

THE LEADER COLUMN

EASTER SHATTERS THE NATURAL ORDER AND OFFERS A REAL, ENDURING LOVE

The cycle of life and death



North Norfolk is somewhere I have got to know well since my mother and late father bought a cottage there in 1986. Located in the hamlet of Houghton St. Giles, near to Wells-next-the-sea and Fakenham, it is a part of the country that has become quite dear to me.

On a recent visit to see my mother, I found myself standing at the top of the garden listening to the squawking of pheasants, and staring at a very barren field. Very bare, cold, and a little miserable. Yet I knew that within a few months the field would once again be full of crops, and the cycle continue of sowing, growth, harvest, and so on.

The natural cycle is reflected and made much of in the neighbouring village of Little Walsingham where the annual *Snowdrop Walk* draws large numbers of people to the grounds of Walsingham Abbey to admire the beauty of the late winter flowers. Yet as we are increasingly conscious of what we human beings are doing to the planet, we should not simply take this natural cycle for granted, particularly with the approach of Easter. The events of Easter shatter what appears to be the proper cycle of life.

There is an Easter hymn of which I am particularly fond, the tune of which is a fifteenth century melody, but the words are twentieth century. If you have access to the internet you can find the tune here:

www.nethymnal.org/html/n/g/ngbrises.htm

The first verse is this:

*Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again,
like wheat that springeth green.*

The hymn lyrics (in full in the column to the right) circle around two separate images - the dormant seed that gives birth to the grain, and Christ as love. The parallel is drawn with new life coming from where we expect only death. Yet in some ways the image of the grain breaks down - actually, to us today, the new life of the grain does not come as a surprise at all. The surprise (and in some countries, horror) is if the grain does not come.

By contrast, the resurrection of Jesus breaks apart the natural cycle for human beings that we are born, we live,



Peter Vannozzi

and we die - for physically that is what we see happening. The resurrection is about life coming from death - from the nothing that is death, rather than from something dormant. The two are not the same.

The second image is that of Christ as love or rather Love. *Love is come again...* The human experience of finding love where it is not expected is a reality for many, but sadly so also is an absence of love. *Love is come again...* has behind it an assumption that there is a Love in existence that cannot but return. This is a cycle as natural as that of the world around us. The cycle of love is embodied in Christ. That is why he is

Love. There is actually nothing 'natural' about the inevitability of love. Enough lyrics have been composed and poems written about the awful loss of love to illustrate this aspect of human experience. The love of God is not then something that can simply be deduced from experience, read off from the natural order or be seen with evident ease to be at the heart of things. It needs more, and that 'more' is the resurrection of Jesus. The breaking of the inevitable cycle of birth and death seen in Jesus points people, at Easter, to something more going on than can straightforwardly be inferred from the world around us. *Love is come again*, because with God it cannot but be like this.

The moment I write something like this article or read it written by someone else, I am conscious that it is all very well for me to write it sitting in relative ease and comfort. This Lent St. James's Church has been supporting an appeal by the Bishop of London to help the work of the Anglican Church in Angola and Mozambique to provide more people with fresh water.

What of God's love where people cannot guarantee that they have access to that most basic of things that we need to live, such as water? Yet perhaps one sign that *Love is come again* is precisely when people break out of the death of selfishness and enter into the new life of generosity.

I wish you all a very happy Easter as we celebrate that *Love is come again*, above all in the resurrection of Christ - 'Love.'

IN THOUGHT AND PRAYER

A hymn for Easter, words by J.M.C. Crum (1872-1958), to be sung at the Easter Liturgy on 11 April, and the Fifth Sunday of Easter, 10 May

Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been;
*Love is come again,
like wheat that springeth green.*

In the grave they laid him, Love whom men had slain,
thinking that never he would wake again,
laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love...

Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
he that for three days in the grave had lain,
quick from the dead, my risen Lord is seen:
Love...

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
thy touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts, that dead and bare have been.
Love...



A hymn for Pentecost, words by Bianco de Siena (d.1434), to be sung on Sunday 31 May.

Come down, O love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps
with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

On hallowed ground



A week's pilgrimage in the Holy Land gave **Rob and Debbie Oades** the chance to reflect on the life of Jesus. It proved to be an emotionally uplifting time, as Rob reports.

