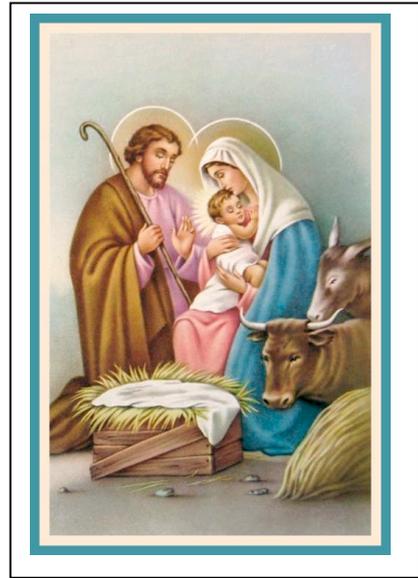


"At the dawn of salvation it is the birth of a child which is proclaimed as joyful news; the source of this great joy is the birth of the Saviour, but Christmas also reveals the full meaning of every human birth and the joy which accompanies the birth of the Messiah is thus seen to be the foundation and fulfillment of joy at every child born into the world."

John Paul II , *Evangelium Vitae*



## CHRISTMAS 2010 GREETINGS

*Dear Friends,*

*It has not been too long since our last letter at the beginning of October and God-willing we will be able to keep you more regularly informed of developments in the community over the coming year.*

*On the 4th October, we welcomed Jim over from Chicago to spend several weeks living alongside the community as he discerned his vocation. Unfortunately, his arrival coincided with the tube strikes, which meant Sr Camilla having to get up at 6am and spend 3 hours getting to Paddington Station in West London. That is as far as Jim managed to get from Heathrow having wanted to travel to Abbotswick using London transport. Little did we know, until the midnight before his arrival, that the tube strike was even on that day. It taught us the need to check daily news items more often! However, he seemed unphased by the experience and actually settled in very well with us. He certainly earned his keep doing a beautiful job in re-painting the coach house. We enjoyed telling Jim about the television show 'Jim'll Fix It' which many of you will remember from the 80s and 90s. We adopted its theme tune for Jim: Every request for doing 'odd jobs' in the house was met with a chorus of 'Jim'll fix it!'*

*As our charism is about helping to promote a culture of vocation in the church, whenever possible we take opportunities to visit schools and help young people to become aware of the beautiful life choices that are possible for them, especially those they might not have considered before, such as religious life. So in October Sr Camilla and Theresa, accompanied by Jim, made their way up to Norwich for a few days where they gave a set workshops to year 9 students (thirteen and fourteen year olds) about the vocation of a religious sister (there were also other speakers invited who spoke about priesthood). There were a range of responses to our input from genuine interest, simple curiosity and plain bemusement that anyone could wish to chose such a life-style. Theresa shared with them her vocational story with the use of a well-thought-out power point presentation while Sr Camilla provided some theory, adding snippets of her own story and answering some of the more challenging questions. Hopefully we have 'sown a seed' and we pray that God will open their hearts to hear His call, whatever it may be.*

*Whilst in Norfolk, we took the opportunity to visit our spiritual home, Walsingham. Recalling Mary's joy at the Annunciation as she embraced her own vocation to be the Mother of God, there was a sense of pilgrimage for Jim as he prayed for guidance in discerning his own vocation. We were interested to hear from Jim that there is a parish of Our Lady of Walsingham*

*all the way over in Houston, Texas. Now that he is back home in America, Jim is kindly putting us in touch with them and we look forward to making some links with them in the future.*

*You will be glad to know that we have at last been able to find a more suitable material that we will be testing out in the coming months. It is a slightly lighter blue in colour but as it seems more durable, easier to wash and iron we knew we had to give it a go. Sr Gabi found it by chance when she popped into a shop in Katowice whilst awaiting a flight back home after one of the formation weeks there. This was after all the hunting that friends in Poland and friends from Kerala had been doing in their respective countries on our behalf. It just shows that if you try hard enough things fall into place eventually.*

*Hopefully we will be able to say the same for our first house in Walsingham. We have started the fund raising – please do not forget that you and your friends can also donate online. It has been a slow start but we know that God will provide for us when the time is right. Speaking of which Lizzie, a member of the founding group who many of you will remember, married Brian on the 20<sup>th</sup> November. We had the great joy of being able to share their joy on that day and we wish them every happiness in the coming years.*

*As a contemplative community, it is particularly important for our 'formees' to develop a deep prayer life. Therefore, Theresa went to St Anselm's Institute in Margate for a week-long course on prayer and relationships. Through the talks, discussion time and guided meditations, she was able to explore the paths of love in relationship with God and with people. She was interested to learn that development in these relationships often go hand in hand. It is something that reinforced what we learn already in community. Sr Camilla is always reminding us that intimacy with God runs parallel to intimacy with ourselves and intimacy with friends.*

*That is why friendship in and outside of community is so important to us and why Annette went to spend a week with her best friend Sacha and her family instead of attending the course this time round. As well as reflecting on spiritual matters, Theresa also took the time to socialise with the other participants, enjoying many rounds of pool during the evening recreation. Now if only we had a pool table at Abbotswick...! Not forgetting of course that Sr Camilla's mother bought us a table tennis table last spring and this proves an excellent way to let off steam at the end of a hard day's work. We ask your prayers for the repose of Magdalena Oberding's soul as she died in her sleep on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. She was immensely generous to the community, especially when we first started out, and she always made sure we had enough money not just for the necessities but also for occasional treats like the table tennis table.*

*Please keep Theresa also in prayer as she prepares to enter the novitiate on the 6th January and Sr Gabi as she prepares for her final vows, hopefully near or on the 24<sup>th</sup> September. We will confirm the date as soon as we can. Mothers can never be replaced and we thank God for the gift of all mothers, especially those awaiting children at this special time of the year. Together with Mary, our heavenly mother, we pray for all nascent human life and we approach Christmas with a heart open to receive all the gifts the Christchild wishes to bring us. Bringing to mind the prayer of Erasmus to Our Lady of Walsingham: "May thy Son grant us, that following thy holy manners, we also may deserve to conceive the Lord Jesus in our inmost soul and, once conceived, nevermore to lose him".*

*Sending you all much love and many prayers from a snowed in community,  
We enclose a hug for each one of you from  
Sister Camilla, Sr Gabi, Annette, Theresa,*

**Abbotswick House of Prayer**  
**Navestock Side, Brentwood, Essex CM14 5SH**  
**Tel: 01277 373848    Email: [info@walsinghamcommunity.org](mailto:info@walsinghamcommunity.org)**  
**Website: [www.walsinghamcommunity.org](http://www.walsinghamcommunity.org)**