

ST BARNABAS SOCIETY NEWS 2011

In co-operation with the Catholic bishops, to provide support and assistance to those former clergy and religious of other denominations and their dependants who have come into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church, until such time as they have been integrated into the Catholic community and have re-established themselves.

The Secretary Writes...

The Society's only mailing to our supporters is this annual Newsletter and it is the only opportunity I have of thanking those whom I cannot thank individually. The St Barnabas Society is most grateful for your continuing support, which is essential for our work, as are those whom the Society is able to help, many of whom would otherwise be in great difficulty.

Last year I told you that the number of those coming for the Society's help had increased. This increase has continued. During the past twelve months the Society has helped some 55 people or families, 17 for the first time. Not only are there more people needing the Society's help, but the amount of help needed is increasing. The total paid out by the Society in direct charitable expenditure has doubled in the past five years. This is putting an increasing strain on the Society's finances which are running a deficit and using up the Society's reserves up at a rate which we cannot sustain.

We have therefore taken the unusual step of enclosing with this Newsletter an extra sheet so that those who are able to do so can support the Society's work or increase their support. If you did not receive this copy of the Newsletter through the post and would like to be on our mailing list, please use the sheet to let us know.

Ordinations during the year have included Fr Gary Buckby (Birmingham) and Fr Stuart Seaton (Westminster) and Deacons Alex Hill and Kevin O'Donnell (both Arundel and Brighton) who will be ordained priest during January 2011. Matthew Bond has recently entered the postulancy of OFM (Conv). There are a further 13 convert clerics or religious preparing for ordination and one who will soon enter a religious order.

Last year a friend remarked that I had written very little about the Pope's offer of Personal Ordinariates for former Anglicans. The reason was that it had only been announced while I was writing and there was little to say. A year on, there are plenty of rumours but few facts and, writing in late October, I am very aware that by the time you read this it may be hopelessly out of date.

Two points need to be borne in mind. The first is that this is the Pope's response to the requests of many Anglican groups and

individuals, both in Britain and, more especially, in other parts of the world, who have approached him seeking full, visible communion with the See of Peter while wishing to retain what is good in Anglicanism.

The second is less obvious. It is now well over forty years since serious dialogue began between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church (ARCIC) and this has achieved a great deal in terms of both understanding and agreement.

The goal of this dialogue has always been full, visible, reunion, seen as "united but not absorbed" and as involving the whole Anglican Communion. However while this dialogue has continued, there have been developments in Anglicanism which have made this corporate reunion, for which many of us hoped at one time, increasingly unlikely.

I believe that in this generous response to those who have approached him, Pope Benedict is offering, as something which can be achieved now, this goal of "united but not absorbed" to those groups of Anglicans who share the faith of the Catholic Church including that of the office of Peter in the Church.

As such, this is a moment of great importance in the search for Christian unity. I hope that all of us in the Catholic Church will respond generously both in welcoming these people into the Catholic Church and, where necessary, helping them materially.

Those Anglican clergy who will choose this path, like those who come into the Catholic Church in the more usual way, as individuals, will be taking a very great step into the unknown. They too will lose their homes and their incomes and it may be some time before the communities which will make up the Ordinariate are able to support their clergy. For those who are the first to come, before the Ordinariate is functioning, the step will be perhaps even greater.

I am confident that the Catholic community will be ready to welcome them and I would like to end by repeating my thanks for your support, in prayer and concern, as well as financially.

Fr Robin Sanders



*Icon from original
by Sr Petra Clare,
Benedictine Skete,
Beaulieu,
IV4 7LT*

THE ST BARNABAS SOCIETY PRAYER

Father in heaven, we thank you for the life and work of your servant St Barnabas.

Through his intercession may all who work for the St Barnabas Society be strengthened to follow his example of joyful encouragement.