It was with a feeling of trepidation that I found myself in the departures lounge of Heathrow Terminal One waiting for our flight to Tel Aviv at the beginning of our pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But what was the reason for this feeling – was it because of the recent fighting between the Israelis and the Palestinians? Or perhaps the thought of spending the next seven days with 24 ordained members of the Church of England?

On reflection I think it was a feeling of excitement and expectation at the thought of visiting some of the holiest sites in the Christian world, the chance to put into some kind of perspective the teachings of the Holy Bible and the life of Jesus Christ.

Our trip had been arranged by McCabe Pilgrimages as part of the Kensington Area Post Ordination Training. It was to be a whirlwind of a tour, taking in Jerusalem, Ein Karem (birthplace of John the Baptist), Bethlehem, Jericho, Nazareth, Tiberias and The Sea of Galilee. It was to be a mixture of study, reflection, worship and a little bit of tourism. It was going to be a memorable trip whatever happened.

Our hotel in Jerusalem was the Golden Walls Hotel, situated in the Arab quarter of the city just outside the Old City walls and close to the Biblical sites we were to visit. We began our pilgrimage at the Mount of Olives with a panoramic view of the walled city across the Kidron Valley. This valley is mentioned several times in the Bible – Jesus crossing it several times in his last days – but the distance is a lot shorter than the label 'valley' portrays.

On the Mount of Olives we visited the Dome of the Ascension, which venerates the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven from a cave on the Mount. We also visited the Pater Noster Church, built on the site where Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer (it is depicted in this church in 62 languages – even Welsh!).

We then moved down the Mount to the Dominus Flevit – a tear-shaped Church built in 1955. This commemorates where Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Here was a special moment for me as we celebrated the Eucharist overlooking Jerusalem. As we prayed together as a group I have never felt so close to God.

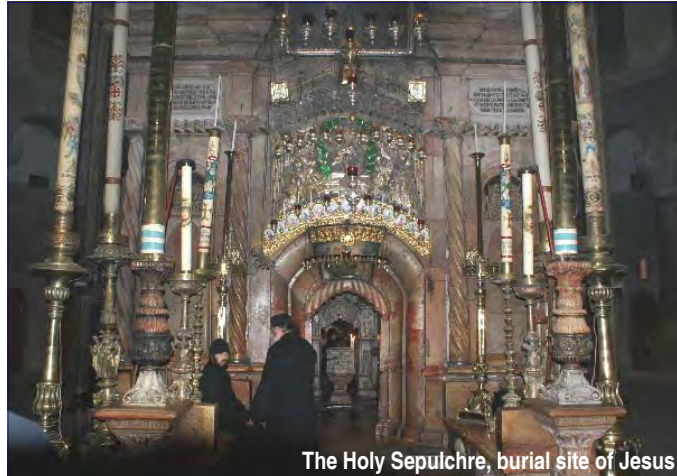
After the Eucharist we continued down the Mount of Olives to The Church of All Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane. The church, built in 1924, is on the traditional site of the garden in which Jesus prayed on the night he was



Celebrating the Eucharist on The Mount of Olives



The Grotto of the Nativity, birthplace of Jesus



The Holy Sepulchre, burial site of Jesus



betrayed. The altar covers the rock where Jesus spent the night in prayer. I felt so humble being amongst the Olive trees where Jesus was arrested.

We finished the morning by entering the walled city and visiting the Pool of Bethesda and the Church of St. Anne. This pool is believed to have healing powers and to be close to the birth place of Mary, mother of Jesus. The crusaders built an impressive church to mark this and dedicated it to her mother Anne – Jesus' grandmother. This came over as a very Holy place and one which Debbie found very powerful.

We then walked through the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem to Mount Zion. Here we visited the Church of St Peter in Gallicantu (cockcrow). Built in 1931 this church was to commemorate Peter's three denials of Christ. This was followed by the Dormition Abbey, a German Benedictine monastery, dedicated to Mary, who is believed to have lived and died in Jerusalem. Mount Zion itself is where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples and the meeting place of the first Christians.

As I looked out from Mount Zion I was reminded of the troubled area Jerusalem is in. In the distance you could see the security wall being built to separate the Palestinian West Bank from Israel. This wall splits streets, gardens, neighbourhoods and family and friends. We prayed for peace.

