THE SAINT JOHN OF GOD STORY - PART 6 CONTINUED

men and women who give bad example and are trouble makers, and who give you much work because of their ill-breeding. So, send them away and clear the hospital of such persons so that the poor who want to live in peace and quietness are not afflicted and maltreated by them.”

John of God listened carefully until the Archbishop had finished and then he replied: “My Father and good Prelate, it is I alone who am wicked, incorrigible, useless, and deserve to be thrown out of the house of God; and all the poor people who are in the hospital are good and I do not know anything bad about a single one of them. God suffers the bad and the good every day. He lets his sun shine on all. There is really no reason to throw the abandoned and the afflicted out of their own house.”

John of God’s response, full of sympathy for ‘his’ poor and assuming any blame that had to be assigned, moved the Archbishop deeply. He told John: “Blessed of God, Brother John, go in peace. I give you permission to do in the hospital as you would in your own home.” John of God went back to his hospital, and his poor, healed in spirit if not in body.

A LAST DUTY

In February 1550, feeling that his life took courage. “There is no God who knows the number of lives to the intrinsic every human life, but it faithfulness. We have, on the other hand, witnessed God, who is love, call us to love our neighbour and live in peace.

Each one of us is called to respond to the Gospel of life, “fed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe those in need, visit the sick and go to see the prisoner.” (Matthew 25:31-46). To do this in a practical way is, as Pope John Paul II reminds us, “to preach and teach the Gospel which dispels the darkness and illuminates the way of life.” (Address to the Bishops of England and Wales – 23 October 2003).

Each one of us can bear witness in our daily lives to the intrinsic dignity and value of every human life, but it takes courage.

At Christmas we celebrated the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. The whole event spoke to us about the love of God for all peoples and throughout all ages. God’s love for each one of us. A God who enters into our human condition in order to redeem it; who comes among us, “so that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10).

For many people, there is still the tradition of looking back and reflecting on the events of the past year and looking ahead to a New Year and making ‘New Year’ resolutions.

If we think for a moment about the world in which we live, we see that during the past twelve months there has been an escalation in violence, terrorism and crimes against humanity. We are more conscious of the plight and impact of refugees, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. We have been made aware of the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic; a growth in drug and alcohol dependency, an increase in associated crimes, family breakdown, homelessness and the human misery that is ever present when the value and dignity of the person is undermined.

We have, on the other hand, witnessed the courage, dedication and commitment of a great number of people who simply reach out to others in times of need. There has, as always, been a generous response to national and international need when lives have been threatened. The values expressed by compassion, hospitality, justice, respect and trust have been demonstrated in so many ways by those who care for others. I believe these realities express the tension within each one of us for good or for evil; for generosity or selfishness.

Each one of us can bear witness in our lives to the intrinsic dignity and value of every human life, but it takes courage.

Perhaps, as we begin this New Year of 2004, we could simply resolve, as far as we are able, not to turn away from the needs of our neighbour, knowing that together we can make a difference to world in which we live.

I wish you all a very Happy, Blessed and Peaceful New Year.

Can You Contribute?

We hope that you enjoy this issue of the Hospitaller. As an interactive publication, we welcome any comments or suggestions regarding the newsletter, and would be delighted to include it in the Hospitaller mailing list. For additional names and addresses of friends, family or colleagues, if at any time your details change or you wish to have your name removed from the Hospitaller mailing list, please do let us know.

We acknowledge sincere appreciation to all those who continue to support our work. We will always be grateful for financial support and voluntary help, which ensures the continuation and extension of the Hospitaller mission.

Registered Charity No. 232539
A New Name...

The Trustees have felt for some time that the name of the Charity, “The Trust Property Administered in Connection With The Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God” is rather cumbersome. Accordingly, at the Trustees meeting on 1 October 2003, a resolution was passed changing the name of the Charity to “Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God Charitable Trust”. As well as being less cumbersome, the new name more accurately describes what we are - a charity which advances the Mission of Hospitality of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God.

...And A New Location

The Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God Charitable Trust has moved its headquarters to the centre of Darlington. After over 120 years in the village of Scorrier in North Yorkshire, the Order and the Charitable Trust has moved in order to take advantage of a central location from where to serve its 40 projects throughout Great Britain. The address details are on the right.