Help them to extend a warm and generous welcome to those who have left home and livelihood to be united with Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

THE ST BARNABAS SOCIETY

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REFLECTIONS ON TWO NOTABLE MODERN CONVERTS

by Dr Cyprian Blamires

Since the last edition of the *Newsletter*, two notable clerical converts to the Catholic faith have left us: **Mgr Graham Leonard**, formerly Anglican Bishop of London (d 6 Jan 2010), and **Fr Ronald Walls**, one-time Scottish Presbyterian minister (d 2 Jan 2010). They were near contemporaries, for Mgr Leonard was born in 1921 and Fr Walls in 1920.

Both grew up in a very Protestant environment, but whereas Ronald Walls found his way as a young man directly to the Catholic Church, Graham Leonard was to spend many years at the heart of the luxuriant Tractarian tradition in the Church of England before he was eventually received.

These lives were parallel rather than converging, and I would be surprised if Graham Leonard and Ronnie Walls ever met. My own life intersected with theirs only briefly but those intersections were for me powerful moments. I first met Graham Leonard as a young Anglican ordinand. In the year 1973 I was reaching the end of my theological studies at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford. It was agreed that my first curacy should be in the London parish of St Martin's, Kensal Rise, which came under the remit of Graham Leonard as Bishop of Willesden. So it was that he came to visit me in my room at Wycliffe Hall. I was immediately impressed by the quiet and unassuming way in which he slipped quietly into the college to see me.

Soon after my diaconal ordination Bishop Leonard moved away to become the Bishop of Truro. From Cornwall and afterwards from London, where he returned as Bishop in 1981, Graham Leonard worked tirelessly for the cause of High Church Anglicanism. He was part of a current of gifted Anglo-Catholic intellectuals and men of letters of his generation like John Betjeman, T S Eliot, Austen Farrer, V A Demant, Gregory Dix, and George Every, along with Eric Mascall.

It was not until the Synod of the Church of England had agreed to the ordination of

women to the priesthood in 1992 that Graham Leonard was received into the Church (1994), although he subsequently stated quite openly that he would have come sooner had he realised what a welcome he would receive. Some years later he contributed a chapter to *Path to Rome* – a book of stories by converts to Catholicism, and began his chapter with three pages of reflection on Cardinal Newman: some might be inclined to compare the influence of his conversion to that of Newman's. Graham Leonard had provided leadership for a constituency of catholic-minded Anglicans, and many of those who found their way into the Roman Communion at around the same time as himself were inspired to a greater or lesser extent by his example or by his advice. In fact he was the highest-ranking English Anglican prelate to be received (albeit in retirement) into the Catholic Church. In his last years we met to discuss the possibility of an enlargement of the biography of him by John Peart-Binns, which had been published before he became a Catholic, but it came to nothing.

As Scottish as Graham Leonard was English, Ronald Walls was born in Edinburgh in 1920, studied at the University of Edinburgh and was ordained to the ministry of the Scottish Presbyterian Church in 1945, taking up a position in a parish in Ross-shire. We are very fortunate in having his own account of how in 1948 he came to be received into the Catholic Church, first published in 1960 under the title *The One True Kirk*. The discovery of this book was hugely important to me because I had never been sympathetic to the Anglo-Catholic tradition from which the vast majority of Anglican converts to Rome in modern times had come; consequently, although I did find their stories helpful, what I really wanted was to hear from a real Protestant who had made this leap and who could be a model for me. I found my model in Ronnie Walls. Journeys from such a background into the Church are as rare in

the UK (though not in the USA) as the journey of Graham Leonard is a familiar one.

After being received into the Church in 1979 I had studied for a doctorate in Oxford, hoping for an academic career. This hope proved to be a vain one and in 1995 the St Barnabas Society gave me a part-time job as a Regional Organiser. I was now following a similar path to Ronnie Walls, for he had worked in Scotland for twenty years in the same capacity. It was not until I actually met him in the 1990s that I discovered that we had something else in common: we were both freelance translators, and Ronnie had the distinction of being a translator of Karl Rahner.