The second day was a little less hectic, beginning with a visit to Ein Karem, birthplace of John the Baptist, where we celebrated the Eucharist. We then visited the Israel Museum, home to the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the fascinating St James Armenian Cathedral where we attended afternoon Vespers.

The day finished at the Western (Wailing) Wall, the holiest site for the Jews. This was fascinating as we arrived just as the Sabbath was beginning. I had prayers said for my family by members of the Brothers of David – a special event.

Saturday began with one of my highlights of the visit to Jerusalem – a walk along the via Dolorosa, taking the route Jesus Christ followed to his crucifixion, carrying his cross. I had the honour of reading at the second station of the cross – 'Jesus takes up his cross'. I must admit I was in tears for most of this, thinking of Christ's suffering as he went to his death.

This walk finished at the magnificent Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Golgotha, believed to be the place of Jesus' crucifixion. It is also said to contain the place where Jesus was buried.

We then started our journey to Bethlehem, stopping in the village of Beit Sahour, the Shepherds Fields, which is where the Angel of the Lord visited the shepherds and informed them of



Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives

Jesus' birth. The Eucharist was held overlooking the field. We carried on to Manger Square and the Basilica and Grotto of the Nativity and St Jerome's Caves. This is of course the site of Jesus' birth and where he was laid in a manger. The present church is 6th century and is said to be the oldest continuously operating church in the world. You have to bow your head in humility to enter – and because the door is so low.

This again was a special place for me, made even more so as we were the only group present in the grotto at the time. This enabled us to pray together and sing a hymn whilst thanking God for sending us his only son.

Our last day in Jerusalem saw us visit the Temple Mount – site of the Dome of the Rock and el-Aqsa Mosque. Due to its importance for Judaism and Islam, it is one of the most contested religious sites in the world.

The Temple Mount is the holiest site in Judaism. They hold that it was from here that the world expanded into its present form, and that this was where God gathered the dust he used to create the first man, Adam.

The Torah also records that it was here that God chose to rest his Divine Presence. In Islam, the site is revered as the destination of Islamic prophet Muhammad's journey to Jerusalem, and the location of his ascent to heaven, and is also associated with other local Muslim figures of antiquity.

This tension is very real when you visit this site – our group had to pass through airport-style scanners before entering the site and once there we were accompanied all the time by an armed guard. No praying or bibles are allowed on the mount so as not



The Garden of Gethsemane

to inflame religious rivalries.

After this we travelled to St Georges Cathedral, the centre of Anglican worship in Jerusalem. We joined the 10am Eucharist which was performed in both Arabic and English (for our benefit). Hearing the eucharistic prayer said together in both languages will be another enduring memory for me from this pilgrimage.

After the Eucharist we left Jerusalem on our journey to Tiberius and the Sea of Galilee. On route we visited Jericho and took a cable car up to the Mount of Temptation, where Jesus was tempted by the devil. Atop the Mount sits the Monastery of the Temptation. We arrived late evening at the Ron Beach Hotel, our base of for the next three days.

The following day we drove via Cana to visit the Church of the Transfiguration on the summit of Mount Tabor. As mentioned in a recent sermon by Debbie, the taxi drive to the church was rather precarious to say the least and I said a prayer or two for our safety.

We then continued to Nazareth where we visited the Sisters of Nazareth Convent where we celebrated the Eucharist. This was special for me as I read the lesson here, in the town where Jesus grew up.

Across the road we entered the magnificent Basilica of the Annunciation, built where Mary was told she was to be the mother of our Lord. The modern Basilica was dedicated in 1968 but preserves the outline of the 12th century Crusader church.

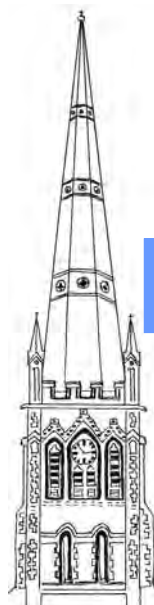
Of course Mary is rightly glorified as the Mother of our Lord, but what of Joseph? Just behind the Basilica stands the Church of St Joseph built in 1914. In it lies a subtle picture of Mary, Joseph and Jesus – with Joseph's arm around our Lord instead of the usual depiction of Mary holding him. One for the boys I think!