NEWS FROM THE SERVICES

The North East

Dalby View

1 & 2 Dalby View in Coulby Newham, near Middlesbrough were purpose-built in 1993 as high specification bungalows each offering accommodation and 24-hour care and support for four young adults. Until very recently all of the people for whom Dalby View became their home had physical disabilities. However in response to a pressing need in the area, the home is now registered to receive young people with learning disabilities. Staff and residents have worked hard to have this new registration accepted and were pleased to welcome a young man with learning disabilities to their home.

Sandown Road

22 Sandown Road was opened as a service in 1995 and is an eight-bedroomed bungalow offering 24-hour care and support to adults with profound learning and physical disabilities, and complex needs. Such is the extent of the challenging needs of some residents, many care providers are unable to offer them homes. Hence Sandown Road is a particularly valuable service in the area. In recent weeks, for the first time in any of its services, the Order has managed to negotiate a 2:1 staff ratio for one resident who has particularly challenging and self-injurious behaviour. Two staff members are required to care and support this person with very special needs.

Working in partnership with Social Services and Health Trusts is vitally important when ensuring the needs of the people we care for are met.

DON’T FORGET!

You can get all the information on our services by visiting our website at www.hospitaller.co.uk
NORTH YORKSHIRE
Saint John of God Hospital Services, Scorton, North Yorkshire

The Order has worked tirelessly in pursuit of a number of options for the services at Scorton. These have included particularly our work in partnership with Broadacres Housing Association, which produced a potential development of new services. This option would have been the Order’s preferred choice, as we would have continued to provide the services. Sadly this was not feasible, as the funding was not available. The other options we have pursued have been to find a purchaser for the site as a going concern.

The Order has now received an expression of interest, subject to planning consent, which is being actively pursued. This would be a positive solution, which will mean that services will be continued on the site, with further development of the site included in the proposal.

If this positive solution proceeds, it will mean that the residents’ homes will be secured and that the majority of staff would transfer under TUPE to the new provider. Some areas, including the ancillary services and LEOs, are potentially still at risk and we will be exploring the options for these services and staff with the potential purchaser over the next few weeks.

Further meetings with Social Services and the PCT have been established to further the transition to the new provider. The intention being that there would be an appropriate handover period to ensure that the quality of services is sustained throughout.

We believe that this will provide continuity for the people who use the services and staff, reduce disruption to everyone and improve the facilities on site.

We would like to thank everyone for their patience and support.

WEST YORKSHIRE

NEW NURSING HOMES IN BRADFORD
The Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God Charitable Trust, in partnership with Bradford District Care Trust, is developing two new nursing homes, both of which are on sites adjacent to existing nursing homes run by the Charity. The first of these developments is in Thornton where a purpose built nursing home will provide a home to twelve people with learning and physical disabilities. Building work on the bungalows is well under way and due for completion in September 2004.

The second development, in Queensbury, is an eight-bedded nursing home for people with learning disabilities, who also have challenging behaviour. Work is due to commence in January 2004 for completion later in the year.

The development of the Charity’s services in West Yorkshire over the last ten years has been extensive. When the two new nursing homes open, the Charity will have a total of nine nursing homes, two supported living services and a respite care service. This rapid development has been made possible by the Charity’s effective working in partnership with Bradford District Care Trust and Calderdale Social Services.

WEST YORKSHIRE

EXCELLENCE AWARDED

Making a Difference to People with Learning Disabilities crowned with a national award winner is the Trust.

In partnership with The Hospitaller Order of St John of God, a number of LEAD (leading education and development) staff from the Trust have been invited to attend the national awards ceremony in London.

Awards are being made to people and organisations which have made an outstanding contribution to the development and delivery of quality learning disability services. The Trust has been shortlisted for two awards.

The first is in the category of innovation, excellence in education and training. The Trust has been nominated for its innovative approach to teaching and learning for people with learning disabilities. The Trust has developed a range of innovative teaching methods to enhance learning and development, including the use of role play, simulation and group work.

