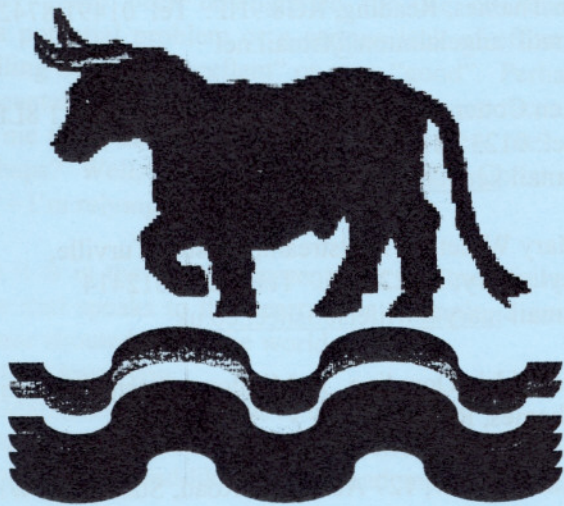


# Oxon Fourth



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Thanks to Anthony Lucy for sharing his

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Oxford 6



## The Lay Director writes ...

We live in a world of superlatives where footballers give 110% to become “over the moon” – and now the latest candidates to be Sir Alan Sugar’s apprentice have had to increase this to 150% for them to prove their commitment. On the other hand, positive words such as “acceptable” or “satisfactory” have been downgraded for use on school reports or to highlight a potential problem or a serious lack of effort, such as that the pupil is falling short of “excellent” or even “good”. Perhaps this is why the phrase “acceptable in God’s sight” leapt out at me recently from the bible and made me think about it. How does God view me? Do I need to try harder perhaps? Well, of course not, because it is Christ who has made me acceptable – I’m relying on Him!

Sometimes it is in the understatement that the truth is revealed – the still small voice that speaks to the heart. For example, a couple of things we regularly hear shouted out in the world:

- 1) God loves you
- 2) Marmite - you either love or hate it.

In this context, the intellectual truth of the first has not moved me. However, try saying “God likes me” instead and the impact can be amazing.\*

Similarly, knowing that we’re “acceptable in God’s sight” is a truly powerful realisation: that whenever we request an audience, it is granted and we are ushered into the courts of the King. He doesn’t mind looking at us and doesn’t turn us away. Indeed, He’s ready to rush out and meet us and welcomes us with open arms as for the prodigal son. He is happy with the 100% of ourselves that we have to offer Him – he wants nothing more and nothing less. (You may like to join me in a chorus of ‘Just as I am at this point!’)

A Cursillo Weekend is a place for the still small voice may be heard, a space where the facts in our heads about God’s love become the knowledge in our hearts. Let’s make sure that others have this opportunity too and that we make good use of all guest places on Oxford 6.

ULTREYA!

\* Thanks to Anthony Lury for sharing this.

# PAPILLON?

Isn't it strange how, quite out of the blue, memories come flooding back into your mind seemingly for no apparent reason and often totally unconnected with each other. Recently for me this has meant two oddly conflicting memories.

The first was "Do not forget from whence you came", which was the title of the sermon given at the Eucharist of the Ministerial Selection Conference I attended eleven years ago. This recollection was both heart wrenching and stomach churning but those wise words came back just at the right time (as if there could be any doubt about that!)

The second brought a wide smile to my face as I donned a purple stole. Fairly newly ordained I was allocated the Family Service in one of the Team Ministry Churches during Lent and decided to focus on the letter P and how words beginning with that letter helped us to understand the season and God. I duly turned up and began my 'address' armed with a long sheet of paper and 20 words prepared and printed out on card ready for people to guess and come out to stick on to the paper. All went well to begin with

– Passion; Preparation; Prayer; Purple; Penitence; but then came more and more words which were not on the cards!! We resorted to writing them up instead and ended up with sixty two words altogether in a very short space of time.

I learned some very valuable lessons that day as you can imagine, not only that there are an amazing amount of words in the English language beginning with a P that point to, profess and proclaim (sorry!) God, but also that I needed more personal planning, preparation and to provide an alternative way of presentation (oh dear!) Most of all though there was the realisation that as I attempted to proclaim the Gospel it was already being proclaimed to me and that the people present were living a very Christ-like life in their understanding, their willingness to participate, their generosity and gentleness, and the wonderful pouring out of their love upon me, which they still continue to do. We had a great deal of fun that day too.

This week I have been reading the Team evaluation sheets from Oxford's weekend #5 (and what a wonderful and very blessed time it was) with the reflection of these occasions in my mind and see just how much they illustrate Cursillo. Perhaps especially in that however much hard work, planning, preparation and prayer goes into each weekend and however exhausted the Team members are at the end, they all, without



exception, comment on how much they have received through the giving of themselves and what a privilege it is to serve. It is often at this time that they also have a chance to reflect on, and learn more, about their own Cursillo weekend experience.

