

New Prospect



The Parish Magazine of St Mary Stoke Newington

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50p please

“Tete to Tete”

Representatives of St Mary Stoke Newington, London visit the Church of the Epiphany, Tete.



In 1998 Bishop Dinis visited the parish of St Mary Stoke Newington in the Stepney Area of London, and challenged us to make a link with a parish in Mozambique. He proposed the Church of the Epiphany, Tete. In Mozambique Tete is an important place geographically. It is here that the mighty Zambezi river is first bridged. It is capital of the third most populous province in the country, with approximately 1 million people. Of these some 100,000 live within the municipality of Tete. Tete is also situated near the borders of three neighbouring countries - Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Yet another significant factor is the Cahora Bassa dam. The hydroelectric power station here supplies electricity not only for Mozambique, but also for Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. The potential is even greater. Additional hydroelectric schemes further down the Zambezi are planned, bringing more work opportunities, and making this province an essential part of Mozambique's developing economy.

For 8 years the relationship between our two parishes was developed by letter. We have prayed regularly for the parish, and they for us. We have also sent them some gifts. Last year, it was decided that the time had come to arrange a visit. Four members of our 200-strong multi-ethnic congregation were chosen as delegates. Of these one is British born of Nigerian parents, one from Uganda, and the other two white British. After 6 months of fund-raising, and enhancing the profile of our link by various social events, pictures and information, the four delegates were commissioned. So we set off for Tete in mid-June, by air via Johannesburg and Blantyre in Malawi, and thence by road across the border, a journey of almost 48 hours in all, and not without some adventures on the way.

The parish of the Church of the Epiphany, Tete, is a relative newcomer in the diocese of Lebombo. It was founded by a Mozambiquan business man called Papane in the 1980s, who built a small church at the back of his house. Later some land about a mile from the city centre was acquired, a single-storey house for the priest built, and plans drawn up for a permanent church.

But after 14 years there is still no church. Why not? For one very simple reason. The parish, which at present numbers some 60-80 souls including children and young people, does not have the funds. Just to make ends meet, that is, to pay for their day-to-day expenditure and to contribute to the priest's modest pay takes almost all the money they can raise. Yet by a great effort during the last 2 years, they have managed to collect enough money to build the church up to head height. But much remains to be done before it can come into use.



So for many years the congregation have been meeting in a space beside the priest's house. This space is covered by a makeshift corrugated iron roof, supported by wooden timbers, in all about 25-30 feet long and 15 feet wide. It is otherwise open to the weather, for there are no walls. Whether it's drought or rain, hot or very hot — Tete is said to be the hottest place in Mozambique — this is where the congregation meets. The Sunday school meets in the open air. Because there is no other storage space, all the gear for worship has to be stored in the padre's house, and then brought out whenever there is a service. So his house also has to serve as vestry and sacristy, and repository for drums, service books, hymnbooks, and everything else needed.

Despite these problems, the amazing, indeed miraculous thing we found was being caught up in the unforgettable life, joy and warmth of their worship of God. The beauty of the dancing of the five young people before the main Sunday Eucharist, the singing by the congregation of hymns old and new, the lead singing of a youth leader with his beautiful baritone voice, the rhythmic drumming, the throaty ululations of the older women, the warmth of the welcome given to us, the sense of joining in the historical and universal liturgy of the Church — the Eucharist — these things cut across all barriers of language and culture. After 6 days of sharing their lives and weekday activity our final act of worship there came as an amazing climax of thankfulness and wonder. I recalled Jacob's words at Bethel: *"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."* (Gen.28:17)

So the material needs of the Epiphany parish at Tete are glaringly obvious, but their spiritual gifts of sincere, joyful and attentive worship were something we had to experience.

But that is only half the story. Twice we travelled eastwards towards the Malawi border over 100 miles into the most remote places in the bush, far from any recognisable road. Here in two days we found five different groups of Christians awaiting our arrival. As well as con-celebrating the Eucharist, Father Francisco and I shared in the glorious task of baptising over 100 (one hundred!) adults and children! These village people, three hours' drive from Tete, had not seen a priest for 2 years, and they were desperate for the sacraments! In all my years of ministry in Britain and even in Tanzania, I have never seen anything like it! Here, we met a different kind of poverty, not the poverty of city people who need money to live, but the poverty of village people for whom life is precarious in the extreme. We found villages where there is no clean water, so people frequently suffer from water-borne diseases. Infant mortality is high. Dispensaries are miles away. Primary schools are few and far between, and secondary schools completely non-existent. During the annual rainy season many children are completely cut off from their schools. Village shops are few and rudimentary in what they could provide. It is not that the Government is inactive. We saw evidence of road building, and railway reconstruction. But this is a huge country, and resources are limited. In the provincial hospital, there was for example only one x-ray machine in working order.

Yet once again, we were moved by the dignity and grace of these villagers. No one begged. No one looked for handouts. But the singing, the dancing, the worship had that same quality of self-forgetfulness, the same relaxed reverence for the word of the Bible and the sacraments, which we found in Tete. And a sense of seriousness allied with fun and vitality. And in each place we were offered a meal of maize porridge and goat meat. In those remote villages the gift of God's spirit that comes most to mind for me is that gift which is called in the New Testament long-suffering or patience.

