

## A LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

## "LET US PRAY"

How often have you used that phrase and what have been your expectations or the hopes of the congregations you have associated with you? Has it just been a formal introduction to formal prayer said week by week with no more than a passing thought that it is all part of the routine of corporate worship? Do we really believe that we are associating ourselves, when we pray, with Our Lord Jesus Christ as He offers to God the Father the needs, the hopes and the fears of His children whose good and well-being He desires and wishes to bring about?

Sometimes we need a jolt to remind us that words have meaning and that such words "Let Us Pray" are at the heart of our religion. If they are a mere formality or a meaningless phrase, then our faith is vain.

No event has provided this jolt so convincingly in recent times as the death of Pope John Paul and the election of his successor. The election of this good man — "God's candidate", Cardinal Hume called him — seemed the clear answer to that prayer in the Sistine Chapel, "Let us pray for your man, O God". Yet thirty-three days later he was dead. There were plenty of critics, and they found a prominent place in the correspondence of *The Times*, who saw in this clear evidence that prayer and life had little connection or if John Paul was God's answer to good prayer, then it might seem to them a strange God and a strange way to respond to those who prayed. There were many who were genuinely confused about the purpose and the exercise of prayer and, indeed, about the nature of the God to whom we pray. But it was a jolt that we all needed. We needed to be reminded what those words really mean for us. We needed to be reminded that we have to think far more deeply about the meaning of prayer so that it is not a formality but the very basis of a true relationship between man and God.

It leads me to make one or two observations on the jolt that this event has given us. First, prayer can very easily become a formality. It can become something we feel that we ought to do and so we offer it without always much real conviction that it will fundamentally change anything. We need a jolt from God from time to time to remind us that prayer is the life blood of our relationship with Him and however remote He seems or we seem, unless we continue to communicate, the relationship dies. But prayer is not just words. Words and the response that they evoke need to be examined, wrestled with, understood and not just blindly accepted, though there are clearly times when as Archbishop Anthony once said, "You can only pray — Help me, O God, to let go all my problems and fix my mind on You." But resignation — "God's will be done" — before some disaster with no further questions asked, is not a relationship based on love. It is one thing to accept a situation because we can do nothing about it, with a good deal of hidden resentment, and another to see in a given situation a way of discovering something of the depths of a relationship which, whatever else we know about it, is vitally and unquestionably one of love. So we believe and it is this belief that makes our prayer far from just a formality.

Again, is not one of our difficulties, when we say these words "Let Us Pray", that we naturally expect our answers to prayer to come in terms of time and space, in this very limited dimension. We pray and the answer, if we are to understand it, must come within the compass of the world that we know and its needs — our needs — as we see and experience them; but God, though He works in time and space, has for the fulfilment of His ultimate purposes to work within the eternal dimension, a world of which ours is only a very small part, hidden from us but known to Him. There are plenty of phrases that come to mind as we read the Bible. "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday" (psalm 90, verse 4). "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my disciples fight." "This is life eternal, to know Thee and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." Incarnation is one thing but the Kingdom of God is another. None of us knows quite what living under that kind of rule really involves for us but we know that it is beyond the dimension of time and space. We may be bothered that thirty-three days were a poor answer to prayer for a man who had such obvious potential, so little time, so little space; but there is a sense in which in the Kingdom of God that short reign achieved more than others have achieved in a great many years. I quote from The Times of October 14th: "God's candidate identified himself in one short month with a reversal of one thousand years of papal symbolism and self-understanding. For those who believe that God's living hand is on his Church the message may well be unmistakable. From the first moment he manifestly discarded both the paraphernalia and the personal style of a monarch, no crown, no coronation, no royal 'we' . . . . If John Paul's legacy is not to be betrayed, the message muffled, then henceforth the Pope must indeed be manifestly a pastor rather than a monarch . . . . and the thirty three days' ministry of God's candidate may well prove a pointer to the future of the greatest significance." God with the needs of His Church in mind, was answering the prayer. He was in a true sense God's candidate. He was the man to give a push in a new direction which is desperate for the health and work, and especially the renewal, of the Church. This was his life's work and a fitting climax to it.

