

In Touch *with The Grail*

In union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours,
filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you!
Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!
Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!
Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.
God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

Franciscus

For our earth

All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace,
that we may live as brothers and sisters,
harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.



PRAISE
TO
YOU,
LORD

Laudato si ... Praise be to you

Pope Francis' encyclical 'Laudato Si....', the first words of which are taken from St Francis' Canticle, was published in May. It has made a big impact on many people and I had hoped to take some key themes in this issue of 'In Touch'

However, I have not been able to give the necessary time to this, but decided that it was too important a document to be ignored. Therefore, I have taken the two prayers at the end of the document and these are printed on the cover of 'In Touch'.

Below are a few short extracts from Chapter II 'The Gospel of Creation'.

'Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us all. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God...'



'God has written a precious book, 'whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe...'



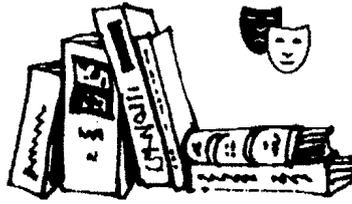
'The universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God...'



'When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them....'



'A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.'



What's New?

DEMENTIA: Pathways to Hope - spiritual insights and practical hope for carers

Louise Morse,
Monarch, £7.99
ISBN 0857216554

From hundreds of interviews and hands-on experience, Louise Morse offers counsel on what dementia is, and is not; how to make your home a safe place; how to understand and handle challenging behaviour; slowing the onset of dementia; how churches can help; when specialist care is needed; and illuminating stories of what has helped others.

Secular models of support don't adequately reflect Christian values of compassion, love and service. Our current medical services are letting people down, there is no cure on the horizon, and the pharmaceutical companies are reducing their investment. Too little advice is available, yet at least two-thirds of dementia sufferers are cared for in their own homes.

This compassionate and timely resource will be critical to those coping with dementia in a family member or friend and those who fear they may develop it.

from Parish Pump



Cathedrals of the Church of England

By Janet Gough,
Scala Arts & Heritage £12.95
ISBN 1857599403

Janet Gough is Director of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Church of England, and Secretary of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England. As

such, she has spent the last twelve months visiting all 42 of the cathedrals under her care in order to compile this collective portrait of one of the world's greatest achievements in architecture.

Each cathedral is described in a brief pen portrait, focusing on a few aspects of its history, architecture, treasures or music. Our cathedrals are a unique record of the history of England, and the stories she relates range from the murder of Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral to the recent interment of Richard III at Leicester Cathedral.

She says of her travels, 'Everywhere I've been struck by the huge activity and energy in our cathedrals today.' Each cathedral is illustrated with a pair of eye-catching photographs, including some specially commissioned images by Paul Barker (best known for his photographs over many years for Country Life), which are available for reviews or features relating to the book.

I would like to add that this would be a splendid book to keep in the car when travelling around.



A WEEK IN PARIS

Rachel Hore
Simon & Schuster UK £5.99
ISBN-10: 1471130762

Like many books at the moment, *A Week in Paris* links present and past times to keep the reader's interest and to deepen any mystery. This novel covers World War II in France together with present day England and Paris.

The story is a fascinating one: Kitty, a young musician studying at the Conservatoire in Paris, marries American doctor. Whilst there the war breaks out and they opt to stay. Twenty five years later, her daughter Fay goes on tour with her orchestra, to Paris.

She has never been to Paris before – she knows nothing of her mother's past since it is never spoken about.. She barely knows the city, so why does it feel so familiar?

Touches of memory slowly become stronger, and she realises her connection with these streets runs deeper than she ever expected. As Fay traces the past, with only an address in an old rucksack to help her, she discovers dark secrets hidden years ago, secrets that cause her to question who she is and where she belongs...

A compelling story of war, heroism, family secrets, and enduring love. In its own way, this is quite a powerful story and certainly gives the reader a real feel of what war-time Paris must have been like.

Mary Grasar
Grail Community Member

A Thought from St Ambrose



*Come now my friend,
turn aside for a while
from your daily work,
escape for a moment
from the tumult of your
thoughts.*

*Put aside your weighty cares,
let your burdensome
distractions wait,
free yourself awhile for God
and rest awhile in him.*

*Enter the inner chamber
of your soul,
shut everything out except God
and that which can help you in
seeking him,
and when you have shut the
door, seek him.*

*Now, my whole heart, say to
God:
I seek your face, Lord.
It is your face that I seek.*

Courageous Conversations

Becoming Church in the way we long for?

There is a terrible power in fear. There is a transforming power in courage. As is well known by informed Roman Catholics in England and Ireland, fear is a deadly virus at the core of so many of our current Church misfortunes. On the one hand it leads to the silence of the bishops, the silence of the priests, and, on the other, to the silencing of both. It is at the heart of the sex-abuse scandal. And at the heart of clericalism.

