

Issue 4 - Winter 2015

Dee-Light

A newsletter for the Catholic Communities on Deeside



Features:

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- Lourdes
- Lenten Thoughts
and...
- 'one of Winston's girls'



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Editorial

This winter edition of Dee-Light is published on the doorstep of Lent, a time for contemplation and as Fr Chris says 'action' in pursuit of Spiritual Renewal. There are a number of articles that expose areas where we can all be active in ways that will demonstrate our faith. Could you help on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, will you maintain an interest in Fair Trade, will you support the young people's Film Night (in aid of Ikelenge) and (silly last question) will you indulge in another of Bernadette's charity fund raising Malaysian Feasts (suitably scheduled beyond Lent)?

If you have any queries regarding the newsletter or would like to submit material for subsequent issues then please contact the Editor, Lawrence Ross, at hhl.ross@btinternet.com

St Columba's, Banchory

Although Banchory is referenced in a Charter of 1324, it did not really develop as a town until Victorian times and the coming of the railway in 1853.

In the early days of the town the Catholic community probably looked to Aboyne for service. St Columba's, the youngest of the Catholic churches on Deeside, was opened on 29th October, 1931 when



'a goodly gathering of the faithful was present as Dr Bennett, Bishop of Aberdeen, accompanied by a large number of his clergy, solemnly blessed the new building.'

The building of the church was made possible by the bequest of the late Mr Charles Stephen Leslie of Balquhain and Fetternear who died in 1916, leaving his estate at Auchinhove to the Bishop of Aberdeen. (Readers will recall that the same Mr Leslie was a subscriber to the funds raised for the building of St Margaret's, Aboyne.) The estate was sold and the money invested in Trust Funds, producing an annual income of almost £200. The object of the bequest was that income should accumulate until there was sufficient to build a new church and presbytery at Banchory-Ternan and to form an endowment for the support of a resident priest. The first step in carrying out the bequest was taken in 1927 when the ground on which the church now stands was bought. For the moment it appeared that nothing further could be done as some time would have to elapse before sufficient income would accumulate to allow the building to commence. Fortunately, two legacies left for diocesan needs at the discretion of the Bishop, the one by Mr John Gruer and the other by Mr Caithness Brodie, together with a few other donations made it possible to begin building in 1930. However, for the purchase of the cottage which was to serve as the presbytery money had to be borrowed.

The church is built of Hill of Fare pink granite to the plans of a Mr Devlin A.R.I.B.A. Its most striking feature is the circular stained glass window located at a high level in the West wall. It is divided into three segments to represent the Holy Trinity. Each segment contains the symbol of a saint with St Columba represented by the dove, St Andrew by his Saltire Cross and St Margaret by the crowned white Scottish rose. A setting sun shining through this powerful window with its jewel colours projects a glorious light onto the statue of the Risen Christ located on the East wall at the back of the Sanctuary.

Eileen Higson – One of Winston's Girls



Eileen Higson (nee Warrington) has a sparkle in her eye that portrays a character of brightness and fortitude, not one to be cowed by misfortune and sadness. Born in Liverpool in June 1925, Eileen had three brothers, two older and one younger. The parents (born and bred Liverpoolians) were teachers. When Eileen was six the family moved to Farnworth near Bolton where her father took up the headship of the Catholic school for children up to age fourteen. Farnworth was a cotton mill town with a healthy Catholic population. There were annual processions around the town on Whitsunday and Corpus Christi. At the age of ten, Eileen went to St Joseph's Convent School in Bolton (she commuted

daily by tram) and seven years later gained entry to Liverpool University. She graduated with a BA in English and History and then did a further year to obtain a teaching diploma. In 1946, Eileen began teaching in Manchester at Notre Dame High School – another convent and nuns again – where she stayed until she married Gordon Higson in 1955.

