

Fr Hoyal Writes

Crisis at Christmas

Is it such good news - the gospel I mean?

Did you feel uncomfortable as you listened to last Sunday's Christ the King reading from Matthew 25? About those sheep and goats: people who genuinely care about serving others, and self-serving people who mostly care about themselves. You don't want to be a goat, Jesus warns; you really don't.

And it's no isolated theme. Tax-collectors and prostitutes with a heart are streets ahead of self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, says Jesus, as regards making it into the Kingdom. Outrageous!

Priest and Levite alike shun the half-dead traveller in their path. It is almost unforgivable. It takes one of those awful Samaritans to stop and show some compassion.

Had they passed him in town, would those clerics also have ignored Lazarus amid his sores, starving at the rich man's gate? And is that what Dives himself did, or was he just mind-bogglingly unaware of Lazarus and his plight? For Lazarus, of course, there is Abraham's bosom. For Dives, like those 'goats' in Matthew, torment awaits. And why should priest, scribe and Pharisee expect any better?

But there are priest and priests, just as there are no doubt scribes and scribes, and Pharisees and Pharisees. For another priest, Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, was shot on 24

March 1980 while celebrating Mass at a small chapel located in a hospital called "La Divina Providencia".

The previous day Archbishop Romero, a persistent critic of government oppression, had preached a sermon calling on Salvadoran soldiers to heed God's laws rather than continue implementing the government's brutal violations of basic human rights. There was no doubting Romero's commitment to the oppressed and the poor.

An audio-recording of the Mass indicates that Romero was shot while elevating the chalice at the end of the Eucharistic prayer. When he was shot, his blood spilled over the altar along with the contents of the chalice. This meddling priest paid a high price for his obsession with compassion and justice.

Some say he was asking for it. Others reflect that he was offered up in sacrifice at the very moment he was offering up the sacrifice of Christ, his own life and death intimately subsumed into Christ's.

Yet Romero loved Christmas. It spoke to him of the one who, though he was rich, became poor for the sake of the poor, and of him who humbled himself to our low estate in order to come alongside us and serve.

'No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas,' said Romero, 'without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who have no need even of God – for them there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there

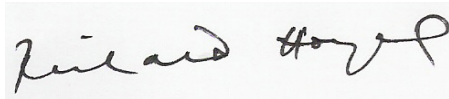
can be no abundance of God.’ (Romero – ‘The Violence of Love’ 1978)

These are challenging words, but perhaps we should let them be a benchmark for us this Advent. After all, they merely corroborate what Jesus himself is telling us.

The gospel is mercy for the poor and the poor in spirit, those in crisis, that is, those who know their need for God’s help. It is judgement (also *crisis* in Greek) for those who, whether by virtue of wealth or of self-absorbed self-sufficiency, are too rich to feel any need for salvation or saviour.

I am glad our PCC has chosen Crisis Centre Ministries as our Christmas charity this year. As you can read elsewhere in this issue, CCM’s invaluable work in our city is directly concerned with people at the margins, people in crisis, the very people we walk away from at our souls’ peril, according to the gospel.

I hope we shall be moved to support CCM very generously. To my mind they are following our Saviour’s own pattern, just as Archbishop Romero did - coming alongside in humble service, choosing to be poor in order to make needy souls rich in those things that really matter – the basic decencies of life and the assurance that they are accepted and loved.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Hoyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

About *CRISIS CENTRE MINISTRIES*, our Christmas Charity *Information from Jonathan Swithinbank, CCM Fundraiser & Office Manager*

Crisis Centre Ministries, or CCM, is a Christian charity that helps homeless and drug-addicted people in Bristol, England. CMM is current running three projects: The Wild Goose, the LITE Course and East Bristol Foodbank, and a fourth is about to start.

"The Wild Goose" is a drop-in-centre open six days a week which serves free, hot meals and employs three Support Workers. These Support Workers are assisted by teams of volunteers from Churches across Bristol; currently CCM has have over two hundred and fifty volunteers. These Support Workers help people into supported accommodation, put them in touch with other agencies and provide them with practical support, for example with bedding, clothing and household effects. The Wild Goose was featured on *The Secret Millionaire* in March of last year. This resulted in £130,000 being donated to CCM. This large donation helped purchase and open a new, larger, better equipped drop-in-centre. Last year the Wild Goose served approximately 90,000 hot meals and helped 312 people into supported accommodation.

The LITE Course (Life-skills Initial Training for Employment) This project comprises two, eighteen-session courses. The courses aim to retrain unqualified people who often are former addicts, or ex-convicts and have been unemployed for a significant amount of time. It is also a way to ensure that, once off the streets, people stay off them. LITE aims to build

confidence, teach team activities and provide skills to enhance employability; such as CV writing and interview techniques. A recent student LITE course has commented: *“The course has surpassed my expectations. My time with LITE has left me with renewed confidence... to leave my comfort zone... and has given me direction for the future.”* LITE is currently run by a former minister with extensive experience of working with addicts. LITE has seen a large rise in demand; currently LITE has ten students per course, helping over forty students per year.