There can be no courageous conversations while clericalism sits at the table. Because clericalism cannot converse. It operates on a one-way system, wired for transmission only, not reception. It has no imagination. Nor can it really reflect on itself.

So, first we acknowledge the fear in ourselves. Then we face the negative attitudes of bishops, other priests and parishioners who disagree and resist and oppose our purposes, our efforts to make a difference. Is it fear that keeps priests from coming to our meetings? It is - but not always. Last week I asked that question of a few priests who came to a local ACTA gathering: 'We are not afraid of what others may say about us' they said, 'we're here because we love the Church'.

QUESTION OF ANGER

What kind of image do we want to create for ourselves in ACTA? Friendly, compliant, flexible? It won't be easy, for many people in our ACTA meetings, to be true to their strong feelings and yet to dialogue in a very controlled, polite and politically-acceptable way. Many feel deeply about the injustices of past dismissive and preju-

diced decisions by various hierarchies, the unnecessary suffering put on so many of God's People - and they do not want to be forever complicit in those decisions. There are, then, many people with much anger in them, even much rage. This is only too understandable. Jesus was often that way too. His anger was a very a fierce one, a very justifiable one - and a very human one.

There is a question here - should we be careful about expressing our emotions and disagreements too forcibly about many things? Or not? But we still are committed to speak 'truth to power'. We can be *too* careful, *too* anxious about staying on the right side of the hierarchy so as not to be scape-goated as dangerous, disobedient or aggressive? One factor here is, that as long as we are obedient and non-threatening, we can easily be sidelined or ignored, as so often before. But might we gain more clout and respect by saying things honestly and openly as we feel them? We might - but it is a risky business! Sometimes it is only when faced with large numbers of motivated, well-prepared and persistent people that institutions begin to listen. At this stage in our evolution there is a need to anticipate the twists and turns of the road ahead.

There are many lessons we can learn from the painful journey of the Irish Priests' Association and the Austrian 'We Are Church' story. One thing is sure - the road ahead will be no easy ride no primrose pathway through applauding crowds, only a rocky, risky climb up uncharted mountains and cliffs of fall. If we want to find the perfect way, there isn't one. We chart our own course in the ever-

new Spirit - for others to follow if they wish.

Now Jesus and the two Francis' *were* and *are* trouble-making challengers and a nuisance to the *status quo*. 'A Call to Action' and 'Courageous Conversations' are very active words. To keep people interested, hopeful and actively involved, it is important to remember they need signs, that we intend to follow through on our aims. Some ACTA groups have warned about being talking-shops of discontent rather than engaging with hierarchies in a definitive way.

Here again, depending on the situation in each diocese, the softly-softly approach may be the wisest whereas, in places where a bishop refuses to meet up with ACTA members, another strategy must be discerned and pursued. Either way, what is important is to be self-aware, authentic and compassionate. And vigilant. Because fear, like the ego and the devil, comes wearing many holy and very reasonable disguises.

ANOTHER WAY

Jesus showed no undue loyalty to his Jewish religion. He radically critiqued it and warned people against having an idolatrous relationship with it. It did not seem to assume for him the huge presence it does for us. Our allegiance is to the Lord of truth first, and then to his well-intentioned but flawed and sinful institution. How do we give witness to that allegiance? How can we be Church in the way we long for?

Pope Francis' strategy is worth noting. In his immense courage and



inner authority is he showing us a kind of Third Way? Is he dismantling the Roman Curia, not by attacking it verbally, but by doing things differently eg appointing a team of eight Cardinals to share with. 'Do not domesticate the Holy Spirit,' he repeated; 'It is pushing the Church; it is pushing us'. Only fools resist the Holy Spirit, he said, and only hypocrites deny that Spirit to the needy on the grounds of ecclesiastical regulations. He warned that 'A self-referential Church with a spiritual worldliness, a stubborn self-assurance and a narcissistic theology will always be a bad leader'. Referring to the curse of clericalism he spoke of the peacock, so impressive from the front but not so captivating from the back! This is our Pope speaking!

A THIRD WAY

What might a way forward look like? The best critique of the old and inadequate is the pursuit of the good; to make the new happen. The best way to make one's point is to live the renewed way, to provide an example of the better option. Daniel Berrigan said the best way to make the future different is to live the present differently. To meet in love and mutual support, to develop a lifestyle and communication, to pursue the Gospel ideals, to grow a permanence and a commitment that is simply an example of how things could be done. This seems to be the Third Way that Pope Francis is setting about *his* call to action in his efforts to purify the institution, and to have courageous conversations with the Vatican Curia.

There is a lot of excitement and expectancy, possibility and power within the ACTA groups. Already a change in the meaning of 'being Church' is emerging through our welcoming, listening and mutual respecting, bringing much needed healing, sustaining and new life to many. And those hurting, needy, disillusioned people will continue to come to us, with others, when the word gets round. That might be the shape of the shape of a Third Way.

