

THE YEAR 2009

2009 A year when many *musical anniversaries* occur and special events have been and are being held to celebrate these.

Numerous Composers and people from the musical world have been appropriately in the public eye in this their Anniversary year. Among them are **Henry Purcell; Felix Mendelssohn; Arwel Hughes; James McMillan; George Frederik Handel; Franz Joseph Haydn; Heitor Villa-Lobos; Haydon Wood;** to name just a few of them. Each has been given massive public exposure in concerts, talks, etc.

Another important anniversary for many of the Blaisdon Old Boys was the **150th anniversary of the founding of The Crusade of Rescue,** now known as **The Catholic Children's Society (Westminster).**

This anniversary has also been celebrated in a number of ways. Firstly there was an exhibition of its work over these 150 years in the Committee Room at the CCS(W) Headquarters in Ladbroke Grove, London. Here there were many photos and texts displayed on all the walls of the Committee Room. I had the chance to visit this exhibition, which was quite awe inspiring. This Exhibition was transferred to Westminster Cathedral for the Mass and displayed in St Joseph's Chapel in celebration of this important event.



The Mass marking the 150th anniversary of the Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) was celebrated at Westminster Cathedral by His Grace, The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, on Wednesday 10 June 2009.

Deacon Jim Richards, Chief Executive Officer of **The Catholic Children's Society (Westminster)** prepared and read an inspiring Homily at the Mass, so appropriate given the current difficulties to the organisation's work by recent legislation. Jim's Homily was roundly endorsed by **His Grace, Archbishop Vincent Nichols**, at the Celebratory Mass on Wednesday 10 June 2009.

Deacon Jim Richards' Homily is reproduced below:

Thanksgiving Anniversary Mass – 10th June 2009

It is a singular although somewhat daunting privilege to be asked by one's Archbishop to deliver a homily in his presence. But, I thank Your Grace for this opportunity and also for the support you have already so generously given to the work we do, on behalf of the diocese, for so many children and families in need.

It is right that at a Thanksgiving Mass of this nature we remember those who were significant influences in the creation and development of the Catholic Children's Society, the Crusade of Rescue. One thinks in particular, from those early days of three Cardinal Archbishops – Wiseman, Manning and Vaughan. All who, in their different ways saw the need to act and thereby do something to alleviate the crushing and debilitating poverty that was the lot of so many children at that time.

We also remember former executive heads, known then as Administrators. Fr. Banns, who was so influential in the first part of the last century and Fr. Harvey later to become Bishop Harvey and Chairman of the Society- much loved and remembered by so many of us here today. As Administrator he had the vision to realise that the large children's institutions, housing over 100 young people, had to be replaced by smaller family group homes. He is also rightly remembered for his work in adoption.

What is not so well known though, is the service he set up to make it possible for many young mothers to keep their babies. Inevitably in so many years of existence the Society has had to face controversy. On two occasions taking cases on behalf of children to the House of

These legal disputes were rooted in the deep concern we had for the need to preserve the faith of the children involved.

Over many recent months, we have used legal processes in mounting a challenge to changes in Adoption Law, which are contrary to our Faith. We have sadly not been successful and in worldly eyes this may be seen as weakness. It is, though, the opposite. It is precisely through the strength we derive from our faith that we are in the position we are, and it is that strength of faith that has and will guarantee our continuance.

This in part is what Paul was trying to explain to the Christians of Corinth. They were questioning his Apostolic legitimacy. Do not, he writes, be taken in by these other preachers who come with their “covenant of written letters”, letters that they may have even written themselves. Paul asks them instead to have faith in himself – one of the Administrators of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is not of written letters but is of the Spirit. This is where Paul’s authority comes from. Paul is a minister of The New Covenant. And just as he was transformed by his belief in the word of God, heard through the Risen Christ, so too have the people of Corinth been transformed, as they hear the Good News proclaimed by Paul.

The message is therefore received by them through the Grace of the Spirit. This is not something external to them but is something written in their hearts. This helps us to realise, that what might be described as the Community of Faith is a creation of Christ not of people. We are God’s Creation empowered by the Holy Spirit.

I referred earlier to the challenge we made over recent legislation effecting adoption and that the position we have taken springs from our faith and the teaching of the Church. Such a stance has been succinctly summarised by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor: - you cannot have the fruits without the roots. In other words the drive behind and the means by which Catholic agencies like ours will continue to thrive, comes from our faith and the key ingredient of that faith is love.

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The front section of the Cathedral was reserved for Past Pupils of the various Homes run by the Crusade of Rescue and for those currently involved in this vital work.

After the ceremony we past pupils were privileged to be invited back to Archbishop's House for a buffet reception in the Throne Room, where we had a chance to meet with the new Archbishop of Westminster. A number of Blaisdon Old Boys were in the gathering where they were able to share their delight at being invited to the 150th celebratory Mass and to the reception afterwards.



John Ward, Tony Wadsworth, Norman Taylor and Eric Nutcher from St Joseph's Home, Enfield



An interesting potted history by Tony Galcius, was sent to me by The Catholic Children's Society (Westminster), to which, with the author's permission, I provide access. I believe this will be of much interest to many Blaisdon Old Boys and maybe others. See Library section.