Answers to prayer, like history itself, can often only be understood in perspective. You must have discovered that as you look back on your own life. The thirty-three days of John Paul — the thirty-three years of Jesus Christ at the time must have seemed indeed a strange answer to prayer, even the prayer of Christ himself. "If it be possible, let this Cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done", a phrase we never find very easy to add. Yet in the perspective of history and in the life of the Church, that strange answer to prayer, the Cross of Christ, has turned out to be the means of our salvation and an explanation of much about our world that could not have been answered or revealed in any other way.

There is much prayer that seems to be unanswered and much prayer that seems to us to have very often the wrong answer but we have to pray in the light of what we know the nature of God to be rather than in the light of our own immediate needs as we see them. There are matters of very great moment to come before our Church before the end of this year. We shall often say the words, both privately and corporately, "Let Us Pray". We shall do well to remember what God has been trying to teach us through recent events.

Your friend and Bishop,

† Ronald Kensington.

(This letter, primarily intended for Clergy and Parish Workers, is included here because we think it merits a much wider circle of readers. Ed.)

## “THE SENSE OF HEARING OF THE SOUL”

The above are not my words but the inspiration of D.S. Cairns in his remarkable book “The Faith that Rebels” and they leapt out at me from the printed pages as being at one and the same time both terribly important as food for thought and wonderfully descriptive of that vital yet intangible link between Man and God.

How can one describe the soul, where is it located? Man has located the mind as pertaining to the brain but it is only in part through the mind that one “perceives” the soul; damage the brain and the working of the mind is disordered; but if the soul is cast down or barren, the mind may still function apparently normally but its quality is impaired.

The soul then, is surely something that apertains to the quality and wholeness and fact of life itself and departs finally whence it came when life itself departs. “May the Lord have mercy on your soul” does not imply something of the flesh or mind but of the spirit.

Perhaps it is easier to consider the qualities of the soul when we are conscious of what the lack of it means to us; to say of someone that he is soulless does not mean that he is brainless or mindless but can conjure up a picture of spiritlessness, of lack of lustre and purpose, but more often the adjective soulless describes a person without conscience, without love or sensitivity, emotionless, lacking humanity, dead to warmth and life. A body with all organs intact and with mind functioning but bereft of this intangible we call the soul would be little more than an artefact, wonderful indeed but not whole or complete. When the soul is “cast down” the whole body and mind is spiritless, it goes through the motions of living but life has lost its savour; when the soul is restored the whole body and mind is revitalized. “He restoreth my soul” cries the psalmist in joy and praise and worship out of his experience of God the great restorer, and new life — as the New English Bible puts it — is granted him **through** this restoration.

It is true that when Man is open to the Grace of God a newness of life is part of the gift of the Holy Spirit; but when God communes with Man where does man initially experience this — what location in the body, what known organ receives and experiences this? The heart? The lungs? The brain? — all so necessary to maintain the body. Do the outer eyes see the Holy Spirit and the outer ears hear Him? Surely no — or the whole earth would be as Heaven!

We are thus thrown back on this word “soul” for an explanation of something that really lies beyond our human power and comprehension to explain. We assert, given that we believe in such a thing as man’s soul, that it is this, itself intangible, that mercifully receives or tragically rejects, the Spirit of God because even the mind seeks to intellectualize something which is an experience beyond human intellectual exercise. Man’s mind, for all his pride in it, is too puny even at its highest fully to receive the mind of God, and when it tries to grasp it only succeeds in reducing it in size and scope to conform with the limits of his own limited understanding, and this is man’s tragic dilemma — he creates a God in his own image instead of being open to the conception of himself as having been created by God in His image, and given a soul to be God’s special creative gift to man, intangible and given to receive that which is also intangible but necessary for wholeness of life as the air we breathe is necessary for the maintenance of merely corporeal life — the Holy Spirit.

Christ tells us that the one unforgivable sin is the one of slander or denigration of the Holy Spirit, and in the next breath assures his disciples that the Holy Spirit Himself will instruct them.