Again, for us it was not all work! We greatly enjoyed a day off with our hosts visiting the Cahora Bassa Dam, both beautiful and hugely impressive. It was good to see for ourselves something of the benefit this scheme, now over 30 years old, has brought to what is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Although it was built by the Portuguese, it is now run by local people. Our last evening with our hosts included a useful review of the week, an exchange of gifts, and many moving words.

Since then we have reported back to St Mary's and we have just received their report on our visit. Very soon we in London will be meeting to consider our next steps in this developing relationship. They have already received our invitation to come to London in 2008 to help us celebrate the first 150 years of our own glorious so-called "New Church". It is our prayer and hope that by then the church of the Epiphany Tete will have been completed and dedicated. It seems all too likely that we at St Mary's may be given the privilege and the challenge of a supporting part to play in helping them to meet this goal, their greatest aspiration. But will we be ready to receive whatever of their spiritual riches they may wish to offer us?

Fr Graeme

An Outsider's First Impression of Hinduism



The frieze at Mahabalipuram

Tamil Nadu contains some of the finest historic Hindu temples in all India. Although I have now read a reasonable amount about Hinduism and Hindu temples, I still feel very ignorant about this religion that is so different from

Christianity. Even to an outsider though, it is fascinating and startling.

The reason for my visit to Tamil Nadu was that my daughter Jessi recently worked there for three months in a village at a hospital and an AIDS orphanage. The rest of the family decided to spend a fortnight with her in April, first at the hospital and then on holiday. In that time we looked at many Hindu temples.

Our first experience was the great pilgrimage temple of Meenakshi in Madurai. Meenakshi is another emanation of Parvati, the wife of Shiva. The temple is especially sacred to Hindus because Shiva and Meenakshi were married there. Each has his or her separate holy shrine. Every night, just before the temple closes, there is a ceremony when Shiva "beds" Meenakshi. The temple priests carry an image of Shiva in a palanquin from his shrine in one part of the temple to Meenakshi's shrine, accompanied by music and drums, so the two gods can spend the night together.

Visually, the temple dominates the city. The temple site is walled, the walls painted in the Hindu white and red stripes. There are twelve *gopuras* – or towers – that are entirely covered with brilliantly coloured stucco figures of demons and gods. Inside the walls of the temple complex there is an extensive collection of buildings, shrines, pillared halls, shops, kitchens providing meals for the poor, purification pools, courtyards, garlands of flowers, animals and people.

At the entrance of a temple there are vendors selling plates of bananas, spices and coconuts that the faithful can offer to the gods at the shrines. We took off our shoes. We passed through an airport style security door under one *gopura* because recently there have been bomb attacks on temples in various parts of India. There is no objection to non-believers entering the temple. But non-Hindus are not allowed into the *sanctum sanctorum* or inner part of the shrine where the symbol of the deity stands. Nor may one enter this *sanctum sanctorum* wearing a *lungi* – a cloth worn instead of trousers - because this is an item of clothing associated with Muslims, although it is also worn by Hindus and Christians

During the day, there is a vast range of activity inside the temple. But there is no communal prayer or worship, at least none that Christians or Muslims would understand.

Instead, worshippers and pilgrims make their personal devotion, or *puja*, at individual shrines. So far as we could tell, this worship appeared to involve pleas for family and personal benefits. For example, carved in granite on one pillar, there was a female goddess. Around her waist and lower body devotees had wrapped beautiful silk fabrics creating a many-layered skirt. From time to time pregnant women approached the goddess, drew aside the silk skirts and poured clarified butter over the goddess's womb. The purpose of this offering was to ensure that the women had smooth pregnancies and labours.

From the 7th or 8th century Hindus in southern India had developed remarkable skills in carving in stone, above all in granite. This is shown best at Mahabalipuram, on the east coast near Chennai (formerly called Madras). There are temples hewn out of the rocks and cliffs, telling stories from Hindu myth, as well as *rathas* - or chariots - carved from single boulders so as to resemble temples. Most striking are the open air bas-relief known as Arjuana's Penance or The Descent of the Ganges. They contain sculpture of the highest quality, a skeletal penitent Arjuana, graceful animals, playful mice, stately elephants, all telling a story over a massive expanse of cliff face. One theory is that the sculptures here represented a kind of apprenticeship for Hindu sculptors, so that by the end of the 8th century a style of Hindu sculpture had evolved that was capable of adorning architectural structures and stone pillars.

Whatever the history of this sculpture, you cannot fail to be struck by the profusion of carved images in the great Hindu temples. Modern Hindu temples too are equally full of gaudily painted sculptures of gods and demons. However much we see Jesus as sharing in our humanity, there has always been a concern about the worship of idols among some Christians, and even more so among Muslims. We have been ambivalent about images of God. However, in Hindu temples the presence of so many images contributes to a sense that the Hindus regard their gods as more tangible, less abstract, than we view our Christian God.

There are said to be hundreds of millions of Hindu gods. In any temple it is often difficult to identify many of the images of gods, apart from

the most famous. Different gods have different qualities, reflecting the multifarious aspects of the divinity and of human nature. The diversity of the gods echoes the staggering vitality of ordinary Indian life, its energy, colour, noise and cacophony.

Among Hindus many local caves, trees, mountains, lakes, rivers and other sites are worshipped as divine. In some cases it is thought that historically the worship of these sites predated the arrival of Hindu priests, but these local cults were adopted within the huge pantheon of Hindu deities. This practice appears to reflect the Hindu view of the immediacy and universality of the presence of the divine forces around us, and of the endless battles between the forces of good and evil in the world that affect humans.

