



Christmas Greetings

Light looked down and beheld darkness:

"Thither will I go," said Light.

Peace looked down and beheld War:

"Thither will I go," said Peace.

Love looked down and beheld Hatred:

"Thither will I go," said Love.

So Light came and shone.

So came Peace and gave rest.

So came Love and brought life.

*And the Word was made flesh
and dwelt amongst us*

(by Laurence Houseman)

Dear Friends

We are shortly approaching Christmas and we hold you all especially in prayer during this season of preparation for such a beautiful feast. So much has happened since our last newsletter at Easter that it will be difficult to mention it all.

The most important grace is the growth of the community, with Scott (originally from the Southend-on-Sea area) having joined at the end of July and Katie (from Crawley) at the end of November. Theresa (a nurse from Poole in Dorset) and Annette (a hairdresser and former international lay missionary from Southend-on-Sea) will be joining the community in the new year. Annette has already been living in for a while so she'll be helping Katie and Theresa get to grips with the various aspects of hospitality we offer visitors. That will make us six in community as from January onwards, Deo Gratias! With another five men and women seriously discerning their vocation with COLW our only problem will be providing bed space and having the finances necessary – which, all in all, is a good problem to have! Experience has shown that Divine Providence has not left us wanting so far and as long as we trust and are faithful to his call, God WILL provide.

Scott, with years of experience as an administrative manager is gradually getting to grips with the office and teaching Sr Camilla many ways of improving operations there – whilst he overcomes an inherent dislike for the Mac computer. Before the year is out he'll love them!!!! A friend of his kindly gave us a PC for the postulancy room which, after 5 years, is slowly beginning to take shape (the books have yet to be organised and with the help of the formees that is slowly being done. Scott's expertise in the office is giving Sr Camilla more time for her work as formator and also as spiritual director for the increasing number of people asking for this.

Annette and Katie are enjoying the challenges of catering for the community and for the varying numbers of people visiting the house. Their culinary skills are expanding and so are we. We need to watch our waistlines! Annette is good at reminding us of the need for exercise, although with all the housework and ground maintenance at Abbotswick we do not lack physical exercise of a certain kind. We received funding for both Sr Gabi's course in Poland (she's training to become a formator as mentioned in our last newsletter) and for Sr Camilla's facilitation skills course. Scott has started a BA in Divinity and is generous in sharing what he is learning with all of us. The other formees will be starting the Catechism course at

Maryvale in the new year. Before long they'll all be in novitiate and we are already looking for a supplier of gabadene material for their future habits. Not only this but Scott and Sr Camilla have been put in touch with a designer because Scott will also be wearing a simple form of attire when he enters novitiate next year, and a full male habit once he takes vows so if anyone has some bright ideas on habit design please feel free to contribute.

One of the interesting things about having more people in community is the increased chance of miscommunications and misunderstandings happening, especially as several of us are from abroad. How many laughs we have – like when Sr Gabi understood that the 'thumb bone' not the thighbone' of St Therese was touring the country.

Talking of that, In September Sr Gabi and Sr Camilla had the immense grace of accompanying the relics of St Therese for three days - a special grace for them and for the whole community. One of the major milestones for the community in 2010 will be Sr Camilla's perpetual profession. She and Sr Gabi had a good meeting with Archbishop Nichols at the end of July and he recently accepted her request to take final vows. She cannot wait to take them... 22 years after her first vows in the Italian community she was in for 11 years. What a journey! She keeps reminding us how much it will be a celebration of God's faithfulness to her. He never goes back on his choice even if we are unfaithful. This fact is the source of our hope – a hope manifested in the incarnation of the Word himself.

You are all invited to her final profession of vows which will take place at the 6pm Mass on 24th March (the vigil of the Annunciation) in the Carmelite Church in Kensington. Fr Matt Blake, our chaplain, is the parish priest there and has kindly offered to see to the catering needs for the event. Please can you fill out the enclosed form and return it by the end of February so that we know how many people to expect. Keep her in your prayers especially at this time and during the month of February when she will be in retreat.

Sr Camilla was invited to address the Walsingham Association Annual General meeting in October. She was made very welcome and was encouraged by the response received. So many had not heard of the community's existence but by the end of the weekend many people were enthused by aspects of the Walsingham message that have been incorporated into the community's charism and they wished to collaborate more closely in the future. The director of the shrine has promised to visit at some stage but not before Bishop Irwin, the director of the Anglican Shrine who will be visiting us in the New Year together with the rector, Fr Stephen. What with the recent apostolic constitution there is an air of many things to look forward to, both at Walsingham and beyond, especially the 950th anniversary of the Shrine in 2011.

Some of you may also have noted the results of continuing media interest in the community. Apart from getting our fingers burnt on one or two occasions we still wish to have the courage to bring a positive Christian message into public view. We are definitely learning on the job and ask for your prayers in this area – it would be all too easy to give up when we are misinterpreted or misrepresented. However, apart from the many calls of support and increased number of enquiries (both vocational and asking us to speak in schools) we have also been approached by the Songs of Praise team. They wanted to follow the story of Katie as she entered the community and will be broadcasting her story as one of the three people doing something exceptional in the new year – so please tune in on Sunday 3rd January and let people know they can have an inside glimpse of COLW at Abbotswick on that day.

With thanksgiving in our hearts for your friendship and support, we wish you and all your loved ones every blessing throughout the Christmas season and well into 2010.

With kindred spirits let's welcome Christ into our midst.

Come Lord, come down, come in, come among us.

Come as light to guide us, come as peace to calm us, come as love to empower us.

Come Lord, come down, come in, come among us.

*Sr Camilla, Sr Gabi, Scott & Katie ...
...Annette & Theresa*

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