



Community of Our Lady of Walsingham

## *Easter 2009 Newsletter*

Dear Friends,

May the peace, joy and strength of the Risen Lord accompany you and your loved ones this Easter and throughout the Easter Season!

We ourselves will be celebrating the Easter Vigil with the Fraternity of Bethany, a community of monks and nuns in Terlizzi, near Bari in Italy (see [www.ffbetania.it/foto](http://www.ffbetania.it/foto)). They are a thriving community and will be helping us in our own discernment as we move in the direction of being a community open to men and women. Although Scott has decided not to join COLW, we still hope for brothers and priests to be part of the community in the not too distant future – without them COLW wouldn't be complete. At the same time we are keeping in mind the establishment of COLW associates as more and more lay people are visiting Abbotswick and feeling drawn by our charism. Sr Camilla has even started to lead retreats for young couples preparing for marriage so that they can live their calling more fully and become saintly wives and husbands, mothers and fathers.

The Fraternity of Bethany has mentioned the beginning of congresses which look into new forms of religious life and have invited us to bring our own contribution to the deliberations. They will also be taking us to visit the shrine of St. Pio in Pietrelcina, where we will remember you all especially in prayer. Hence, we are really looking forward to our Easter break.

We continue to visit Walsingham every now and again. Our first visit this year was to celebrate our fifth anniversary of foundation, a special landmark for COLW. Mass was celebrated in the Slipper Chapel, which was a pleasant surprise for us and even more so because the priest gave a homily on vocations which is central to our charism. Every visit to Walsingham is blessed in some way or another – we returned home from our last one with a beehive! Yes, we're going to start producing Abbotswick honey! We are immensely grateful to our COLW friends Janie and Michael Davidson-Houston who gave us the beehive and some important accessories eg protective suits and a smoker. Not only this but we have found a bee-keeper: a dear priest friend from Australia who's living locally and who's hobby is bee-keeping. Sr Gabi is especially excited to learn this trade as it runs in the family. On the other hand Sr Camilla is going to keep her distance from the hives as the bees would only pick up on her nervousness – a result of being stung by seven GIANT hornets in the Malaysian jungle many moons ago!

Recently we have been branching out more into schools with Sr Camilla and Katie leading a day's retreat for some 60 sixth formers at St Bernard's school in Southend. They were so well received and some of the young people said that their stereotypical image of nuns had been altered and they now realise that we're normal people. Katie visits regularly and keeps saying she's an old-timer, but as the credit crunch hits us all, she'll only be able to move in at the end of August.

In March we also celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vocations Discernment Group (from which COLW has emerged) and were glad to welcome some 38 young adults to the talk given by Fr John Armitage who's been with us from the beginning. One of the beauties of this vocational accompaniment work is the increasing number of young adults coming to Abbotswick for days, even weeks of guided vocational experiences. Later that month, on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, we renewed our vows in the chapel here at Abbotswick and in the evening we were treated by Hayley, one of the aforementioned sixth formers, to tickets for the show Annie which they had produced.

We thank God that Sr Gabi has been accepted on the Formation for Formator's Course which is organised in Trzebinia, Poland by the Salvatorians and which will run over two years from this November onwards. It's by far one of the best courses for formators that we could find anywhere. It will also allow her to keep in touch with her Polish roots and for her and her family and friends to see each other more often. Luckily we have been offered funding for this course which is one sixth of the cost of equivalent courses here in the UK. We owe a special 'Thank You' to Bishop John Arnold (who many of you may remember from our first profession of vows in the crypt of Westminster Cathedral) who supported her application for the course.

We close by asking you to keep especially in prayer the conferences/seminars we are organising this May/June with speakers coming across from the US. Apart from Fr William Jarema's return visit, we mention in particular a day entitled: Jesus' Presence in the Eucharist: Real... or just 'symbolic'? given by Raymond de Souza, an international lay apologist and EWTN host. WE are hoping that it will revive people's understanding of this wonderful gift given to us by the Trinity. Please pray that it does.

On this note and with a thought of the Holy Father we pray that you may all enjoy a grace-filled Easter,

The truth on which hope is based is the Risen Jesus. It is a living hope because it is bound with the living person of the Risen Lord that is projected beyond the present until it embraces the eschatological tract of our life. The resurrection has inaugurated a new dimension of life and reality, from which a new world emerges, which penetrates our world deeply, transforms and attracts it to itself" (Benedict XVI).

With love as always,

*Sr Camilla and Sr Gabriela*