Not dominated by, or confined to parish, disillusioned people will continue to come to us, with others, when the word gets round. That might be the shape of a Third Way. Not dominated by, or confined to parish boundaries or clergy or splinter-lay-groups, the potential expansion of the vineyard is great. Patience and trust, transparency and openness, and a selfless commitment to the universal good will bring a huge harvest. Because bishops will trust us, not when we please and cozy up to them, but when we courageously speak the truth to them, clearly, honestly, professionally and compassionately.

There just is a need for a formation of all of us, maybe especially the priests, as many of the groups have articulated. In our ranks there are many people well-versed in theology, in the history of the Church, and well skilled and wise in dealings with all kinds of situations - domestic, parochial, inter-faith. To encourage and empower such people, the releasing of their gifts must be one of the first steps on our journey. It would not be the first time that the *sensus fidelium*, the graced common-sense of people, saved the Church. When it comes to modelling the Church we wish to create, we priests have so much to learn.

AWARE OF OUR HISTORY

Courageous, creative, collaborative and compassionate formation for lay adults is one of the most requested ways forward at our diocesan ACTA meetings - a plea for respect, humility and trust, as our common baptism, priesthood and prophetic gifts are shared in mutual empowerment. A relevant theological underpinning is repeatedly requested for parishioners and priests, and the nourishment to grow spiritually while preparing for a deep commitment to a long haul - a vital nourishment too long denied to them.

How do we deepen our understanding of the content and process of dialogue? I suggest, for a start, having another look at three excel-

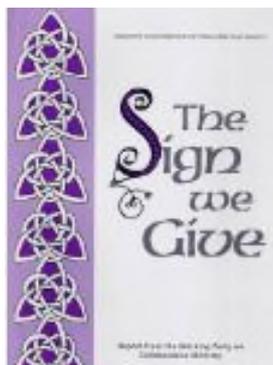
lent but already forgotten working papers of recent years of the Bishops' Conference - *The Easter People*, *The Sign we Give*, and *On the Way to Life*. If we are not aware of our recent history we will simply keep on repeating it. All three brief documents are intrinsically and seminally connected with the heart of Vatican II as is everything about ACTA.

15 years after Vatican II the 1980 National Pastoral Congress took place. Fired up by the insights and revelations of the Council, 100,000 people contributed to 20,000 replies, 1,500 lay-folk and 42 bishops came to Liverpool - after years of preparation in deaneries and parishes in every diocese. The Official Report *Liverpool 1980* and *The Easter People* followed immediately. The Easter People began with the heading 'Initiatives in Shared Responsibilities in a Sharing Church'.

Different reasons are given for the amazing and immediate collapse of all that wonderful effort. Here are two - the fact that there was no in-built strategy of continuity to effectively carry forward the impetus given by the Congress and, as revealed by the English Cardinals decades later, this most promising movement of the Holy Spirit was brought to a halt because of panic signals from a Rome that was alarmed at the emerging influence of God's People in the Church in England.

A RADICAL CHANGE

The Sign we Give, a Bishop's Conference Working Party's document, was prepared 15 years later, the fruit, no doubt of the seeds of *The Easter People*. In the Introduction, Bishop Christopher Hollis wrote 'It contains the seeds of a revolution that will radically change the structures of the Church'. He believed it would achieve this by making us think more deeply and imaginatively about the theology and practice of collaborative dialogue and ministry. Last year, in his new and excellent book '50 Years



Receiving Vatican II', moral theologian Fr Kevin Kelly writes about *The Sign we Give*: 'I highly recommend this remarkable document as essential and inspirational reading for all committed to genuine collaborative ministry.'

It has immediate relevance to almost all the points, requests, questions asked by most of our ACTA members. We could do worse than work our way through some of the chapters of these magnificent documents at a few study-days for our members. They would provide a heart and a head for hope, direction and meaty solid content at our meetings, and guide us away from too much repetition and complaining, much of which is inevitable. But these documents and reports are lying yellow and limp, or frighteningly pristine, under catechisms and new translations in Bishops offices and presbyteries around the country.

A FUTURE CHURCH

Here in Leeds diocese in the 90s, based on *The Sign We Give*, we launched a project to achieve its aims and the aims of the National Congress and of the Vatican Council, much the same aims as we have today. We published and promoted booklets about a future Church that would be human, spiritual, green, feminine, inclusive, poor, penitent and so on. We slowly developed a 'Council for the Laity' (one of the few in the UK) to balance and communicate with the diocesan 'Synod of Clergy'. But then, our dreams all went down the drains of fear when once again the plug was pulled and the fresh sweet water flowed so swiftly away. As one priest put it, the open granary doors

through which people were slowly coming to bake their own bread, were slammed shut - in the length of one grey day.

