

# VENERABILE VIEW

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## It's Been a Great Jubilee Year

This year has been a really great Jubilee year for me despite my previous reservations. When the idea of a Friends Pilgrimage to Rome in 2000 was first raised, my response was very half-hearted. However we had an excellent response, a full quota on the pilgrimage and a waiting list, which shows how wrong I had been. I was able to join it for a few days and it really was a great experience. Our getting together in College with the Roman Association for Mass and a wonderful dinner was a memorable occasion. The memory only clouded later by the death of the two priests.

Our Annual Meeting in Liverpool in October gave members from that part of the country a chance to meet up. Our next Annual Meeting will be in London on the 3rd Saturday in September, the 15th, 2001.

You will see from the report on the Annual Meeting 2000 that you have the same Committee but since the meeting we have persuaded Yvonne Veale to join the Committee, she is most welcome. We hope that by our next committee meeting in February the weather and travel will have improved as problems hit both our meeting and the Palazzola Holidays Meeting.

### Winter 2000

I make no apology for mentioning to you yet again the 2 forms which I trust you filled in and returned to the Secretary. Our funds at present are at a low ebb but we hope that, with all the forms in, our Bank balance will look a little healthier. We had hoped in this Jubilee Year to recruit more members from visitors to the College but as it has had to be closed for a third of the year this will not have helped us. Our sympathy and prayers go out to all in Rome spread out as they are among all the other Colleges.

You may remember that we are having that excellent artist Michael Noakes paint the portrait of Mgr Toffolo, which he began after the book he was working on about the daily life of the Queen. The book is now out and I have treated myself to a copy as a Christmas present. It is excellent and I can't wait to see the past Rector's portrait. We are hoping to organise a gathering for members one week-end in March 2001 in the South West. I am working on finding a venue. If you are interested in being on the mailing list for this do let me know. Also if you would like a regional gathering in your area, let me know where; I promise

you won't have to do all the arranging.

We have now sold all our stock of Christmas cards. Would you wish us to find another subject and get more cards for next year or do you already have too many charities to help in this way?

### Jo Barnacle

## Tyburn

*Some 20 Old Romans concelebrated Mass at Tyburn on December 1. The chief celebrant, Mgr Canon John Hine, in his homily emphasised that fidelity, for which the Martyrs were noted, was as essential today. Joe Silver, who had taken care of the Venerabile pilgrims in Rome, served as deacon; Friends Stephen Usherwood and Mark Woods read from Hebrews, and led the bidding prayers; and the Tyburn Community sang at the Offertory.*

*Elizabeth Usherwood*

# A Liverpool Echo

by Jeremy Hudson

The Millennium Reunion and Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Venerabile took place on Saturday 14th October at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, Liverpool. About 50 members attended and enjoyed a most informative and convivial gathering.

Our day started with a short talk about the history of the Cathedral followed by a tour of Frederick Gibberd's splendid building. We were very fortunate to have as our guides its Administrator Mgr Peter Cookson, an Old Roman, and Colonel Graeme Bryson a member of the Friends whose association with the Cathedral has lasted nearly 80 years! In spite of the drizzle outside, the interior was bathed in beautiful light from John Piper's stained glass windows. After our tour we returned to the massive Lutyens Crypt, which was our base for the meeting.

We were delighted to welcome to his first Friends' AGM Mgr Pat Kilgariff, the new Rector of the English College. In his report on the College he shared with us his concern over student numbers; only one new seminarian had joined the College this academic year and several departures over the past year meant that there were only 36 students training there currently. This state of affairs reflected the lack of new vocations nationally as well as the fact that not all those offering themselves for the priesthood would be suited to training in Rome. He stressed

that the Venerabile had experienced a similar dip in numbers at regular intervals over the past century and he had no doubt that, with the help of our prayers, the College would soon be full once more. As regards staffing, Fr Nicholas Hudson had succeeded Fr John Marsland as Vice-Rector, and soon it would also be necessary to find successors for Fr John Rafferty as Spiritual Director and Fr Martin Stempczyk as Theology Tutor, when their respective terms of office end next summer. There was a tremendous spirit in the House.

In the past year much work had been carried out at the College. Thanks in part to help from the Friends a new Welcome area had been created adjacent to the main entrance, for the benefit of guests and visitors, with new waiting and reception facilities, including a disabled access toilet. In this foyer the College exhibits a permanent display, depicting the history of the Venerabile and its work today, with an explanation of the training every priest undergoes. With help from former students - Old Romans - the area known as 'The Queen Mary', a wasteland of redundant showers and toilets (which had been extremely elegant in the 1920's but which had been in disuse for 25 years) had been transformed into a seminar/teaching room, now re-named the 'Gradwell Room'. The libraries had been re-wired, redecorated, and re-lit, and a new sprinkler system had been installed. Following on from this work the College was

employing a Benedictine Sister part-time to reorganise the libraries' contents.