The second award is in the category of outstanding leadership and management. The Trust has been nominated for its commitment to providing the highest standards of care and support for people with learning disabilities. The Trust has a strong culture of excellence and continuous improvement, with a focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for all its residents.

The Trust is recognized for its commitment to excellence and innovation, and its success in providing high-quality services to people with learning disabilities. The Trust is proud to be shortlisted for these awards, and is committed to continuing to strive for excellence in all its work.

The Trust’s success in these awards is testament to the hard work and dedication of its staff, and to the commitment of the Trust to providing the highest standards of care and support for people with learning disabilities.
The conference celebrated the efforts of followers of St John of God to support and advance the evangelization of peoples by bringing John-of-God hospitality into the life and cultures of many peoples. The Prior General paid a tribute of admiration to the missionary Brothers who ‘went out to the peoples’ in almost every generation for their generosity, sacrifices and good example in living the true John of God style of life and serving others in their most urgent needs. Similarly, he paid warm tribute to the first indigenous Brothers and the Co-workers who joined the missionary Brothers. Hospitality, it seems, blends easily into so many cultures.

The main speaker was Fr Donal Dorr, a member of the St Patrick’s Mission Society. During the meeting he gave a number of inspiring talks on missionary activity as part of the mission of the Spirit and the Word in Salvation History. Brother Brian O’Donnell, from the Australian Province of the Order, gave a powerful and clear presentation on the Order’s missionary activity. He traced its missionary attitude to John of God himself who, in the words of the late Brother Gabriele Russotto, was not a missionary in the commonly accepted sense of the word, but he had a missionary spirit in his fruitful apostolate in the streets of Granada. This missionary spirit of our Founder was passed on to his first disciples and to all the Hospitaller Order, growing from his bountiful seed to spread rapidly to mission lands. Brother Brian also said “the Order’s tradition of inculturation is the reason that it lives on today in many lands, more than four centuries after its foundation”.

Each Mission region gave a history of its foundation and an up to date view of its present Hospitaller services. One can only be impressed and inspired by these Hospitaller services - with the Brothers and Co-workers working side by side, just like our Founder did in Granada in the 16th Century.

Our African Brothers were terrific hosts and the conference was marked by lots of deep sharing, laughter and real interest in each other’s Hospitaller activities.

Brother Michael Newman, OH

**In the Next Issue:**

Brother Ignatius Halloran, OH celebrated his Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession on 13 December 2003. In the next issue of Hospitaller, we will look at his life in the Order.

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**Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God General Conference 2003, Tagayt, Philippines**

The coming together of this group allowed for the opportunity to experience collegiality to draw on the opinions and experiences of other Provinces, help understand the meaning of appropriate globalisation, and above all, allow a more adequate understanding of the Brothers’ fraternity based on respect for the diversity of others and the capacity for communion. The conference, which lasted six days, had delegates starting as early as 7.45 am, such was the intensity of the schedule - it was no holiday for the participants although extremely rewarding!

The title of the conference was “Charismatic Management”. Charismatic management is a style of management and leadership, which gives life and keeps the flame of hospitality alive. The General Government decided on this title because it saw the need to promote charismatic management in its centres for the performance of its mission while being at the same time both witnesses of Jesus Christ and of St John of God. The aim of the conference was also to analyse the strategies that are implemented in order to steer the Order’s future with an adequate mission in the Order, with the Brothers and the Co-workers united, sharing responsibilities and defining their roles.

What St John of God put forward as his starting point when he gave substance to his concerns — “May our Lord Jesus Christ grant me the grace to have a hospital were I can treat the poor sick, and the mentally ill as I wish” was a theme to drive on the Brothers and Co-workers to ensure that the management performed in the Order’s facilities today are defined by the charism and imbued with the charism.

Another element of the conference, which goes hand-in-hand with charismatic management, is the state of vocations, the way the Brothers are in the Church, the sense of religious life today and how they are viewed by the Church and by society. Delegates looked at the rate at which the Order is attracting new members, what this means for the life of the Provinces and what decisions we are being asked to take in order to direct the Order’s future.

The last issue was a global analysis of how the Provinces implemented the conclusion of the General Chapter that took place in 2000.

