

# THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

MARCH 2005

## From Lent to Easter

On Easter Day we'll sing the hymn 'Jesus Christ is risen today' and it is then that our alleluias - which have been silent during Lent - will ring out once more as we celebrate the triumph of the cross and the resurrection of Christ.

But we are not there yet. As I write there is still a month or so of Lent to go before we reach that wonderful celebration in which we can continue to prepare ourselves for that great day. The poem *'The Icon of the Risen Lord'* by Brother David Hodges, a monk at the Cistercian Abbey on Caldey Island, invites us to reflect on how much Christ has risen for each one of us: what is holding me back from believing in the risen Christ? What do I need to 'die to' in my life that I may share the risen life of Christ?

If we can take time to ponder these things, then when Easter Day comes, we will be able to sing even more joyfully our alleluias that Jesus Christ is risen, not just for the world, but for each one of us.

Ginny Thomas

## The Icon of the Risen Lord

I looked at the Cross,  
the sign of his love,  
and pondered:  
has Christ truly risen?  
Has he risen yet for me?  
for every part of me?  
Yes, he died and rose again;  
but did he die and rise again for me?  
And have I died and risen with him?  
Is there yet some part of me  
for which he has not risen?  
Some part of self that I am holding back -  
that holds me back from taking up my Cross  
to follow him.  
Can I say, "I no longer live  
but it is Christ who lives in me?"  
and "The life I now live  
I live by faith in the Son of God  
who loved me and gave himself for me?"  
It was then I looked at the white Host  
and saw him watching ME,  
and I began to realise it was He  
that made me and holds my cross,  
and it was that that made me certain:  
Yes, I do believe;  
Yes, He does love me;  
Jesus truly present, full of glory, full of power;  
The Icon (and the presence of) the Risen Lord.

*'Songs from Solitude'* by Br David Hodges, Caldey Abbey

## Icon of St. John the Evangelist

Gerald has been a dear friend of ours for many years, so I was especially delighted when he commissioned an Icon from me for his cell in Boston. As the Monastery is St. John the Evangelist, this was the subject for the Icon. To research this, I went to Turvey Abbey in Bedfordshire, where they have a good library of Icon books, and even better, there is Sister Esther, who has been an immense encouragement and help on my journey as an Iconographer in the Byzantine tradition. I then worked out the drawing - for an Icon, one needs to refer to prototypes. Icons are subject to a "Theology of Images" i.e. rules and structures for the drawing of each image. In this Icon, St. John is receiving inspiration from the Holy Spirit, in the top left, and is passing his words on to Prochorus who is writing them down. The eagle, symbol for St. John, is between them.

The board for the Icon is of oak, sanded and smoothed as perfectly as possible. Next, a gesso ground is prepared and around 12 coats of gesso are painted on, then once more sanding the surface to the smoothness of ivory. Pure gold leaf is applied next, then tempera paint is prepared using pure pigment mixed with egg yolk and distilled water. The colours are built up gradually, using many transparent coats - the process is a slow one and takes me many hours, or rather weeks of work!

One is trying to express unity and calm, always trying to make each stage as perfect as possible. When I begin work each day, each morning or afternoon, I pray the Iconographer's prayer. This helps me to concentrate more fully, and to make me aware of working in God's presence. So, Gerald has had many prayers said for him during the making of this Icon, and the completed work probably has as much prayer as paint in it.

Suzanna Rust

The Icon will be in church on Sunday 6 March when it will be blessed during the 10.30 am Eucharist.

## Oberammergau and Anti-Semitism

The village of Oberammergau in Bavaria puts on a 'Passion Play' every tenth year, fulfilling a vow their ancestors made in 1633, a plague year in which many of them had died. The thirty years war had been raging in Germany and pestilence had erupted in its wake. The village said 'Let's tell the story of the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The story will give us hope, and at the same time admonish us to live the way he lived! If we do that, then we will do everything we can to end those conditions that bring disaster and death'. So they wrote the play and put it on. In the year 2000, between May and October, they did it for the fortieth time. Thinking I might not get another chance, I booked in, as did nearly half a million other people.

For those of you who have not been to Oberammergau let me briefly set the scene. The play involves the whole village; over 2000 people take part and the only professional actor is Jesus. They give 100 performances, each lasting for over six hours - with a merciful break for lunch! Much of it is in Oratorio form with a choir forty strong and a full orchestra. I found it deeply moving - much more so than I had expected - without a trace of commercialism or 'dumbing down' in the play itself. (Of course it has made the village exceedingly prosperous). For me, and I think for many, it was genuinely religious experience, justifying the title of 'pilgrimage' given by the tour operators to the whole expedition.