I mention these facts, not in blame or resentment - well I think not, anyway! - but for us to learn a bit from recent history and avoid repeating it, and making unnecessary mistakes in our current efforts. There is so much wisdom, theology, guidance on almost everything we seek for today, in these three documents: they were all officially approved in recent years, before the present distressing situation set in. The provision of some central accessible and relevant sources would save us reinventing the wheel over and over again in our current work. Such resources could be a dedicated website together with some study days around the three working papers I mentioned, plus selected Vatican II themes and a travelling team of lay and religious facilitators and so on.

AN EARLIER THEOLOGY

10 years after *The Sign we Give*, another Bishops' Conference Working Party produced *On the Way to Life* (2005) - the third document I mentioned. Written by the Jesuits it was intended to form a basis for all discussion and planning of approaches to the faith - in parish ministries, preaching, religious education and in dialogue with others.

We can gather from it that theologians hold that our stances, beliefs, attitudes, particularly regarding many of the points now raised by ACTA members, are based on a theology. This fact may help us significantly when weaving and working our way around these issues. They point, in general terms, to two theological approaches: A fall/ redemption'- centered theology which tends to be conservative, dualistic, safe, legalistic. This very inadequate - and when presented as the only Christian story of our human condition - utterly destructive doctrine can be seen as the fundamental reason for the splintering of our Church.

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GRAIL NEWS

Living with mental illness

Arriving on Friday afternoon at Wyedale Hall, near Scarborough, approaching along the tranquil, spring-green driveway, I am sure many Partners were slightly apprehensive about what might be revealed at the meetings during our weekend together. As the title suggests this was due to focus on types of Mental Illness.

After settling in we found ourselves to be a smaller group than usual. On Saturday after breakfast we gathered for a presentation by Helen Williams, a Volunteer and Dementia Care worker attached to the NHS Hospital trust in Scarborough. This proved to be both enlightening and informative. She stressed to us that Dementia is not a mental problem but an illness with very specific needs.

As the presentation progressed we were made aware of the many difficulties facing affected people and those caring for them in the Community. Helen stressed, however, that a good number of Dementia sufferers still lived in their own homes, it being important that they be surrounded by their familiar possessions.

Helen gave us a very powerful picture projection showing the daunting everyday items which form challenges and obstacles for sufferers. At the end of the session we were offered material to pass on to our local Doctors and care homes.

After a coffee interval, we gathered for a very moving account of the trials of mental illness within a family. Sheelagh Pickles presented account of the very emotional and testing problems they had

suffered dealing with mental illness within their family. *Their account follows on page 9*

The final morning session was offered by Michael and Eileen McEwan who gave a very brave depiction of the challenges and anxieties they suffered, almost daily, with their offspring's mental problems.

MORE INFORMED & AWARE

Saturday afternoon was free time till tea. After which we took part in a Bible study for The Sunday reading of Pentecost. The evening offered the opportunity to view a film 'A Song for Marion' which was a heart-warming portrayal of a woman with a terminal illness and the singing group she attended, 'Most Uplifting!'

Sunday included a Morning Prayer session with The Wyedale staff and, after breakfast, we drove into Scarborough for Mass at St Joseph's.

The topic for this weekend was not one of our usual light-hearted topics but we all came away more informed, aware and better prepared for the future.

A formal Partners meeting was held in which discussion took place regarding future venues for our weekends, the retirement of the current Partners council members and the Council elections due at the October meeting. There was also the regular financial report.

We offer our sincere thanks to the retiring Council and look forward to the October changes.

Tess & Pete Singleton
Grail Partners



We are his memorial

Ken Buggy thought about his funeral, very carefully, five years ago. After his death, Jane found a very detailed file of his plans and wishes including readings, music, hymns and his requests for readers and people who would speak about his early and later life. I was asked to speak at the funeral, after which Grail Partners asked me to share my thoughts through 'In Touch'. The following is a resume of my memories of a very dear friend.

My wife Shelley and I first met Ken, and later Jane, about 18 years ago. He came to our home as a Minister of Eucharist bringing communion to Shelley's elderly father who lived with us. He always spent time with Dad, but with us as well.

Ken and I immediately got on and found we had much in common having attended catholic seminaries in our early years. He attended Clonlife college and, then, later graduated from the University College Dublin.

GIFT OF EMPATHY

With a wonderful gift of empathy he listened attentively to people, encouraging them to confide in him.

He and I joined Weightwatchers and on our first visit there was a long queue of ladies. As we waited in line, a lady started chatting to Ken. Soon he was sitting listening to her, and steadily the queue passed by. Ken only got weighed at the last minute. Within a few weeks, more and more people seemed to be awaiting Ken's arrival, so much so that he hardly had time to be weighed himself.

After a week of guided prayer, during which he would council numerous people, he could be very tired and drawn. But with a glance, his eyes twinkling, he could let people know that he loved and respected them, thus encouraging



L to R: Jane, Shelley, Ken

them to voice their thoughts. He was a perfect sounding board helping them to hear themselves.