In the Hindus' world view they do not attach the same weight to the idea of an original creator god who first made the universe. With one exception none of their temples are devoted to Brahma, the creator-god of the universe. Instead, they are more concerned with the cycles of destruction and new creation, and in the south the god Shiva embodies many of the qualities that contribute to these cycles.

In the large urban temples that we visited we were reminded of the story of Christ in the Temple in Jerusalem, when he overturned the tables of the traders and moneylenders. Temple elephants bless visitors with their trunks, in exchange for an offering of rupees in the trunk. There is an air of intense commercial activity. Worshippers want to make offerings at the shrines, so many have to buy the sacrifices at the temple. There is also a strong smell of burning sesame oil, which is used in the lamps around many shrines.

Families, groups of pilgrims from a village, wedding parties come to the temple. They may make a day of their celebration at the temple. Some of the nurses at Jessi's hospital go to a temple on their days off, praying for perhaps an hour, and then socialising there for the rest of the day. There is animated chatter. In the courtyards there are visitors lying on the stone floors in the shade, some eating their lunch. In the midst of all this hubbub pilgrims periodically prostrate themselves on the floor full length before images of the gods. I imagine that in Europe in the Middle Ages there was a similar

atmosphere in the great Christian pilgrimage churches.

Talking to individual Hindus, as well as visiting recreations of Hindu houses, we learnt that in their homes there are private shrines. Personal prayers, holy rituals and meditation are a part of their family's routine daily life. Everywhere we travelled we saw small simple shrines besides the road, perhaps no more than a crude representation of the *Sivalingam*. In India the gods are never far from man.

Simon Taube

Mary – Virgin, Mother and Saint



“Jesus Christ ...was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary”

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.”

This is intended to be the first of three articles about Mary, running from our Patronal festival in September to the beginning of Advent in November. I want to look at three aspects of Mary's life and the stories and doctrines that grew up around her. First, this month, her virginity. Then, next month, Mary as mother. Finally, in November, Mary as 'Queen of Heaven'. The stories surrounding Mary form the richest tapestry in the whole of Christian history, and the different aspects of her myth inevitably overlap. But I hope it will be possible to disentangle them to some extent and to see where, and why, some of the doctrines and stories grew up.

The doctrine of the virgin and therefore miraculous conception of Jesus has been a part of Christianity for as long as it has been a recognised religion. But on top of this, a huge superstructure of other beliefs has been erected – some given the official sanction of

the Church, and others remaining firmly rooted in 'folk religion'. This article will look at three aspects of the doctrine: Mary as a virgin at the time of Jesus' conception; Mary as a perpetual virgin; and the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. In 2005, the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission agreed a statement about their understanding of the place and importance of Mary in the Christian faith. This is not an official agreement by either party, but it is intended as a starting point for debate within both communions.¹

The 'virgin birth'

At its most basic, what we loosely refer to as the 'Virgin birth' is more accurately referred to as the Virgin conception. From the very early days of Christianity, it was believed that Christ had not been conceived in the normal fashion, but that in some way God, as the Holy Spirit, had intervened directly to make Mary pregnant. This was not a universally agreed doctrine. For example, there were branches of Christianity which believed that Christ had in some way been 'adopted' by God as his Son, possibly at his baptism by John, and that there was nothing different or miraculous about his conception or birth. (Other early believers went in the completely opposite direction, claiming that Jesus was fully divine. The official position was that he was both fully human and fully divine.) By the time the Nicene Creed, quoted at the top of this article, had been agreed, however, the doctrine of the divine conception of Jesus had been generally accepted as a fundamental teaching of the Church.

In the earliest of all Christian writings, Paul's epistles, the mother of God is referred to only once, and in the most general terms. Paul's concern is to stress the full humanity of Christ, so he simply says that when God was ready, he sent his Son 'born of a woman'. No name, and certainly no mention of virginity. So where did the idea of virginity come from? The obvious answer is in the two Gospels of Matthew and Luke, both of which contain prologues (written after the main body of the Gospels) in the form of the 'infancy narratives' – the familiar Christmas story. It is worth

¹ *Mary- Grace and Hope in Christ, edited by Donald Bolen and Gregory Cameron, London 2006*

noting, however, that the earliest of the Gospels, that of Mark, contains no such prologue. Nor does the latest, that of John, even though other Church tradition says that Mary made her home with John in Ephesus after Jesus's death. But by the time John was written, the author was already more concerned with explaining the spiritual importance of his stories, not recording the events of Jesus's life.

Matthew and Luke were both in their different ways concerned to show that Jesus's birth was something that fitted into the pre-existing tradition of the way God would intervene for the salvation of (his) people. Matthew is generally reckoned to be writing for a Jewish audience, and his gospel is full of references back to Old Testament prophets. (Sometimes, the passage he was 'quoting' cannot be identified with any certainty.) The most important of these prophecies for our purposes is that in Isaiah 'behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us'. There is now a fair amount of agreement that the passage, in the original Hebrew, simply meant a 'young girl'. It was a prophecy of hope to Israel that her people would continue to sense God's presence among them. It was only in the fourth century that the Church Fathers began to insist that it must mean a virgin in the literal physical sense of the word. At the same time, Matthew did also say that the child Mary carried was conceived by the Holy Spirit before she and Joseph had come together. So he certainly believed that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, and this was an important element in his description of the events surrounding Jesus's birth, intended to show that from the beginning of his life he fulfilled the prophecies about the coming Saviour.