Our final full day of the pilgrimage saw us explore the sites associated with Jesus' ministry around the Sea of Galilee. We visited the ruins of Capernaum, Jesus' Galilean home.

We continued to Mensa Christi (where Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection). The highlight again for me was the Eucharist which today was said on the shores of the lake at Tabgha, beside the Church of the Multiplication (more commonly known as the Church of the Loaves and Fishes). In this church lies the famous mosaic of two fishes flanking a basket of loaves.

We lunched in the Convent of Beatitudes where we visited the church and garden that commemorates the Sermon on the Mount. We then sailed on Lake Galilee back to our hotel on a replica of the design of boats used in the time of Jesus and his fisherman disciples. The weather was perfect – what a way to end a fascinating and moving pilgrimage.

■ Do you feel inspired to join Debbie on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 3-12 February next year? For more information please contact her or pick up a leaflet from church. The leaflet has the full itinerary and the cost.



AROUND THE SPIRE

NEWS FROM HAMPTON HILL AND BEYOND

Christingle collection tops £100 and is still open

Thank you to all those who returned the candle money-boxes handed out at the Christingle service. Over £100 has been collected for the Children's Society, an increase on last year's total. If you still have a box, please bring it to a Sunday service or leave it at the parish office. If you would like a collecting box to contribute to this charity on a regular basis, please see Pip or Anne Rowett, or collect one from the Parish Office.



■ We welcome our new Bishop of Kensington, the Rt. Revd. Paul Williams, who was consecrated in St. Paul's Cathedral on 25 March. His service of welcome will be on Wednesday 1 April at St. Mary Abbott's Church, Kensington at 6.30pm.



Congratulations to Betty Rainbow who celebrated her 80th birthday on 17 March. The event was marked with a family lunch.

■ On 21 April, the parish visitors will be holding a tea party in St. James's Church Hall from 3 pm for members of the church whom they visit and who cannot often get out on their own. Anyone else is welcome, particularly if they know those already attending would value the chance to catch up with friends they don't often get the chance to see. Either turn up on the day or let Liz Butler know in advance (telephone 020 8977 4227) and she will bring more biscuits!

ALMA children's clothes appeal for orphans

Please bring any unused or unwanted children's clothes to church on 25-26 April or 2-3 May and place them in the collection bins by the main church doors. They will be used for the AIDS and cholera orphans in our link parishes in Mozambique. We are also collecting old mobile phones to be exchanged for cash to pay for the cost of sending out the clothes.

REGISTERS FOR FEBRUARY

Baptisms

4 Ted Nicholas Nottingham, Hampton

8 Archie James Bourdeaux, Teddington



The Colourful Christian Year, Part 2

The Christian Year is made up of five seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter. (The rest of the year is referred to as 'Ordinary Time' as there is no special celebration.) It also consists of Saints' Days, Festivals and Holy Days. These seasons and days make up the Christian calendar. Colour can be seen around the church, especially in the altar frontal, the pulpit fall, the Bible book-mark, the embroidered scarves (stoles) and the brightly coloured outer vestments (chasubles) of the priest. Colours vary according to the time of the Christian Year. The seasons follow the life of Jesus like a story. Part 1 appeared in the December/January issue.

LENT

The story then follows his life through to the preparation for his passion (suffering) and death on the cross during Lent and Holy Week. The colour for Lent is purple (penitence, preparation) which was the most expensive dye in Roman times. Being very expensive, purple became a sign of wealth, power, and royalty. Therefore purple is the colour during the seasons of Advent and Lent, which celebrate the coming of the King.



EASTER

Following Lent is the important time of Easter with Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Angels announced Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:1-8) and The New Testament uses white to describe angels and the risen Lord. So white (light, joy, purity) is the colour for the season of Easter. Gold or ivory are alternatives to white. After the ascension, the story focuses on the founding of the Church itself, with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.



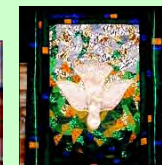
FESTIVALS

Red is the colour of blood and fire, and so is the colour for any service that commemorates the death of a martyr or saint. During Lent red is used on Palm Sunday due to its association with the cross and the shedding of blood. Also, red is used at Pentecost, due to its association with the 'tongues of fire.' Other Festivals are George Patron Saint of England, 23 April; Mark the Evangelist, 25 April; Philip and James, Apostles, 1 May; Matthias the Apostle, 14 May.



