-le-Frith; and there he stayed, still publishing, until it became too difficult for him to live on his own, and he moved to the London Priory, and later here to Cambridge.

So he came back to be with his brethren in a priory. And he settled in remarkably well. He was not always easy to live with. He could be fractious, aggressive and contemptuous. But this did not come from malice or perversity, I think, but from a temperamental impatience with what he took to be hypocrisy or pomposity or limp piety or self-deception in others. Sometimes he realised his judgement of someone was quite wrong, and then he was disarmingly and sincerely repentant. Those who looked after him when he needed it in his later years discovered that, though he could be exasperatingly difficult, he was at the same time humbly grateful for their care. The novices, I am sure, will remember this. Some years ago at Chapel-en-le-Frith, after he had been ill in a local nursing home, he went back, with presents, to say thank you to the staff who had cared for him.

A deeper reflection

That illness sparked another change: a deeper reflection on death and purgatory. He had earlier been puzzled, perhaps sceptical, about purgatory. Some years before, when Bob Ombres wrote a booklet on Purgatory for Blackfriars Publications, Giles wanted to entitle it: "Purgatory? You must be joking!" But now, faced with the prospect of dying, he clarified his thoughts in a short paper which he called *"Embracing the Future"*.

We are to die with Christ, he says, so that we can live with Him. And he suggests that at death, "in a flash of timelessness", we are confronted with all those whom we have hurt, and confronted with all the times and ways that we have put ourselves first, either in aggression or through laziness. And we are healed by the loving presence of the Christ who stands by us as friend, teacher and healer.

So purgatory is not passive – being healed or cleansed – but rather a process of responding positively to those whom we have hurt, having to meet the challenge of being healed through them in Christ. So one is able to say: "I look forward to dying, however painful the experience of purgatory is going to be". It is better, he says, to speak of "dying" rather than "death"; the one is positive, the other somewhat negative. "Dying authentically", he says, "is rather like building a bridge – constructive and creative, a leap forward towards something new – the other side". So the elderly, ailing friar joins hands with the young army engineer.

The meaning of 'meeting-up'

I cannot but think that this is the spirit in which Giles embraced his own death; he sought forgiveness, in Christ, from all those whom he had harmed and wounded. "I hope", he wrote (in words that might have been written for today) "that I don't 'meet' any of you 'there'; for it would mean that I had at some time hurt you, or failed in caring for you. I hope, however, that we shall all 'meet up' purified in the glory of the light of the Resurrection – in other words, in Heaven". And then, characteristically, he adds: "Whatever the meaning of 'meeting up' might be".

Giles Hibbert died on December 28th, 2013, and his funeral took place in Cambridge on January 15th.

Fondly Remembered

A personal note on Giles Hibbert OP by Josephine Way

I never imagined, at a long-ago Newman AGM, that this huge figure in a boiler suit could be the national chaplain – let alone that he would come to be a dear friend. He never to my knowledge wore the Dominican habit (on the Holy Land pilgrimage he was resplendent in a brilliant multi-coloured T-shirt) and his only concession to liturgical vestments was a stole. This attitude to dress was indicative of the wide-ranging freedom of his thought, shorn of unnecessary complications and outmoded concepts. Conversation with Giles was rich in new, and sometimes startling, ideas.

I was firmly corrected at a circle meeting when I announced that Giles would celebrate Mass. "No, Josephine" he said, "we shall all celebrate Mass and I shall preside". For Giles, the Eucharist was the offering of the gathered community; it was not a prerogative of the priest. The logical follow-on from this was that there could never be more than one presider, so that concelebration made no sense. This understanding, so clear to Giles, was not self-evident to others.

When the Manchester chaplaincy closed Giles made a life for himself in a cosy little house, his urban hermitage at Chapel-en-le-Frith; I would sometimes stop off when travelling down from the north-east. He would take me out for a drive, never on main roads, let alone motorways. His preference was for narrow, winding lanes, preferably with grass growing up the middle: "Accolade!" he would exclaim.

No longer able to live alone he adapted to community life in North London. When I visited him there he made me lunch and escorted me back to the station in his electric wheelchair. Later, at the reception he gave for friends with the proceeds of Blackfriars Publications, I was sad to see him so physically diminished: but the news of his death was still a shock. Giles is irreplaceable and his passing a great personal loss.

Secularism: threat or opportunity?

Myriam François-Cerrah

The author was brought up as a French/Irish Catholic but has converted to Islam

Edward Said, the Arab academic, used to say: "I'm Christian, but I'm culturally Muslim". Inversely, I would say: "I'm Muslim, but I'm culturally Christian". Christian festivities and holidays are built into my life, whether I choose to incorporate them or not. I recently returned from Paris with a traditional cake we eat in France for the epiphany, called *La Galette des rois* – I explained to my children its religious significance for Christians, which although not an event marked in the Muslim calendar, I'm happy to incorporate into our hybrid home culture, where I always emphasise the importance of gleaning the wisdom of other Divine traditions.

I mention the cake story because I'm always reminded when I return to the fatherland (my mother being Irish) that France, despite all its protestations over secularism, is also a deeply traditional country in many ways, where Christianity, although arguably marginalised from the political sphere, continues to hold tremendous importance in national culture. It dictates the holidays, the pâtisseries we eat and when; but it is also the unspoken language of birth, marriage and death – an unconscious backdrop for many, but a backdrop all the same. And I often consider how much poorer French culture would be without a Christmas '*buche*' or the cathedral of Nôtre Dame or the philosophy of St Augustine.

Reflecting on the topic of secularism I can't help but start by considering the good intentions which underpinned the secularist trend in France: the hope of ending ecclesiastical privileges and affirming universal principles including the freedom of conscience and equal rights expressed through the Declaration of Human Rights. The initial objective was to make the church a source of public morals and not the basis for politics, to guarantee that religious practices should be permitted, but with no preference given to any outlook. It was to ensure, as Rajeev Bhargava[1] describes it, that the plurality of society is met by a type of state neutrality he defines as "principled distance". Of course, today this aspiration seems far removed from the arguments about crosses or headscarves in schools or the right for women who wear face veils to move around freely.

My own view that a very specific socio-historical juncture, namely the Enlightenment, the Age of Reason dating from the 17th century, has led too many of us often to dismiss religion wholesale, without examining the rich heritage which religionS (plural) offer us. Could we actually be overlooking centuries of wisdom in so doing? Quite understandably, the excesses of the church and the abuses by institutionalised religious authorities, together with the conflict between science and religion, gave rise to a movement, the Enlightenment, which associated religion and religious people with hypocrisy: that is, a deficiency in reason and discrimination.