By then Ronnie had been a Catholic priest for a number of years. The circumstances of his ordination were full of pathos, as recorded in the second and much expanded version of his life published under the title *Love Strong as death*. In 1974 his wife Helen was killed in a car crash, and that opened the way for him to be ordained (for this was some years before married convert clerics became eligible for the Catholic priesthood). Fr Walls served in several parishes and eventually retired to live in Inverness. During his latter years he and I had a sporadic email correspondence.

Heroically, he came out of retirement in his 80s when he heard that the Catholics of Orkney were without a resident priest. He ended his days there serving in a church which, he told me with great delight, was just down the road from the street where his grandfather had lived.

Having enjoyed his services as an Organiser for so long, the St Barnabas Society is indebted to Ronald Walls. Spiritually, we are equally indebted to Graham Leonard, the guide and mentor for so many clergy converts. May they both rest in peace.

Dr Cyprian Blamires

THE DISTRICT ORGANISERS

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THE DISTRICT ORGANISERS

DR CYPRIAN BLAMIRE

A priest told me recently that his biggest pastoral difficulty was to convince people that God loved them just as much when they were suffering. That resonated with me because for me this year has been a year of grieving for my wife Trudi, who died of cancer on 29 November 2009. My work for the St Barnabas Society has been a very important part of the therapeutic process. The worst time for me in my grief would undoubtedly have been the weekends, but I could look forward to seeing people and being out and about on my parish visits at those times. This then has been a period when the Organiser's role has helped to carry me, giving me as much I was giving out.

At the same time, I have been acutely conscious of the way that personal suffering can give an edge when you are speaking in churches. Comfort and ease can give a hint of complacency to your voice of which you are likely to be wholly unaware. I like to dress reasonably smartly for my appeal talks, and a man came up to me after mass one day this year and said 'When you first stood up, I thought to myself – there's a successful bloke with a good career, and when you began to talk about your time on the dole and your job difficulties, I was very surprised'. To hear of the painful experiences of unemployment which convert clerics frequently have to go through as a result of their decision to become Catholics comes as a surprise to some, for many assume that because it is now possible for married convert clerics to be ordained, their difficulties must be at an end. I have found it very important to emphasise that individual ministers of religion considering becoming Catholics cannot be guaranteed ordination before they take the step into the Church, though they may be encouraged by their bishop to hope for it. So this leaves them still with the dilemma of whether they can take what is essentially a step into the unknown. This was graphically illustrated not long ago when an ordained minister with six young children wanted to become a Catholic. The experience of walking with him and sharing his worries and fears on the way has been a great blessing for me.

GLYN ROBERTS

I repair statues, and on appeals take an interest in what I call "suffering simulacra" (statues! both abused and neglected) this very small statue had a moving conversion story and was well worth the effort restoration. Its owner had been brought up a Catholic; she had married and had children. But the marriage had been abusive. Unhappy she blamed God for the maltreatment. In an act of desperation and anger at God she threw her sacred heart across the room smashing its head off, and then she consigned it to the bottom of the wardrobe. Separated from her husband, she lived for years without the church or the sacraments. Eventually she met a caring man and was able to marry again... Encouraged by friends she was converted back to the faith "in a big way." One day she came across the statue and was filled with sorrow, it was a sign of rejecting God and she wanted it restored, as a sign of her own healing and as a thankyou.

When she asked me to do this I asked her, as I usually do, to take its photo and send it to me, not many people are prepared to do this, but to my surprise these photos arrived with her contact details. I rang her and then she explained significance of hers, and said that any money for its repair should go to the St Barnabas Society. The point of all this is really to say that those who are genuine about their Catholic faith and their conversion, treat it as a thing of great value and are glad to pay its price. Something of course that the St Barnabas Society and those it helps have in common with that lovely faith-filled lady and the statue that symbolised it all for her.