Eileen has vivid memories of World War II. At its outbreak, Eileen's father became an air raid warden; her eldest brother joined the Royal Corps of Signals and the second brother the Home Guard (no wonder that Eileen likes watching Dad's Army) before enlisting in the regular army with the Royal Armoured Corps. This second brother fought in North Africa with the 'Desert Rats' then up through Italy and France and back to the UK. He returned to action in France in 1944 where he was killed. Eileen remembers the bombers (the different engine sounds of our planes and theirs) and the blitz on Manchester that turned the night sky red. There were summers when Eileen and her younger brother were evacuated to a farm in Somerset. There they lay in the fields watching the Spitfires in dog fights with enemy planes. One day a German plane crashed into an adjacent field. That was enough for Eileen's mother who said 'if you are going to be in danger then that may as well be at home as in Somerset'!

Gordon Higson was from Bolton. He was the best friend of Eileen's younger brother and as Eileen says very touchingly 'my only boyfriend'. Gordon was a physicist. His first job was in London with Fairey Aviation so the newlywed couple settled in the South East (Middlesex and then Surrey) where they raised their three children – Mark, Paul and Ursula. In time, Gordon changed jobs to be with the National Coal Board and then the scientific section of the NHS where he was a leading light in the development of the wonderful MRI scanner that was developed in Aberdeen. In 1993, Gordon and Eileen moved to Banchory to be nearer Paul and Ursula who had both come to the north east. They made many friends in the parish. On Sunday 2nd July, 2001, Gordon, who had always been active in charitable causes, addressed the congregation at St Columba's to say that he was starting a Fair Trade stall at the church. The following Sunday Gordon suffered a stroke that proved to be fatal.

Nowadays, Eileen is resident at Abbeyfield in Torphins. She retains her interest in English and History and loves to get news of her seven grandchildren who are all very good at keeping in touch with their grandmother. Oh, and fifty years on from the death of Churchill, Eileen remains very clear about the unique role that he played in saving the nation during World War II. History revisionists beware; this is one of Winston's girls.



Fair Trade moves on...

The Fair Trade concept seems pretty simple but as is often the case when 'small' gets 'big' the reality becomes more complex. Fair Trade as we know it in our churches and as promoted by Gordon Higson at St Columba's in 2001 is, in simple terms, about buying commodities such as tea and coffee directly from small producers in developing countries. Direct purchase allows these small producers to gain access to market and to obtain a higher price which in turn affords improvement in the producing community. Buyers such as ourselves are generally happy to pay more for the product because we feel that it is the producer that gains rather than the middle man. There is a relationship between us and the farmer in much the same way as there is a relationship between the parish at St Columba's and the school for the deaf at Ikelenge in Zambia.

As Fair Trade has grown over the years it has moved on from the small direct relationship to bigger markets and Fair Trade itself is seen more as a certification that the production process and apportionment of value in the trade have been fair to the workers. Fair Trade products are now quite widely available in supermarkets and at lower prices than the traditional direct route. This has led to a reduction in trade at the church stall which will now cease. However, this is not the end of the promotion of Fair Trade at St Columba's as Malcolm Nicol, Chairman of the local group, explains:

'Maintaining awareness of Fair Trade is vital to its continuing development. To that end we will have three to four events each year to keep up the image of Fair trade and to fund raise for third world projects. Fair Trade moves on and we will stay with it.'

Lourdes - Why do we go there?

By Karen Cardy



I am sure that many of us grew up hearing stories of Lourdes. I was told of the little shepherdess Bernadette and how she saw Our Lady in the Grotto. I had very little idea of the Lourdes of today. I joined a parish pilgrimage when I was 14. Since then I have visited Lourdes over twenty times. So, how did Lourdes become such an important pilgrimage centre? To answer this we must look back at the year

1858 when Lourdes was a small provincial town situated in the foothills of the Pyrenees. One cold morning, the 11th February, a girl aged 14 called Bernadette, the eldest child of a very poor family, was collecting firewood when she saw a vision of a lady in a rocky outcrop. This was the first of eighteen apparitions. Initially, Bernadette did not know who the lady was. During the course of the apparitions, the lady asked that people drink and wash at the spring – a previously unknown source of water at the base of the Grotto – and to come in procession and to build a chapel.