The Grail with its motto 'To help one person to grow is to help to build the world' was a perfect place for Ken and Jane. After visiting the Grail, which was then in Pinner, he and Jane joined Grail Partners and became members of our local East Midlands Grail group. Ken often prepared and led our discussions and prayer. He was famous for giving out reams of papers, prepared to illustrate his points. The quality and depth of his sessions on prayer, the psalms and listening skills were immensely valuable to the group.

Ken and Jane, were also an active member of an Explorers a group that met in homes for discussion and friendship. He was a very active Associate member of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace and was invited to participate in a planning meeting in New Jersey, for their Chapter in London.

ON-GOING CALLING

On retirement, he took a part-time course in Ignatian Spirituality and Counselling, involving him in travelling to London, many weeks, for three years. This was his way of continuing his Christian calling to help others.

He used this training extensively, becoming well known at the Anglican Minster at Southwell where he ran prayer workshops at the Sacrista Prebend. Many denominations used his skills for weeks of guided prayer at various venues in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

Many days were spent answering phones for the Samaritans for whom he also trained others. People would visit him privately on a regular basis, at his home, for discussion and prayer guidance.

OTHERS CAME FIRST

Finally, he was our best friend, full of kindness, generosity and humour, who put himself out for others. His passing will leave a big hole in our lives. But just as a ship when leaving harbour, sails away and slowly sinks below the horizon and out of sight, we know that you are with our beloved Lord in the place you longed to be, in the glory of Almighty God... and probably listening to the worries of the angels!

A large congregation gathered in The Good Shepherd church, in Nottingham. Looking round at them I was inspired to add a final fitting tribute to my friend:

'Don't look for a monument to honour Ken. Look around this church at every person here. Every one of us, each one who was touched by knowing Ken, is a living testament to him. We are his memorial.

We look forward, when our turn comes, to seeing you again with our beloved Lord.

Brian & Shelley Hollingworth
Grail Partners

LIKE CHRIST

*Make me a heart
gentle and humble,
loving without asking any re-
turn,
large-hearted and undauntable,
which no ingratitude can sour
and no indifference weary;
a heart penetrated
by the love of Jesus
whose desire
will only be satisfied in heaven.
Grant me o Lord
the mind and heart
of thy dear Son.*



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An earlier theology is needed to ground, balance and critique this over-emphasis on a seminal Fall. A 'nature and grace'-centered theology sees Incarnation as planned from the start - and not because of an original sin committed by Adam and Eve. According to this theology, as beautifully articulated in *On the Way to Life*, grace is everywhere. We are all equal before God. There are no insiders or outsiders anymore. God has no favourites. And God just cannot stop loving us extravagantly and unconditionally. Because that is what Incarnation reveals, and that is the mind-set and heart-set that changes everything when we come to the table for courageous conversation.

NATURE AND GRACE

Until Church leaders become reacquainted with the inspiring theology of nature and grace, of a new humanism of the incarnate life, they will carry a constant and deep-seated fear of a multi-faith, multi-cultural, pluralistic world, of the demands of a young, postmodern society, of the amazing, emerging cosmology (with astonishing daily discoveries about the fact of evolution) that asks 100 challenging questions of our faith and beliefs and doctrines.

Until they learn to get a theology of creation and incarnation right, so to speak, they will continue to resist offering a Gospel-based Eucharistic hospitality to sinners, the equal treatment of women in the governance and pastoral leadership in the Church, the whole-hearted promotion of ecumenical dialogue with a view to sincere unity and intercommunion, and the full acceptance of Vatican II theology.

Because of a flawed theological understanding of the Fall, a lack of trust lies at the root of the Roman Curia's suspicion of collegiality, of listening to the hearts of the faithful about many aspects of Vatican policies - such as the silencing and investigating of priests and Sisters, the

banning of general absolution, the introduction of the New Translation, the ignoring of lay people's graced capacity for discerning and disseminating God's ways - and other issues on the ACTA files

Referring to many sections of people marginalised by the church, but especially perhaps to women, Sr Joan Chittister argues that 'when any group feels it has the right to distrust or suppress any other part of the human race, then God is not there.'

Pope Paul VI called for a personal response from each member of God's People (thus restoring the *sensus fidelium* of the priesthood of the baptised), 'without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely, to infuse their own Christian spirit into the mentality, laws and structures of the wider Church'.

What is at stake is not just a short-list of issues regarding the inner renewal of the RC Church, but also its liberation to play a huge part in transforming the whole world. We have so much to say to the leaders of the nations.

I honestly believe that the recovery of this old, orthodox and traditional understanding of Incarnation will provide us with a clarity, a powerful support, and a worthy negotiating context for our courageous conversations in the future.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Is the Holy Spirit whispering to us that it is all more urgent and serious than we think? Did not Einstein say that 'The last thing to collapse is the surface!' Something like that has happened in Ireland - at a few levels. And at a few levels, too, something beautiful is being born there. Our role now is to save the Church.