The Rector also had some very sad news to impart to the meeting. In the preceding week two Old Romans, Fr Anthony Foulkes and Canon Harry Parker, had died of Legionnaires' disease contracted during their pilgrimage to Rome in September, which was a great tragedy for all concerned [soon after the meeting the source of the disease was traced to the College, causing its immediate closure]. All were asked to pray for the deceased priests, their families, and for the College community at this difficult time.

Mgr Kilgariff ended his report by recounting the marvellous Millennium celebrations which Rome had so far experienced, with special events for priests, women, bishops, prisoners, the homeless, sportspeople, etc. etc. These had attracted little coverage in the media, but had helped to make this a brilliant Jubilee Year.

We then broke for an excellent lunch, in another part of the Crypt, an opportunity for members to meet, to look at our photographs of projects sponsored by the Friends over the past 15 years, and to buy our popular merchandise. After this our meeting continued with a talk intriguingly entitled *Auxiliary Associations in the Life of a Seminarian and Priest*, given by Fr David Potter, former student and now assistant to Mgr Jack Kennedy in Southport. (continued on next page)

He spoke movingly of his discovery of the importance to all priests of the prayers offered for them by the faithful. Until the end of his first year in Rome he envisaged priests as solitary figures, shouldering the Church's burden through life following the example of the Pope, the light of whose study would shine out from a darkened Vatican. It was then, at the Gregorian University, he met a young nun, an Oblate Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose charism is to pray for the sanctification of seminarians and priests. The existence of such an Order, dedicated to supporting students like him in preparing for priesthood made a lasting impression on him, and helped him to a better understanding of his own ministry. Fr David commended the Friends' aim of supporting the staff and students at the English College with 'prayers and encouragement'. With many calling for changes in the seminary system, it was not an easy time to be a student. He had certainly felt sustained by the prayers of the Friends, the Oblates, and many others.

Our third speaker was our long-serving Chairman, Jo Barnacle. Highlight of the past year had been the Friends' pilgrimage to Rome in September, which had been fully booked, and which had been a great success. A very memorable evening had been spent at the College with the Old Romans, starting with Mass followed by a reception in the garden and a formal dinner. She expressed the Friends' gratitude to the Rector and all those students who had looked after them during their visit. The other main event had been the Friends' visit to Harvington Hall in February, a special day which included a talk given by Eliza-

beth and Stephen Usherwood about the support given to priests in hiding, and Mass in the Georgian Chapel.

A financial report was given by our equally long-serving Treasurer, Hamish Keith. His accounts showed a significant drop in our income, £8,254 for the year to 31st August compared with £12,760 in the preceding year. The change of bank account, following the Friends' registration as a separate charity, was partly to blame and a major effort was already being made to send reminders to members about unpaid subscriptions, bankers orders, etc. Expenses totalled £5,675 (£7,212 in 1999) and £7,350 had been donated to the College, leaving a reserve of £5,500.

Despite an appeal for new Committee members no nominations were received. It was fortunate then that all the existing members were willing to continue, and were duly re-elected.

The Committee comprises:

Chairman	Jo Barnacle
Secretary	John Broun
Treasurer	Hamish Keith
Members	Nicky Dillon Jeremy Hudson Ivan Kightley Elizabeth Usherwood Mark Woods

Our meeting was followed by Mass in the Crypt Chapel. Fr David Potter preached and concelebrated with the Rector and with Canon John Short. Our reunion ended with a cup of tea, before members dispersed - some returning to the Cathedral, others journeying on down Hope Street to visit the splendid Anglican Cathedral, before leaving Liverpool as dusk fell.

**Jeremy Hudson**

## Martyrs' Day 2000

### **The Midlands**

The Mass in the Midlands in honour of the English College Martyrs was held on November 29th at the Oratory in Birmingham. Mass was celebrated in St Philip Neri's Chapel. The Chief Celebrant was Fr Paul Chevasse and about 18 Old Romans concelebrated. In his homily Fr Guy Nicholls reminded us how apt it was for us to remember the Martyrs in a chapel dedicated to St Philip, for it was he who in Rome used to greet all the College students with the words '*Salvete flores martyrurum*'. The new priests would go to him just before leaving for the English Mission, for his blessing, many of them becoming the Martyrs we are honouring today. It is said that one student declined to go to the old man for his blessing and on returning to England apostasized.