Many of the critiques which emerged during this period were valid and contributed to purging religion – but specifically *institutionalised* religion – of some of its worst excesses. But my own examination of religious philosophy has led me to conclude that we mistakenly threw out the baby with the bathwater. Or to quote Charles Taylor, the Canadian philosopher, the counterview to the suggestion that the Enlightenment,

or the Age of Reason, was a move from darkness into light is the view that it was "an unqualified move into error, a massive forgetting of salutary and necessary truths about the human condition." Today, largely as a consequence of this massive reassessment of religion, its place within modern secular societies is socially contested and politically divisive.

Fears of religious folk

For people of faith the concern is that religion may become merely tolerated; it may no longer be a moral compass and a social glue, but a quirky eccentricity, derided at best, and often denounced as a form of intolerance and closed-mindedness. The fears of religious folk also vary to some extent as a consequence of their place within broader society. Church of England folk may feel rather differently than Hindus about secularism and the opportunities, or restrictions, secularism is deemed to afford. And of course, across the world, secularism takes many different forms. In the Middle East for example, secularism is associated with brutal dictatorships and religion with people power.

I recently debated the issue of secularism with a Christian colleague from Ekklesia[2] for the BBC. My friend, a committed Christian himself, argued that secularism has not gone far enough in the UK: he gave as examples the presence of bishops in the House of Lords, the fact that the monarch promises to uphold Christianity and the selectiveness permitted in enrolment in religious schools. In his words: "Jesus reserved his harshest words for the rich and powerful and for religious hypocrites. In contrast, the monarchy and House of Lords represent privilege and inequality."

My main concern with doing away entirely with Christian symbolism is that those symbols contribute to fostering a sense of national identity and culture. Nations need common values and perhaps more than that, common symbols of the sacred. Like the academic Tariq Modood[3] I believe it is "quite possible in a country like Britain to treat the claims of all religions in accordance with multicultural equality without having to abolish the established status of the Church of England, given that it has come to be a very 'weak' form of establishment and that the church has come to play a positive ecumenical and multi-faith role."

Prince Charles's suggestion that he seems himself as 'defender of Faith' rather than defender of 'the' Faith is one such example of this. Free democratic societies require a high level of commitment and participation which can only be achieved with a strong sense of collective identity. It seems to me that Christianity should very much play a part in that collective identity, both in terms of its historical significance but also in terms of the contribution of Christians to modern Britain, alongside that of other faith and non-faith communities. All modern societies must, and will, undergo a redefinition of their historical identity.

Christian symbolism

But also, my concern with marginalising Christian symbolism stems from the fact that this inadvertently lends legitimacy to the view that religion ought to have no presence or voice in the public sphere. This is problematic to me on a number of fronts, not least in terms of the loss of invaluable wisdom offered by diverse religious traditions, but also the potential impotency subsequently imposed on religious organisations who time and time again are shown to be an invaluable element of our social tapestry: they

support the most deprived, offering an inclusive space for the elderly, the disabled and those often marginalised by the mainstream.

A recent survey from Manchester University found a direct correlation between higher visits to religious places and lower crime figures, especially in relation to shoplifting, drug use and music piracy. The findings suggest this is because religion not only teaches people about 'moral and behavioural norms', but also because when individuals spend time with like-minded people it is less probable that they will get mixed up with the 'wrong crowd'.

The largest organiser of food banks in the UK, the Trussell Trust, is a Christian charity which has doubled the number of people it feeds over the past year. Similar initiatives are run by other faith groups, including Muslim organisations like Rumi's Cave which runs a soup kitchen for the homeless every Thursday. It remains deeply reassuring that, where the state fails, religion steps in to fill the gaps.

Interestingly, studies also suggest that people of faith are generally more content. According to data from Gallup-Healthways (which has surveyed 1,000 people a day for several years): *"Americans who attend a church, synagogue, or mosque frequently report experiencing more positive emotions and fewer negative ones in general than do those who attend less often or not at all."* Of course, this is not to say people of no faith don't also do good, through volunteering and donating, but religion, as opposed to faith, is all about the social, the societal. It is about the meta-narrative which drives how we perceive the world and our place within it; a totally secular public sphere, with all the goodwill of the Alain Bottons of the world, lacks an overarching and coherent narrative to encourage citizens to do good. Good becomes aleatory, or dependent on chance – the product of individualised and individualistic decisions about one's own relationship to the world. We must not rely on an overly optimistic (in my view) hope that people will do the right thing.

How can secularism's priorities possibly be compared with the depth of religious traditions which teach that our worth as human beings is inherently tied to the good we spread in the world? We rely on centuries of teachings about charity and selflessness, and about concern for the meek and the disenfranchised.

And so the push for greater secularisation must be approached cautiously. In some ways the attempt to create a neutral public sphere – one which might prove blind to religion or its absence – could help to foster greater tolerance. Such neutrality might ensure that the diversity of the nation which is modern Britain is reflected at all levels and that the privileges of a historically-rooted religious group do not supersede the right of all citizens, whatever their faith or lack thereof, to be represented in and influence the public sphere.

Charles Taylor argues that rather than focusing on the separation of church and state, or on the notion of removing religion from the public sphere à la French republican model, we should focus on the objectives of secularism – which he lists in line with the French revolutionary trinity as "liberty, equality and fraternity' as well as the harmony of relations – and derive the concrete arrangements from there. In other words, what are the objectives of secularism? To defend plurality. Therefore how can the state best achieve this?

Like many people of faith I have profound reservations about the radical secularism

being pushed from some quarters in an attempt to depict religious views as antiquated and outmoded at best, and archaic and discriminatory at worst. Such currents pose a significant challenge to religious communities because of the intransigent assumptions concerning the assumed universality and immutability of liberal norms.

A few months ago the Grand Mufti of Atheism[4] himself waged his own mini-war against *The Times* for referring to "Muslim babies" in an article, contending that babies are not Muslim or Christian or otherwise. Tim Stanley wrote a rather brilliant response to him in *The Daily Telegraph* pointing out that this ignores how religion and culture work; Muslim or Christian or Hindu parents are adherents of a narrative which includes their loved ones within it. Of course, Muslim parents have Muslim babies because that is how Muslim parents perceive things.

The underlying issue, of course, is a much deeper one, the idea pushed by radical secularists that the state, rather than creating a neutral public sphere in which all religious views can coexist, must impose a pseudo-neutrality which banishes any trace of religion from our midst. This is a worry, not least because, as fully-fledged, taxpaying citizens, religious folk have as much right as anyone to see their views respected by the state.

In academia, modernisation theory, although widely discredited, continues to influence how many of us perceive the world. It holds that all societies are evolving according to a linear model, with Western industrialised societies selected as the epitome of human development and so-called primitive, i.e. preindustrial, cultures viewed as backward and doomed. We assume that technological development is concurrent with human, social and ethical development.