ORDINARY TIME

The day after Pentecost until the eve of All Saints' Day is called 'Ordinary Time' as it is not a specific season of the Christian year. Green is the colour for general use during 'Ordinary Time' as it is considered to be a natural colour, the colour of vegetation, the colour of life, creation and hope. This final period of the church year is called Trinity. There is actually no 'Ordinary Time' during April and May 2009 as Pentecost falls on 31 May.





Revelations

War and Peace

One of the unhappy results of the Gaza conflict has been an apparently wide-spread increase of anti-Semitism. In several places in Europe alone synagogues have been scrawled with hate slogans and swastikas. In February a Jewish man was attacked in Golders Green by a gang chanting 'That's for Gaza!' as they kicked him on the ground. Jews are only one of the many groups to be made proxy victims for their leaders' violence. Innocent travellers have been mutilated and killed in London, apparently to revenge the carnage of the war in Iraq. The Mumbai hotel bombings, thankfully repudiated by the government of Pakistan, seem to have been simply anti-Indian, possibly a response to the Kashmir conflict, with no positive purpose. Such violence creates a vicious spiral of more violence. But some injured people seem to be able to break this spiral by acts of almost superhuman forgiveness. We know of such acts in Northern Ireland; occasionally we hear of others in the other conflicts. Though mostly unpublicised they contribute to reconciliation and make the task of political peacemakers possible.

Knives and other weapons

We worry about people who say they must carry a knife or even a gun for their own safety. Individuals who keep aggressive weapons to protect themselves in this country are usually regarded as anti-social, possibly paranoid or criminal. Our nation seems content to keep Trident missiles in nuclear submarines with an easy conscience. In their letter to *The Times* of 17 January a retired field-marshal, Lord Bramall, and two retired generals argue very plausibly that the Trident missile system is a waste of money: 'unusable nuclear weapons...virtually irrelevant except in the context of domestic politics'. As critics of this letter have said, it may be motivated by inter-service rivalry. But unless we doubt the writers' honesty it would seem that keeping these weapons is not just wrong, but stupid.

Financial advice from the past

Ecclesiastes, 'the Preacher', says he is a son of David, putting him at about 1000 BC, but probably he means son in spirit rather than literally. The style is thought to be much later, perhaps as late as 300 BC. Although the writings have something of the air of relished melancholy of Victor Meldrew or Christopher Robin's Eeyore, the February lectionary readings from Ecclesiastes were strikingly relevant to our present economic problems. One might almost have thought that Ecclesiastes fixes his disapproving eyes on Sir Fred, Sir James and all the other bankers 100 generations or so in the future, giving them awful warnings: 'The man who loves money can never have enough, ...Sweet is the sleep of the labourer... but the rich man owns too much and cannot sleep' and much more. Chapters 5 and 6 would make good texts for our financial experts to hang on their bedroom walls.

Simple problem solving

A quotation from ex-war correspondent Martin Bell's Lent talk: 'If the only tool in your hands is a hammer, then every problem you face becomes a nail'. A useful saying for all sorts of professions to remember, watch-repairers and counter-terrorists particularly.



Christian Influences in Broadcasting

Wednesday 1 April, 8pm, Garden Hall, next to St Mary's Church, St Mary's Road, London SW19 7BP
Talk by Michael Wakelin, head of religion and ethics at the BBC. Free. For more information tel 020 8946 2605.

Bishop of Kensington

Wednesday, 1 April, 6.30pm
Welcome Service at St Mary Abbot's Church, Kensington.
Sunday, 7 June, 6pm, St Mary's, Hampton
The Bishop will be visiting the Hampton Deanery.

Sunday, 22 November

Confirmation service at St James's Church.

Concordia Concerts

Sunday 5 April, 6.30pm,
Palm Sunday Concert, St John the Divine, Richmond
Concordia Voices perform *Membra Jesu nostri* and *Buxtehude*. Musical Director Neil Ferris. Organist Alex Chaplin. Tickets £12 (concessions £10).
Sunday 28 June, 7.45pm,
With a Merry Noise, St John's Church, Wimbledon
Programme to include Walton's *The Twelve* and the first concert performance of Paul Spicer's *Psalms 150*. Tickets £12 (concessions £10).

