

LEADER AUGUST 2006

I have just sat through two ordination services. At the first, in St Paul's Cathedral, 31 deacons were ordained by the Bishop of London to serve in a wide variety of parishes across the whole of our Diocese of London. At the second, in St Mary Abbot's Kensington, nine priests were ordained to serve in diverse parishes in the Kensington Episcopal Area and the Archdeaconry of Charing Cross. Ordinations are always highly charged times. There is much that is about fulfilment of a long process, hope and sense of vocation. On the other hand they are also about beginnings, about new work, new tasks, new roles to be explored and grown into. At heart the work of a deacon is one of service, both for the Christian community and to the wider world. In other words, service of God in our neighbour. After all, the word deacon comes from the word meaning a servant. In the Church of England, most deacons go on to be ordained priest after a year or so in office, and retain their servant leadership even as they then grow into being raised up by the whole body of Christ, the Church, to celebrate the sacraments and preach the Good News of Jesus. But in every ordination service it is clear that the work of Christ, ministry, belongs to the whole people of God and is not the prerogative or the sole responsibility of the ordained. There is a particular sense in which during an interregnum, which this parish faces very soon, the whole people of God share the functions, if not the role, which is often concentrated in the vicar. Throughout the New Testament we realise that everyone has something given to them by God, some characteristic, ability, trait, or gift to be used for the benefit of and shared with the whole community.

So it is indeed true that the church of God needs not only good clergy, but it needs good administrators to administer, good teachers to teach, good pastors to exercise pastoral care. Recognising your own gifts is something that we are encouraged to do in the world of work nowadays, but still perhaps not as encouraged to do in the church as perhaps should be the case.

One of the exciting parts of the New Testament story about the growth of the early church, was the way in which everyone's gifts were valued, cherished and used both for the good of the Christian community and for the mission of the church amongst those to whom it was sent. There is no-one in the body of Christ who hasn't a gift to offer. We can't all be teachers or good pastors or strong managers. Nor do we need to be. For St Paul reminds us that together we constitute the body of Christ and where would we be as a body if we were all noses or each of us was a right foot? We need that diversity of gifts, strengths and abilities in order to be a fully functioning body. But two crucial factors do remain. The first, is we have to be prepared to look at ourselves openly and honestly and ask 'what are my god-given strengths and gifts?' Secondly, when we've done that, we need to be generous, indeed sacrificial, in allowing those gifts and abilities to be used for the good of the whole



church of God. Translated into our parish situation, whether your gifts would enable us to repair the drain pipes, undertake pastoral visiting, lead intercessions, work with young people, or offer administrator support in the church office, whatever it may be, unless we acknowledge our gifts and are prepared to use them then the whole body will not flourish.

So might I encourage you both during the August holiday season, and before the interregnum begins, to think about your gifts and how they might be used at St James' for the good of the whole community and for the growth of the body of Christ here. Whatever your gift, search it out and use it, for St Paul reminds us that "the one who calls is faithful". With our participation God will never allow gifts to be unused and a gift is a spark of God which will show both God's glory and love in the world. And that, after all, is what we are all called to whether in lay ministry or ordained ministry, namely to reflect God's love and light in the world.

Brian Leathard

SAINT FOR AUGUST: Mary Sumner 1828-1921

As the founder of the Mother's Union, Mary Sumner may be a familiar name, but any image of her as a dour, crinolined Mary Whitehouse comes from our misconceptions of Victorian family life rather than the reality. Mary's passionate concern to bring religion into the home and school and to limit divorce did not arise from concern with "morality" but from her own deep love of Christ and her personal experience of a happy childhood and sixty-one years of "happy, united, blessed life" with George Sumner.

Born near Manchester but growing up at a country house near Malvern, Mary was the youngest of three children, who were fortunate in having parents who gave personal attention to their religious and general education. The Heywoods ensured that their two daughters acquired the expected piety and accomplishments but also that they enjoyed the pleasures of riding and continental travel. It was while the family was in Rome when Mary was 18 that she met George Sumner, then 22. They were married in 1848 after his ordination and for the first couple of years lived with his widower father, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

With the birth of their first child, Mary said, "it struck me how much I needed special teaching for so great a work as the character-forming of a child... I felt mothers had one of the greatest and most important professions in the world and yet there was no profession which had so poor a training for its supreme duties." The birth of further children only increased her belief that there needed to be a "national effort to awaken the conscience of mothers to their responsibility and power as character trainers" but raising her own family and helping her husband in his parish work occupied all her time.