It is still the tradition for students today to seek St Philip's blessing by going to pray at his tomb just before leaving Rome.

**Jo Barnacle**

# The Friends' Pilgrimage to Rome and Palazzola

18 - 29 September 2000 by John Oyler

For those of us who were fortunate enough to be able to take part in the Friends' pilgrimage, it was a wonderful opportunity to be at the heart of Christendom during the most significant of years.

The party was large, over 50, and it was remarkable how it managed to move through the crowds of Rome without mishap. We were each provided with a week's season ticket for the new Jubilee buses which have been introduced to cope with the influx of visitors in Jubilee year. Amazingly in view of the number of pilgrim groups, we all managed to get on the same bus. We stayed at the Hotel Lancelot, a few hundred yards from the Colosseum on Via Capo d'Africa, which, by Roman standards, is a quiet side street in the parish of San Clemente. Our daily programme involved morning and afternoon excursions, Mass celebrated by Fr Thomas Wood in different churches and time for relaxation in between and in the evenings when not being escorted to places of interest such as the Trevi fountain. We were very fortunate to have the company of Anthony Coles, our travel organiser, and Dominic Howarth, Joe Silver and Gerard Skinner from the College, each of whom in his distinctive way added much to our visit.

Highlights of our visit to Rome included an excellently informative tour of St Peter's by Fr Thomas, our general audience, and our visit to the College. There we were welcomed by the new Rector, Mgr Pat Kilgariff, the Vice Rector, Fr Nicholas Hudson (brother of Venerable Friend Jeremy Hudson) and the Pastoral Director, Sr Amadeus Bulger. Our tour of the College to see all the new work carried out was followed by Mass and a magnificent reception and dinner with members of the Old Roman Association. We were left

with a very clear impression of the vitality of the College and of their appreciation of our contribution to its well-being.

Although we did not complete the classic tour of the seven churches in one day, we made our pilgrimage to five in the course of our visit: St Peter, St Mary Major, St John Lateran, St Paul without the Walls and Holy Cross in Jerusalem. We only missed St Lawrence and St Sebastian. As well as seeing the numerous relics at Holy Cross we were given a private view of the relic of St Thomas Beckett at St Mary Major. Our visit to St Gregory the Great gave us another link with England as it was from here that St Augustine was sent to us in 597. We also visited the ancient churches of San Clemente and Santa Praxedes. In common with St Mary Major, Santa Praxedes has mosaics of the first millennium. The brilliant colours of these pictures of anything up to fifteen hundred years old are amazing. San Clemente has the unique distinction of surviving at three levels: from the existing church of the twelfth century we descended to the palace Christian church of the fourth century and below that to the Roman buildings of the first and second centuries which served a number of purposes including the worship of Mithras. Our last excursion ended with the singing of Vespers by the Augustinian nuns of Santi Quattro Coronati, almost next door to the hotel. On our way to Palazzola we visited the Catacombe of St Callixtus on the Via Appia Antica, a hallowed shrine of early Christian martyrdom. An alternative visit for those who did not welcome the descent to the second level of the catacombs was to the Fosse Ardeatins, a more recent instance of man's inhumanity to man.

Our first day at Palazzola was left

free to us to unwind and ended with a welcome talk and slide-show on its history by Mgr Tony Philpot. Following a grant from the Italian State, the gardens have been relaid in formal Italian style. Cooler and fresher than in Rome, the sun nevertheless blazed down on us all day and we soon relaxed into the timeless serenity of the convent. More active pursuits involved the excellent swimming pool and visits by coach to various places of interest. We went to the Commonwealth War Cemeteries at Anzio and the shrine of Our Lady of Ipswich and of St Maria Goretti at Nettinno, where those who wished could sample the Mediterranean. We also went to the ancient port of Rome at Ostia Antica with its wonderful array of buildings. As well as the formality of public places, there are the remains of private enjoyments; the bar with its marble counters and shelves and pictures on the walls. We had a whole-day outing to the Benedictine Monastery of Sacro Speco at Subiaco and to the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. Sacro Speco is of particular significance as the site of St Benedict's pre-monastic life as a hermit. Other excursions were to the local towns of Frascati, Albano and Castel Gandolfo. Our only mishap occurred when the coach broke down on the way back from Tivoli and had to be encouraged to complete the journey by the mechanical efforts of the driver and the supplicatory efforts of the passengers. The end of the pilgrimage came only too quickly. We had had a wonderful opportunity to visit the shrines, make new friends and enjoy the late summer sun. Our thanks are due to the Committee and to Nicky Dillon for organising the pilgrimage in the first place, Jo Barnacle who came to support us in Rome and all the others who contributed to such a successful outcome.