In line with modernisation theory there is a widespread assumption that progress means becoming more secular. Here in Britain half of those brought up in a religion say they have abandoned it. We often assume that our economic success and relative wealth are tied to this secularisation, noting as many do how much of the third world remains deeply religious – giving evidence, some claim, of their economic and moral backwardness. And yet, the somewhat large exception to the secularisation and development rule is the United States which was, and continues to be, very religious and also very modern. In the US, surveys suggest, 92 per cent of adults believe in the existence of God or some kind of universal spirit, while 70 per cent are 'absolutely' certain of God's existence.

In their book[5] *God Is Back: How the Global Rise of Faith Is Changing the World*, John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, both of *The Economist* magazine, trace how in the 19th century the most influential thinkers predicted that modernity and secularisation would go hand in hand. Throughout most of the 20th century, it seemed this was the case. But by the late 1960s and the 1970s religion began to reappear in the public square and in the lives of individual people, confounding modernisation theorists who could not understand how we could be DE-evolving!

Europe is different

In this sense, not only does the post-Enlightenment period in which religion disappeared from the European public and private spheres appear to represent a small blip in an otherwise consistent presence of religion throughout human history, but that blip is a distinctly European phenomenon which is at odds with the manifestation of

religion globally.

While just half of Britons say that faith is important to their life (only 44 per cent identify themselves as Christian) according to a poll conducted by Ipsos Mori, almost all people in Brazil, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and India say faith is important to theirs. If, as some theorists speculate, religion is not only *not* disappearing, but is actually reshaping and re-emerging in new shapes and forms (less institutional, more individualistic and personalised), the question of how we define secularism and how it relates to the religious dimension becomes ever more pressing. I urge you not to allow the term secularism to be hijacked and reframed by those who wish to use it as a means of consigning faith and its adherents to the margins of the public sphere.

Secularism contains both an opportunity to express better the plurality of religious traditions and a contradictory threat that religion could be increasingly evicted from public life. It is my hope that people of faith will recognise the value of a moderate, accomodationist secularism and help to redress the imbalance in the perception of secularism and its goals.

This talk was given to the Ealing Circle on January 16th, 2014

1 Rajeev Barghara is a noted Indian political academic who was professor of Political Theory at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

2 Ekklesia describes itself as a Christian political think tank

3 Tariq Modood is a British Pakistani Professor of Sociology, Politics and Public Policy at the University of Bristol

4 A tongue-in-cheek reference to Richard Dawkins

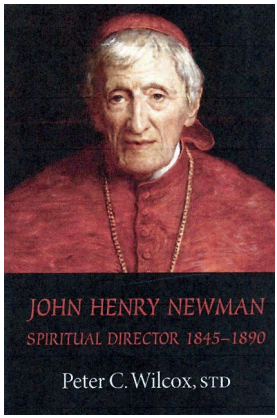
5 Published by Penguin Books (paperback) at £9.99

Book Reviews

John Henry Newman: Spiritual Director 1845 – 1890 by *Peter C. Wilcox, STD*
Pickwick Publications, Eugene, Oregon; 2013. Pp 362.

Most of us probably do not think of Newman as a 'spiritual director'. Perhaps this is because the phrase does not seem to chime in with Newman's own character. Certainly in the way it is ordinarily used, the word 'director' has notes of command and authority about it, which may seem out of place in this context. 'Guide' or 'supporter' might seem more appropriate.

'Spiritual' is also a slippery word. Sometimes it refers to the part of life which is to do with religious practices – e.g. prayer, worship and moral behaviour. But it should mean the whole of a person's life as lived under the influence of God's grace. The 'spiritual life' means life lived in the awareness of God presence in Christ and the Church, and therefore of one's own sin and need of redemption, of one's response in repentance, prayer, worship, the acceptance of God's gifts and trying to live a life shaped by the virtues. 'Spiritual' therefore means the whole of life lived in conscious awareness of the reality and presence of God who is spirit.



Seen in this way it is clear that 'spiritual direction' can be of enormous value to anyone. After all, we have parents, teachers, mentors, trainers, advisors, support staff and so on, helping us in much of our life and activities. So why not have a guide and mentor for matters of faith, the element which gives meaning and value to life as a whole? Often we are hesitant and reluctant to talk to someone else about the things of God in our own lives. This is understandable; but often enough those who take the plunge and start consulting a spiritual director find it enormously valuable, and begin to develop in unexpected ways.

Newman did not set out to be a 'spiritual director' in the way it might normally have been understood at his time. In fact he rejected this title for himself, just as he did the title of 'theologian'. This was mainly because he felt he did not have the training and qualifications that were normal at the time. Nevertheless his writings have a strong theological and spiritual character. His theological works were not systematic treatises of the kind that was current at the time, but were almost always in response to public questions or controversies to which he felt he could make a useful contribution. And likewise, his spiritual directing was expressed not in books but in letters written to friends or to others who consulted him about their queries and anxieties.

This is what shapes the present book. The author has mined the deep seams of material contained in Newman's correspondence during his Catholic years, 1845 to 1890. This is found in volumes 11 to 32 of Newman's *Letters and Diaries*. The first ten volumes cover his Anglican years and the remainder the second (and Catholic) half of his life. There are some 20,000 letters in the whole collection, which gives some idea of the vast amount of material that Wilcox has examined.

The book is structured around certain themes that recur in the correspondence. After two introductory chapters, which give a spiritual biography of Newman, and the origin and characteristics of his spirituality, there follow five chapters on topics which frequently recur in the letters. These are: the providence of God; faith; conversion to the Roman Catholic Church; vocation and the religious life; and lastly, friendship. The overriding impression is of Newman's humanity, his sensitivity to each individual's distinctive needs, and at the same time his firm and steady advice and encouragement.

Since it is Newman's own character that stands out, a reading of this book supplements well the picture one gets of him from the biographies. We hear his voice continually, speaking from the heart, guiding, persuading, judging, supporting, in his own words, not in those of his biographer. What also stands out is the enormous amount of time and energy he spent, writing to hundreds of individuals, with never a sense that he might think it more useful to talk or write to large numbers, to the crowds.

One slight shortcoming is the lack of a general index; but perhaps that might have been too daunting a task to undertake. There is however an Appendix which lists 220 people, with mini-biographies, people who feature in the book, either as correspondents or as mentioned in the letters, e.g. Pope Pius IX.

Fabian Radcliffe OP

Fifty Years' Pursuit of Renewal in the Church, by Ianthe Pratt; published by Catholics for a Changing Church, £3

Not comfortable reading for a traditionalist, this short booklet is essential reading for anyone who wants a radical and progressive take on all the most topical and urgent issues confronting the Catholic Church today. Its 26 pages contain a fast-moving, multi-dimensional approach to feminism, sexism, hierarchy, patriarchy, women's ordination, authenticity and 'infallibility creep' to name a few. It contains what may be termed strong, even offensive language to some, but is nevertheless a little gem for several reasons.

