



CLIFTON DIOCESE

Chaplaincy Newsletter March 2007

Home is a Holy Place?

Many of you by now will have read the unicef report on the state of childhood in the world today. As you will know from press coverage Britain is bottom of the league in almost every measure. Perhaps most distressing was the fact that so many teenagers felt that their mental health was under threat. As a result of Listening 2004 the Bishops of England and Wales produce a three year plan, the second phase of which, "Home is a Holy Place" began this January. This is an attempt to recapture the sense of God at work in our everyday lives.

"While God is certainly other-worldly, God is also fully present in the nuts and bolts, the highs and lows, the chaos and noise of each person's life. An immanent spirituality says that instead of eliminating those "distractions" which comprise a great deal of our day why not seek truth and wholeness from within the "distractions" themselves? So that the activities of family life are no longer obstacles to faith and relationship with God but are vehicles for faith and relationship with God."

Leif Kehrwald. Family Spirituality: The Raw Ingredients of Faith. Don Bosco Multimedia, 1994

The unicef report didn't look at the spiritual life of young people but I believe that many are hungry for God, for something that makes sense of their lives. Paul Michael Gallagher wrote about his work in schools:

"Where will the children of today find anchors and roots? What experiences and images could liberate their hope and incarnate the Gospel for them?"

I have spent hundreds of hours listening to young voices in search, sometimes lost in painful fog, sometimes full of energy. And it has been a joyful adventure. In my innocence, however, I sometimes thought that the fruits of a liberating conversation, a moment of genuine prayer or a deeply moving retreat experience would be enough. I witnessed many people get in touch with themselves and sometimes with the Lord. But the context was too personal. Even if they discovered hidden treasure they went back to what the Gospel calls the world; to a powerful culture that could eclipse their version and stunt their hope. They needed new spaces with others where they could deepen and live out the challenge of the faith freedom they had glimpsed. John Paul II was right: a faith that does not find cultural expression will remain immature. When the problem is cultural the response has to be communal, not just personal."

We need a communal response to our search for God. Part of the Catholic view of life is that it isn't enough to talk about developing our own personal relationship with God; we need to talk about faith within the context of a community.

"Wherever two or more of you are gathered in my name there I am"

The concept of trinity reminds us that the essence of God is relational. The website:

www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk is a useful starting point for ideas about how we can help make home a holy place. In March the Bishop will be launching a consultation document called

"Seeking the Face of Christ". This document is intended to trigger discussion over the future of our diocese. What do we mean by church? How can we genuinely listen to the "hopes

joys and anxieties” of people today. The aim would be to produce pastoral guidelines during the course of next year. It is important that the voice of those who work directly with young people is heard. Initial meetings with the Bishop will be:

Trowbridge March 3rd (at St John the Baptist parish hall)
Taunton March 10th (at St Georges Parish hall)
Cheltenham March 24th (at Sacred hearts Parish hall)
Bristol March 31st (at the cathedral)

After this consultations will continue within individual parishes and organisations. Please be a part of the process. After the first meeting resources will be available from the website.

Chaplaincy Day March 16th at Alexander House

In the morning Mr Farooq Siddique will be talking to us about the role of Islam in contemporary society and helping us gain a greater insight into the Islamic faith. During the afternoon will look at the question of community cohesion, how this will be examined under section 48 and the role of the chaplain in this process. Representatives of Liverpool Hope will also be present. They are interested in developing resources for chaplains and would like to meet with you and discuss various issues. There would also be an opportunity to discuss the pastoral consultation. This is a packed programme and I would hope as many as possible of you would be able to come. Please let Jenny know as soon as possible.

Live Simply

As we move into Lent if you haven't already done so this would be an appropriate time to begin supporting Cafod's Live Simply campaign. They have many excellent materials available. You can order and find more information from their website at www.livesimply.org.uk as well as the main Cafod website.

“Come Live in the Light”

This is the theme of the annual chaplaincy conference which takes place at the High Leigh Conference centre, Hoddesden, Hertfordshire, EN118SG. The conference will be from lunch on the 20th June till lunch on the 22nd of June. The themes this year will be focusing on the church's social teaching and 14-19 education. Further details will be sent later.

Resources

Many of you will be receiving into your schools students whose first language is not English. In order for liturgies to be meaningful and inclusive we need to provide translations where possible. Translations of readings can be found at the following two sites, there may well be others. <http://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/pastoral/turismo.htm> this site belongs to the Spanish Bishops conference. It is in Spanish but they show the flags of the countries they provide translations for. The second site <http://www.virc.at/all/english.htm> is the Vienna international religious centre and is in English. Both these sites provide translations of the readings. If anyone knows of a site that provides translations for the prayers of the mass will they please e mail the information in so we can circulate.

Thank you for all your work and dedication.
God Bless

Ann Fowler (Chaplaincy Coordinator)