“The Holy Spirit” – in the words of Cairns – “is as it were God’s highest word to man; the word that speaks in conscience, in ideals and at its loudest and clearest in the fullest Christian experience. To have known that experience and to have destroyed it is to kill ‘the sense of hearing of the soul’. The gravity of the warning is the measure of the supreme value put on the gift of the Spirit.”

If anyone has knowingly received the gift of the Spirit, of spiritual intuition, and turns his back on it, that person is dulling the sense of hearing of the soul; it is as if Samuel, hearing his name called and called again and yet again, had turned over on his couch and pulled the sheet over his head between himself and his God.

We are constantly being told to ask for God’s guidance, to listen to God, yet many hearing must wonder “but how is this done, how can we achieve this?”

I think that, consciously using our gift and discipline of free will, we have deliberately to place ourselves in God’s way, making ourselves available to Him by praying to hear and wanting in all sincerity and belief to hear and be instructed; to listen with our inward ears to the voice of Christ speaking through the Gospels by disciplined and regular study of them; by listening to preachers speaking out of their experience and love; by seeking Christ not only in ourselves but in our neighbours – but surely the greatest and most direct way is to cultivate through prayer and meditation this “sense of hearing of the soul” – not to stifle it, not to say “I will listen tomorrow”, for that may be too late and many never come.

If anyone has experience of the sense or knowledge of the presence of the Almighty in their lives at any point – and there are many who have, let them say like Samuel “Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth”, and their sense of inward hearing will grow greater as they follow their experience nearer to its source; but just as surely it will dim and die if they close their inward ears to it and so finally destroy it.

Margery Orton

## A VISIT TO CHINA

Some friends in Hampton Hill will remember the Browns from New Zealand who lived here in the early ‘50s, and attended St. James’s Church. Dorothy, having made herself an expert in teaching English as a foreign language, is now spending a year in Peking, teaching in college in Tientain. Laurie, her husband, is spending a few months of sabbatical leave from the University of New South Wales with her.

Last year Dorothy said “Come and see me in Peking”. This stuck in my mind. I tried to go as an individual, but the Chinese Embassy obviously preferred people to go in groups, in organised tours. Joining a Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding three-week-tour presented no difficulties – except for the money involved, £907 – and on Monday, Sept 11 rather to my surprise, I found myself in Peking.

As tourists we were treated royally: first class on the trains, luxury hotels, delicious food, two interpreter guides with us wherever we went, and local guides laying on special visits to factories, communes, schools, clinics, shops, production units, the Great Wall, palaces, tombs, a film-studio, everything – or very nearly everything – we had said we wanted if possible to see. This particular tour concentrated on industry, and from Peking we went north-east into what was at one time Manchuria, and visited Changchun, the

Detroit of China, the car-industry town, and saw the Liberation lorries coming off the conveyor-belt; we went also to Kirin, Shenyang and Darien on the coast of the Yellow Sea. We didn't manage to see the big steel-works at Anshan, also in that area, or the coal-mines at Fushun, though we saw models of both places in the superb Industrial Exhibition mounted in Shenyang, which rivals our Science Museum.

I was there for such a short time, but my impression of the Chinese people is of a highly-motivated, responsible, conscientious, courteous people, all working hard to get China into full production so that the vast population should be fed, clothed, housed and taught. Chairman Mao was their inspiring leader until his death in 1976; now they have wise Chairman Hua, and all the children's songs and the songs at concerts praise him and acknowledge thanks to him. The most popular song at a concert we went to had words like this: "We want to assure Chairman Hua of our support, and our gratitude for this recent period of stability."

There are no advertisements in the streets, but there are slogans everywhere. "People of the world unite". "We follow Chairman Hua in a new Long March towards full production". In every factory there are enormous slogans "In Industry, learn from Darching" (Darching is an oil refinery which has accomplished marvels of production). Every agricultural centre, brigade or commune has "In Agriculture learn from Darchai" - Darchai is a brigade which, despite terribly difficult conditions of infertile soil, rocky mountain-sides and so on, has produced fantastic yields of grain. In school-rooms and on the sports-fields there are slogans: "Friendship first: Competition second". Over a garage were the words "Do not drive like hero, and do not drive in competition with one another". This did not stop the drivers of the busses, trucks and lorries from going very fast and hooting very loudly!

