

Oxon Fourth



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God the Giver

This phrase particularly stood out when I was reading the chapter on Eucharist in Rowan Williams book “Being Christian”. I was reminded of God’s generous and hospitable invitation in Christ to come and share a meal with him, to be fed by him, and of his unstoppable desire to give himself without favour and unconditionally to a wayward and hurting world.

I am also reminded of the phrase “Christ is counting on you” which was said to each of us in the closing Eucharist (Clausura) at the end of our Cursillo weekend. Christ is surely counting on us to be ‘God the Giver’ in our communities, the groups we belong to, the places where we work, wherever he calls us to serve; to approach all people, all animals, all living things and the whole environment with the outlook of God the Giver who created everything.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15.5) So woe betide us if we think we can be ‘God the Giver’ entirely on our own! We need to be fed by the vine, by God the Giver in Christ through his Spirit, to place our reliance on his food and inspiration and to be accountable to him for how we play our part in bringing his food and inspiration to the hurting and hungry world.

As I reflected on God the Giver, giving to and through all of us he is counting on, I thought of all the evidence I had seen of this in what I have heard people say in Group Reunions and Ultreyas; evidence of people’s hearts and minds being fed through piety and study and evidence of them being God the Giver in so much action. The Action Talk at an Ultreya is also referred to as the Witness Talk and time after time we do indeed hear just how people have witnessed to the generous, hospitable, loving God the Giver.

God the Giver in Christ has certainly fed me through the witness of others in Group Reunions, Ultreyas and Spiritual Direction and I hope that others may have sometimes been fed through my witness. But our ‘fourth day activities’ also fulfil another vital purpose for me. They keep me connected to the vine and the other branches and they help me to be accountable through others to him for how I am using and sharing his gifts.

God the Giver offers us through Cursillo opportunities to be growing branches, connected and accountable to Christ, the vine, and the other branches. Cursillo may not be the only way to remain connected and accountable, but I pray that we all find a way, because without it we will soon be ‘doing it MY way’ and not HIS way – the way of God the unstoppable Giver.

Love and prayers, Peter Watsham, Diocesan Lay Director

‘The Way’

I recently watched Emilio Estevez’s film ‘The Way’. Advertisements for the film bill American actor Martin Sheen as the ‘star’, but the real star is the ‘way’ itself, that is, the pilgrim path to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain. It’s well worth watching and will surely whet your appetite for pilgrimage if you haven’t felt it before.



There are, of course, multiple story-lines, and levels of meaning as the plot unfolds. For those of us involved in intentional discipleship, though, the story is a vivid reminder of the need to travel together. Although, as a veteran pilgrim of *El Camino* declares early in the film, every pilgrim must make the pilgrimage for himself and not for anyone else, the richness of the experience for the pilgrims—as different as Chaucer’s random bunch heading for Canterbury—is in large measure due to their travelling *together*. The plot-line, as it deepens, is about what happens *in the company of others* as each pursues his or her unique spiritual quest.

This ought to strike a chord for us Cursillistas. Our fellowship at Ultreyas, and more locally in our reunion groups, is very much about what happens *in the company of others* as we walk the way of Spirit-led disciples. That’s why the reunion card reminds us of the words from the Letter to the Hebrews: that we should ‘not neglect to meet together...but encourage one another...’ (10.25).

The farewell repeated throughout the film as the pilgrims go together from place to place is ‘Buen camino!’ To that we must of course add ‘ultreya!’

Charles Miller,

Diocesan Spiritual Director

Recommended Reading.....

Dreaming of Home by Michael Mitton. Quoting from the back cover: ‘Finding a sense of ‘home’, a special place of acceptance and belonging, is a fundamental human longing. In this powerful and profound book, Michael Mitton shows how it is, in fact, an essential part of both personal development and spiritual renewal..... he considers how we can go about finding our true home within God’s eternal kingdom, how to identify the forces within us that may hinder this search, and the importance of churches offering a welcoming home to all. Each chapter concludes with questions for personal reflection or group discussion and the book also features an imaginative retelling of the parable of the prodigal son, addressing some of the issues raised through a story-based approach’

MESSAGE FROM A RETIRING (SHY?) BISHOP

I wish I had learned the art of bilocation. It would have been so useful to have been able to be in two places at the same time. That way I could have been at so many more important parts of life in the Diocese of Oxford, including Cursillo events.

However, the good Lord felt it best to restrict my life to a single journey – and it's been fascinating and rich and a joy and a privilege and another hundred descriptions. I wouldn't have changed it (except in details!) for the world.