East Bristol Foodbank Run entirely by volunteers, this growing project provides food parcels to people who have had their benefits cut. The food collected for distribution is donated by various bodies, shops and churches among them, as well as by generous individuals. Service users are referred to Foodbank by agencies, such as the Bristol Drugs Project and Social Services, amongst others. The project complements The Wild Goose, because the service users for Foodbank would not normally use The Wild Goose but are still in need of food. The project has only been running for four months, but has already distributed over one hundred and sixty food parcels, and has been featured on ‘Sky News’.

CCM’s newest project is their **WONS** (Women Only Night Shelter). A 2010 Bristol University study into the need for a WONS in Bristol found: *“It needs to be recognised that the needs of homeless women differ from the needs of homeless men and that, if homeless women are not physically and emotionally safe, then they are vulnerable to further abuse, which compounds the problems they already face. The service (St Jude’s) provided a safety net where women could access a safe*

*place to stay, food and a respite from the men in their lives.” -
Dr Emma Williamson.*

Up till now, Bristol's only WONS service has been St Jude's night shelter, run by People Can (previously known as Novas Scarman) but this service has closed owing to funding cuts. CCM had been supporting St Jude's for some while (for example providing the beds they used) and had a contingency plan in the event of St Jude's closing. CCM is now about to take over WONS provision. St Jude's were housing between four and twelve women a night. Initially CCM's service will be open for two nights a week (the two nights Bristol's only unisex night shelter is closed). It will provide eight beds and is aiming to be a seven night a week service within three months, providing funding and volunteers are found.

CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY AT ALL SAINTS

**SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS *SUNDAY 18TH*
*DECEMBER***

11.00 AM THANKSGIVING MASS
*CELEBRATING FR ROGER DURBIN'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF
ORDINATION*

6.00 PM LESSONS & CAROLS FOR CHRISTMAS

**CHRISTMAS EVE *SATURDAY 24TH*
*DECEMBER***

5.30 PM FAMILY CRIB SERVICE
WITH CAROLS & CHRISTINGLES
(CHRISTINGLE ORANGES AVAILABLE FOR ALL)

11.30 PM MIDNIGHT MASS OF CHRISTMAS
***THE CHURCH'S GREAT CELEBRATION AT THE HEART OF
CHRISTMAS.***

**CHRISTMAS DAY *SUNDAY 25TH*
*DECEMBER***

9.00 AM MASS (SAID)

10.00 AM CHRISTMAS MORNING
FAMILY MASS FOR ALL AGES

***SPECIAL SHORTER SERVICE WITH SOMETHING FOR
EVERYONE***

6.00 PM EVENSONG AT THE CRIB
QUIET REFLECTIVE SERVICE

**NEW YEAR'S DAY *SUNDAY 1ST JANUARY*
*2012***

9.00 AM MASS (SAID)
10.30 AM NEW YEAR'S DAY MASS FOR ALL AGES

**FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY *FRIDAY 6TH*
*JANUARY***

10.30 AM MASS (SAID)
7.30 PM PROCESSION & FESTIVAL MASS
EPIPHANY PARTY AFTERWARDS.

Notes from the meeting of Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham and Redland 17 November 2011

Friday 11 November saw a stunning turnout for the Remembrance Service by the St John's War Memorial. Several schools involved and up to 200 people present. A public and visible presence of CTCCR. Hearty thanks to Fr Richard from the Churches.

A Soup Run Co-ordinator is urgently needed from February 2012. There will be a job description available well before then and it will include energy, administrative talents and space to store gear and goods. We thanked Pat Reynolds who has done this job for decades, and we seriously need a successor; the Soup Run is a vital part of the work of CTCCR.

Victoria Methodist and Tyndale Baptist are doing Giving Trees this Christmas if you would like to make a contribution.

The Christian Unity service takes place 22 January 2012; ASC is a serious contender to host the service at Evensong.

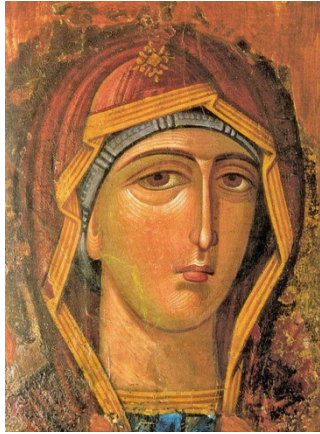
Lent Lectures will take place on THURSDAYS next year. The theme will be 'Chaos or a Christian Cure' and the speakers are to be:
1 March: Geoff Dear (Lord Dear of Willesley) at Christ Church Clifton
8 March: His Honour the Reverend James Patrick at the Friends' Meeting House, Hampton Road
15 March: Matthew van Duyvenberg at Tyndale Baptist
22 March: The Reverend Helen Matthews (Bromley by Bow URC) at Clifton Cathedral in the Apostle Room.
We are asked to spread the word and advertise this remarkable line up to the best of our ability.