In its pages the reader will discover a wealth of detail about

- its author Ianthe Pratt, certainly a very energetic woman
- a fascinating insight into the activities of the Newman Association in the immediate aftermath of Vatican 11
- the development of changing attitudes to the role of the laity and particularly women in the Church
- and numerous invaluable references to both the people who, and books, articles and conferences which have contributed to the call for radical change over the last 50 years.

Having identified a 'credibility gap' between the institutional Church and following

Christ as a young woman, Ianthe Pratt has spent fifty years pursuing renewal in the Church in the hope of filling the gap. This short narrative documents her journey and whilst the reader is left with some uncertainty about her success rate, there is no questioning her tenacity, courage, vision and determination to pursue her goal.

Of particular interest to all Newman readers will be the analysis of the post Vatican II years and the impact of that period on the Newman Association. Ianthe's husband Oliver was Newman President between 1963 and 1965 and both were key figures in the then very large London Circle. The excitement and hopes of the early 1960s – and the ensuing frustration and disappointment as years passed with little change – are portrayed with zeal and feeling. There is no doubt that the early post-Vatican II years provided much food for thought and activity for Newman Circles!

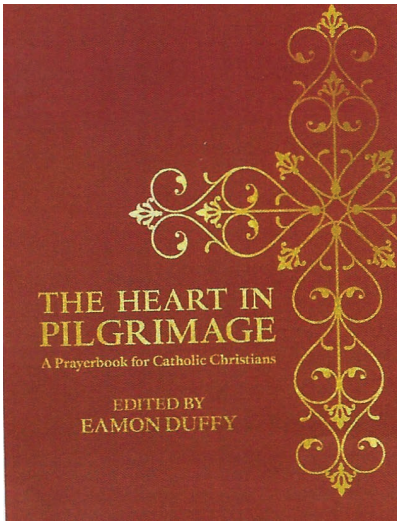
Ianthe Pratt clearly does not believe in mincing her words about the institutional Church and its hierarchical, patriarchical systems. It is easy to understand why one priest wrote that Ianthe and her husband were probably KGB agents! Her passion for a different role for the laity, and especially for women, is evident on every page. However not all the ills of the Church are laid at the feet of the clergy. The laity too has to take a share of responsibility for bringing change about. There is no doubt that throughout her life Ianthe has pioneered change and from the late 1960s she drifted towards the Catholic Renewal Movement (now Catholics for a Changing Church).

Some of her ideas for new structures based on inclusivity, participation and equal relationships call for further expansion. I hope Ianthe has the energy to do this. I suspect she has. The fact that so many of Ianthe's words and ideas resonate with the same force and vibrancy for today's reader as they must have done fifty years ago testifies to the value of this 'little gem'. It is well worth reading.

Carole O'Toole

The young Ianthe Pratt (far left) having tea with Aneurin Bevan

THE HEART IN PILGRIMAGE; A Prayerbook for Catholic Christians by Eamon Duffy; Bloomsbury 2014; £20



Some people would agree with St Therèse of Lisieux who preferred her own heartfelt words and did not find books of prayers helpful (though six of her own are found in this collection). Others turn gratefully to familiar phrases which express what they want to say, and for us this book is a comprehensive and precious resource, a complete *vade-mecum* with enough material for a lifetime of prayer.

The Ordinary of the Mass is given in full, with also part of a 1st century rite from the *Didache*. There are forms for Morning and Evening Prayer, Stations of the Cross and various litanies. In the section on the Virgin Mary we learn that the earliest known prayer, *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, dates from the 1st century, and that the use of beads or a knotted cord in saying the Rosary possibly derives from Islam. The twelve-part Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God from the Eastern Christian tradition is included in full, giving a striking example of the ecumenical richness of this book. Several Anglican prayers are given in the beautiful language of the Book of Common Prayer and there are poems by George Herbert, one of which furnishes the title of the volume. The prayer from prison by St Thomas More is followed by one of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's in the same situation. Everywhere we meet the psalms, our common heritage with the Jews, whose Mourners' Kadish is also quoted.

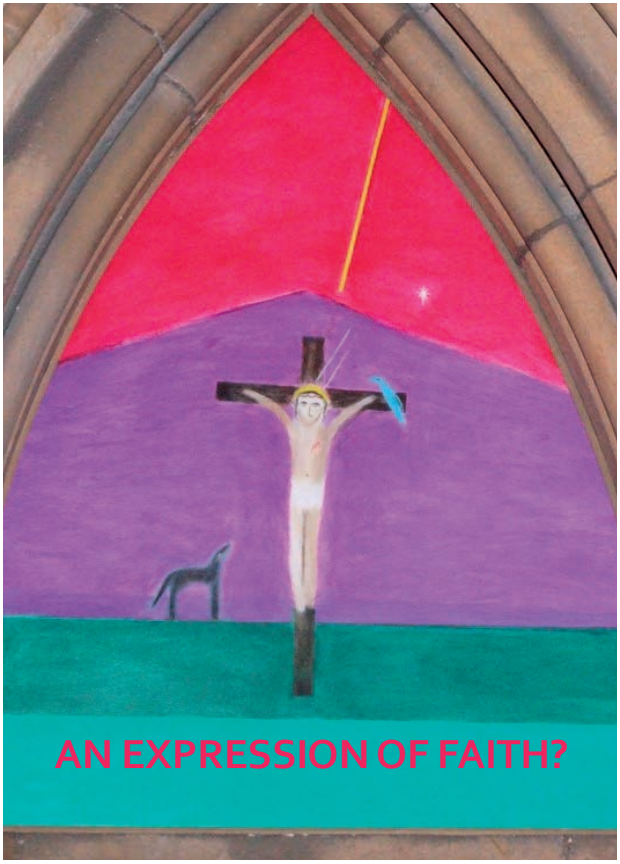
Each theme or devotion is given a history and an explanation, illustrated with relevant scripture passages and appropriate prayers. These come in an astonishing variety, covering a vast timescale from St Clement of Rome, who died c.90AD, to Pope John Paul II, always fitting seamlessly into the current theme. For example, a moving meditation from Julian of Norwich introduces the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Every page offers well-loved prayers and new treasures and there are styles to appeal to all manner of temperaments from passionate outpourings to – my own discovery – the sober but deeply spiritual prose of Yves Congar.

Eamon Duffy is Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Magdalene College

Of all the books I have been privileged to review this is the most beautiful, exciting and satisfying, finely produced and with intimate black and white illustrations.

Josephine Way

Modern Visual Art: An Expression of Faith?



A one day conference organized by the **Newman Association** and **St Albans Cathedral Study Centre**

10am-4pm, Saturday 4 October 2014

Focolare Centre for Unity, 69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6JG.

Speakers:

Mr Paul Bayley

Prof Tina Beattie

The Rt Revd Lord Harries of Pentregarth

The Revd Canon Charles Pickstone

£35pp to include lunch , or £30pp if booked by 4 September.

Discounted rates are available for students and those for whom the cost would be prohibitive.

To book, email studycentre@stalbanscathedral.org or telephone 01727 890205. Booking closes 26 September.