Luke, as is well-known, focuses even more of his story on Mary than Matthew does. In Matthew, it is Joseph who is the recipient of heavenly messages. In Luke, it is Mary. One of the most famous images in the whole of Christian art is that of the Annunciation, the Angel appearing to Mary to tell her that she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Mary's reception of this news, 'Be it unto me according to your word' (or her *fiat*, as it would have been in the Latin Vulgate Bible), is regarded as one of the most pivotal points in

the story of Christianity. But Luke's story too is full of references to the Old Testament. He does not quote so directly as Matthew, but the combined stories of Mary – the young girl who conceives miraculously – and Elizabeth - her elderly cousin who in a different way does the same - echo the stories of the mothers of Samson, of Samuel, of Sarah the mother of Isaac and of Rachel the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. The *Magnificat*, for example, is strikingly similar to Hannah's song after the birth of Samuel. As in Matthew, the whole story surrounding Jesus's birth is meant to show that this was no ordinary child.

At the same time, both Luke and Matthew are very anxious to demonstrate that Jesus is a descendant of David, which in terms of accepted genealogy at that time, could only be through the paternal line. In other words, it was Joseph they 'proved' to be descended from David, not Mary. Paul was also anxious to show that Jesus had been born from the Davidic line. This was an important part of the expectation of the Jews about where the Messiah would come from.

So the Virgin conception of Jesus was not without its problems and discrepancies. But it did become generally accepted by the Church as the only way to account for the unique status of Jesus as God's Son, uniquely qualified to reconcile mankind with God.

Soon thereafter, the story began to get even more convoluted. It also became increasingly tied up with attitudes to sexuality and sin. Looking back to the Old Testament, the early Church Fathers noted that the mess and pain of childbirth were clearly intended as part of the punishment of the original sin of Eve in Eden. Sex, and all that came with it, were a symbol for sin. How was it possible, they asked, that a girl whose innocence and purity made her fit to be the Mother of God should, at the same time, partake in this sinfulness? Clearly, they argued, she did not. So the doctrine began to develop of the perpetual virginity of the blessed Virgin. Not only was Jesus conceived without the benefit of sexual intercourse, but he was born without the pain of childbirth. Mary was a virgin after 'giving birth' as well as before. Inconvenient references to Jesus's brothers, they argued, were either to step-brothers, Joseph's children of a previous marriage, or to 'kinsmen' in a looser sense. Modern medical

knowledge might think that this was stretching credulity even further than the idea of a miraculous conception. There are, surely, some rules which even God cannot break and getting a fully formed baby out of its mother (without the benefit of modern techniques of Caesarian sections) without breaking the hymen would appear to be one of them. And many of the Church Fathers did also emphasise that Mary's perpetual virginity was as much an attitude of mind as a physical state. The purity that had led her to be selected for the task remained so intrinsic a part of her character that her openness, obedience and single-hearted faithfulness made her as close to sinless as it was possible for an 'ordinary' human being to be. All the same, there was a considerable element of good old-fashioned misogyny in the attitude of the Church fathers, who saw women as the inevitable gateway to sin, leading faithful men astray from the pure worship of God. Mary could only be given proper respect by being 'unwomaned'.

And still the Fathers did not feel they had got to the bottom of this mystery. Jesus was born of a woman. He shared totally in her humanity, and indeed got all his humanity from her. Jesus was born without original sin. But all women, and even all men, were born with original sin. How, they asked, could Jesus not have inherited Mary's original sin, thus spoiling the whole scheme of salvation? The answer they came up with was the Immaculate Conception. Not of Jesus, but of Mary. Mary, in order to be fit to be the sinless vessel from whom Jesus would take his humanity, had herself to be without sin. This doctrine was one which itself, of course, raised difficult issues. If God could create Mary without sin, what happened to the uniqueness and universality of salvation through Christ's life and death? And if Mary could be created without inheriting sin from her parents to break the chain back to Eve, why could not Jesus have been? Alternatively, was it enough for her to be conceived without sin, or was there a single line of descent which went all the way back to the beginning, each untainted by original sin, waiting for the birth of the saviour? Popular pressure for Mary to be herself unique in some way led, nevertheless, to the promulgation by the Roman Catholic Church of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, but not until 1854.

It was very shortly afterwards that Bernadette Soubirous had her visions of a 'Lady' who called herself the Immaculate Conception in a cave in Lourdes in the foothills of the French Pyrenees. An officially stated papal dogma means it is a doctrine that all Roman Catholics are required to believe. Very few Protestants do.

Finally, in 1950, the Pope proclaimed a second dogma, the logical culmination of the theology the Church had developed – the doctrine of the Assumption. The feast day of the Dormition, or falling asleep, of the Virgin, had long been an important feast, particularly in the Eastern churches. Early icons show Christ receiving Mary's soul and taking it up to heaven where she was crowned as Queen. But the western doctrine of the Assumption was something different. Death was the inevitable result of sin. Mary (see the Immaculate Conception) was not only conceived without original sin, but had lived a sinless life. Why then should she die? As early as the twelfth century, mystics had visions in which Mary did not die, but ascended body and soul to heaven. This was not, at the time, necessarily a unique attribute – other very holy saints might also aspire to it (and there were a number of Old Testament characters to whom the same had applied). But by the time the doctrine moved from popular to official sanction, it had become an attribute unique to Mary and Christ – to be physically present in heaven before the last Judgement. Traditional Protestants have trouble with this doctrine too, although its date of 15 August is now an officially recognised feast in the Church of England, although named, neutrally, simply as a feast of 'the Virgin Mary'. Many saints are now traditionally commemorated on the date of their death, and this follows the same pattern – sort of.