It is as challenging, magnificent and terrifying as that!

Today, in the way we are meeting, listening, sharing, disagreeing, trusting, arguing, we are 'doing and being the Church' we visualise and long for, love and must surely suffer for. Today is already an example of the community of hearts and minds we have patiently and impatiently waited for - not a preparation for it, or a building up to a great and future victory for it. No, it is already the spirit-inspired and open dialogue that essentially belongs to the Church of God's People, happening right here and right now. We are small, vulnerable, unsure - but not alone. 'When the time is right', wrote J H Murray of the Himalayan Expedition, 'when the first steps are taken, when we move, Providence moves too. All manner of unforeseen forces, supports and powers come to facilitate our journey to the summit, to the horizon, to empower and guide us - the path clarifies, the rocks beckon, the winds fill our sails, the sea is calm, the angels come.'

ESSENTIAL INNER WORK

Authentic hearts are needed to persevere on the journey we are beginning. There is the utter necessity of doing our own 'inner work' so that courageous and compassionate conversations will happen. They will not happen if we hold any resentment towards others, or if, in the pursuit of the particular passion of our own hearts, we fail to listen to our fellow travellers. Without a profound awareness of our emotions and how to share them, as Pope John Paul II emphasised, the road will be too long and difficult for us, too many obstacles around and within us, and our great little hearts will just give up.

Without a self-awareness of our passions and motivations, the cause will surely be lost. 'Know yourself well' we are advised in the Gospel, because as within, so without: the bad tree cannot produce good fruit, and the good tree will never produce bad fruit. James Hanvey SJ, in his

touching '*Because you give me hope*' article about the new Pope, writes of the primacy of the interior life as the condition of the fruitfulness of our self-sacrificing service. Only from the humble spiritual centre of our being does that invincible inner authority emerge - that discernment of the freedom that is at times intoxicating, at times crucifying, but the birth-right of all God's beautiful people.

NOT AN IDEOLOGY

Fr Hanvey ends his meditation on Pope Francis with these words about the grace of transcending the old into the new. 'Transcendence', he writes, 'creates a new and open space of redemption, of honest, personal and intimate encounter. It begins in trusting the other, offering a hospitality, going out to meet them with generosity, treating them with dignity and simplicity. It looks in to a *human face*, not an ideology. It listens, and seeks to listen, to understand before judging. It knows that it must seek forgiveness before it offers to forgive. These are the spaces where the Holy Spirit is quietly at work and the Church is reborn'.

Fr Daniel O'Leary

This article, taken from an ACTA conference, was given to me by an ACTA member as being valuable to 'In Touch' readers.

ACTA - A Call To Action: we are a group of Catholics, some of whom are ordained, brought together by our love of Christ's church and our anxiety about its future. Still inspired by the Second Vatican Council, we want to contribute fully to the life of our church so that we may be a more effective sign of the Kingdom of God. To do this, we believe that an atmosphere of openness and dialogue, both with each other and with our bishops, needs developing. We desire to help create a climate of trust and respect for all where this dialogue may be fostered.

**Should I have infringed any copyright please let me know and I will ensure a full apology in the next issue of 'In Touch' Editor

A SENSE OF ISOLATION

Rather than a detailed account of hospital sections, tribunals, meetings with employers etc, Pat and Sarah Ross decided to use the following format to describe their experience of the mental health problems within their family. They entitled it 'Brown Cows'.

In our world there are white cows, brown cows and the occasional black cow. Cows are held to be sacred in India. Our children are sacred to us.

White cows do what they are supposed to do; they grow, procreate, produce milk or beef and generally look after themselves.

Brown cows need a lot more attention and often fall over into their own cow pats!

Black cows bite the other cows and usually we find that they bite us! They do the opposite of the sensible thing but can be exceedingly good at doing things the other cows cannot accomplish. All cows can change their colours at times. Even white ones are speckled with colour. We are all on a continuum between so-called sanity and madness; however, some people are clearly one or the other. For the past 24 years, we have realised that our cows are different and we have been dealing with what is essentially 'madness'!



Families who have normal 'white cow' children can also have horrendous problems as we all know. However, these problems fall into the 'rational' category, ie parents are able to explain and fully rationalise the difficulties they experience and family and friends help and understand. When brown or black cow children are involved, this becomes much more difficult for the following reasons:

In the first place parents are usually ignorant of the type of mental disorder that is affecting them. Secondly, when they do realise there may be a problem it is more comfortable to be in denial. They then suffer the process of loss, ie denial, anger, questioning, loss of trust and faith and so forth.

INSURMOUNTABLE?

Often there is painful falling-out between the parents especially when 'black cows' are involved, as the difficulties appear insurmountable.

There is a sense of isolation. Family and friends don't understand the problems, often blaming the very parents who are caring for their children. They would rather not admit that mental instability is in the family because it might well affect their own genetic disposition. Relatives turn their backs, literally. Friends usually have quite a low tolerance threshold, becoming bored very quickly. You know after a time, that friends don't really care about the problems. There is also the nagging doubt that really it is the parents' fault, in any case.