The Bishop of London's

Holy Week Lectures

Monday-Wednesday, 6-8 April, 1pm, St Stephen Walbrook Church, 39 Walbrook, London EC4N 8BN
The Mystical Life is a series of lectures being given by Bishop Richard Chartres. Monday 'Preparation', Tuesday 'The Journey to Easter' and Wednesday 'The Promise'. The lectures are free and will be followed by refreshments. For more information please telephone 020 7626 9000.

Initiatives of Change Forum

Trust and Integrity in the Olympic Ideal, Tuesday 7 April, 7.15pm, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD
Light refreshments from 6.30pm, talk begins at 7.15pm.
John Armit is Chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority, the public body responsible for building the venues and infrastructure for the 2012 Olympic Games, including the Olympic Park. As well as overseeing the project he is also concerned about the legacy post 2012. The talk is free, but a collection will be taken towards expenses.
Telephone 020 7798 6000 to book places.

St James's Theatre Club

Wednesday 8 April, 7.45pm, Brief Encounter, Richmond Theatre
Tickets £16 (save £10)

Tuesday 5 May, 7.45pm, Cabaret, Richmond Theatre
Tickets £19.50 (save £10).

To join us, please put your name on the church notice board or telephone Ria Beaumont on 020 8943 4336. Transport can be arranged.

Beneath the Veil of Suspicion

Saturday 25 April, 9.30am, London School of Theology, Green Lane, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2UW
The Centre for Islamic Studies at London School of Theology examines the issue of Christian-Muslim relations in Britain today. Speakers include: Sheikh Dr Al-Hussaini, an Imam and research fellow of the Interfaith Alliance and lecturer in Islamic Studies at Leo Baeck College; Dr Philip Lewis, an advisor on Christian-Muslim relations to the Anglican Bishops of Bradford; and Dr Ida Glaser, the Academic Director of the Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, Oxford. Cost is £20 including lunch (£15 students and senior citizens). Contact Mrs Lisbet Diers, Assistant to the Director, Centre for Islamic Studies, London School of Theology, Green Lane, Northwood, HA6 2UW. Tel 01923 456160.

Family Quiz Night and Supper

Saturday 16 May, 6pm for prompt 6.30pm start, St James's Church Hall
Come and join the fun to raise funds for Christian Aid Week. £10 Adults, £5 under-16s, to include supper between two rounds of questions. Tickets from Liz Wilmot, telephone 020 8977 9434, or from the Parish Office, telephone 020 8941 6003, by 10 May please.

From Henry VII to Henry VIII

Runs until 29 August 11am-5pm Saturday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Museum of Richmond, Old Town Hall, Whittaker Avenue, Richmond
Five hundred years ago, King Henry VII died in his palace at Richmond. He was succeeded by his second and only surviving son, who became Henry VIII. The museum is marking the anniversary of this event with an exhibition and a series of associated events, which include a Tudor film season, Exhibition Gallery Talks, and a Tudor Dance Workshop, plus much more. Admission free. For more information telephone 020 8831 6000.

Vicar's View



...I haven't the heart to tell her the bishop went home 20 minutes ago!

Help me to keep hope alive



Once again the poverty of so many of our fellow men and women in countries far away calls us to 'make a difference' to their lives this Christian Aid Week. When we remember that thousands of people of every age live on about \$2 a day, we realise that we can afford to help them to better lives.

This will be the 21st year that I have organised the Christian Aid collections at St James, and the need for generosity and prayers is as great as ever. So, please, let us make a special effort to stand up for the poor and often forgotten people of the world - they need our help so badly - and remember, **a child dies of hunger somewhere in the world every five seconds.**

All Christian Aid's work is carried out through charities or partners local to the country which is receiving aid. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) we work through Humanité Nouvelle, so let me tell you about how your money is spent there.

Eighteen-year-old Nadia Kabula's story is not an extraordinary one. For many people in the DRC, life is a struggle. Following ten years of conflict, malnourishment and preventable diseases still claim thousands of lives each week. Christian Aid partner organisations are helping to rebuild lives and livelihoods in some of the country's most vulnerable communities.