Judith Simpson

To be continued

Magnus Flett 1939 – 2006
Memorial Service Friday June 23, at St.
Mary's Church.



*Away with gloom, away with doubt! With all the morning stars we sing!
With all the sons of God we shout the praises of a King,
Alleluya, Alleluya!*

*Away with death, and welcome life;
In him we died and live again
And welcome peace, away with strife.....*

The vibrant words of this family hymn, sung as a solo by Daniel Robson, could well have been written by Magnus himself. Away with suffering, discomfort, and pain - all of this had come and gone and the soaring Alleluyas now sounded a jubilant note. Even more triumphant was a rendering of Handel's "The Trumpet shall sound" in which the soloist was joined by a trumpeter.

For Magnus, the earthly struggle was over, his final illness borne by his strong character, upheld by his steadfast faith.

Earlier we had listened to a selection of his favourite songs, ending with "Thanks for the memory". We sang the hymns that he loved and listened to his own account of his life, from early times to its last punishing months and weeks, movingly read out by members of the family.

His kindness to others was always apparent - ferrying a churchgoer over the road from Clissold Park to the church for the Sunday Eucharist was just one example. Magnus would just be there with a helping hand.

It was in the last few months that his regular attendance on Sunday mornings began to show gaps. For his absence was always noted. We saw him come in his wheelchair, which eventually gave way to an electric 'buggy' which propelled him, unaided, to the altar rail. Earlier, in former years, his reading of the intercessions, always diligently and thoughtfully prepared, showed the sincerity in his character. This remained strong throughout his life, a character always free from pretension or humbug, his tenacity of purpose overlaid by his friendliness of spirit.

You would know when Magnus was around - at a dinner table or in a restaurant; he would make his presence felt. Always in a positive way "jolly good wine" "excellent fayre" "ample portions" and then compliments to the "pretty

girls" either at the Party of serving at the tables. These comments I might add were usually said at the top of his voice!

We will miss him in so many ways.

At the Night Shelter on the overnight shift Magnus had stories to amuse us and keep us awake. Latterly when on "breakfast duties" his arrival was most welcome and exactly at the appointed time. He could rustle up sausage bacon and eggs in minutes flat. And to order! He would set to and rouse a guest who might think they could get a few more minutes lie-in. He spoke to the lads and lasses with great respect and cheer to send them on their way.

The "Men's Night" chaps enjoyed Magnus's new found culinary skills with delight, except on the evening he dropped a home made steak and kidney pie, just out of the oven on the floor. After a few expletives from Magnus and the chaps it was decided to throw the pie in the bin (shame for Jessie the dog) and they all had to dine on salad! Bad news but I expect the wine compensated.

It is an old expression, but the mould was broken when our dear friend Magnus Flett was gone. We will never see his like again, till we all get to the "Heavenly Feast" and hear his voice, holding forth with the "Heavenly Hosts".

Geoff and Betty Manning.

A Big Thank You

Many Thanks from the "Ted Smith"/ "Magnus Flett team who walked the London Pride Walk For Cancer Research UK on Sunday July 2nd 2006 and raised £490.

The team consisted of John Guest, Maureen Passingham and Steve Ryder (Ted's sister and nephew), and Betty, Jeff and Alex Manning.

Jean Guest played a part by cooking us a welcome meal to return to!

It was a very hot day so the pint of Fuller's Beer went down a treat.

Thank you for your sponsorship.

Betty Manning

'Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed' (Isaiah 1.17) – introducing our new 'JUSTICE, PEACE and INTEGRITY of CREATION' Group

St Mary's have been involved in justice and peace issues for a long time – so in some ways, this group is nothing new. *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*, or *JPIC*, is a concept which comes from the international ecumenical movement. The World Council of Churches' (WCC) has a *JPIC* department which aims

...to analyse and reflect on justice, peace and creation in their interrelatedness, to promote values and practices that make for a culture of peace, and to work towards a culture of solidarity with young people, women, Indigenous Peoples and racially and ethnically oppressed people.

The basic idea is that all of these issues – justice, peace and the environment – are related and that we need to address them together. It's no good just tackling one or another. What's more, the WCC suggest that it's really important that Christians from different denominations work with one another on these issues and stand together alongside the most oppressed people in our world. So, setting up a *JPIC* group here is an attempt to take the work we're already doing forward along these lines.

Our plan is to focus on six areas during the year – a different one every two months. We'll put up a notice board about the issue with information and suggesting ways to get involved, write an article for the magazine, have a Sunday morning sermon preached on the issue and organise a contemporary *JPIC* service on a Wednesday evening. Oh, and we may organise a speaker or event as well – just depends!