The priests wanted to know who was asking for such things. At the sixteenth apparition the lady finally confirmed her identity: "I am the Immaculate Conception".

Since then, the Grotto of Lourdes has become a centre for pilgrims who drink the water and bathe in it. During the pilgrimage season (April to October) there are two processions each day – the Blessed Sacrament Procession in the afternoon and the Torchlight Procession in the evening.



They visit the Grotto, see the source of the spring and touch the rock where the Blessed Virgin appeared. Candles are lit and prayers offered. Masses are said from dawn until midnight in the numerous chapels. There have been miraculous cures at Lourdes and for that reason over the years many people with illnesses or disabilities come on pilgrimage.

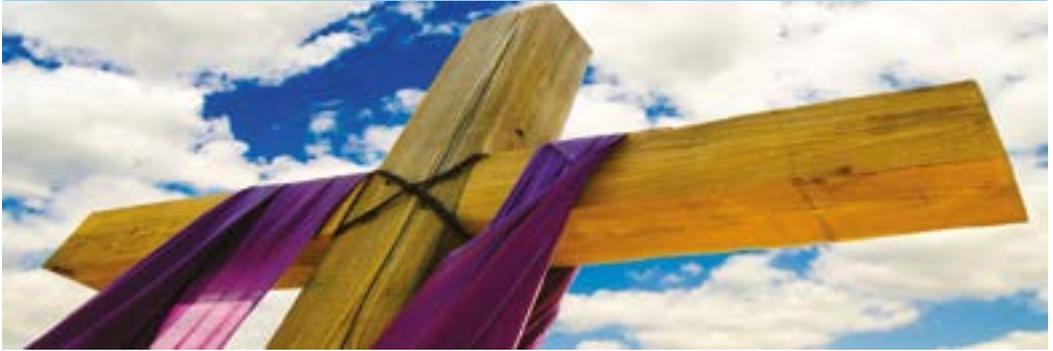
Last summer, I went to Lourdes with a group of people aged from 17 to 89, some of whom are sick or disabled. We stayed at Hosanna House, a wonderful home outside Lourdes with spectacular views of the Pyrenees. The house is adapted to suit all needs and has a beautiful chapel, lounge, dining room, shop, terrace and grounds. Our group visited the Grotto every day, taking part in the pilgrimage activities. We had a nurse to help with those who needed medical care and a chaplain who celebrated our Masses and other services through the week. It wasn't all prayers and penance though – we had a day trip to Gavarnie, a lovely town in the high Pyrenees, a party night and plenty of time in Lourdes to enjoy a coffee or an ice cream or to shop for souvenirs. We looked after each other and enjoyed each other's company.

Each year our Hosanna House group travels in July for a week to Lourdes. We fly from a Scottish airport (last year, Edinburgh) and our group has around 45 people, some of whom will use wheelchairs. We travel around Lourdes in a specially adapted bus. We fundraise to help with our expenses but have to pay our fares, around £700, for the week in Lourdes (this includes flights, all meals, accommodation and transport in Lourdes).

You can help in three ways. Firstly, think if you would like to come to Lourdes on pilgrimage with our Hosanna House group. Secondly, contribute to our fundraising so that those who would like to go but can't manage the fare can be helped. Thirdly, say a prayer for our group and all those who travel to Lourdes on pilgrimage. Be assured that those of us who kneel at the Grotto like Bernadette remember you all in our prayers too.

For more information visit www.hcpt.org.uk or talk to Karen Cardy (013398 83442).

Lenten Thoughts from Fr Chris



Redemptorist priests of an older generation used to say that when they went to preach a week of sermons in the parish church – they might not get people’s attention until the night they preached on hell. Catholics are good on sin – especially in Lent. The problem is that focusing on our sins, gives our sin power over us. Several Gospel stories can help us change focus.