After the greatest challenge of Nadia's life, Christian Aid partner Humanité Nouvelle was there to help her focus on the future and the hope of a better life. Nadia's father died suddenly two-and-a-half years ago. Her grieving mother, Brigitte, struggled to provide for her six children. Even though Brigitte works gruelling 48-hour shifts, some weeks

her crippling transport costs total almost as much as her meagre weekly salary.

Nadia was profoundly affected by the death of her father, whom she adored. And his death had immediate practical implications. There was no money to pay for her schooling, so she had to drop out and care for her younger siblings while their mother worked.

Families like Nadia's often hear about Humanité Nouvelle's tailoring course through their local church. The course helps poor girls to develop skills to support themselves and their families. Nadia explains why girls in similar situations turn to sex work: 'They need to pursue their education and, with a lack of means, get desperate.' It would have been easy for Nadia to despair. But instead Humanité Nouvelle 'have given me education for life', she says. She completed the course and now helps to teach the new intake of girls.

Nadia still takes care of her siblings, as well as being a mentor at Humanité Nouvelle. Her mother describes her as 'a blessing... [without her] things would be very hard'. And it's not just her family who speak so positively of her - her pastor also talks about the inspiring influence of her gospel singing.

Nadia is confident that she can earn a good living from sewing and she is clear about her priorities: 'If God helps me... I will do all I can to take care of my siblings and my mother.'

As collectors we can be inspired by Nadia. Even in difficult circumstances she is planting seeds of hope around her. And Nadia's mother has a message for us: **'You volunteers should not be discouraged when you're turned away from houses. You should carry on because without that money it would be very difficult for... children from destitute backgrounds to get training, get a job and secure their future.'**

Your time and money are more valuable than you know. You could give a chance of a brighter future to another young person like Nadia, and support them to bring hope to the people around them.

In 2008 we at St James's Church raised £3665 for Christian Aid Week and about £400 was added from Gift Aid signatures. It would be heart-warming to do more in 2009. Let's try together.

■ **Family Quiz Night and Supper**, Saturday 16 May, 6.30pm, St James's Church Hall, in aid of Christian Aid Week. Tickets £10 Adults, £5 under-16s, to include supper, from Liz Wilmot or Parish Office. Full details in Events section, page seven.

Easter Candle

The Easter Candle is a large candle which is placed in a prominent place in churches during the Easter season. It is also known as the 'Paschal' candle from the Hebrew *pesach* meaning 'passover'. The Easter Candle is the principal symbol of the resurrection during the season of Easter. It is the sign of Christ's 'passover' from death to life. As Easter is not just one day, but a season, it burns from Easter Day (which begins with the celebration of the Easter Liturgy on Holy Saturday or Easter Eve) right through until the day of Pentecost, at the very end of the Easter season. It is lit at all celebrations of the eucharist during this time.



Usually an Easter Candle has specific decoration on it - a transfer in plastic or wax, and some pins or nails. The transfer is invariably a cross with the date of the year and the letters 'alpha and omega,' the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Then there are five pins or nails. At the Easter Liturgy the cross, the symbol of salvation is traced. Then the alpha and omega, for Christ is the beginning and end of all things. Then the year is traced, for it is in our own time that Christ is alive and present. The presiding priest says: 'Christ yesterday and today the beginning and the end. Alpha and Omega. All time belongs to him, and all ages; to him be glory and power, through every age and for ever. Amen.'

Then the five pins or nails are put in, reminding us of the five wounds of Christ. The Gospel of John records how the risen Christ still had his wounds. The presiding priest says:

'By his holy and glorious wounds may Christ our Lord guard us and keep us.'

After the celebration of the eucharist at Pentecost, the Easter Candle is placed near the font. It is then lit again at services which point people to new life in Christ - baptisms and funerals.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 10-16 MAY

christian aid HOW YOU CAN HELP

The ripple effect of supporting people like Nadia during Christian Aid Week is immense:

£5 could buy six yards of material, from which a three-piece woman's outfit can be made

£10 could provide a girl with enough material to complete a 12-month tailoring course

£40 could pay the monthly salary of a tailoring instructor.