So far, it's looking like this –

September/October - Environment

November/December - Homelessness

January/February - Israel-Palestine

March/April - Fairtrade, Trade Justice and International Debt

May/June - Asylum Seekers and Refugees

July - Amnesty and Human Rights

Look out for more information coming up and do get involved if you can. If you're

interested in helping out in one of these areas in however big or small a way, just have a word with Susie or Jonathan Gebbie – or alternatively, come long to our next JPIC meeting which is on 12 September at 8pm. Everyone's very welcome!

Now, over to Martyn and Beryl to introduce this month's issue...

Environmental Footprints

The phrase 'practise what you preach' is always an uncomfortable one for the preacher to embrace (!) and never more so when exploring issues around the environment. However, the need to be able to speak with any integrity on the issue requires that we take seriously the need to get our own house in order. As a start, members of JPIC will be undertaking an environmental audit on St Mary's Church. There are various ways that this can be done, but we have discovered a couple of websites that enable churches to evaluate their life and practices with respect to impact on the environment. One of these is a new Church of England initiative called 'Shrinking the Footprint' www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org.

This will help us look mainly at our energy use and the degree to which we can shrink our carbon or energy footprint.

The second website is Eco-Congregation www.ecocongregation.org. This is a far more thoroughgoing self-assessment that explores among other things areas such as worship, theology, children's work, finance and church land. Without wishing to pre-judge the audit, I am sure that this process is going to reveal much that we should do, some things that we might consider, and also some things that we'll never agree about! The main thing is that we are engaging in a process of reflection and action that will help St Mary's Church to play a part in reducing waste and carbon emissions and drawing environmental issues into our life of prayer and worship. It might also be a process that spills over into choices that individuals might make for themselves. But before I start preaching, let me find that audit...

Wednesday 11th October is a date for the diaries. We have invited Mischa Borris, local councillor and member of the green party (as well as being Gwen Borris's daughter) to speak

at a discussion at 6.30pm on **environmental issues: global problems and local solutions**. This will be followed by an act of worship at 7.30pm to reflect environmental concerns. Do come along!

Susie Snyder

Book Review

Urban Eden, Adam and James Caplin, priced £12.99, published by Kyle Cathie



Living in London poses many challenges and among them is the fact that if you like gardening you will be expected to pay through the nose to have any access to outside space and even then it will be the size of a postage stamp. A special issue stamp perhaps, but still, not much room for lush lawns and rose beds. Yet most gardening books still assume that you have a fair amount of ground to work with, so it is refreshing to read a gardening book that specifically caters for those who want to garden in very small spaces.

The emphasis in *Urban Eden* is on creating places of refuge away from the busy city, making the most of every resource and nook and cranny available and growing your own produce to eat as well as stuff that just looks nice.

There is plenty of sound advice on making sure your fruit and veg is not steeped in pollution, avoiding choosing plants that will take up too much room, and some genuinely ingenious ideas on making the most of what room you have, e.g. growing runner beans around drain pipes.

If you want detailed advice on growing tips then it is probably best to consult a specialist book although it does have good advice on growing in containers and managing the

variable conditions of balconies, and I found the tips on compost bins useful.

Despite the rather hippie title it is also refreshingly straightforward about dealing with pests. I expected to read that snails should be gathered up and released in a park or something but no, the authors cheerfully advise that you hurl them against a wall.

However there was not much thought given to budget; it is assumed that everyone can afford fruit trees, for instance. I would have also liked to see more advice for people like myself who are limited in what they can achieve in the garden, partly though budget and partly because their home is rented so you are reluctant to put too much into the ground as you cannot take it with you.

I think there is another book in there somewhere. Meanwhile this is lovingly photographed and is great for garden related inspiration. It would make a good present for someone who is longing to do something with that plant-less back yard or windswept balcony but is not sure where to start.

Emma Dent

Website Review



If they give out prizes for nerve at the pearly gates Wladziu Valentino Liberace would surely be near the head of the queue. The camper than camp entertainer once sued the *Daily Mirror* for implying that he was gay, denied that he was or ever had engaged in homosexual acts and won the law suit.

This took place in 1957 and one would hope that he might have felt able to talk publicly about his homosexuality in more modern times. Regardless, if the Internet had been available then, the *Mirror* would surely have used this website as part of its defence.

It is probably fair to say that Liberace was one of life's more exuberant characters (he often walked around his garden with nothing on but a sock. This sock was gold with black sequins) and his exuberance extended to every part of his personal taste.

Run by a devoted fan of Liberace, this site includes details of his fan site, Liberace's collection of Christmas cards and information on the Liberace Museum, housed, of course, in Las Vegas. (It houses the world's largest rhinestone.) For the truly obsessive there are also details of Bob's large archive of Liberace memorabilia.

But the crowing glory is the house tour, which offers a photo-led look round all six of the maestro's residences.

Put simply, they are astounding. If you thought the Victorians could overstuff their rooms, take a look at this little lot. Shag pile carpets (complete with plastic runners to protect the most trafficked areas), chandeliers, candelabra and Versailles-style furniture abound in one home, whilst a penthouse apartment boasts not just candelabra but an explosive mix of Buddha statues and Chinoiserie lacquered sideboards too. Another has painted ceilings and a sunken marble bath. The bed in the Hollywood Hills house is about the size of my flat while another has a mink bedspread.

I'm relieved to say that the commentary is actually rather tongue in cheek. About the Lake Tahoe House Bob writes, 'Not a shred of cut glass. No mirrored surfaces. Matching furniture. What was he thinking? I can't bear to show you the rest.' Clearly the country air affected his decorating flair.

