



*Risen Lord, you come, walking, listening and discussing
Risen Lord, you are in our talking, laughing and sharing,
Risen Lord, you know all that happens on our road,
Risen Lord, you travel with us as our constant guide.*

Happy Easter to all our dear Friends and Benefactors.

We hope that with all that's been happening in the Church and the gift of a new pope it really has been a special Lent and Easter for you. Like most people, we followed with eager anticipation all that has been happening on an international as well as on a national level. These are really very heady days for the Catholic Church as it gets used to the changes in leadership. Our hope and prayer, as is that of so many we meet, is that Pope Francis will be able to feel the love and support of us all and lead the Church into a new era.

At every level the Church needs leaders who model the servant leadership of Jesus Christ himself. Men who, feeling loved and supported, can choose to live by gospel values and make choices which reflect the beauty, love and truth of God himself. This applies to all leaders at every level of the Church, to men and women alike. As we all know for ourselves, this type of servant leadership isn't easy. It means a dying to self so that we can truly put others first, to live for others. This is why, in community, throughout the season of Lent, we focused especially on the litany of humility. Each day we took one of the statements and made it our own. It proved challenging but also helpful for facing the little and big challenges of each day.

In what form does the cross of Christ manifest itself in people's lives today? Through illness, a lack of resources, too little time to do what needs to be done, loneliness, unemployment, insecurity and fear in the face of the current economic climate etc etc. The list could go on and on. We all face different challenges but one of the most common to anyone and everyone at some point in life is that of misunderstandings. The suffering caused by misunderstandings in relationships, whether between people in the same family or community or between people of different groups or nations is almost inevitable and can be most acute, because it cuts at the core of what is ultimately important for all of us: relationships. At the same time misunderstandings can be one of the sources of real growth in the spiritual life if accepted well. But how hard that is to do that in practice!

Pope Francis said very eloquently in his first homily as Pope 'When we journey without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not disciples of the Lord, we are worldly: we may be bishops, priests, cardinals, popes, but we are not disciples of the Lord'. Also, we could add we could be religious but not disciples of the Lord. The Cross of misunderstandings can be an assurance that our hearts are centered on the work needed to live out our calling, whatever that may be. Not that it makes things easier but it reminds us who we have put our hope in, namely, Christ Our Saviour; we look to his Cross, accept our share in his sufferings, and strive to follow him in all things.

Any self-examination caused by misunderstandings can also provide a time of re-looking at things from a different perspective and of learning to do things in new ways. It is always a time of purification. Only the grace of God can enable any of us in difficult moments of our life to follow Jesus' example of silence and allowing God to be our refuge, strength and rescuer.

In the face of misunderstandings and incomprehensions, the ego, the false self, the old man/woman in each of us (Eph 4, 22-24) would always want to justify itself and avoid censure. That is why the litany of humility takes a lifetime to implement. From the desire to be esteemed, deliver us Jesus; from the fear of being humiliated, deliver us Jesus; etc. Mary, the perfect disciple of her Son in this area is also the best witness to the Risen Lord. We chose to celebrate the Solemnity of the Annunciation in Walsingham this year, as it had been postponed until after Easter Week. Mary's humility drew down the second person of the Blessed Trinity into her womb. As St Bernard said "Even Mary's virginity would not have been pleasing to God without humility. Mary certainly pleased God by her virginity, but she became His Mother because of her humility."

Mary, Mother of God, pray for us and teach us the real meaning of humility.

News



Gloria entered the novitiate on Palm Sunday following a week's silent retreat. The retreat was led by Sr Gabi who shared a lot of what she had learnt during the formators' course at the Salvatorian's centre in Poland. The Salvatorians have a developed way of Lectio Divina retreat whereby retreatants are led through the gospel by spreading out the lectio, meditatio, oratio and contemplatio throughout the day. We are so grateful to Sr Veronica and Sr Antonia, our friends at Kiln Green near Reading who are always exceptionally generous with their welcome, support and hospitality at times such as this. As many of you know, the setting can make all the difference to a retreat. And God worked powerfully during this time for both Sr Theresa and Gloria.

Two days after the retreat Sr Gabi and Sr Theresa went to Ely to join the Ely leg of Student Cross which we had been invited to join. They walked the 70 miles to Walsingham over three days. This pilgrimage was for them a living through the paschal mystery of Christ's life, death and resurrection; life in the fellowship of the people they walked with, death in dying to themselves in intense daily walking and little sleep (not to mention the blisters and aches here and there), and being given new life through the graces they received during that time. Also, they made friends with those on the Ely leg who would like them to come back next year. Both sisters reached their final destination and were greeted by Sr Camilla and Gloria on the Good Friday. They really appreciated the warm footbath that awaited them and the welcome to their new home at Walsingham - the Slipper Chapel Cottage. Indeed, this Easter celebration has been very special here at the shrine.