It was not until she was 56 and her children had married and left home, that Mary was invited at a church congress in Portsmouth to outline her idea of a mothers' union of prayer and mutual support. The Union was formed as a diocesan organisation the next day. For the rest of her long life Mary poured her energy into setting the organisation on a firm foundation, encouraging its members, and spreading its influence. She managed a vast correspondence and travelled extensively to speak at meetings large and small, making her most demanding tour when she was 84. By then George had died. It was, she said, her own happy married life which led her to realise that the foundation of a home is a holy marriage and so to spend her last years opposing relaxation of the divorce laws. But what she reiterated most often was the importance of parents setting an example - "be what you would have your children be" - as well as actively "teaching the true faith to our children... one of the most imperative of all religious duties."

The Mothers' Union was clearly an idea whose time had come; it spread rapidly until by its 21st anniversary in 1908 there were 6,000 branches throughout the British empire. Mary's effectiveness as the "Mother of the Mothers' Union" can be put down to three things which impressed all those who knew her. Firstly, she was naturally attractive - charming, sunny-tempered, energetic, musical and beautiful. Secondly, she had developed and refined her gifts by self-discipline: her voice received professional training, but she also trained her mind and her tongue, firmly rejecting grumbling, criticism and self-pity. (Her longevity she put down to a regime of early rising, strenuous exercise and cold baths!) But above all people felt the strength of her faith in and submission to Christ.

It was her aim to "live in prayer", in constant union with her Master. She never spoke to even the smallest meeting without having first spent an hour in prayer and her opening prayers brought to even the most mundane business meeting a powerful awareness of the Holy Spirit. In her last years, as other activities had to be laid aside, Mary gave herself increasingly to intercession for the Union and urged other elderly people to see prayer as their particular calling and contribution.

Speaking at the 1908 celebrations in the Albert Hall, Mary ended her address with this appeal: **With all my heart and soul I beseech you to be earnest in prayer and effort, not only so that your own homes may shine gloriously for our Master Christ but also that you may win over other homes for him.**



WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER? TO THIS QUESTION

Is it ever justifiable to assist someone with a painful terminal illness to end their life?

Four years ago I watched a very good friend, also a very good man, die slowly after a massive stroke. He lived for several weeks in a hospital bed. Unable to speak or to move voluntarily, his limbs jerked constantly as if he were in agony. He was of course fed by tube. The nursing care was kindly but casual. They knew there was no hope of any recovery, it was just a question of when his misery would end. I have no doubt that heavy sedation hastening his death would have been entirely justifiable.

Name and address supplied

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

Festering memory or true forgiveness: how do we lay aside wrongs of the past, particularly if they have never been acknowledged. How do we find inner peace for the present?

Please send replies to this question or questions for future issues to the office email (listed on page 7) or send to Margaret Taylor or Susan Horner or to the Church Office marked 'For the Spire'.

Have you subscribed to the Diocese of London's E-newsletter?

Keep in touch with the life of our diocese by entering your email address at the bottom of the home page for www.anglican.org.uk It's as simple as that and you can unsubscribe just as easily.

Richmond upon Thames becomes a Fairtrade Borough

Richmond upon Thames Borough has been granted Fairtrade status by The Fairtrade Foundation. In the picture, Barbara Crowther, their Communications Officer, is seen presenting the certificate to the Mayor of Richmond, Councillor Bill Treble, at a very happy reception in York House on 13th July.

The award is the result of a concerted effort by the *Richmond Fairtrade Steering Group* over the past year and a half, a group comprised of councillors and members of the public representing churches, schools and local businesses. Their focused effort built on the strong foundation laid by many dedicated Fairtrade representatives who have been selling Fairtrade goods across the borough for more than twenty years.

There is an ongoing campaign to make London a Fairtrade Capital City. To achieve this goal seventeen of the 32 boroughs need to be granted Fairtrade status. Richmond is the eighth London borough to achieve it, with many other boroughs on the way.

Being granted the certificate is not the end of the matter. The *Richmond Fairtrade Steering Group* will continue to work for greater availability of Fairtrade goods in the borough's shops, cafés and businesses and for greater awareness of Fairtrade among the public and in the schools.

Charities and Links Committee



Review of 'The Monastery' and 'The Convent'

I expect that most of us try to avoid reality shows, appealing as they do to that nasty moronic voyeur who resides in all but the saints among us! However, the two series 'The Monastery' and 'The Convent' held a fascination, as here were groups of men and women experiencing life within these institutions and attempting to explore their spiritual growth through participating in the monastic disciplines. It seemed that the success of The Monastery reflected the honest attempts made by the participants to find a truth which human wisdom could not provide. In the monks and the abbot they had guides who did not pander to failings but who steered them towards an alternative way of thinking and who stood alongside them in their struggles to pray, meditate and find a path to God. The follow-up to this series demonstrated that the monastic life has much to offer the non-religious as these men had been transformed both in their spirituality and in their life styles.