Liberace died in 1987. If there is a celestial internet café he is probably looking at this site and loving every tacky minute of it.

<http://www.bobsliberace.com/>

Emma Dent

Last Month's Caption Competition

Here's the picture just to remind you. Our adjudicator chose no. 1 as the winner. You have won the "Holy Toast Maker". The other (excellent) entries are in not in any particular order.



Are you sure it only said five loaves, dear? There seem to be an awful lot of people out there.

Edith! Do you really have to wear your diamonds just for handing out the vol-au-vents?

Millicent's hand slipped craftily under Algernon's arm as she tried to run off with his crusty cheese surprises!

Jamie Oliver may well be a younger and better cook, dear, but these turkey twizzlers will just wow the socks off our guests!

It was only a TV supper, but Arthur insisted that standards of dress should be maintained.

It was difficult to decide what to take, as the Queen didn't often have "bring and share" lunches.

Hortence found that if she hypnotised Reginald he didn't notice her snitching his muffins.

It was true, they were slightly overdressed for clearing tables at McDonalds.

They always got rather peckish during Act IV of Tosca.

"Is that a cheese straw in your pocket" she whispered, "or are you pleased to see me"?

"Bertie" she hissed, "You've been at the cooking sherry again"

"Yes, my darling little viper" he murmured, "I *did* avail myself of some liquid refreshment earlier".

Mabel longed to tenderly brush the crumbs out of Freddie's moustache.

A quick but smouldering glance passed between them, and they both understood that it was the *Rose & Crown* after the show.

Prize Caption Competition



Your caption goes here. Get competitive and win our super new Star Prize as featured on page 13. Entries can be given to any one of the magazine team. The closing date is 20th September.

Caption Competition Prize



Moses Action Figure

The story of Moses has more action, drama and adrenalin than the most adventurous Hollywood blockbuster starring Bruce, Arnie, Jean Claude, or any number of muscle bound tough guys. His is a story jam-packed with miracles, murder, plagues, escape, and betrayal, the Bible's own James Bond if you will.

Now with the help of this Moses Action Figure you can recreate the entire epic saga in the comfort of your own home. Use the removable shepherd's staff and stone tablets to deliver the Ten Commandments to your children, practise parting the Red Sea in the bath or lead your most loved pets out of slavery in Egypt (or the kitchen if that's easier).

This fantastic, fully pose-able model of our hero is just over 5 inches high, made from hard plastic and comes with interesting info on the back of the packaging.

Don't despair if you haven't won our competition as you can get one of these little beauties on-line from www.evolvefish.com - A bargain at just \$8.50 +p&p.

Andrew Yoshiro

Recipe

Watermelon, Feta and Black Olive Salad

This recipe has a very unlikely-sounding combination of ingredients, but the result is surprisingly good. It is one of my favourite recipes: easy to make and dead impressive! I made some as a side-salad for a barbecue recently and so many people remarked on it that I thought it should be published more widely. I make no claims to originality - it's a Nigella Lawson recipe, and I discovered it being served at the café in the Chelsea Physic Garden - fortunately the friend I was with remembered where to find the recipe. To make this really cheaply, go up to one of the Turkish grocery shops in Green Lanes, where all the ingredients will be on sale, with rather larger bunches of herbs than you find in the supermarkets.

Ingredients

1 small red onion
2 limes (maybe more if not very juicy)
1.5 kg (3 1/2 lb) watermelon
250g (10oz) feta cheese
1 bunch flat-leaved parsley
1 bunch mint, chopped
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
100g (4oz) black olives
a pinch of pepper

Peel and halve the red onion, cut into very fine half-moons, and put in a small bowl to steep with the limejuice. Cut the watermelon flesh into largish (say 4cm / 2") chunks, and remove the pips - this is not as difficult as it sounds. Cut the feta into chunks put into a large, wide shallow bowl with the watermelon. Tear off sprigs of parsley rather than chopping it, and add to the bowl along with the chopped mint. Add the onions and lime juice, olives and oil to the salad, and (this is the fun part) toss the salad very gently using your hands so the melon chunks don't get squashed. Add a grind of black pepper.

Jonathan Gebbie

A Poem For the Month

Tomatoes

They are nestling now so many of them
they come to the brim of the pot

and rise up over these glowing red
swollen fruit, veined still slightly with green. They

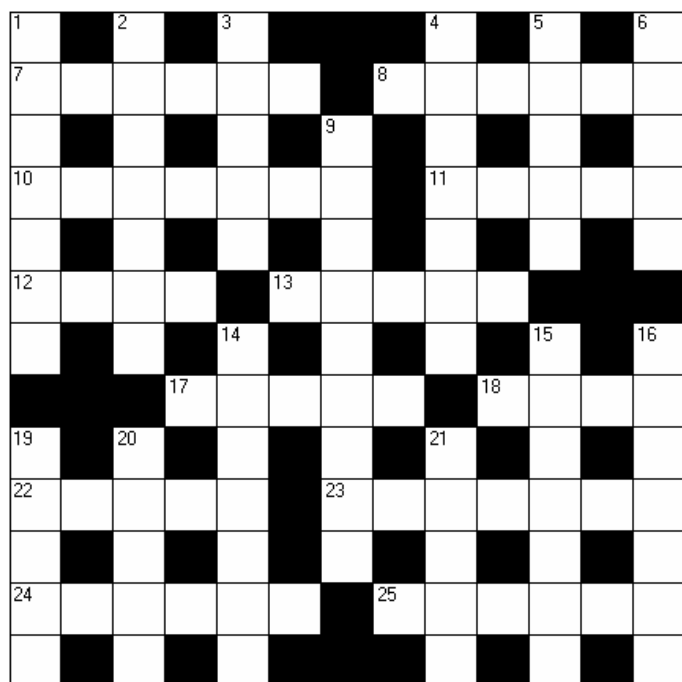
bulge in themselves push out their red skins and
glow in the light

decorated with crisp bent fingers of green.
Picked today found

a brilliant red treasure, hidden
in fallen stems leaves.