In summing up the week in the Philippines, Brother John Martin, OH, Provincial of the Province of the Venerable Bede in Great Britain, said, “It was an extremely exciting conference in the sense that we are constantly evaluating our Mission of Hospitality. Our new document on spirituality – ‘The path of Hospitality in the manner of Saint John of God’ will encourage us to re-energise ourselves in the ongoing Mission of Hospitality”.

**Mission Conference in Ghana**

I was thrilled and privileged to be asked to attend the Order’s first Mission Conference in May this year which took place in Accra, Ghana. I looked forward to returning to Ghana after a gap of nearly 30 years.

Brother John O’Neill was there to meet me at the airport and took me back to the Brother’s Mission Hospital, St. Joseph’s and Community in Korforidua. I settled into Community life quickly and visited the Hospital, then joined John in his important tasks in and around the Hospital.

There are two important aspects to every conference. First is the actual conference content and second, there is the valuable contact with other conference delegates. This conference was special in that both aspects were first class! Eighty-five Brothers, Sisters, and Co-workers, including the Prior General and most of his Council, took part in this significant Hospitaller Conference.

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Brother Michael Newman, OH
THE PATH OF HOSPITALITY IN THE MANNER OF SAINT JOHN OF GOD

SPirtuality Document Presented

At the general conference in the Philippines December 2004, the Prior General made the long awaited presentation of the new document on the Spirituality of St. John of God and the Order. This is now being printed in Rome in seven language versions and should be ready sometime in March 2004. This article is an attempt on my part to give a short synopsis of its contents.

Introduction

What St. John of God began around 1538 is still moving forward after 465 years. This is the result of the power of the charism of St. John of God to transform the men and women who look to him as a spiritual Father. Today we are living in a rapidly changing world and the legacy that we have received, that has been handed down to us deserves to be transformed, so that it is relevant to our time in history. It needs to live and be expressed in new ways, come alive in new cultural forms, with a fresh fervour. We cannot sit back and just accept the Charism as a static legacy that has been bequeathed to us, it must be roused again and again, given a new face, and expressed in new ways relevant to our time. We have many co-workers endowed with the spirit of the charism, so we are sharing a spirituality with them. The purpose of this document is to place the Orders spirituality within this new historical context.

It is divided into three parts

1 Memory (The Charismatic Origins)
2 The Gospel Keys (Mercy and Hospitality)
3 The Spiritual Path (Hospitaler Spirituality for our Age)

1 Memory

John of God was a man on the move; he reached his own life’s peaks by recognising the depths of human misery. This is described in the following way: EMPtINESS MAKING ROOM FOR GRACE. The failures of his early life, his abdication as a child, his near death experiences as a soldier, the death of his parents. Are all events that led him not to place trust in self, but to place God before and above all the things of this world.

Call: The Final Act of Service to the Lord

He was seeking without success, in Seville, in Granada, in all the time praying, “bring peace and calm my soul.” While selling books in Granada he went to the hermitage of the martyrs to hear John of Avila preach. There God was waiting for him.

Change: Transformed by the Word of God

John found the answer to his yearning to serve the Lord in the tabernacle, converts our communities into genuine schools of hospitality. It also speaks of the sacraments of reconciliation, anointing the sick, and the liturgy of the hours.

The importance of daily mass, the real presence of Jesus in the tabernacle, converts our communities into genuine schools of hospitality. It also speaks of the sacraments of reconciliation, anointing the sick, and the liturgy of the hours.

3 The Spiritual Path: The Stages Through Which St. John of God Went Point Us to Our Own Spiritual Path, Experiences of Emptiness (Being uprooted in order to be born again) We recognise the traditions of the world, our response to our vocation in this can be seen as a first step towards a change of life. It invites us to go further and give rise to a yearning for something different.

The Call and Calling Throughout Life: “Listen My Son”

When people give up living for themselves they discover a mysterious design and plan for their life. Great effort is needed to readjust our lives to what God is offering us. Forgive one another, Not our own calling and give it solidarity. We must be ready to receive and change and consecration.

Those who know that they are called by God to live in the manner of St. John of God, and respond to that call, must strive for a gradual interior transformation, a sense of being changed and consecrated.