Payment is by cheque, payable to;
Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Albans Learning
(please write your name, contact details and 'modern art' on the back), posted to:
Cathedral Study Centre, Sumpter Yard, St Albans AL1 1BY,
or by transfer (account 73855791; sort code 207409).
www.stalbanscathedral.org/learning/study-centre/conferences

Image: detail from 'Calvary' by Craigie Aitchison.

Spirituality Page

Contributed by Eileen Cheverton

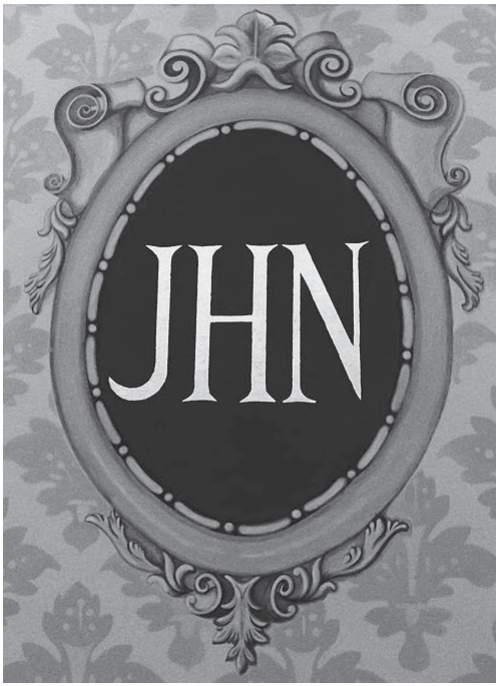
On Faith, Hope and Love

Faith and hope are graces of an imperfect state, and they cease with that state; but love is greater, because it is perfection. Faith and hope are graces, as far as we belong to this world – which is for a time; but love is a grace, because we are creatures of God whether here or elsewhere, and partakes in a redemption which is to last for ever.

Faith will not be when there is sight, nor hope when there is enjoyment; but love will (as we believe) increase more and more to all eternity. Faith and hope are means by which we express our love: we believe God's word, because we love it; we hope after heaven, because we love it. We should not have any hope or concern about it, unless we loved it; we should not trust or confide in the God of heaven, unless we loved Him.

Faith, then, or hope are but instruments or expressions of love; but as to love itself, we do not love because we believe, for the devils believe, yet do not love; nor do we love because we hope, for hypocrites hope, who do not love. But we love for no cause beyond itself: we love, because it is our nature to love; and it is our nature, because God the Holy Ghost has made it our nature. Love is the immediate fruit and the evidence of regeneration.

John Henry Newman
Parochial and Plain Sermons



The Heart is Reached through the Imagination

First comes knowledge, then a view, then reasoning, and then belief. This is why science has so little of a religious tendency; deductions have no power of persuasion. The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description.

Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.

John Henry Newman
An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent

Story, theology and drama in the Gospel of John

Peter Edmonds SJ guides us through the evangelist's unique narrative and encourages us to read the whole of this 'religious classic' for ourselves.

"Religious classics can prove meaningful in every age; they have an enduring power to open new horizons, to stimulate thought, to expand the mind and the heart," writes Pope Francis in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. One such religious classic is the fourth gospel, commonly known as the Gospel of John. This is the gospel from which we hear most often in the Sunday liturgies of the most solemn part of the Church's year, Lent and Easter.

Before Easter we meet the Samaritan woman, the man born blind and Lazarus who was brought back from the tomb. In Holy Week we hear John's account of the Washing of the Feet and the Passion of Jesus. After Easter we have John's version of the finding of the empty tomb, the commissions of the risen Christ to his apostles both in Jerusalem and Galilee, Jesus's self-description of himself as the Good Shepherd, and extracts from the long Last Supper discourse which prepare us for Pentecost.

Yet if we consult the gospel itself we realise that there are many parts which we do not hear. A positive exercise for the seasons of Lent and Easter is to read this religious classic as a whole and to make it our own. What follows is offered as a help to facilitate such a reading.

We recall first how we may divide the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, the Synoptic Gospels, into four parts.

- We first identify their prologues, which tell readers what they need to know in order to understand the narrative that follows. (e.g. Mark 1:1-13).
- Secondly, we familiarise ourselves with the body of their story, which reports the teaching, preaching and healing activity of Jesus. The bulk of this takes place in Galilee on both sides of its lake (e.g. Mark 1:15-8:21); this Galilean ministry is followed by an account of the journey of Jesus with his disciples to Jerusalem (e.g. Mark 8:22-10:52).
- Thirdly, we read of events in Jerusalem. After a brief ministry in the Jerusalem Temple, Jesus is arrested, tried before religious and secular authorities, and then cruelly executed by crucifixion. We may also give this section the title, 'Final Days'. (e.g. Mark 11:1-13:37; 14:1-15:47)
- Finally, there is an epilogue, which tells of Jesus's resurrection from the dead and the appearances which followed. In contrast to the passion accounts which run in parallel, the three Synoptic gospels vary considerably in their details and contents. (e.g. Mark 16:1-20)

But gospels offer us more than the story they tell. Their story is at the service of the theology they contain as they teach us about God, Christ, the Church and the demands of discipleship. The evangelists write as pastors to deepen the faith of their communities. We must also investigate the literary means by which they tell the story, the drama of the plot and the characters being portrayed. Restricting ourselves to John's Gospel we explore the four parts of the narrative which we have identified under the headings of 'Story', 'Theology' and 'Drama'.

PROLOGUE (1:1-2:22)

The Story

We repeat that the role of gospel prologues is to tell readers what they need to know in order to understand the narrative that follows. The heading of 'prologue' is usually given to the first eighteen verses of John which begin: "In the beginning was the word. . ." We argue that the contents right up to 2:22 have the function of a prologue, because each part offers basic knowledge which prepares us for the events to be told in the body of the gospel. Thus, after the "prologue about Christ" (1:1-18), we have a prologue about disciples (1:19-51), a domestic story about a wedding (2:1- 11) and a public story about the cleansing of the Temple (2:12-22).

The Theology

In these 'prologues', we learn theological truths. In the first we learn about the person and career of Jesus. In the second we reflect on the vocation and career of disciples with whom we may identify. In the third we are taught how in Christ, the water of the past becomes the abundant wine of the present (Amos 9:13), as God remarries his people (Hosea 2:16). In the fourth, as Jesus cleanses the Temple, we see how in his own person he replaces and brings about the fulfilment of the institutions and persons of the Old Testament.

The Drama

As for the dramatic presentation of this material, we may identify the shape of the first part as that of a hymn (1:1-18) but thereafter we note how the story is told in brief paragraphs or, in technical language, 'pericopes', which are typical of the Synoptic gospels, but unusual for this gospel.

