

Seasons of Faith led by Fr. John Daley

A sunny September morning and we were gathered to hear Fr. John Daley speak. The title “Seasons of Faith” did not give us an inkling of what was to come!

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace welcomed us with tea and biscuits and the conversation flowed as people arrived.

Fr. John began with a prayer and then asked us to **imagine** his distributing Rosary beads, blessed by the Pope, to everyone in the room. Then, at the end of the day concluding with Mass and Holy Communion again given to everyone present. How many of our Christian friends of other denomination would comfortably be able to take that back to their own communities? Even now - 50 years after Vatican II - it wouldn't be an option. But we don't need a separate group (the Ecumenicals!) we need to work together as followers of Christ.

Vatican II brought together the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church from all over the world; it opened up the Ecumenical debate. One of the most influential voices at the Council was that of Courtney Murray, an American Catholic who was used to the freedom to follow his faith to build churches and schools to educate his children in that faith without fear of discrimination and this, despite Roman Catholicism being a minority faith in the U.S. Courtney Murray wanted all Christians throughout the world to enjoy this freedom and to be accepted and respected for their differences as well as their similarities. The leaders of the European Catholic churches were not easily convinced, being of the opinion that people not within the Catholic tradition needed to “be shown the error of their ways and brought to Catholicism” – ecumenism of return. There was a great deal of debate before consensus was reached!

Another great supporter of Ecumenism, Karl Rahner, opened up the thinking that “the Word of Christ is the centre of our faith” (In the beginning was the Word.....) and with this as our by-line all Christian traditions belong “together in Christ” and love and respect should be a given amongst us all.

We were a mixed group of Christians there to enjoy the day but was that all there was to it? Fr. John asked us to consider three questions during our break -

Why am I here?

Why don't people want to come to these sorts of events?

Why don't I always want to go?

I for one am still contemplating these - perhaps a subject for a future gathering??

Following lunch, (prepared and served by the sisters) Fr. John intrigued us with a view of the Gospel according to St. John. In particular the Marriage Feast of Cana.

Was this a miracle or a sign? There is no record of a town called Cana, there is no bride mentioned in the story, the stone jars filled with water were not holding drinking water but

that used for washing. So, are we being told a story about the washing away of our sins? The opening line is “on the third day” - is this a reference to the day of the Resurrection?

Mary approached Jesus with trepidation when she discovered that the wine had run out. Jesus no longer lived with His mother and so the relationship was not as intimate as it once was - or at least was that what Mary felt? Jesus, on the other hand, turned, addressed her as “woman” the translation being “Chosen by God”. He asked her why she approached Him in this manner because while he was on earth she would always be His mother - “His time had not yet come” is this a reference to His death and resurrection?

Is this why, despite the words in the Bible sounding very negative, Mary did not see this as a rebuff but rather turned to the servants and gave them instructions to ‘do all that He says’?

Again we were left with a lot to mull over, not least the fact that the reference to “the third day” is one which occurs over and over again throughout the Bible; all we need to do now is find them!

Our afternoon concluded with a Holy Hour Meditation, with words and music from Watermead Music, written by Fr. John and Alison Kennedy. A beautiful and thoughtful series of stories and reminiscences from Fr. John each one followed by a hymn which fitted like a glove!

With tea and cake to fortify us for the journey home we dispersed after an enjoyable, interesting and thought provoking day.

Sandra Endsor

Nottingham Diocesan Ecumenical Commission

An Anglican’s appreciation of the Ecumenical Day of Reflection

The sun shone on the convent lighting up the beautiful grounds and I think that Fr John shed light in some dark places at the same time. He teased us a little, he taught us, showing formidable theological knowledge, he explored some of the unhappy history of relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations and also dispelled some beliefs which have tormented Catholics over the years. To Protestants some of the latter sound very strange but Fr. John dealt with these issues very clearly by using examples from his family home and later Priesthood. Our last hour of music and reflection was very moving and again we heard the stories behind the music and songs which I think were composed by a lady who was also present. As ever we had a wonderful welcome from the Sisters of St. Joseph and I think that we all felt we would be happy to return very soon and would welcome the chance to hear Fr. John again. There is still much to think about in what we heard today.