The Mystical Identification with the Father, Marginalised and Suffering Jesus

In the present life, the path of the spirit never ends. The spirit acts through us to keep the merciful Christ of the gospels presence alive through time.

Participants Along the Path of the People of God

The importance of daily mass, the real presence of Jesus in the tabernacle, converts our communities into genuine schools of hospitality. It also speaks of the sacraments of reconciliation, anointing the sick, and the liturgy of the hours.

Participants in the Path of Spirituality of the Order and It Communities

Charismatic Transmission

Our spirituality takes place through transmission (communion) the community, the Order the past and the present are important as a school of spirituality in hospitality.

Brotherly Love

Our sign to society lies above all in the Brothers to create communion in fraternal love.

Sharing the Experience of God and Carrying Out Community God’s Will

We are called to make our communities places in which the environment and spirituality give rise to spiritual discernment.

The Community and the Mission of Hospitality

We do not act in an individual capacity, the community sends us, we are not individuals but Brothers.

A Community with a Sense of Church

We belong to the great community of the church. The Ordar’s apostolic centres are called to be places in which Christian love is publicly confessed, proclaimed and practised.

Our Personal Path of Spirituality

We are called to be men of the Spirit. We will not be able to share this spirit if we do not seek to possess it.

Personal Prayer as a Path of Spirituality

When daily concerns and daily work prevent our prayer life from flourishing, our path of spirituality stall, we can even backslide.

A Personal Spiritual Project

The personal life project becomes a manifestation of our continuing vocational response. The spirituality of self-giving, or permanent service, of unserved outreach and welcome.

Contemplatives on the Mission

We are called to live with a contemplative attitude. With our co-workers, we are called to cultivate the values of the human person, and a deepening of the culture of hospitality.

Vigilance and Outreach to the Spirit

The spirit calls us to be messengers and witnesses of justice, committed to peace.

Formation as a Path of Spirituality

This is present in three stages. The first stage or initial formation is covered under the heading “Charismatic Initiation”. It is seen as the age of ideals. The second stage is seen as the stage of operational responsibility. The third stage is presented as the stage of increasing limitation. Whatever the stage, there are always decisive moments in our lives. Trials are a providential instrument of the spirit for our growth and identification with Jesus.

Conclusion

Allowing the yearning of spirituality which dwells within us to flourish, will surprise us. Something new will grow within us. What seems impossible, will become possible. We shall be joyful and enthusiastic messengers of the good news of mercy and hospitality.

The people of God and the whole of humanity need our witness as prophets and mercy. Let us take up the invitation of John Paul II "Duc in Altum" may Christ our hope, strengthen and encourage our fidelity to our prophetic mission.
Speaking for the Province we ask to be forgiven for all this introspection but we are over 50 once. As this jubilee year comes to a close we look for a fitting symbol that can express all that we have been given, and all we have been able to achieve. Some one person who can both summanise the past and point the way ahead. Having earlier spoken of a journey of discovery of a maturing process, and of a growth more specifically at the one Brother who was here long before we became a Province and has been and still is an inspirational figure throughout.

IN OLD AGE

The Bernard who was always a good bluffer and given his educational background, an almost scandalous over-achiever, is now the Doyen of the Province, in his 93rd year, blind, ‘leader now no longer’ and away from his immediate environment; has to be led by the hand. How can a sighted person understand the deprivation which is blindness and yet he has quietly accepted to be seen as unimportant, has never become sour, grumpy, resentful, is never known to complain. He still wants the Mass passionately and seems to spend most of the day in prayer. He seems to be immersed in Christ as the drop of water in the wine of the chalice. For the Christian God is always there, deep within us, intent on bringing us to that union with himself. That transforming union, for which were made. It follows that far from pining Bernard in his weakened physical state I see in him the full flowering of the Christian life; for this he was made.

I see a life that echoes the prayer in Ephesians “Glory to him whose power working within us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine” (Eph 3:20).

FULL ACCEPTANCE

The truth is that God’s love for me, for all of us, is unconditional. It can be difficult to fully accept this. My tendency is to think of a slow progression up the ladder of virtue which fashion me and makes me fit for God even though the reverse is true. I need to fully accept that God loves me – infinitely – now just as I am and does not saddle this love with conditions. Further, the teaching insists that full acceptance of this truth makes everything else possible. My whole being needs to grasp, “God loves me.”