The village has built a most unusual theatre. The audience of four and a half thousand is under cover but there is no roof over the stage, which is awkward if it rains. And there is another strange effect. If you are in the village, not watching the play, at about three o'clock in the afternoon you hear a sound that makes your blood run cold. It is the mob, on stage, baying for human sacrifice. What they are shouting is something like:

*'Er sterbe', 'Ans Kreuz mit ihm', 'Kreuzige ihn'.*

*'He must die'; 'To the cross with him'; 'Crucify him'.*

It is gruesome enough to hear those words at any time. There, with all those people howling at Jesus on stage, it is terrifying, and it fills the whole village.

Some people think that over the years the sound of that shouting, the way it makes the Jews directly complicit in Jesus's death, has echoed far beyond that one village in Bavaria to find a hearing throughout the whole of Christian Germany. They would say that the hatred of the Jewish people that it brings into the open may even have been a factor in the Holocaust. We know that during World War II the German authorities arrested some millions of their own citizens, for no other reason than they were Jewish, sent them by cattle trucks into huge compounds and gassed them to death. Meanwhile the mainstream churches in Germany, of every denomination, turned a blind eye: heard, saw and certainly did nothing. Was it just cowardice, the hope of a quiet life at all costs to one's conscience? Maybe, but I suspect there was an undercurrent of deliberate connivance. If so, they were far from being the only ones. Murderous hatred of the Jews has cropped up again and again through history, from New Testament times to this day. In the high middle ages it was often those Christian writers most strongly inclined to seek spiritual identification with the crucified Christ who were also most prone to regard Jews as defective, not quite fully human. Some believed that the Jews knew Jesus was God and killed him out of jealousy. The Roman Church has beatified Pope Pius IX who in the mid-nineteenth century described Jews as 'dogs of which there are too many present in Rome, howling and disturbing us everywhere.' In our own time T.S. Eliot, one of our most erudite Christian poets, has been tarred with the brush of anti-Semitism.

I think we should recognise frankly that the New Testament is on the face of it profoundly anti-Semitic. Remember the awful moment in Matthew 27. 24-5 where Pilate says to the crowd 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves. And all the people answered:

*"His blood be on us and on our children!"*

The Jews at the time knew well how damaging this text could be. Remember in Acts (5. 26-32) the High Priest

has the apostles brought before him to upbraid them: 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us'. To this Peter replies 'We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed ... and we are witnesses of these things'. This was giving it to Caiaphas pretty straight. Starting with these texts, it is not a great leap to extend the guilt of Caiaphas and the crowd he had suborned, to cover all the generations of the people of the Jews.

At Oberammergau the text of the play has developed over the years. The present version is based on work by a Benedictine monk done around 1810, rewritten fifty years later by another priest and for the year 2000 'extensively revised and expanded' by two scholars called Otto Huber and Christian Stückl. They have obviously had the issue of anti-Semitism much in mind and tried to correct it. One can see this in various ways. One of the most obvious, and most pertinent, is by stressing the Jewishness of Jesus himself. Right at the beginning the stage fills with people - Jewish people - with their animals and a great host of small children, most of whom suddenly start to run, for no particular reason other than being children. A homely touch, strangely moving. Then Jesus appears on his donkey. Of course he was Jewish to his finger-tips. Remember his contemptuous comment to the Canaanite woman who begged a healing for her daughter (Matthew 15. 6): 'It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs'. The dogs? A remark like that today would land one in front of a race relations tribunal. Jesus came to reform and to fulfil Jewish law and civil society, both of which he dearly loved. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not'. (Matthew 23. 37 and Luke 13. 34; verbatim).

*To be continued in April*  
Hugh Beach

### **Parish Choir Additional Members Needed**

The Parish Choir generally performs a simple anthem during the Parish Eucharist on the last Sunday of each month (and/or at other times by arrangement). Rehearsals are held in the church on the Friday evening prior to a performance from 7.30 – 8.45 pm and at 9.50 am on the Sunday. We are currently looking for additional singers for the choir. If you:

- have a good voice
- are able to read music
- are keen to be part of a small, friendly choir.