I wonder if you have looked back recently and made out the golden thread of God's presence and action in your life? OK, it might have got a bit tarnished sometimes or disappeared underground for a while, but it's always been there – God's abundant loyalty. Why not look back now and trace that ever-present love that has believed all things, hoped all things and endured all things (1 Cor. 13.7)

I've often asked groups to draw a road on a sheet of paper from top left to bottom right. I've then asked them to see that picture as the journey of their lives, putting in the people, places and events that represent the major turning points of their lives, and their lives-in-Christ. What I'm suggesting now is that the line down the middle of that road isn't a white line but a golden one. It's the golden thread of Love.

Cursillo is a way of celebrating that golden thread. It paints Love down the centre of our road. It reminds us of God's loving presence at every point, and the endless patience, compassion and resilience of that love for us. John V Taylor, former Bishop of Winchester, wrote: 'The truth about God is not so much that he is omnipotent as that he is *inexhaustible*; and for that reason he will always succeed.' Not omnipotent in the sense of an iron will dictating events, but inexhaustible in the sense of a love 'that will not let you go.'

That's the kind of love that I trust you as Cursillistas will go on giving to the Diocese of Oxford. Keep loving; don't be discouraged. In loving we are tapping into the massive energy that creates and sustains worlds. Indeed, we're aligning ourselves with the only dynamic that defeats death and irrevocably embraces life at all times and in all places.

Who wouldn't want to be part of such a movement, a gift to the Church and the world? A way of renewal at the heart of the Church. An experience never forgotten and often refreshed.

Some people don't know what they're missing.

So tell them!

+John



Cursillo #14 April 2014.

A little apprehensive.....

Marie, my sponsor, had asked me if I wanted to attend a weekend away which was about prayer and spending fellowship with other believers. It sounded great, as our church had not long come back from a church weekend away, and as a 'new' Christian I felt it would help me grow in the areas that I was not so confident in. I had only known about the weekend for a couple of weeks, and hadn't had time to have a proper chat with Marie or to go on a familiarisation day, so I was a little bit nervous, as I didn't know what to expect.

I was picked up by Peter and we also picked up Andrew, it was his first Cursillo too. I was glad of the lift as it had not been a good week at work, so driving through the pretty Chiltern countryside was a real blessing. When we arrived at Douai Abbey I was taken aback by its size and beauty, I could already feel the worries of the week melting away. When we arrived I was introduced to Rosemary and she took me to my room and carried my bag! It was like I was on holiday, I had a single room, which was a nice surprise, I had assumed that we would be sharing. I had a quick freshen up and went back to reception, Rosemary took me to the welcome room where I met some of the other guests. We had been told to have a big lunch as the evening meal would be light. After the welcome from the leader, Janet, who was friendly and very funny, we went to dinner. It was great food and company, I did think that if this is a light supper I am not going to do well on my diet this weekend!!

After supper we got straight into the first meditation, a truly enlightening talk about how we should open our eyes to Jesus. We then had another uplifting talk before Compline and a night of silent reflection. I had only been on the weekend for 4 hours and already I was happy, calm, prayerful and incredibly grateful for having the privilege of being invited to such a special place.

I was already up and awake before the knock at 7 as I was excited to see what the day would bring, I was not disappointed. My fellow table members Nick and Peter were fantastic and we all got on really well, I particularly got on with Nick, as he said that he was beginning the process of going into ministry, this had been on my heart and mind for some time, so it was wonderful to speak to someone who was taking that first step. Our table leaders were Rosemary and Gilly who were really encouraging and helpful. During the day we were given messages of love and prayer from other Cursillo groups, it was truly amazing to hear all of those messages and realising that there were people praying for us and thinking of us from all over the world. I was extremely overwhelmed by the people who had agreed to pray for us for a whole hour during every single hour of our weekend, the love and dedication of those people really hit home to me what an amazing and loving group Cursillo is. As you can imagine, when I received my first gift bag full of Palanca, the emotion and surprise was immense. It is the most amazing reminder that God called each and every one of us by name, before we were even born! That is how being on the weekend felt, it was like being re-born in Christ, and there was absolutely no doubting that the Holy Spirit was with us for the whole weekend.

