

December 2006

Year 3

Christmas Greetings

*Community of Our Lady
of Walsingham*

**"The Father spoke
one Word, which
was his Son, and
his Word he keeps
always in eternal
silence and in
silence must it be
heard by the soul"**

St John of the Cross

A Christmas Prayer

**God of love,
In the coming of your
Son at Christmas
a great light shone
upon the world.
May his light fill our
hearts and our homes,
Bring peace
and goodwill
among nations,
and lead us to worship
at his manger-throne;
Through Jesus Christ
Our Lord.
Amen**

Dear Friends,

We hope that this year's Christmas newsletter finds you well and enjoying the Advent Season in anticipation of Jesus' birth. The House of Prayer as usual looks forward to providing you with space for peace and reflection in this otherwise busy season or sometime in the coming year.



We had hoped to write to you all before the summer holidays but this was not possible for a variety of reasons. As many of you know this year has been one of extreme highs and lows for us as a community.

On the 29th January Gabi's mother was killed in a tragic incident whilst travelling back to Poland from Holland. Camilla returned immediately from a formation course in Scotland so that she could go home. Fr John Armitage then flew to Poland with her so that they could both be with Gabi, her father and brother at the funeral. It was a time of deep shock and pain for us all, happening as it did just eight weeks before our first profession and in such circumstances. Johanna was amazing as she looked after the House of Prayer during our absence. Gabi will be going home for 10 days in the New year so as to be with her family again on the first anniversary of her mother's death. Please keep them all especially in your prayers at this time.

First Profession of Vows...

Thanks to the help of so many of you we made it through those painful first months of the year and arrived at this marvellous day. Surrounded by family and friends Gabi and Camilla took their vows in the presence of Bishop John Arnold in the crypt of Westminster Cathedral. It couldn't have been a better day with the sun shining down for most of it. As the convoy of minibus and three cars, laden with people and home-made cooking made it's way from Abbotswick into London we couldn't help but join in Mary's hymn of praise for all the wonders God is doing.

The sense of joy and communion was palpable as so many helped put the finishing touches to everything; from the flowers in the crypt, to music practice, to preparing the reception etc etc. As mentioned at the time, our 'yes' was possible and remains so only because of the 'yes' and love of so many friends like yourselves. Hopefully, we will continue to sustain each other in mutual fidelity to our different vocational calls.

Summer Months

Terry, our aspirant, joined us for a summer holiday, experiencing Polish hospitality again and visiting a priest friend in Nitra, Slovakia.

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Camilla also went for a fruitful two week's Vocation and Formation Providers Course in Colorado Springs. There she had the chance to do a morning's whitewater rafting during a weekend off studies.....

As usual we went to Walsingham for the Feast of Our Lady on the 24th September. Every time we go there we receive some gift or other. This year the shrine offered us one of its main statues of Our Lady of Walsingham. They were looking for a good home for it and thought we'd like it. Well, that's an understatement! We treasure it and when you next visit you'll find her gracing the niche just outside the chapel. She cannot be missed!

Other news...

Gabi has started a two year MA in Spirituality at Heythrop College in London. She is finding it challenging and stimulating in more ways than one. Jo is starting a pastoral placement at the Marillac nursing home in the new year and Karen will be joining the community on the 2nd January and we are looking forward to improving our liturgy as she is musically talented. Terry had six months of aspirancy with us and has just left to make a decision away from the community. The distance is necessary for all our candidates so as that they can come to as free a choice as possible.

We will be organising a series of retreats for diocesan clergy, for religious and days on parenting skills next October. This is part of our broader mission to help people in all walks of life live fully their own call to holiness. More details will be available on the website that is being designed for us as we speak. A friend very kindly offered his IT man to do this work for us. It was one of the many items on our 'wish list' and he has generously seen to that. So please do look out for it. We hope to launch it around the middle of January at the latest and it will be called www.walsinghamcommunity.org. Booking forms for the above retreats etc will be available on line. We are considering sending out future newsletters by electronic email. For those without email, we shall continue to use the postal system. PLEASE advise us of your email address by contacting us through the site once it is up and running.

And finally...

With this invitation we remind ourselves that the joy of Christ's birth is destined for every human heart! As Pope John Paul said 'it is the joy of the whole human race, a superhuman joy! Could there be any greater joy than this, any greater Good News than this; every person has been accepted by God so as to become his child in this Son of God who has become man!'

*We wish you all the best for a
Holy and Blessed Christmas
and a Happy New Year
Sr Camilla, Sr Gabriela,
and Johanna*