Please speak to: The Director of Music,  
Graham Caldbeck, after a service; Tel: 020 8670 0100  
or email: [graham@gcaldbeck.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:graham@gcaldbeck.freeserve.co.uk)

### **Lent Course 2005 'Neighbours Who Serve Us'**

This year's Lent Course will be held in church on Wednesdays at 7.45pm following the said Eucharist at 7.00pm. All are welcome. Please do come and learn

about 'Our Neighbours who Serve Us'. The speakers in March will be:

- 2 March Diane von Kesmark, Headteacher  
SS Cuthbert & Matthias School  
**6.45pm There will be No Eucharist this week**
- 9 March Councillor Frances Taylor, RBKC
- 16 March Chief Inspector Paul Wilson  
Kensington Police

### The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting and AGM Tuesday 26 April is fast approaching. It is at this time we update our parish electoral roll. If you are not on the parish electoral roll and would like to be able to vote on issues concerning St Mary's and the work of this parish at future open meetings please take a form from the back of the church and send it to the Parish Office marked '*Electoral Roll Officer*'. If you are unsure as to whether you are living in or outside of the parish boundaries please contact the office. The parish electoral roll is nothing to do with government electoral rolls.

### Holy Week & Easter Services 2005

#### Palm Sunday 20 March

8.00am Said Eucharist  
**10.30am Sung Parish Eucharist  
with Procession of Palms**  
4.30pm Said Evening Prayer

#### Monday 21 March

8.30am Morning Prayer  
**Noon Said Eucharist**  
6.00pm Evening Prayer

#### Tuesday 22 March

8.30am Morning Prayer  
**7.00pm Said Eucharist**  
6.00pm Evening Prayer

#### Wednesday 23 March

8.30am Morning Prayer  
**10.00am Said Eucharist**  
6.00pm Evening Prayer  
**7.00pm Stations of the Cross**

#### Maundy Thursday 24 March

8.30am Morning Prayer  
**10.30am Chrism Mass at St. Paul's Cathedral**  
6.00pm Evening Prayer  
**7.30pm Sung Eucharist of the Last Supper  
Vigil until Midnight**

#### Good Friday 25 March

*No Morning Prayer*  
**10.30am Informal Service  
for Children and Adults**  
**Noon - 3.00pm Three Hours at the Cross**  
**'The Passion according to Matthew'**  
*No Evening Prayer*

#### Easter Eve 26 March

8.30am Morning Prayer  
*No Evening Prayer*  
**7.30pm Easter Vigil and**

### Lighting of the Paschal Candle

#### Easter Day Sunday 27 March

8.00am Said Eucharist  
**10.30am Sung Parish Eucharist**  
4.30pm Said Evening Prayer

### Caravaggio, 'The Final Years'

We have 20 tickets (£6.50) booked for Thursday 5 May at 1.00pm. Please sign the list at the back of the church if you would like to go.

Items for the April edition of *The Clarion* to be sent to the Parish Office by 20 April please.

#### Hugh Beach part two (April)

A second emphasis in the revised play is on the way in which some prominent Jews at least, tried to support and protect Jesus, arguing at the various trials for an acquittal. We hear Gamaliel, in front of Caiaphas, arguing that the court is unconstitutional, that the witnesses against Jesus are unreliable, that none of the crimes of which Jesus is indicted carries the death penalty and finally that Jesus is a true and faithful servant of God, the Law and the Prophets. Much later on, before Pilate, Nicodemus also defends Jesus because, he says, God is with him.

A third, very telling line concerns the crowds. Pilate, determined to acquit Jesus, throws open the gates to admit the people. His idea is to make use of the tradition under which the Governor releases one prisoner at the Passover by popular request. Remembering Jesus' popularity with the crowds, only a few days earlier, Pilate no doubt calculated that they would choose Jesus for release. But then we hear Caiaphas telling his cronies to go out into the city, rustle up their own supporters and intimidate any followers of 'the Galilean'. So when Pilate confronts the crowd only a small number speak out for Jesus and the great majority, being Caiaphas' rent-a-mob, howl for his blood. The point is that Barabbas is no more the unforced choice of the people of Jerusalem as a whole than 'Mad Dog' Johnny Adair was favoured by most Protestants in Belfast. The whole thing was rigged to force Pilate's hand. And because Pilate was in a weak position *vis-à-vis* the emperor Tiberius, against his better judgement he gave in.