The physical and mental wear-and-tear of looking after brown and black cows can lead to exhausted parents. Dealing with the well-meaning, helpful mental health professionals is time-consuming and can be counter-productive. Attending 'Caring Days' and going to 'Action groups' is all very interesting and helpful at first but can become wearisome. There are ups and downs: for instance, an early diagnosis is terribly helpful but also extremely painful because all your cherished hopes for their future life

is dashed. On the other hand, when the mental problems persist, where difficult behaviour is experienced for years, then denial tipping into acknowledgement of the mental problem gives the parents chronic mental/emotional pain.

STRESS CAN NULLIFY JOY

It is said that 'one joy can erase a hundred upsets'. This is so true. There were few joyful experiences, even when the children were very young, even though the problems haven't surfaced - but we were aware that there was something 'not quite right!' Every stage of a child's development can be so joyful, such as a graduation or a wedding. However, when these occasions are blighted by 'brown' or 'black cow' behaviour, the stress involved can nullify any expected joy. Clearly, if the whole university senate is prepared for an act of disturbing behaviour, then parents will be feeling some anxiety at what might transpire.

Having brown and black cows, with their demanding needs and all the attendant worries can drain a parent of their desire to be involved with world poverty, conservation etc. You have to prioritise. It would be so easy, and I think selfish, to turn your back from the huge needs of your family. Without huge reserves of energy it is impossible to do both. On joining the Lions or Rotary I found that it was impossible to be of any real use to them.

The worries caused by dealing with children with mental difficulties are enormous. Not all can be explained, but some can eg physical, mental, financial difficulties, emotional and spiritual damage; inharmonious relationships with friends and family.



Being honest about your children with friends and acquaintances brings its own difficulties and is something we can't do because we know their reactions from the past. We and they will be rejected.

There are the difficulties of hearing about other children's successes and then the guilt from feeling like this. There is no one, except professional mental health staff, with whom to share the pain. Just explaining the situation and the difficulties makes you quite emotional and can be a barrier. Even the process of writing this down on paper is upsetting.

ALL HAVE THEIR PLACE

Brown and black (or white) cows are perfect as they are. After you have gone through all the pain and turmoil to your life, you can see with equanimity that all cows have their place, theoretically, as we all know. Obviously, there are still upsets but with constant reminders given by both of us, things are as they were intended to be. Brown cows can be extremely loving and caring. They have some understanding which they can use for others. Black cows can be like this at times and can help other siblings, amazingly! I would not wish to change their colourings at all, even if it was possible to do this! However, they could always be worse and we as parents are only human and we would really love them to be OK.

Bipolar disorder and Schizophrenia can cause euphoria, restlessness, extreme irritability, anger, aggression, hostility, suspicion and resentment to mention just a few.

MOST IMPORTANT

Clearly, there are many other symptoms but there is not room to list them all here. But let me come to the most important part: Faith.

For thirteen years I have felt the lack of faith which has caused me problems in relation to Grail Partners. I have found Francis Thompson's 'The Hound of Heaven' resonates within me and seems to capsule some of my own struggles.

'You called, you cried and you
broke through my deafness.
You flashed, you shone and you
chased away my blindness.
You became fragrant and I in-
haled and sighed for you.'

Finally, let me refer to Psalm 91:

Upon you no evil will fall.
For you has he commanded his
angels
to keep you in all your ways.
They shall bear you upon their
hands.

Pat & Sara Ross
Grail Partners



Exhausted Humanity

Under a glowering sky they came
ashore,
spilling from a flimsy boat
that rocked in the swell.
Exhausted humanity,
without possessions,
shivering, silent and expressionless.
Their sea drenched clothing
clinging to their bodies.
Coast guard staff and helpers
keep a look-out
for those too weary and spent
to make it up the slope without help.
A sudden brief interruption.
A helper notices
the small child's bare feet.
As from nowhere he finds
a pair of bright pink plastic shoes.
They were on in a trice and
as she took hold again
of her father's hand
They exchanged a look
that was almost delight,
a Cinderella moment
that suddenly lit up
the drab procession of survivors
still too fatigued to react
to their arrival on dry land....
and bringing with them
bleak memories that would haunt
them for ever.

Esther Gordon



Dear Readers

As mentioned in my last letter,
we were awaiting a visit from
Bishop Egan. In fact we had a very
pleasant visit with us and he re-
called his meeting with several
members of the community at dif-
ferent times.

We have had some new fencing
erected at the back of the house. It is
overlooked by the kitchen which has
a very large window and it has been
mentioned that we should hang sev-
eral colourful hanging baskets on
the fence. It would certainly cheer
up the outlook and, actually, look
very attractive. Maybe next year?