AN ELABORATION

Some theologians today incline to the possibility that Jesus himself experienced a profound conversion at the time of his Baptism by John the Baptist. A conversion not from sin to virtue but in Christ as the Father of the English Province, His leadership and example has always pointed the way. I am not in the business of Canonisation Bernard, you were always the stubborn side but if I were an examiner I would put ticks against increasing selflessness and simplicity. A charity that knows no bounds, a man who for all his great achievements accepts to be seen as unimportant, and a man who now prays without ceasing.

DYING

In the Genesis myth the serpent’s classic line of seduction is “You will be like God.”

GOD LOVES ME

What is the point of all this? People “in love” are capable of tremendous self-sacrifice and self giving and they do not even think it’s costly. When I can fully grasp that God loves me so much and longs for my love in return. I am not simply tolerated, I am loved, deeply. As you might expect there is a caveat. A full acceptance of this love, which is God’s presence in me, can never be grasped by the intellect and can only be reached by prayer. Thus my transformation can only be gradual. God will bring it about through people and events and – my prayer. All of which, of course, Bernard knew long, long ago.

CONTEMPLATIVE

In the distant past one Brother Benignus, on a visit from Ireland, told us the more your life seethes with activity, the greater your need for prayer. Christ our Lord was contemplative. His prayer and action follow one another as constantly as the inhaling and exhaling of breathing. Bernard, I believe, was always contemplative in action. The terms are complementary. Thomas Merton used to speak of the spring and the stream.

I see Bernard as the Father of the English Province. His leadership and example has always pointed the way. I am not in the business of Canonisation Bernard, you were always the stubborn side but if I were an examiner I would put ticks against increasing selflessness and simplicity. A charity that knows no bounds, a man who for all his great achievements accepts to be seen as unimportant, and a man who now prays without ceasing.

So this is my tribute to Bernard, a rambling but sincere tribute for no one could ever accuse me of sticking to the point.

We still need his prayers.

Brother Joseph Carroll, OH
In 1948 this young beginner en route from Scorton’s pre-Beeching railway station and smoking his last cigarette, believed his was a divine call to follow Christ in this distinctive way and he expected solicitude. He would not be disappointed. That beautiful blue double-breasted pin-stripe suit which cost £13 of the demobilisation pitance, the wristwatch, the radio and the cigarettes, “forbidden”, no newspapers, no visits to the Zambians call “mas-pins-eN”, no days off and your next trip home will be in 3 years me lad. You used to sing “If I was single my pockets would jingle” but now no pocket money either. Allowed a bath once a week, one clean bed sheet a week, a very short haircut and a life governed by bells (and I don’t mean the whisky).

Ear shattering, at the crack of dawn, whisky). No newspapers, no what Verboten!. Later, as one of the Brothers “Ma-pint-ee”.

There was a voice within me m 26 years old, you must look I the floor and then make your request (I kid you not). I remember thinking this is just plain ludicrous. I tried to cover my embarrassment by saying the strongest will be needed at 130 patients. They were of all creeds and none and all were the victims of severe long-term illness or disability. There...
A DAY FOR REFLECTION AND FORWARD PLANNING

THE 18TH CHAPTER OF THE PROVINCE - ADAPTATION PLANNING AND FORWARD PLANNING

I was recently delighted to join the Brothers, Directors and Area Managers in reviewing the Hospitaller Mission over the last three years. We evaluated our experiences (both good and not so good) over the last three years and from there, looked to the future and where as an organisation we wanted to be.

Together and in groups we discussed and revealed our ideas and hopes for the future. To share this with you, we elected to recommend the following eight proposals for the 18th Chapter of the Province in March 2004.