However, not all of us are able, for various reasons to be a part of a Cursillo staff team but this doesn't prevent us from serving in other and very important ways.

Firstly, we need to remember our own weekend and which parts of it made the greatest impact upon us; then we can ask ourselves what we can do to play our part in enabling the Holy Spirit to work through us in the sharing of God's love with everyone.

Maybe we can use some P words here as well....

**PALANCA** – do you recall? The individual affirmation of prayer both personal and profound. Why not start on some today – it begins long before the weekend and even before the guests are known to us. Good fun as well.

**PUDDING** – yes, I know, but it's something close to my heart, is a form of Palanca and very necessary so if you're feeling creative make a note for the next time.

**PRESENCE** – Physical presence is just as important as spiritual presence – is there someone you could invite to a reunion meeting or Ultreya, or maybe sponsor in the future?

**PROMISE & PRESENCE** – Do you remember the surprise and the love? Put the next weekend in the diary and make a commitment to attend *both* the services on the Sunday. Being there is a very **PRECIOUS** gift.

In St. Paul's words let us "therefore encourage one another and build up each other." (I Thess. 5:11)

**ULTREYA!!**

*Angela Linton*  
*Spiritual Director*

*Coincidences happen when you pray!*

## **What did Cursillo Oxford 5 mean to me?**

By Christine Indge

It's difficult to put into words but it was a wonderful experience. I felt wrapped and immersed in the love of God all weekend! I learned a lot about God, myself and others, and enjoyed the teaching which was relevant and inspiring. I had moments of pure joy and moments of repentance and sorrow when I realised that I had been harbouring wrong attitudes. The only thing I wasn't keen on was having to get up and speak about Rollos. But it was such a pleasure being among brothers and sisters who wanted to know more of God and put Jesus first in their lives. I really enjoyed singing the grace before meals and appreciated the delightful surprises throughout the weekend. I enjoyed our Reunion at Swallowfield; it was great to see some of the Team and one fellow member again. Thank you all so much.

### **Out of the mouths of children!**

Some children were asked to read a passage from the bible and then to imagine that they were eye witnesses. They were then asked to write a postcard to tell someone about the experience. Here is one example from a 10 year old:

Dear Mary,  
Today your son, Jesus gave a speech,  
and he was a guest in Zacchaesus'  
house. I'm afraid your son mixes with  
the wrong people.

From Mrs Partridge

## **Witness talk by Anne Ishikawa at the AGM on 10 November 2007**

I was brought up as a cradle Catholic, went to college and became Ecumenical in my faith. I have attended both an Anglican and a Catholic school but now I feel it is important to return to my Catholic roots a bit more whilst still embracing my ecumenical stance. One of my friends, Gill Lusby Taylor, introduced me to Cursillo via the rector of the church. My first thought was 'why did he give my number to a (then) stranger?' but now I realise it was the start of a Pentecostal experience. The biggest challenge to my faith has been the loss of my aunt to cancer in March 2005. It spiralled me into a spiritual depression which almost left me with no faith.

My spirituality is enhanced by my Benedictine links with three monasteries, one of them being Worth Abbey, where my weekend took place as I could not fit into a weekend with the Oxford group. It turned out to be a blessing all along!

My first visit to Worth Abbey was the August before to attend a meeting to see if I would be suitable to join a vocations fellowship.

I was late, exhausted and every motorway to the Abbey was a nightmare and then I was told that I couldn't join the group! I had what I call my Job and Jonah moment all at once. I felt swallowed up and fed up with no where to go and felt greatly let down by my faith!

My friends had been praying about it and getting positive vibes. I sat in the chapel and sobbed and shouted at God and for a few hours I lost my faith in God. Until my friend asked me a question 'When you get angry do you get cross at those you do not care about?'

I answered 'No, of course not! It is only those you care about highly that irritate you occasionally.' This conversation changed my view for ever and it was also the turning point from my spiritual depression. I gained an insight that negative reactions can result in positive reactions. For me it has been a real gift which has enabled me to deepen my faith.



I work in two primary schools; one is Church of England and the other is secular. This gives me a great source of interaction with my teaching colleagues, parents and children. We live in a society that does everything to discourage human kindness but I believe God has given me a gift of affirming and reassuring others in time of need

I was able to help my friend J after she was heavily involved in the Ufton Nervet train crash and was quite traumatised. I became someone she could open up to because I lost two friends in the same accident.

A second example was when two of my friends marriages broke up. When Si and Caz got together I baby sat their children and we were able to chat. I think that they liked that fact that I was unbiased and single.