BODY (2:23-12:50)

The Story

There are major differences in the way that John's Gospel treats the story in the 'body' of the gospel in contrast to the Synoptics. We find no mention of exorcisms, no parables and only two references to the "kingdom of God" (3:3,5). The subject of Jesus's preaching is his own person, his identity and his relationship with the Father who sent him; he reveals the Father's character and teaching (5:19).

Nor does John include what in the Synoptics are called 'miracles', or 'acts of power' (Greek: *dunameis*). In their stead, he presents us with a series of events which he calls 'signs' (Greek: *semeia*), which provide occasion for teaching, dialogue and, at times, confrontation. We have already mentioned the first 'sign' at Cana in our 'prologue' section (2:1-12). The second is the healing of the official's son, which also takes place at Cana (4:46-54). The third is the healing of the sick man at the pool (5:1-9), the fourth the multiplication of the bread (6:1-15), the fifth the cure of the blind man (9:1- 7) and the sixth the raising of Lazarus (11: 38-44). This makes six, but the perfect number is seven: the seventh and final sign is his being lifted up on the cross and his ascension into heaven (chs.18-21).

Whereas, in the Synoptic gospels, Jesus has brief meetings with individuals and communicates in short sayings, in John we read of lengthy encounters with individuals, including Nicodemus (2:23-3:15), the Samaritan woman (4:4-42), the man born blind (9:1- 41), and Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary (11:17-37). These can

be regarded as representative figures. In chapter 6 he has a long encounter with a crowd and chapters 5, 7, 8 and 10 report long and controversial confrontations with the authorities. These mostly take place at festival times, such as Passover (6:1-71), Tabernacles (7:1-8:59) and Dedication (10:22-42).

The Theology

From these signs and encounters we build up our vision of the theology of John. Here are some examples. *God is one who so loved the world that he gave his only Son (3:16). Jesus is Saviour of the world* (4:42), *the light of the world* (8:12), *the resurrection and the life* (11:25), *the bread come down from heaven* (6:51), t*he gate of the sheepfold* (10:7) and *the shepherd* (10:11). At times he simply describes himself as the "I am" (8:58), which puts us in mind of the name that God gave himself in the presence of Moses (Exodus 3:6).

A major point of difference from other gospels is the claim of Jesus to a previous existence. Not only is he destined to ascend to heaven, as Moses and Elijah were believed to have done in the past (2 Kings 2:11), but as Son of Man he has come down from heaven (1:51; 3:13). He asks no questions in this gospel because he knows about people and is in control of events (2:24, 6:6). But he is still human: he is weary when he meets the woman at the well (4:6); he has to take food (4:31), even though his food is to do the will of the Father (4:34); before raising Lazarus from the tomb he is disturbed (11:38); and as his ministry came to an end, he admitted before the crowd, "now my soul is troubled" (12:27).

Three times he announces that he lays down his life for his sheep (10:11,15, 17), but he does this in order to take it up again (10:17). He is to be "lifted up" (3:14; 8:28; 12:32); he came that we may have life and have it more abundantly (10:10). He brings about the judgement of this world (5:27). Thus he tells the crowds: "Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out" (12:31).

The Drama

Much of John's gospel is a gift to the dramatist. Many have been the dramatisations of the story of the woman at the well (ch.4), of the man born blind (ch.9) and of the raising of Lazarus (ch.11). Such scenes form a traditional Lenten catechesis which prepares for the conferring or recall of Baptism at Easter (Sundays 3-5 in year A, optional in year B and C). Discourse and dialogue are often combined (chs. 4, 6, 9, 11). Chapter 6 seems to be based on a homily centred around texts from the Pentateuch, Wisdom and Prophets (6:31, 35, 45).

FINAL DAYS (13:1-19:42)

It is better to give the title 'Final Days' rather than 'Events in Jerusalem' to this part of John's Gospel because Jesus has already made several visits to Jerusalem in contrast to the single visit recorded in the Synoptic gospels. The solemn tone with which chapter 13 begins indicates that here we begin a major section of the gospel (13:1).

The Story

The Last Supper extends over chapters 13-17. A surprise is that we find no mention of the Eucharist, which is an essential part of the Synoptic account of events before the Passion of Jesus (e.g. Mark 14:22- 25). John's story begins with the Washing of the Feet. This is followed by a long discourse, probably modelled on the farewell speeches

found in the Old Testament, such as that of Jacob to his sons (Genesis 49:1). John's passion account is the shortest (18:1-19:42). He repeats much of the tradition that we find in the Synoptics but he omits the prayer in Gethsemane and the trial before the Jewish authorities. He informs us that Roman soldiers were present at the arrest of Jesus and that, after Jesus's death, blood and water flowed from his side.

The Theology

A key word is in the discourse at the supper is 'love': we find it at the beginning (13:1), end (17:26) and the centre of the discourse (15:9-10). Jesus speaks about peace (14:27); of himself as the vine (15:1); of joy (15:11; 16:22), glory (17:1), the world (17:9) and unity (17:22). He explains how his disciples would see him again (14:3) and at the conclusion of the discourse he prays the longest of gospel prayers (17:1-26). He identifies himself as "the way, the truth and the life" (14:6). He teaches about the 'Paraclete' who would continue his own presence in the world once he had departed to the Father (14:15-17; 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:7-11, 12-15).

The passion story is not so much the story of Jesus's crucifixion as an account of his enthronement, his being "lifted up" (3:14; 8:28; 12:32). It is Pilate rather than Jesus who is on trial. The blood and water that flowed from his side look back to the prophets (Ezekiel 47) and forward to the sacraments.

The Drama

In the farewell speech a new Jacob speaks to his sons (Gen 49), preparing them for the future and commissioning them. The various questions put by his bewildered disciples add dramatic variety (14:5, 8; 16:7). In the passion story itself we may highlight the dramatic nature of:

- The seven Pilate scenes, with Pilate and Jesus moving inside and outside, and discussing themes like kingship, truth and power. The "light of the world" (8:12) encounters the powers of this world (18:28-19:16).
- The five 'stations of the cross' which present a king enthroned, ordering the future for the little Church of his believing mother (2:1-11) and the loving and loved disciple (13:23) to whom he hands over his spirit (19:16-37).

EPILOGUE (20:1-21:25)

The Story

This has two conclusions. The first, set in Jerusalem, after relating various appearances of the Risen Christ, explains why the gospel was written. "These are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God and that through believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). The second is set in Galilee, and has its own conclusion: "There are many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself would not contain them" (21:25).

The Theology

Through the various appearances of the Risen Jesus in Jerusalem, we learn how the disciples were brought to faith. Particular models of faith are the anonymous Beloved Disciple, Mary Magdalen and Thomas. It is made clear that the disciples are to continue the mission of Jesus. They are accompanied by the Holy Spirit (20:1-29).