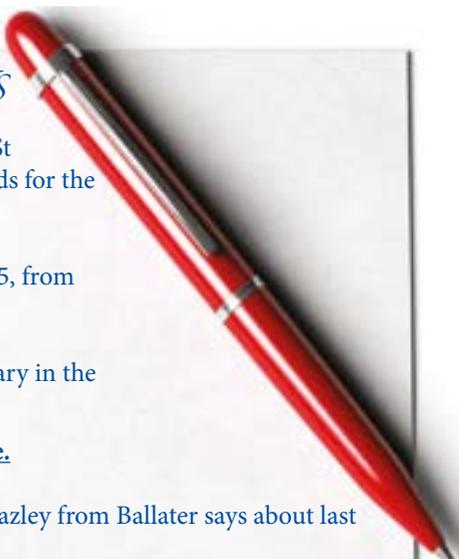
The first - the story of the paralysed man (Luke 5:17-26) let down on a stretcher through the roof so that Jesus could heal him. Instead Jesus says ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ How can we know we are forgiven? Holy Thursday and Good Friday confirm this for us - This is .. the blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be poured out for you .. for the forgiveness of sins. Knowing this, we can get up and go.

Then, in the Gospel of Luke 15: 1-32, there are the three parables of God’s mercy. We might be lost, doubting, confused – but God won’t give up on us, as we see in the stories of the lost sheep and the lost coin. The third is the story of the Father of the prodigal son. Out of love, the father gives his son the freedom he wants, hoping that he will use it wisely. The son, not surprisingly, messes up but comes to his senses. He hasn’t exactly made the right choices and now he makes the only choice open to him – to go home. How will he be received? He is staggered to see his father galloping down the road to welcome him home. He is hugged in a bear hug, kissed tenderly, dressed in the best robe and a feast is held in celebration. In the Eucharist Jesus welcomes us to the feast.

Jesus not only told stories to help us grasp God’s mercy, he himself embodied it. In Gethsemane he prays to get the strength to go through with what he knows is the Father’s desire for us – life, the gift of the Spirit. On the cross he prays ‘Father forgive them they do not know what they are doing.’ In the resurrection we see him coming to his disciples hidden away, paralysed by fear for their own safety. ‘Peace be with you’ he says and breathes into them the Holy, transforming, lifegiving Spirit.

Action!

PARISH NEWS



The young people of the Confirmation Group in St Columba's invite you to a Film Night, to raise funds for the Deaf School in Ikelenge.

The film will be shown on Friday 27th March 2015, from 7.00 - 9.00 pm in St Columba's Parish Centre.

Tickets will be available for sale from 22nd February in the parish centre.

Retreats by the Dominican Sisters for Young People.

Wondering what a retreat would be like? Emily Hazley from Ballater says about last year's retreat in Tomintoul:

Attending the retreat held at St Michael's Centre, Tomintoul last year was a great opportunity to meet other young people my age. Each day consisted of prayer, reflection and Mass and there were many opportunities to discuss our faith. It wasn't all prayer! We also enjoyed walks, fun, games and music and friendships developed. It was a very engaging spiritual experience and I look forward to the next one!

For ages 12 – 16 : Power of Grace: 6 June, Greyfriars, Elgin 11:00-18:00

A one day event for youth, to give them exposure to prayer, fellowship, and fun with other youth from around the diocese. The day last year was powerful with more than fifty youth from around the diocese attending.

New Evangelisation Retreat: 19-21 June, Tomintoul,

Three day event for older teens between the ages of 14/15 -18.

Both of these retreats require registration. If interested, please contact Sr. Christiana by May 15th for both of these at dominican.sisters@dioceseofaberdeen.org. It would also be helpful if you could let Fr Chris know that you are going.

Times of Holy week Services:

Holy Thursday: Mass Banchory 7:30pm

Good Friday: Ballater 3pm and Banchory 7:30pm

Holy Saturday: Banchory 10am for the Blessing of food and Easter Vigil at 9pm

Malaysian Night

Bernadette's Famous Malaysian Night will take place this year on Saturday 18th April - Tickets will go on sale shortly.