There are no vast financial differences; wages are low, and the cost of living very low. No inflation. Everything in the shops and the department stores is very cheap. There are no private cars, but some taxis and official cars. There are hundreds of thousands - no millions - of bicycles. The workers get up at 5.30 and do their exercises in the streets in big groups, all chattering as they do them, or solemnly alone individually. Then off to work on their bicycles; no unemployment. The elderly are involved in the great effort: retirement age is 50 for women, 55 for men, and then they either run the homes and look after the young children so that both father and mother can go out to full-time work, or they do the social work which is needed (there are no paid social workers), or they can be called back to their firms as advisers. There is considerable respect for age.

I came back full of admiration for the way in which China has recovered from what the older people call the "Bitter Past". The past of oppression, foreign invasion, civil war, starvation, toil, illiteracy, grinding poverty, disease, rampant inflation, disasters and flooding of rivers which used to bring great destruction and loss of life.

Of course there are "Buts"; I have no time to enumerate them. Possibly I could give a talk some time, show some of my slides and answer questions.

Hannah Stanton

## ANOTHER KIND OF HARVEST

The Harvest Festival was a time of trial for me this year. The beautifully decorated and very full church and the generous gifts around the altar displayed a "good harvest" in so many senses for St. James's. But when we

sang "all good things around us are sent from heaven above, so thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love", the words somehow stuck in my throat. Because something very sad indeed was uppermost in my mind I could not joyfully praise the Lord. I did not want thoughts of this kind — but they were there: what about the bad things? Is it not dishonest just to thank God for the good things and ignore the bad ones?

It worried me a great deal that these thoughts would not go away. And then, towards the end of the service, suddenly the answer was there:-

God is Love. We do not arrive at that knowledge by any deductions of our own reason. We do not feel that God loves us because there are many blessings that he has given us. If that is the case, our security is indeed shattered in the absence of blessings or in the presence of suffering. No — it is exactly the other way round, we are given the knowledge that God is Love only by Christ, His Son, himself. We must accept it because he tells us so. And then, when we feel happy, praise will flow from our lips easily. And when we feel unhappy, we may rejoice in the unshakeable comfort that there is nothing that can make us despair; nothing on earth is strong enough to separate us from the God who loves us.

And then we can thank God truthfully for all the good things around us. They do come from the Father who loves us. As did the answer for my doubts.

So God delivered me from evil, this Harvest Festival.

H.B.

### AFTERNOON PRAYER MEETING

In the summer I felt it was right to start a fortnightly afternoon prayer meeting. Its purpose is to come together and share thoughts and experiences related to our Christian faith; perhaps to discuss problems; to open ourselves to God and listen to his word through the Bible and through prayer. Praise, intercession, meditation — prayer has so many forms. And when several people are together it is so much richer. God works through our individual minds and gives each person words that another might not have used. Praying together is a lovely experience.

I decided on afternoon meetings because some people find the daytime less crowded than evenings. And I would like to stress that the meeting is not restricted to young mums. Alison still usually sleeps after lunch, and if we have children we would hope to occupy them in the playroom.

The meeting is from 1.30 to 3 p.m. every 2nd and 4th Wednesday at 75 St. James's Avenue.

Hilde Bucknell

### AROUND THE SPIRE

We are all very pleased to congratulate Dawn and Seymour Harris on the birth of their baby son, Matthew. He has been much admired already and we are looking forward to watching him grow up.

Many of us will remember Dick Pearce, a keen member of our Y.P.F. who left for Australia (where we met his wife Beth) about three years ago. They are at present over here for a month, and many of us were given a chance of seeing them and their baby son, Christopher, when they came to our Harvest Festival. Though staying in Frimley, they are frequently coming over to Hampton Hill so many more of us will no doubt welcome the opportunity to catch up on their news before they return to Sydney where they have now settled.