WILLIAM JOHNSTONE

The state visit of Pope Benedict was a huge moment for our country. Images of him greeting the Queen and speaking in Westminster Hall were like seeing the history books being rewritten. At every moment his words seemed to strike just the right note. They were packed with a profundity and significance which will take months to digest. Above all perhaps, it was the graciousness of his personality - his gentleness and warmth – that shone out, as well as the incredible response from the Catholic faithful of this land.

My overriding feeling as a convert to Catholicism was a certain pride in being part of this wonderful occasion. There was a tremendous sense of belonging and of witnessing something very beautiful. As a friend of mine remarked recently "you can say what you like about Catholics but they know how to put on a good show". Of course it was more than just an outward spectacle. The Pope's visit highlighted something very deep – the need for that principle of unity and communion which is seen in Christ's gift of the Petrine ministry. This is ultimately what we all seek in the Church – the fullness of faith which is found in communion with Peter.

As the Pope left, after four dramatic days, I felt that we had been graced with the presence of St Peter. What is more, people really listened to what he had to say, perhaps for the very first time. He spoke the truth with an eloquence and gentleness which is rarely seen in our society. This is surely an irresistible combination, and one which will continue to draw men and women into the fullness of life in the Catholic Church.

JONATHAN BROWN

I was reminded when the Pope was in London of how different the Catholic Church looks from the outside, especially when viewed through the eyes of a reporter. In a similar way, as we think about an Ordinariate, it is perhaps worth asking whether the world of Anglo-Catholicism looks different from the outside. It is hard to fully appreciate the struggles of those feeling betrayed by their own church, or of those ministers torn between their consciences and their pastoral responsibilities. Then there are the worries and fears we might have over a sudden influx of individuals and communities whose motivations and ecclesiology we may not quite understand. For many Anglo-Catholics, a time is approaching when they may find themselves proved wrong: for now they believe that it is possible to remain in the Church of England whilst being faithfully Catholic. It seems that, as for Blessed John Henry Newman and many others, the moment is coming when individuals will realise that the only way to be authentically Catholic is in full communion with the Holy Father. Those who will "come home" to the Catholic Church will do so with trepidation and perhaps uncertainty, but when they do they will discover that the Church looks different from the inside. They will discover the joy of not having to fight for a place in a Church unconvinced by Catholic teaching. They will discover the joy of knowing the Mass and its celebration day by day in each and every church across the land and beyond. They will discover the joy of the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of a Church which has held those marks dear for two thousand years. They will choose full communion with us, but we too have a choice. It is not a difficult choice – since it is simply a question of responding to Pope Benedict's request that we "be generous" – but nevertheless we will choose how we express that generosity. For my part, I will begin with the unquestioning acceptance which overwhelmed me when I became Catholic: it was not my motivation or my past that mattered, simply that I had come home.

CONVERSION STORY

Jane Figueiredo writes



I was born and baptised into a Catholic family and although my parents stopped attending mass when I was preschool age, the seed sown at my baptism must have been very resilient. Despite not receiving any further nurture in the faith and sacraments which normally follow, on the rare occasions I did get Church, I was filled with a sense of wonder at the majesty and mystery of God, and an awareness of something mystical and awesome that captivated me.

I went on to attend an Anglican secondary school, and during my teens sensed an increasing desire to know God and to make sense of how he has revealed himself to humanity. Around the time of my 18th birthday I had a personal spiritual experience, whilst reading through the pages of my somewhat neglected school Bible, when I came across various challenging passages, such as Revelation 3:20, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock, whoever hears me knocking and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me'. I felt the real and living presence of Christ, as if these words were being addressed directly to me in that moment.

I prayed the Lord would indeed be at the centre of my heart, mind and soul, and this experience stirred up the latent faith within me, and the direction of my life from that time was changed and transformed.