Sara Boyes

This crossword is based on the NIV translation of the Bible.



Across

- 7 ..a crop _____ to those for whom it is farmed (Heb 6.7) (6)
8 One of the crops put in a storage jar in Ezekiel ch. 4 (6)
10 Tribe living in the Lebanon mountains in Judges ch. 3 (7)
11 Where a cloak was left with Carpus in 2 Timothy ch. 4 (5)
12 Trigonometrical ratio (4)

- 13 Capital of Egypt (5)
17 Apart from feet and hands, all that was found of Jezebel in 2 Kings ch. 9 (5)
18 Third son of Jacob and Leah in Genesis ch. 29 (4)
22 Such a man brings trouble on himself, says Proverbs ch. 11 (5)
23 Loud noise heard on the morning of the third day in Exodus ch. 19 (7)
24 ..the broad waters become _____ (Job 37.10) (6)
25 Valley in Exodus ch. 13 named because of a cluster of grapes (6)

Down

- 1 Wife of a duke (7)
2 A king delights in a wise one, according to Proverbs ch. 14 (7)
3 ..don't reduce the _____ (Ex 5.8) (5)
4 Illustration (7)
5 Fluid in which Aaron dipped his finger in Leviticus ch. 9 (5)
6 Store in hiding (5)
9 Paul describes himself as one in Romans ch. 11 (9)
14 ..a man _____ to work in gold (2 Chr 2.7) (7)
15 Declared by the holy ones in Daniel ch.4 (7)
16 Biscuit filled with dried fruit (3, 4)
19 Jeer, like the wicked in Psalm 78 (5)
20 Former British royal house (5)
21 Holed money container in Haggai ch. 1
Solution on page 15

Emily tried to escape by leaving a dummy in her place at Sunday School.



A prayer for my thoughts

God help my thoughts! They stray from me, setting off on the wildest journeys. When I am in church, they run off like naughty children, quarrelling, making trouble. When I read the Bible, they fly to a distant city, filled with beautiful women. My thoughts can cross an ocean in a single leap; they can fly from earth to heaven, and back again, in a single second. They come to me for a fleeting moment, and then away they flee. No chains, no locks can hold them back; no threats of punishment can restrain them, no hiss of a lash can frighten them. They slip from my grasp like tails of eels; they swoop hither and thither like swallows in flight. Dear, chaste Christ, who can see into every heart and read every mind, take hold of my thoughts. Bring my thoughts back to me, and clasp me to yourself.

A Celtic Prayer

Balanyá – Music for Guatemala



invites you to a concert of chamber music

Saturday 7 October 2006 7.30 p.m.
St. Mary's Old Church

Please join us for a short programme of chamber music and a glass of wine to launch a project supporting a remarkable youth orchestra in rural Guatemala.

Admittance free

Please share this invitation with anyone who may be interested in supporting the project as a potential teaching volunteer, as a donor, or simply by enjoying the concert.

Crossword Solution

Across

7 Useful 8 Millet 10 Hivites 11 Troas 12 Sine
 13 Cairo 17 Skull 18 Levi
 22 Cruel 23 Thunder 24 Frozen 25 Eshcol

Down

1 Duchess 2 Servant 3 Quota 4 Picture 5
 Blood 6 Stash 9 Israelite 14 Skilled
 15 Verdict 16 Fig roll 19 Scoff 20 Tudor 21
 Purse

Find the Saint

Feast day 17 September, this Benedictine nun and visionary wrote poetry, music, and medical and natural history works.

Move from one square to the next; going up, down, sideways, backwards, forwards or diagonally.

D	L	I
E	A	H
G	D	R



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Parish Office, 020 8809 6111

Services

Sunday

Holy Communion 8 am Matins 9.30 am (Old Church) Sung Eucharist (St Mary's) 10.30 am
Parish Eucharist (St John's) 11 am Evensong 6.30 pm (Old Church)

Weekdays (All at St Mary's except Thursdays)

	Morning Prayer	Mass	Evening Prayer
Monday	8:30 am, followed by	8:45 am	5 pm
Tuesday	8:30 am, followed by	8:45 am	5 pm
Wednesday	8:30 am	7.30 pm	5 pm
Thursday	8:30 am, followed by	8:45 am	5 pm
Friday	8:30 am, followed by	8:45 am	5 pm

Brownies. Fridays 6.30 pm. Enquire at Church Office

Booking enquiries for the Community Centre: see Parish Administrator

Arrangements for baptisms, weddings etc: ring the Parish Administrator for an appointment.

St Mary's has a Church School: St Mary's School, Lordship Rd, London, N16. 020 8800 2645