We heard among the reports from member Churches that the Rev David Hart of Victoria Methodist (who chaired our parish conference) is in Uganda with +Mike and +Lee. The Vic representative admitted the trio is 'not absolutely sure what they are doing'. But no doubt they are in the hands of God.

We are all asked to pray for the Holy Trinity Hotwells social care ministry which has lost funding and for the Iranian pastor sentenced to death for his Christian faith.

Full and accurate minutes will be available before long; let me know if you would like a copy. Meanwhile, if you have inspiration as to how we can celebrate Her Majesty's Jubilee Year, please give your ideas to Fr Richard, Mary Benton or your correspondent,

Anne Bradley
23 November 2011



CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

UNITED FESTIVAL MASS

All Saints Clifton - Holy Nativity Knowle - All Hallows Easton

7.30 pm Thursday, December 8
at All Saints Clifton

Guest Preacher Fr CHRISTOPHER KINCH
(Holy Nativity Knowle)

We are hoping the occasion will be an opportunity for the kind of celebration that the wonderful joint Mass for the Annunciation at Holy Nativity so splendidly provided worshippers from a range of parishes earlier this year.

Refreshments afterwards - All most welcome

Bristol Diocese C of E Catholic Societies attending

Notes from the Ebbsfleet Lay Council 19 November 2011

The Council urgently needs a Secretary. If you would like to help what might currently be termed the war effort and regard minute taking, composing an agenda, ABC Church Crawling, maintaining lists of emails and correspondence as rewarding and fun, do have a chat with me.

The results of the Diocesan Synods deliberation on the General Synod motion regarding Women and the Episcopate cannot be regarded as favourable to the Ebbsfleet position, though the picture is not entirely negative and may provide encouragement to the House of Bishops or to the Archbishops to push for more and better provision for ABC parishes and clergy.

The Ebbsfleet Children's event at Brean will take place 9 June 2012 and needs both financial support and the interest of our young people.

There was some feeling that the boundaries separating Ebbsfleet, Forward in Faith and the *Society are appearing blurred but the distinctions are important and will be maintained.

Ebbsfleet Extra will be published shortly and I shall make sure that take home copies are available.

The meeting took place at All Saints Shrewsbury; a delightful part of the world Beyond the M6.

Anne Bradley
23 Nov 2011

* The Mission Society of SS Wilfrid and Hilda. In his address, the parish priest mentioned that these two saints were often in dispute. He felt this well represented the Church of England, which if it were to take the form of an animal would probably be a duck billed platypus.

EPIPHANY SHARED LUNCH
Sunday 8th January 2012

A great way to celebrate together at Epiphany-tide

Sign the list in the porch to give us an idea what sort of food you are going to bring.

Pay bar available

Come – Bring – Share – Enjoy

*Another event organised by All Saints
Social & Welcoming for all to enjoy.
Any queries to Janice Hopkins*

All Saints Parish Retreat 2011

This year our Parish Retreat is the weekend of 2 – 4 March 2012 at Abbey House, Glastonbury. We have had to change the weekend for this year as Abbey House will be closed for the month of February for a complete overhaul of the heating and water system.

Those of you who have been on our retreats before will be able to extol the virtues of Abbey House to others and encourage them to join us in February. Abbey House is a large, elegant early 19th century house set in beautiful gardens overlooking the Abbey ruins. It is peaceful, comfortable, warm, and the food is excellent and there is a bar – all to ensure 48 hours of spirituality and ‘winding down’ from the stresses of our everyday life. We gather together for Morning and Evening Prayer each day, but if you oversleep and don’t appear, that is OK. The delights of Glastonbury with its interesting High Street and the beauties of the countryside are an additional attraction. Many of us take advantage of a weekend in the country to intersperse our spiritual activities with fresh air – and there is always the Tor to climb.

Our Retreat Conductor this year is Canon Ray Brazier, who .

The cost of the Retreat will depend on the number of retreatants. There have been changes at the Retreat House and the Trustees have put the cost up, but as a Church Group we still get a good discount. *Ideally, we will fill all 20 places and the cost will be around £125 each. Unfortunately, if we are a smaller number we still have to pay for the empty places and this will inevitably increase the cost for those taking part.* **Please think hard about this opportunity** and sign up in the porch. You will not regret it. Where else would you find 48 hours full board in such glorious surroundings for such a low cost? Perhaps you could bring a friend along as well.

We will have to ask for a non-returnable deposit of £30 to book a place, the remainder to be paid on arrival at Abbey House. Please make cheques out to All Saints with St John.

Please sign list in porch. .

For further details please contact Liz Badman at All Saints, Clifton on
0117-9741355 or allsaintsclifton@tiscali.co.uk

Liz Badman
Parish Administrator