A few months after this I went to University to study English and Italian, but found myself increasingly preoccupied with Theology and

decided to transfer my degree. Although it was pointed out to me that studying Theology can be quite challenging to faith, my response, then and now, was that if faith is founded on truth, we should never be afraid to explore it, because truth will stand up to every challenge. This conviction must have sustained me through the amazing faith journey ahead, which has been lived in this spirit ever since: a pursuit of truth and a love for truth.

By the time I finished my degree, a definite sense of vocation had grown within me to be dedicated to Christian service, rather than pursuing a secular career and I ended up on unexpected paths, which led me into service as a missionary, in preparation for which I did a postgraduate Diploma in Mission Studies. Over several years of service in various countries, there was a natural progression in my vocation which led towards pastoral ministry and preaching.

When I returned to England I continued on the path of my vocation into the Methodist Church, where I qualified as a preacher, then went on to train for the ministry at Queen's in Birmingham, an ecumenical College educating and preparing Methodist, Anglican and United Reformed students for ministry. I studied for an MA in applied Theology and enjoyed a time of wide-ranging formation in pastoral work. The highlight of the three years for me was undoubtedly a month spent living and studying on a reciprocal exchange with Catholic seminarians from St Mary's College, Oscott, the central focus of which was the Eucharist.

This whole experience left an enduring impression on my soul, as another seed planted which would later bear fruit.

Space will not allow me to describe the wonderful journey which led me home to the Catholic Church, but essentially it goes back to the pursuit of and love for truth, which is often seen in our culture as something relative and even subjective and it definitely doesn't go down well with the contemporary palate to speak of truth in absolute terms. But our Lord Jesus was the Word of God who 'became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth' (John 1:14), and indeed he told those who believed in him, 'You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (John 8:31-32). Truth therefore can be found and known, and I came to a realisation that the fullness of God's revelation and the

deposit of that truth is to be found in the Catholic Church.

Of the many issues explored which came together with the strands of my life experience to convince me to become a Catholic, the most compelling was undoubtedly the Eucharist.

Once I truly understood the significance of the Eucharist as the body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord, there was only one direction I could go and this was the 'pearl of great price' that I would gladly give everything up for to be able to receive it.

Another challenging issue was the question of Unity. In his great priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prayed 'May they all be one... may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me.' Unity is central to our witness, which must be inevitably compromised and impoverished by the disunity and fragmentation we create and experience as Christians. The Church which Jesus founded was intended to be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

A lot of reading, research and most importantly prayer preceded my decision to be received into the Catholic Church. It was a daunting prospect to stand at the precipice of a decision which would require me to surrender my vocation, responsibilities and whole way of life as an ordained minister, and step out in faith not knowing where this would lead. My love for God was stripped of excuses, doubts and distractions, as I saw clearly before me the challenge to respond to the most precious and irresistible invitation I could ever receive. Nevertheless I knew without doubt that I had to step out in faith and offer myself in an act of unconditional trust and acceptance in order to embrace and be embraced by the Catholic Church, trusting all I had yet to learn to God's grace.

I was received into the Catholic Church at Pentecost in 2008 at St Edward the Confessor Church in Romford by Fr Tom Jordan, who has been a very wise and discerning priest and pastor, as well as a great mentor in the faith to me. Recently I've accepted the invitation to serve as a pastoral assistant in the parish. My understanding of vocation as a Catholic lay woman, wife and mother, following God's call to love and serve him, is a work in progress which is constantly growing. I can't claim to have all the answers yet. However this much I know: I was missing out on immeasurably more before becoming a Catholic than I have ever had to sacrifice to become one.

Jane Figueiredo

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are a priest...

Contact our local District Organiser to arrange an appeal in the parish or to talk about the Society's work.

Let the Secretary know of any convert clergy who have been received into the Church.

Whoever you are...

Pass this Newsletter on to others.

Pray for the Society and its work, those whom it helps and those thinking of coming into the Church.

Send the Society a donation at the address on page one or remember it in your will.