By means of his appearances in Galilee, we learn how Peter was to take over Jesus's role as shepherd; the Paraclete, spoken about at the Last Supper, was not sufficient

alone. Meanwhile the Beloved Disciple was to remain until Jesus came again. We surmise that this figure was more than a historical person in the life of Jesus but was a symbol of the role that every faithful disciple would play in the life of the Church (21:1-23).

The Drama

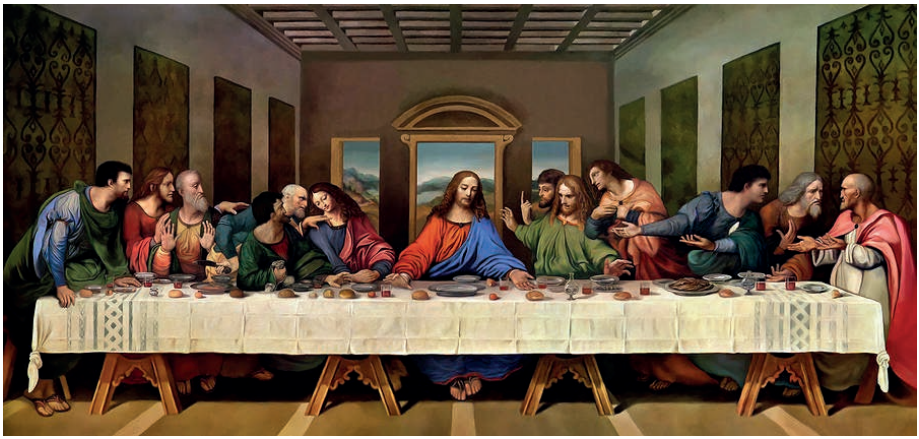
This is provided by lively and unforgettable narratives: in Jerusalem, the race to the tomb, the dialogue of the Risen Jesus with Mary Magdalen, the meeting with fearful disciples in the upper room, the confession of 'doubting' Thomas; and, in Galilee, the miraculous catch of fish, and the dialogue with Peter, which echoes his three denials during the passion. In all these incidents, we see the 'good shepherd' in action bringing abundant life to his sheep (10:10).

WARNING: WEIGH THE RISKS

It is fitting that we read this gospel during Lent and Easter when we are at our best spiritually. It took time before this gospel was accepted in early Christianity. It was regarded as a dangerous gospel, to be handled with care, because it carried two main risks. It could lead to a neglect of the humanity of Christ, as if the divine Jesus was only pretending to be human. This is known as the heresy of Docetism. It could also lead disciples to claim they could not sin, because they have already undergone judgement in their encounters with the Christ whose glory they have seen. This is known as Gnosticism. These issues are addressed in the Letters of John which are probably dated after the gospel. This writer "declared to you what we have seen and heard" (1 John 1:3) and warned that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8).

A true classic is a text to which we can return again and again and always discover something new. Rarely indeed will we pick up the fourth gospel and not learn something fresh about the story, the theology and the drama which it contains. It was surely sound instinct and wisdom that led the Church from earliest times to adopt this gospel as its favourite pedagogical means to introduce the profound mysteries celebrated each year during Lent and Easter.

Peter Edmonds SJ is a member of the Jesuit community in Stamford Hill, North London.



Joshua Furnal's Summer 2014 Tour

Dr Joshua Furnal, the Newman Association Fellow in Ecumenical Theology at the University of Durham, will deliver a series of talks on the theme of Receptive Ecumenism to members of the Newman Association, and others, during the next few months. The first, at Cheltenham, will already have taken place on May 6th before this issue of *The Newman* is received by members. Here is information about the remaining four locations for the talks.

Sunday, May 25th
The Crypt, St Albans Cathedral, at 4.30pm.
Ecumenism: Old Hat or New Approach?
Entrance £5. Can be booked through www.stalbanscathedral.org

Thursday, May 29th
Room 430a, St Andrew's Building, University of Glasgow, at 5.45pm.
Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning
Please note: this is not the normal meeting-place for the Glasgow Circle

Monday, June 30th
Bar Convent, 17 Blossom St, York YQ24 1AQ , at 7.30pm.
New Insights Into Revitalising Religious Practice and Ecumenism in the 21st Century

Monday, September 1st
Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS at 6.30 for 7.00pm.
Ecumenism: Old Hat or New Approach?
Entrance £5. Contact Chris Quirke (email dcq@me.com).

Further information may be obtained from the secretaries of the Glasgow, Hertfordshire, York and Manchester & North Cheshire circles; their email addresses are printed on the back cover of this issue.

An introduction to Wimbledon

by William Russell

At the present time Wimbledon is famed for, if not synonymous with, tennis and, for tennis fans, the Tennis Museum within the tennis courts is well worth visiting. When my children were growing up Wimbledon was better known for the Womble family who lived on Wimbledon Common. Alas, although the Common, its 1100 acres and its ponds and windmill, is still very much in evidence, the same cannot be said for the Wombles, who seem to have gone and stayed underground.

Southside House, built in the seventeenth century for the Pennington family, is located between the Sacred Heart Church and the Common and crammed (literally) with historic artefacts as well as eccentric character. There are tours on Sunday afternoons from 2-5pm.

On Westside Common is the entrance to Cannizaro Park, a more polished version of the Common and diagonally across the Common is the Buddhapadipa Temple on Calonne Road. Erected in the grounds of a largish period house it presents an arresting spectacle. It is often open at weekends but well worthwhile a visit even when closed. The garden has been given an oriental make-over with a stream and bridges, complete with Buddhist aphorisms.

Further afield – and on the 93 bus route – is Fulham Palace on the north bank of the Thames by Putney Bridge. Home of the bishops of London for nine hundred years, and with such diverse occupants as St Dunstan, Nicholas Ridley and Geoffrey Fisher, it was vacated in 1975 and is now leased to the local council. It is open from 1-4pm at weekends.

Finally, the Sacred Heart Church, where the Newman Association's AGM is to be held, requires only a short downhill walk. A wealthy Catholic, Edith Arendrup, not only had the church built in 1887 but, in addition, convinced Jesuits in Roehampton to come over and staff the new parish. This the order continued to do until January of this year. On the other side of the parish hall is Wimbledon College which has also ceased to be staffed by the Jesuit order. In a farsighted move the College, originally a military academy, was bought by the Jesuits in 1892 shortly after their arrival in Wimbledon.

The 2014 AGM will be held in the Parish Hall of Sacred Heart Church, Edge Hill, Wimbledon SW19 4LU on Saturday, June 14th, at 11.00am.

Mass in the church will follow the business meeting. An optional lunch will then be served in the Parish Hall (see the booking form sent out with this issue).

At 3.00pm the local resident Quentin de la Bedoyère will give a talk with the title *The Natural Law and the Catholic Conscience*.

Concerning Circles

New Members

We can welcome the following new members who have been elected at recent Council meetings. They are attached to Circles as shown.