Catherine was out walking the
other day and got bitten by a large
dog. Fortunately, she was close to
our surgery. They do not provide a
walk-in service but Catherine stood
her ground and sat there until seen.
Eventually, her bite was dressed and
she came home. It was quite a shock
for her.

The school development just
over the lane from the Hermitage is
now completed and invitations were
delivered to local residents to view
the complex. Four of us went and
found it very interesting. They were
shown round by pupils and were en-
tertained to coffee and cakes. The
building is certainly less intrusive
than we thought and, so far, not as
noisy. Believe it or not there are
several schools in close proximity to
us.

The local ACTA group has met
several times in the cottage. Cath-
erine and Esther are part of it and
find it a stimulating group. They are
studying 'Laudato Si...' at the mo-
ment. Also, the diocesan Spirituality
group has taken advantage of our

hospitality a couple of times.

Valerie was involved in a 'Tran-
sitions' weekend at Douai Abbey.
This is the second one they have
held here and they hope to hold a
further one in the future.

Some of the community have
taken holidays. Esther went to Spain
with a friend and they visited Santi-
ago de Compostella which Esther
tells us was a very moving experi-
ence. Catherine and her sister,
Paula, spent 10 days in Devon.
Jackie went to Bradford to stay with
her nephew, Hugh and Moira to
Chester to stay with her sister-in-
law who is still grieving for the loss
of her husband, Bernard, who was
Moira's brother.

We have had lots of visitors: Pat
and Sara Ross, who were staying
with friends in Winchester made
their first visit. Jo Price, who
worked for the conference centre
when we were in Pinner and who
became a great friend, was also
staying locally. She came for lunch
and brought us up to date with her
family news. It has been amazing to
find that many of our contacts al-
ready had Winchester connections
...What a strange coincidence. Cath-
erine was visited by her nephew and
wife and their new baby. Valerie's
daughter and family came for
week's holiday in the cottage.

As I write this column, the out-
side of the house is in process of be-
ing repainted. To our dismay, rot
was found in the window sill of two
of the large bays which has meant
more work and time than we had
imagined. Of course, it has not been
helped by the amount of rain we
have had. Today is sunny....

The AGM and Grail Day is in
Birmingham again, this year – see
the back page for information. It
takes place on 12 September and we
look forward to seeing some of you
there.

*Sincerely,
Mary*

GRAIL DAY & AGM



The speaker for the day will be Samantha Baxendale, from the Medaille Trust. She will be talking about 'Victim Support from the perspective of the Medaille Trust'. This is a charity founded by a number of religious congregations in response to the plight of thousands of people who are being trafficked into the UK each year.

Back view of The Hermitage

Venue: St Paul's Convent
94 Selly Park Road
Birmingham B29 7LL

Cost: Individual £10
Couple £15

The cost includes coffee on arrival, lunch, and tea at the end of the day.

To book: call Philip Hayllar on:
02392251593

The Kingdom of God
is simply God's power
enthroned in our hearts.
Faith
in the Kingdom of God
is what makes us
light of heart
and what Christian joy
is all about.

John Main

GRAIL DIARY & EVENTS 2015

26 SEPTEMBER Southern Grail Partners meet in the cottage

9-11 OCTOBER Grail Partners weekend at Launde Abbey, near Oakham

26 OCTOBER Grail Partners meet in the Grail Cottage

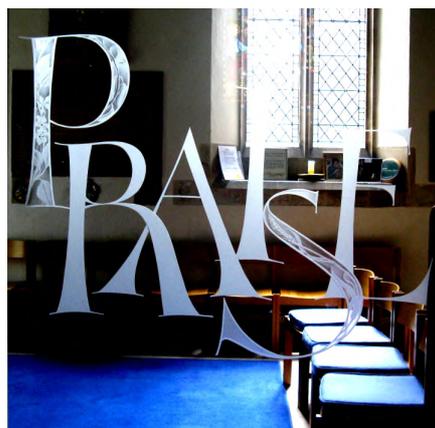
31 OCTOBER Meeting of the Trustees of the Grail Society in Birmingham

2-5 NOVEMBER Companions of the Grail meet at Wistaston Hall, near Crewe

17 NOVEMBER Meeting of the Trustees of the Women of Nazareth

27 DECEMBER for 4 weeks, the Sisters from Minsk will be staying with us while showing their work at the Winchester Christmas Fair.

West Midlands Grail Group usually meets on the first Sunday of each month, in Birmingham, for discussion and a shared meal. For further details contact Brian Ferry on 01214755419



As Grail
we creatively quest
for the treasure of great price,
accepting and valuing
each person
wherever they may be
on their journey.

On this journey
we are aware of
God's presence around us
in creation,
in society,
in each other
and in all we meet.

We are committed to sharing
our Christian inspiration
and values
in and for the world today.

As a Eucharistic community
we try to educate, enliven,
and colour life
with good humour,
creativity and celebration.

THE GRAIL

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