1. Charismatic leadership management by:
   - Reaching our potential as leaders
   - Utilising our personal power to influence people
   - Implementing our personal vision in service to others

2. Building a hospital that truly empowers the poor
   - Using the hospital as a platform for change
   - Establishing partnerships and collaboration

3. Encouraging change and empowering the poor
   - Promoting positive change and values in society
   - Engaging in community development

4. A rural school development department (possibly especially for Africa)

5. A mission cooperative for West Africa as a valuable resource

6. Mission partnerships for the development of mission in the Province

7. A review of our priorities for fundraising

8. A mission development team which is a vital resource

We all felt the day was a huge success. As a group we had participated, communicated and agreed where the focus for us all should be. These all help to give the leadership and direction needed to continue the Order’s Mission in supporting and caring for the people who use our services so that Together We Make A Difference. We thank Ronnie Midwinter and Paul Cummings for their excellent facilitation of the day that was enjoyed by all.

Rachel Clark, Human Resources Manager

A CRACKED POT

THE FOLLOWING PARABLE WAS PRESENTED AT THE CONFERENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his shoulders. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house. Of course, the perfect pot was perfect for the task for which it was made, and proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. “I am ashamed of myself and I want to apologise to you. I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house. Because of my flaw, you have to do all this work and you don’t get full value from your efforts,” the pot said. “The bearer said to the pot, “Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path and every day while we walk back, you’ve watered them. For two years, I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without your being just the way you are, there would not be beauty to grace the house.”

Moral:
Each of us has our own unique flaws. We are all cracked pots, but it is the crack and flaws we each that make our lives together interesting and rewarding. You’ve got to take people for what they are and look for the good in them. Blessed are the flexible for they shall be bent out of shape. Remember to appreciate all the different people in your life.

FIRE AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL

Some three months after that wedding another festivity in Granada was to have a less happy result. At the Royal Hospital, on July 3, 1549, there was a banquet in honour of Dina Magdalena de Bobadilla. In the kitchens of the hospital a big fire was lit to roast an ox stuffed with small birds and various spices and seasonings. At 2.30 am, the fire got out of control and began to spread through the hospital.

When John of God heard of the fire he rushed to the scene. His intimate knowledge of the layout of the hospital enabled him to go immediately to the place where the psychiatric patients were housed. Ignoring personal danger he began to get them out of the building.

When he had rescued the patients John rushed back to where the fire was raging to help put it out. He began hurling beds and bedding from the windows. Suddenly a great sheet of flame engulfed him and billows of smoke poured out onto the people outside. Everyone concluded that the flames had consumed John of God. Then he emerged from the building without a mark on his except for singed eyebrows. Many people who saw all this considered that he had had a miraculous escape from the fire and death.

DROWNING

As his life ran out in his last year of God was not only tested by fire but also by water. Warn out by his labours and travels John of God had become quite ill. He was in no fit state to react as he did to the news that recent heavy rainshad put the bitterly cold Genil River in flood and that it was sweeping through the city carrying unusual quantities of logs and branches that could be sold, or used, as firewood.

Throughout John’s life the free firewood that he had gathered had come to seem like a manna that, gathered and sold, helped to sustain him and “his” poor. There was no question of allowing this firewood to be lost, even if that meant his having to ignore his illness to lead some of the stronger men and bigger boys to the river bank to reap this transitory harvest.

The river, fed by snow and sleet, was ice-cold. One of the youngsters with John of God fell into the river and was swept away. John plunged in to rescue him but was unable to do so and the boy drowned. This sad experience left John depressed and soaked to the skin. It aggravated his illness and, from that day, his health deteriorated rapidly.

John of God was forced to take to his bed, however he was still in immediate contact with his hospital. He continued to serve the poor and he was able to encourage and guide his companions and fellow workers. He continued to serve the poor but from a prone position.

SUMMONED

The Archbishop, recommended for his work by Father John de Avila and with a certain “watching brief” over John of God and his activities, took note of the complaints and, not knowing that John was ill in bed, sent for him. When John of God received his summons he immediately got out of bed and went to the Archbishop.

The Archbishop said to him: “Brother John of God, I have been led to understand that your hospital shelters there were some men who were quite capable of working and should not be allowed to stay there and that, similarly, there were some worthless women around the hospital who, forgetful of all the John had done for them, disregarded him whenever they did not get their way. These people told the Archbishop that he was the only one who could remedy the situation and that it was his responsibility to do so.

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