Rev. Dr. D.& Mrs A. Bennett (Llanelli & District), Mr P.& Mrs J.P. Collins (North Glos.), Dr H.M. Concannon (Manchester & N. Cheshire), Mr T. Conway (Edinburgh), Fr. P. Gallagher SJ (Wimbledon), Dr C. & Dr P. Howes (Manchester & N. Cheshire), Mr J.Pell (Ealing).

Fr. Gallagher is the newly appointed Chaplain to the Wimbledon Circle.

Requiescant in Pace

Your prayers are asked for the following members who have died recently:

Mrs F.G. Beech (Worcester), Mr B. Comerford (Manchester & N. Cheshire),

Mrs Z.A.B. Dentith (Croydon), Mr J.F.A. Duncan (London), Mr G.G. Harris (London), Lady J. Innes (Edinburgh), Miss H.J. Miller (London), Ms B. Parkin (Croydon), Rev. J. Parsons (Croydon), Miss B.M. Tweed (Birmingham), Mr M.F. Whelan (Coventry), Mr J. Dunn (Tyneside).

Barbara Parkin was a founder member of the Croydon Circle and Joe Dunn was a founder member of the Tyneside Circle.

Subscriptions

There are just a few subscriptions outstanding for this year and the Membership Registrar would be delighted to receive cheques for these soon. He would like to thank all of those members who responded to his plea to pay their subscriptions by Direct Debit. Much time, stationery and postage will be saved as a consequence.

The third international conference on Receptive Ecumenism

Fairfield University, Connecticut, USA, a Jesuit foundation, is the location for the third international conference on receptive ecumenism, the first two having been held in January 2006 and January 2009 at Ushaw College, Durham, UK. The Fairfield conference will be held between June 9th and June 12th under the title Receptive Ecumenism in International Perspective: Contextual Ecclesial Learning. It is being jointly organised by the Center for Catholic Studies, Fairfield University, and the Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University.

The first conference, RE I, launched the basic strategy of RE. Then RE II took this forward by inviting a number of other traditions to participate. Now RE III will explore the international dissemination and evolution of RE in relation to various global contexts. In some countries, such as Australia, the UK and Canada, work on RE is already well under way. In other countries it is only just beginning. RE III is expected to be the final international conference in the series.

The Fairfield gathering will bring together a large number of church leaders, theologians, ecumenists, ecclesial administrators and practitioners from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions. Attendance is expected to be about 200. The conference will explore whether receptive ecclesial learning can provide a way forward in relation to all the thorny dividing issues, which include:

- Differing practices and theologies of ecclesial decision-making
- Differing ethical discernments
- Differing relations between the local and the universal church
- Differing understandings of the place of women in ministry

According to the organisers the Fairfield event will press the issue of receptive ecumenism in the more complex contexts of global Christian reality and in relation to some of the sharpest issues providing causes of tension and division within and between the traditions.

Egan Chapel, Fairfield University, where the opening ceremony of the conference will be held

Circle Programmes

Aberdeen Contact: Margaret Smith, 01224 314566

1 May AGM + Cheese & Wine

All Circles

14 June National Newman AGM: The Natural Law *Quentin de la Bedoyere*

Birmingham Contact: Winifred Flanagan, winifredflanagan@gmail.com

3 May Theological Meditation on Pilgrimage
Transfiguration in Christ *Speakers tba*

9 June Mass followed by A.G.M. *Fr Stephen Pimlott M.A.*

Cleveland Contact: Terry Egerton, tpj.egerton@virgin.net

21 May AGM and Supper

Coventry Contact: Maureen Porter, 02476 502965, maureen.porter@talktalk.net

27 May TBA

17 June AGM

Croydon Contact: Andy Holton, a.holton857@btinternet.com

Ealing Contact: Kevin Clarke, 07710 498510, kevin.clarke@keme.co.uk

Eastbourne & Bexhill Contact: John Carmody, 01323 726334, johncarmody44@hotmail.co.uk

21 May The Ordinariate *Father Neil Chatfield*

23 July "And what did we learn." The challenge to peacemakers in commemorating the First World War *Pat Gaffne*

8 September Experiences, joys and challenges of Adoption (includes musical interlude) *Leigh and Julie McLean*

Edinburgh Contact: Annette Brydone, annettebrydone@gmail.com

Glasgow Contact: Dan Baird, danbaird98@hotmail.com

1 May The Vatican and the American Sisters' Leadership Group *Sr Mary Ross*

Hertfordshire Contact: Maggy Swift, 01582 792136, maggy.swift@btinternet.com

18 May Archbishop of Canterbury in Rome *Fr Mark Langham*

29 June Circle Garden Party

19 July The Hound of Heaven *Janet Lewis*

31 July Visit to Stonor

Hull & East Riding Contact: Andrew Carrick, 01482 500181

10 May Pope Francis: the Justice and Peace Pope *Paul Vallely*

18 June TBC

12 July A Family Day Out incorporating the Pilgrimage of Grace Heritage Walk

LLanelli Contact: M. Noot, 01554 774309, marianoot@hotmail.co.uk

London Contact: Patricia, 0208 504 2017

Manchester & N. Cheshire Contact: Chris Quirke, 0161 941 1707 dcq@mac.com

12 May Tales from the Caucasus: how conflict and governance impact poverty *Richard Abbott*

27 May Visit to Stonyhurst College *Jan Graffius*

7 July CIRCLE AGM: French and English understandings of 'religious community': shaped by history, observed today *Dominique Darcy*

North Gloucestershire Contact: Stephanie Jamison, 01242 539810, sjamison@irlen-sw.com

May Annual General Meeting

North Merseyside Contact: John Potts, john_potts41@hotmail.com

North Staffordshire Contact: Vincent Owen, 01782 619698

Rainham Contact: Marie Casey, bmcasey@btinternet.com

Surrey Hills Contact: Gerald Williams, guillaume30@btinternet.com

Tyneside Contact: Maureen Dove, 01912 579646, maureenanndove@btinternet.com

28 May By Secret Creeks and Landing places: Smuggling and Elizabethan Recusancy in North East England *Dr Leo Gooch*

30 July Faith during the War *Dr Dan Scott*

Wimbledon Contact: Bill Russell, 0208 946 4265, william_russell@talktalk.net

Worcester Contact: Heather Down, 01905 21535, hcdown@gmail.com

20 May Our Lady

7 June Summer Outing to Shrewsbury Cathedral and St Mary's Church, Mass at Ludlow 6pm

12 July House Mass and Supper

Wrexham Contact: Maureen Thomas, maureenthomas@uwclub.net

30 May The Holy Wells of Gresford *Tristan Gray-Hulse*

27 June Religious Representation in Contemporary Media *Dr Frank Cottrell Boyce*
Summer Party and AGM

York Contact: Judith Smeaton, 01904 704525, judith.smeaton@btinternet.com

19 May AGM, followed by talk: The Trajectory of Catholic Education *Canon Michael Bayldon*