The Slipper Chapel cottage makes the community feel even more at home in Walsingham. Sr Camilla, with the help of friends, had gone up several times over the past two months, moving furniture from her family home (which is being sold) and preparing things so that it becomes a prayerful and homely base for the community. Even her sister Sonia came and planted some deep blue aubretias and a 'Nelly Moser' clematis in the front garden. This great gift from God couldn't have come at a better time and felt like an affirmation of God's tender love and care for COLW. Sr Camilla, Sr Gabi and Sr Theresa will alternate in spending time working up at Walsingham, but they will

continue to protect times together on community days as well as the monthly retreat days. Gloria and other COLW candidates will join them on some of these journeys and stays up to Walsingham. Sr Gabi is spreading her leadership wings by taking on the role of Director of the House of Prayer as well as the leadership of the local community. The immense support of Bishop Thomas during this time of transition and adjustment cannot be underestimated and we thank God daily for his kindness and paternal guidance.

We would also like to say a special word of thanks to Sr Ellen Gielty SNDdeN who has known us and accompanied us as our facilitator since 2005. Her move to Liverpool makes travel down south much harder. We owe her a particular debt of gratitude for helping us develop our mission statement a few years ago. The mission statement sums up COLW quite succinctly and many of you have said that it has been an inspiration to you. We have included it at the bottom of this newsletter for those who wish to read it.



Val, from the diocese of East Anglia is gradually taking on this role for the community, very much supported by Sr Ellen who remains on our team of supporters and advisors. Val works for the diocese of East Anglia and for various charities so we had the chance to welcome her and get to know her when she spent the day with us on Easter Monday. Mike, another very good friend of COLW has spent hours helping Sr Camilla with the greatly increased amount of admin work related to the fact that we have received our own charity status. He designed our new gift aid forms and donation forms. He also prepared a liturgical calendar for use in community and continues to help our volunteers in the grounds at Abbotswick. So a big thank you to him as well.

When we look at the amount of support we have received over the years, we cannot but rest amazed at the generosity of so many ordinary people, priests, religious and laity. The spirit of what we live as a community is touching the lives of many people and being informed by all these friends and benefactors - you included. One of the touching experiences for us has been the number of pilgrims we meet at Walsingham and who then come to visit us at Abbotswick. One family we really must mention: Stephanie with her four beautiful children who live in Chelmsford. The children are all altar servers (except the youngest who cannot wait to start) and they came to spend an afternoon with us during March. They joined us for the fiat rosary and evening prayer and we were stunned by the way that these youngsters prayerfully joined in, knowing just how to recite the psalms and sing the Magnificat! We felt Jesus and Mary smiling down on them and, by extension, on us :-). Seeing this young family reminded us of the family of St Therese of Lisieux. Such families are the seed bed of vocations and, in actual fact, one of the girls hopes to become a Mercy sister. Their holy mum will certainly nurture such desires. Jim's mum continues to nurture his vocation in Chicago as he awaits his new visa for the UK. Please pray for them both as his brother's health has seriously deteriorated and it is providential that Jim is back there at this time.

On this note we pray that we all have the courage to live constantly in the presence of the Lord, something that Pope Francis asked his listeners in his first homily. Then, as in the story of the

disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Risen Lord will always explain patiently to us i.e. at our pace, the meaning of life events and the situations we are traversing at any particular time. Wearing the spectacles of faith all becomes clear.

With much love and prayers as always for you and those you hold close in your hearts,

Sr Camilla, Sr Gabi, Sr Theresa and Gloria

COLW MISSION STATEMENT

As a contemplative religious community
We promote a vocational culture
In the Church and in society

Rooted in the Carmelite tradition
We search for deep inner transformation
So as to radiate Gospel values

Centered on the Word and the Eucharist
We witness to that joy which can only come
From living in the Divine Will

With a preferential option for the young
And for the spiritually poor
We enable people
To make value-based choices

Engaged in the new-evangelisation
In catechetical, pro-life,
Ecumenical and interfaith work
We promote unity in diversity

Mary, spouse of the Holy Spirit
In her 'yes' at the Annunciation
And at the foot of the Cross
Is our model of discipleship.

Like Mary we open our hearts
And offer our lives as a constant
Song of praise and thanksgiving
To the glory of the Trinity