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It was an emotional, spirit-led, amazing, fun, prayerful and surprising weekend. I could go on and on about all the amazing things I learnt about myself and Jesus and faith and fellowship, but my 2 biggest breakthroughs were my prayer and my confidence. I was having issues before the weekend concentrating on prayer, although I made time for it every day, my mind would wander to work issues, and I found it difficult to stay on track. Nick told me about the Office and how it worked, so since then I have been doing as much morning, evening and compline prayers as I can, which has also improved my personal prayer. My second breakthrough was that I have realised that I shouldn't call myself a 'new' Christian, I have been a Christian for over 3 years and my faith is strong, so I do not need to feel intimidated when I am with Christians who have been believers for years. I had been feeling a call to ministry for the past year, but due to my lack of confidence I kept brushing it aside and didn't feel that I had the knowledge to investigate it further. Speaking with Nick and Andrew, who it turned out was being ordained a few weeks later, I realised that this is not something that can be brushed aside and that if God is calling you, then that is his plan. I have since prayed more for guidance, I am attending the vocation course run by the Oxford Diocese.

Cursillo really has changed my life, I cannot recommend it enough. I am a Cursillista for life, and what a prayerful, enriching, powerful, fun and fellowship filled life it is.

Lisa



More Recommended Reading.....

'The Meaning is in the Waiting' an Advent book by Dr Paula Gooder. How to learn the meaning of being in the present whilst waiting both for the past and for the future. It is a slim volume travelling with the people of the four Advent Candles.

Working from a place of rest by Tony Horsfall, who is a freelance trainer and retreat leader. Quoting from the back cover: 'Exhaustion, burn out, tiredness, even breakdown ... sadly, such conditions are all too common these days, not least among those involved in some kind of Christian ministry... In striving to do our utmost for God, we can easily forget that there were many times when Jesus himself was willing to rest, to do nothing except wait for the Spirit's prompting, so that he demonstrated the vital principle of working from a place of rest... Tony Horsfall reflects on the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman to draw out practical guidance for sustainable Christian life and work. He writes "Come and sit by the well for a while. Take some time out to reflect on how you are living and working. Watch Jesus and see how he does it. Listen to what the Spirit may be saying to you deep within, at the centre of your being; and maybe, just maybe, God will give you some insights that will change your life and sustain your ministry over the long haul"'

This is a very honest book, as Tony Horsfall looks at his own life and confesses that he often fails to practice what he preaches. Even if you really do not have time to read books, do put aside some time to read this as I am sure it will make a difference.



Cursillo and me.....



Some thoughts from fellow Cursillistas

To me a Cursillo weekend gives a flavour of the joy of heaven on earth, where everyone is working together selflessly to give a joyful time for others. In that fellowship worship has sometimes given to me a very fleeting glimpse of the joy of heaven—forgetting self and being totally thrilled by the moment.

Jean Leslie

I am sure that it is Cursillo that has empowered me to recognise and respond to the calling to write 2 books addressing some pretty thorny issues. The second of which is due out in April 2015

Matthew Camminer

A very lovely surprise to me was finding myself part of this Diocesan wide community of Christians. I have loved meeting so many new people and in doing so my faith has been refreshed and renewed through the gift of the Spirit

Sarah Jane Ebanja

Oxford#12

The Cursillo experience enriched my life in many ways, but by far the most significant was the encouragement to find a Spiritual Director. The relationship has proved to be of inestimable value.

Sue J

Lord Jesus,

I give you my hands to do your work.

I give you my feet to go your way.

I give you my eyes to see as you do.

I give you my tongue to speak your words.

I give you my mind that you may think in me.

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.

Above all,

I give you my heart that you may love in me ...

I give you my whole self that you may grow in me,

So that it is you, Lord Jesus,

Who live and work and pray in me.

The Grail (from *The Catholic Prayer Book*, compiled by Monsignor Michael

Buckley)

Carol Sheasby Oxford #12

Dates for your diary

OXFORD #15 Clausura

Sunday 2 November 2014

1:45pm for 2pm start

Douai Abbey, Upper Woolhampton
Reading RG7 5TQ

Diocesan AGM, Ultreya & Lunch

Saturday 15 November 2014

11am for 11:30 start

(Secretariat Meeting from 2pm)

St Helen's Church Centre,
Abingdon-on-Thames
OX14 5FY

OXFORD #16

Thursday 16 April— Sunday 19 April
2015

Cold Ash Centre, Thatcham

OXFORD #17

Thursday 22 October— Sunday 25
October 2015

Cold Ash Centre, Thatcham

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue of Oxon Fourth.

The deadline for next issue is the beginning of March 2015

Is there is anything you would like to contribute to the next issue?

Any thoughts, prayers or study recommendations

Any images, jokes or reflections that you would like to share?

Then please send to magazine.editor@oxfordcursillo.co.uk

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If there is anything you would like to contribute to the next issue of Oxon Fourth, any thoughts, prayers, study recommendations or action tips that you would like to share please send to barbara.a.mcgarry@gmail.com by the beginning of March 2015