We have been sorry to hear of a number of people who have not been well recently — Peter Moorey has been in West Middlesex Hospital and we have missed seeing him at church; Malcolm Smith has just returned home to his wife and two young sons after a worrying spell in hospital; and Mr. Peel, who has also been in hospital is now staying in Bristol for the winter, convalescing with his daughter who is a matron of a hospital there.

Mrs. Lewis is in Australia for a couple of months, staying with relatives in Melbourne. Unfortunately she had an unexpected spell in hospital on arrival and had to temporarily postpone her trip to Queensland. However, she will be home soon and no doubt had a very memorable trip.

We felt great sympathy for the much-loved Taylor family when we heard the news of the sudden and unexpected death of Helen's mother. Helen has asked us to express her thanks and gratitude to all the many people in the parish who wrote letters and cards and stood by offering help.

### **YOUNG FAMILIES' GROUP**

We started the year with a new venture — the combined Baptismal Party and Pram Service. It has already been reported on in an earlier magazine, and we can endorse the opinion that it was a success and we all enjoyed ourselves. We hope to have as much enthusiasm and success for our next service — to be held shortly after Christmas and to be followed by a toddler's party.

Our regular meetings have continued to attract new and established members and we are at present planning our next programme — any information regarding our activities can be obtained from Coryn Robinson (979 6786) or Hilde Bucknell (979 3529) and we are always pleased to see new mothers come along.

**Keep Fit** classes started again in September and have slowly built up in numbers, though as before, we would welcome new members — who, incidentally, do not have to attend our Young Families' Group. This class is open to anybody for a nominal fee, though mothers with young children, who would not otherwise find membership of a keep fit class difficult, will be happily accepted, with their offspring.

Young Families' Group meet on 1st, 3rd and 5th Thursday of every month at Wayside (nearly opposite the church) from 10.30 to about 12.00.

Keep Fit Classes are held every Friday at St. James's Parish Hall, School Road, from 2.15 to 3.15 p.m.

Coryn Robinson

### **THE WORD OF THE LORD (4)**

Someone has broken in on the sequence which I had in mind by asking me to comment on the sixth commandment — 'Thou shalt not kill'. Surely, my friendly interrogator said in effect, here if anywhere is an authentic and absolutely definite word of the Lord, which must apply as strongly now as when it was first declared. Why then have Jews and Christians, who profess to acknowledge its binding nature, all down the years and up to the present, taken part in wars and various other kinds of killings in large numbers, and only a small minority amongst them adopted the pacifist position?

This of course, opens up a very wide perspective indeed, so in this brief article I will concentrate on the actual commandment itself. Hebrew scholars tell us that the word used here is a relatively rare one, and only once is it used to designate the killing of one guilty before the law, and it is never used of the

killing of an enemy in battle or for destruction by God of someone who has fallen under his judgement. It would therefore seem to apply only to certain categories of killing, 'unlawful killing', murder – and so many modern versions of the Bible translate the commandment as the NEB does – 'You must not commit murder'. This is not entirely accurate, and it, of course, raises the question: How do you distinguish lawful from unlawful killing, justifiable homicide from murder?

In the period covered by the Old Testament, the definition of murder took shape slowly. For primitive tribes, killing was unlawful only within your own clan. The stranger was fair game – you were normally at war with all strangers; it was peace that had to be declared, and seldom was! Cain's offence was not so much killing as killing his brother. But God was pressing on men's minds and consciences and slowly it began to dawn on them that not all killing outside the family is good; the circle within which killing is bad began to widen. So we cannot understand the full effect of the sixth commandment without going behind it to the sort of law it supersedes, such as the code of Hammurabi, the great lawyer king of Babylon. Here the seriousness of a killing varies according to the social status of the person slain: 'If a man strikes a gentleman's daughter that she dies, his own daughter is to be put to death; if a poor man's, the slayer pays one half mina'. Some people in Babylon had little value in the sight of gods or of men, and those who killed then got away on payment of a moderate fine.