This is all shrewdly done. But to me the strongest message is a more subtle one. It hinges on what Jesus himself intended when he came up to Jerusalem for the Passover that spring. Did he make his own execution inevitable? It seems to me quite clear that he did. To begin with he predicted it all. Speaking to his disciples *en route* he says: "Behold we are going up to Jerusalem; and

the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will rise on the third day" (Matthew 20.17-19). Making allowance for the fact that this was written several decades after the event there must have been a strong tradition that he had foretold what was to happen. Later Matthew makes him even more specific: "You know that after two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified". (Matthew 26.2)

His actions tell the same story. During his entry into the city and again in the Temple he allowed the crowd to hail him as the "Son of David ... he who comes in the name of the Lord". This was highly provocative as was pointed out to him at the time (Matthew 21. 9; 14. 16). He forecast the destruction of the Temple. (Matthew 24. 2). He publicly assailed the Pharisees as hypocrites and declaimed a long series of 'woes' against them, saying that the people should recognise only one master, the Christ (Matthew 23). All four Gospels record that he staged a spectacular demonstration in the Temple. "He began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the Temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; (at Oberammergau a great flock of white doves took to the air) and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the Temple." (Mark 11. 15-17.) But the folk in question were going about their lawful occasions, though no doubt profiting handsomely. Jesus actions were not only illegal but (at least symbolically) violent. St John's Gospel has him armed with a whip of cords - plainly meant to intimidate. The chief priests, who were in fact the civil authority, "heard it and sought a way to destroy him". (Mark 11. 18). This was therefore the crucial event leading to his arrest, trial and execution.

Anyone reading the account of what followed must be struck by the way that Jesus, after the last supper, made no attempt to hide from the authorities and encouraged Judas to get on with his part in the business. At the arrest events took an ugly turn because Jesus had advised his friends to bring along a couple of swords - doubtless for their own protection - and one of them tried to kill a servant of the High Priest with a blow to the head. Luckily it glanced off, only amputating the ear. (Luke 22. 36-38, 50). Up to this point the authorities seem to have had the law on their side.

The ensuing kangaroo trials in front of Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate were, of course, totally irregular and Jesus would have been fully justified if he had simply declined to recognise them. Some questions he did choose to answer but not in any way conducive to acquittal. Before the High Priest, in response to the question "are you the Christ, the son of God?" he replied "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man, seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven". (Matthew 26. 63-64) Given that Jesus seems often to have described himself, elliptically, as the "Son of man" the Chief Priest was not far out in regarding this as calculated blasphemy. Before Pilate, according to the synoptists, he turned aside the crucial question regarding kingship in the same way "You have said so" (Matthew 23. 3). John adds that Jesus told Pilate his kingdom was otherworldly - a point that clearly Pilate took, but weakly agreed to a death sentence for reasons we have just discussed (John 18. 36; 19. 14-16). One can

only conclude that Jesus took actions that made his martyrdom inevitable.

He had a strong messianic sense but had seen his preaching missions fail to produce the results expected. He acted with unbending integrity in the face of widespread apathy and corruption. He was responding to a dark conviction - derived perhaps at least in part from the "suffering servant" imagery of Isaiah (52.13 - 53.12). - that a scapegoat was needed to atone for Israel's sins. He formed the compelling belief that this was his vocation and destiny, and acted out this insight to its grisly end. For me the most poignant moment at Oberammergau is when Jesus' mother, at the foot of the cross, cries out to him in agony:

"Was soll ich reden? Und was dir sagen,  
da du es selbst getan hast? Herr, mein Gott!".  
(Dear Lord, what can I say since you  
have done this to yourself).

Of course it would be absurd to argue that the Jews, in the person of their officially appointed political leadership, bore no blame for Jesus' death. Obviously they did. But we are thinking now about collective guilt transmitted down a hundred generations. That makes no sense at all. It is fatally easy, as I know from myself, to slip into anti-Jewish ways of thinking; to see them as stereotypes; to resent the absurdly pretentious clothes some of them wear; their insufferable air of having it all right whereas the rest of us have got it all wrong; their magic touch in accumulating money; their arrogance towards underdogs, whether as employers or as rulers; their quite unreasonable influence on American policy towards the Palestinians; their unfair share of talent as musicians, scientists, writers, politicians or whatever. It is easy to resent these things but also very silly and, if carried too far, deeply harmful. Oberammergau is right to recognise the dangers and to attempt corrective action. We must do the same!

Hugh Beach