In both these cases my friends got very emotional and my normal reaction would have been to back away but God said 'No. I want you to support them.' He gave me all I needed to listen and not judge them. He gave me the words to say back and took my nerves away (I'm a very nervous person). In both situations my friends were not Christians and knowing that I was a Christian they were taken aback that I was not judging them – just listening and being honest with them.

The God given opportunity to affirm these people is a vital ministry for me. We all need the ministry of encouragement because we all need to feel accepted.

Who knows where it will lead? But God will always give me so much more confidence to use those opportunities to reach out to others. All I've got to do is to be brave enough to take it.

So to end with a poem that really sums up God's prompting of me.



## And God Said

I asked God to take away my pain.  
God said 'No. It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up.

I asked God to grant me patience.  
God Said 'No. Patience is a by-product of tribulations;  
it isn't granted, it is earned.

I asked God to give me happiness.  
God said 'No. I give you blessings. Happiness is up to you.'

I asked God to spare me pain.  
God said, 'No. Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares  
and brings you closer to me.'

I asked God to make my spirit grow.  
God said 'No. You must grow on your own,  
But I will make you fruitful'.

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.  
God said 'No. I will give you life so that you may enjoy all  
things'.

I asked God to help me LOVE others, as much as he loves me.  
God said 'Ahhhh. Finally you have the idea'.

Source unknown

## Reflections

by Mary Willets

My time as Secretary of Oxford Cursillo is rapidly coming to an end. It is time to reflect on what has happened. Like most people I had no idea what I was letting myself in for when I went on my weekend (London 8 in October 2003) or where I would go afterwards. All I knew was that God had called me to start a new journey.

The first thing was major surgery so that for some months all I could do was to take a back seat. Then I went to 'Time for a Pause' when there was a need for people with the skills necessary to deal with the Charity application and writing of the Constitution. Years before I had sworn that I would never do this sort of work again but God had other ideas. So I not only became Secretary but also did the work to get the Registered Charity Status. I have watched Oxford Cursillo grow out of all recognition, with the presence of God so apparent in all that we do.

Cursillo in Oxford Diocese, group reunions and nationally has given me so much in return. I believe that the ideal of Christianity is un-conditional love in action; something which is rarely encountered and not often found in our churches. Although we sometimes disagree and patience can become strained through tiredness when staffing on a weekend, I have found that we can still meet with an unconditional love that I have encountered nowhere else.

Jesus came to set us free but being human we create boundaries. My experience of Cursillo is that we accept one another as fellow Christians on a journey. The boundaries of parish, deanery, archdeaconry, diocese and most important of all churchmanship do not exist!

Long may it continue.

ULTREYA!!



## Where Next?

Cursillo is marching forward! It's time for change. At the AGM in November we are looking for people to replace Angela Linton as Spiritual Director, Liz Dowding as BACC representative and Mary Willets as Secretary, as they will all have served their three years on the Secretariat. Kevin Beer will have served two of his three years and it is time to begin to pray out his replacement.

We ask you all to pray that the right people will be found so that the work can continue.

## On being a BACC representative

Have I really been the BACC rep. for nearly three years? Time seems to have flown by and shortly I must (according to the rules) hand over to someone else. Time only flies when you are having fun!

I stepped into the position when someone else was unable to attend a BACC meeting and unexpectedly found myself elected to the national body as representative for Cursillo Oxford! It was a bit of a surprise, but a huge privilege. You are one of the first to know what is going on nationally, a point of contact for passing on information from BACC meetings to Cursillo Oxford and vice versa and there is the opportunity to attend the national BACC meetings, (if for any reason you are unable to attend then someone else is usually happy to step into your shoes). You will also be asked to order resources from central office which can be done online. There are also the BACCpages to distribute twice a year.

The BACC representative is a member of the Secretariat of Cursillo Oxford which meets at four times a year. I have really enjoyed being part of this group as we have planned, shaped and seen Cursillo grow in the Oxford Diocese.

If you feel you are being called to take up this post you will become the link between the national and local Cursillo and be part of the team who over the next three years will continue to see Oxford Cursillo grow and prosper.

Ultreya!

Liz Dowding

## Please pray for

Hilary Derbyshire as she prepares for Oxford 6; for the team and the guests

The Secretariat; that the right people come forward to fill the vacancies in November

The Lambeth conference

## Diary Dates

6 September 2008	National Ultreya at Carlisle
9 September 2008	Midlands Ultreya at Coventry Cathedral (evening)
16-19 October 2008	Oxford 6
8 November 2008	Diocesan Ultreya and AGM at Sonning Common
23-26 April 2009	Oxford 7
12-15 November 2009	Oxford 8

***Cursillo is a movement of the Church providing a method by which Christians are empowered to grow through prayer, study and action, and enabled to share God's love with everyone.***

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