So the BBC in its wisdom decides on another series, this time in a convent. Such is the power of the media that the Order of the Poor Clares, a closed order since 13th century opened its doors to four self-centred women as well as an all female production team. It was billed as a 'detox for the soul' and the participants interpreted this as some kind of therapeutic indulgence. They struggled to commit to common worship, personal friendships took priority over the needs of the community and unlike the men, possibly with one exception, it seemed that their commitment to a painful search and an honest attempt to find a way forward was missing. Encounter with God is not all about 'me'. I may have missed it, but I never heard the name of Jesus mentioned by anyone. To quote from the words of Julie: 'a quest for personal fulfilment is subverted by the reality that our wholeness is found as we come together to share in brokenness. "Though we are many we are one body because we all share in one bread."'

I fear that the nuns have done themselves a dreadful disservice by exposing their inability to cope with that kind of influx. They were much too kind to the rude and disruptive women and should have insisted on their either showing serious intent or leaving. It would have been so much more interesting had the programme focused on what the nuns' lives mean to *them* and why they choose to live as they do, instead of following the usual reality formula of 'putting the most unlikely people into an environment that would make most of us shudder' and seeing what happens.

The first series was an attempt to engage viewers and stimulate serious thought. The second was described to me as 'no more enlightening than watching celebrities eat bugs in the jungle.'

Marion Dewey with thanks to various others

YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE ISSUES RAISED HERE WOULD BE MOST WELCOME

Foundation Courses for Christian Ministry

Introducing the Old Testament – 4 sessions on 25 Sept and 2, 9 and 16 Oct 2006

Introducing the New Testament – 4 sessions on 30 October and 6, 13, 20 November 2006

What is Evangelism? 7 sessions—5, 12, 19 Oct and 2, 9, 30 November and Sat 25 Nov

All courses will be held at the Kensington Area Office, 865 Great West Road, Isleworth.

**More information is available from the leaflets in Church or Jan Redshaw on
8580 2140**

THANK YOU

Thank you all for your support and encouragement throughout my curacy and for making my final weekend at St. James' so memorable. The party was fabulous and Sunday's services were very moving. I was overwhelmed by the parish gifts: the baptismal shell was a perfect choice and I shall make good use of the John Lewis vouchers when the new vicarage is ready. I look forward to continuing to work alongside you in the mission and ministry of this deanery.

Julie Gittoes

REGISTERS for MAY and JUNE

BAPTISMS

- 21 May Mary Kate Lowe, Hampton
21 May Lauren Emily Tyler-Scott, South Africa
21 May Emily Sarah Isobel Murdock, Hampton Hill
11 June Harry Daniel Tydeman, Teddington
11 June Benjamin Andrew John Lester, Bracknell
11 June Kelly Victoria Golden, Teddington
11 June Millicent Mari Pearson, Hampton
18 June Laura Stephanie Jane Taylor, Hampton Hill
18 June Mollie Antoinette Hester-Cook, Twickenham

FUNERALS

- 11 May Richard Lloyd, Twickenham
24 May Marjorie Smeed, Teddington
14 June Dorothy Mary Edmonds, Kingston

WEDDINGS

- 24 June Michael David St Leger and Joanna Louise Hedgson

BLESSING

- 28 May Raymond John Bowe and Diane Elizabeth Bowe

Around the Spire

Thank you to Roger from the Hardware Shop in Hampton Hill Street who kindly supplied the metalwork for the lychgates.

The Sunday School performance on St James' Day had an excellent reception from the congregation and thanks must go to the children and all those who helped to organise the production.

Many thanks to Sarah and Stuart Peterson and their friend who skilfully cooked for the BBQ on St James' Day.

Thank you to all those who attended Peter Ryan's funeral. The date for the interment of his ashes will be on Sunday, 13th August after Parish Communion.

Vera Bannister is now home from hospital and will celebrate her 90th birthday this month.

Roma Bridges has moved to a nursing home in Chorley Wood.

Jean Western is now out of hospital.

Prill and Martin Hinckley celebrated their 15th Wedding Anniversary this month. Many congratulations to them.

Congratulations to Romilly Taylor, Cressida Barrett and Sarah Clay who have successfully completed their degree courses. We wish them well with their future careers.

Sara Butterfield has completed her End to End Cycle Ride very successfully.