(to be continued)

### **1st HAMPTON HILL GUIDES**

On Saturday, November 25, the 1st Hampton Hill Brownies and Guides will be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of their founding. Ever since 1918 there have been Brownies and Guides in this parish, and to mark this special occasion we will be having a service of thanksgiving in St. James's at 2.30 p.m., to which all are invited. This will be followed by refreshments in the Parish Hall. We would like to see as many friends as possible at the church on that day, and anyone who has had any connection with the Pack or Company in the past, however slight, will be most welcome.

We look forward to seeing you there.

J. Evans and P. Humphrey

### **LOOKING AHEAD TO THE PARISH PARTY**

The Christmas Family Party will be held on Saturday, January 15, in the Parish Hall. There will be fun and games for all. As usual, we hope that folk will come along in fancy dress – but do not worry if you cannot manage this. The theme this year will probably be 'Foreign Bodies': that means that you can be out of place or out of space!



## CHEMISTS' ADDITIONAL DUTY ROTA

### November

- 12 E & R. Kirby, 53 High Street, Teddington.
- 19 Boots, 66 Broad Street, Teddington.
- 26 D.R. Thomas, 113 Stanley Road, Teddington.

### December

- 3 H. Hall, 62 High Street, Hampton Hill.
- 10 E. Moss, 14 Broad Street, Teddington.

## SOME DATES TO NOTE

### November

- 13 10.30 Editorial Board (75 St. James's Avenue)
- 14 20.00 Tuesday Club: Miss Chabers – 'The Royal Botanic Gardens'(W).
- 15 07.30 Holy Communion
- 16 10.30 Young Families Group: 'Save a Baby'(W).
- 18 All-day Mass Attack in churchyard to clear leaves and debris.
- 21 20.00 Prayer Meeting (75 Burton's Road)
- 23 07.30 Holy Communion; 13.30 Prayer Meeting (75 St. James's Avenue)
- 23 20.00 Liturgical Committee (63 Park Road)
- 25 14.30 Guides: Diamond Jubilee Service
- 26 Special theme for this Sunday: Thanksgiving for the completion of the Stewardship Development Programme.
- 28 20.00 Parochial Church Council (Vestry); Tuesday Club; 'Dried Flower Pictures'(W).
- 30 ST. ANDREW'S DAY: 10.30 Young Families Group: 'Patchwork'(W); 19.15 Holy Communion; 20.00 Wayside Monday Centre Management Group (19 St. James's Road)

### December

- 5 08.45 Holy Communion (LEHS); 20.00 Prayer Meeting (75 Burton's Road)
- 6 07.30 Holy Communion; 14.30 Mothers' Union: Open Meeting – Miss Hannah Stanton speaks about her visit to China(W).
- 7 20.00 Properties Committee (19 St. James's Road).
- 10 DEDICATION FESTIVAL
- 12 19.00 Service of Renewal: Re-licensing of Readers (St. Paul's Cathedral); 20.00 Tuesday Club - Social Evening (W)

## BIBLE PUZZLE No. 6

Several people told us that they found this baffling, and only one correct solution was received — from Mrs. Jennifer Lloyd. It was a coded version of St. Mark chapter 15, verse 9. We had hoped to devise a Bible Crossword for you this month, but that has proved a little more difficult than we thought.

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### BAPTISMS

October

- 8 Matthew James Hill, 9 Sherwood Road  
Caroline Nairn, 7 Vincent Row  
Simon Paul Reece, 112 Wordsworth Road
- 22 Christopher Frank Pearce, 23 Solomon Avenue, Marayong, NSW 2148,  
Australia.

### MARRIAGES

September

- 23 Anthony James Wallis to Sandra Claire Mant  
David Paul Mannering to Julia Renee Payne
- 30 Paul Norman Johnson to Patricia June Mayne

### CREMATION

October

- 10 Elizabeth Chivers, 99 Laurel Road, aged 85 years  
(at South-West Middlesex Crematorium)