



Community of Brother Charles, Britain November 2010

Community Activities



Walsingham 8-10th October

Twenty-six of the community joined in the weekend. It is always a joy to be together in “England's Nazareth”, to visit the Little Sisters' home and chapel, walk the village and country lanes, spend time at the Shrine and to get to know each other better. Fr. Tony Philpot's reflections on Charles gave us new insights into Charles as a person and into his vocation.



Greenbelt Christian Festival – 27th-30th August

Persuaded by L'Sister Cathy who attended the festival last year, Pam & Keith Ware and Louise decided to camp with the thousands who, like us, enjoyed the variety of events at this annual gathering on Cheltenham Racecourse. The programme is packed with speakers, music, art, theatre, films, and worship. It was a unique experience and well worth attending. Space was given in the bookshop for some leaflets about the community, Br.Charles' life, spirituality, and his Prayer of Abandonment.



Charles' Birthday – September 15th at Minet Country Park

Eighteen of us gathered at this nature reserve in the London Borough of Hillingdon. The park was created by “A Rocha” which is part of a family of a Christian environmental projects in the UK. Minet Park was built on an abandoned wasteland and has been transformed into a place of natural beauty by the A Rocha community which provides environmental education and activities for the local community. Sarah Leedham, the park's Liasion Officer, gave us a history of the Park and other projects, then led a walk through the park. We visited, shared lunch, then ended with reflection and prayer.

Local Group Meeting



On the Feast of Ss Simon and Jude (Eph 2:22) “you are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit” nine from the London community visited Wren churches around St.Paul's Cathedral. We found places for quiet reflection and prayer in the heart of the city which prompted desires to return again soon.

GLIMPSE OF CHARLES DE FOUCAULD IN THE DESERT

Fr. Tony Philpot's sharing with the Community in Walsingham

So when his vocation became clear to him - to live the Gospel among the most abandoned peoples of the earth - it was naturally of North Africa that he thought. In order for any Frenchman to plant himself outside the big cities like Algiers, military approval was required. And because of his army contacts and reputation, Charles was perhaps the only Frenchman who could have done what he did. He was the only civilian who would not be viewed as an obstacle and a nuisance. As time passed, he became a much appreciated resource for the army. He became a sort of mascot for them, but not in the sense of an object of derision. Even the officers and men who did not share his religious belief respected his unselfishness and his devotion to duty. They saw him as "one of themselves". The Government in Paris was deeply anti-Catholic and anti-clerical. But thousands of kilometres from Paris, on the front line of the colonial wars, many of the troops appreciated deeply the presence of an unofficial chaplain, and particularly of a man at once as tough and as caring as Charles de Foucauld. So he spent quite a lot of time with both the officers and the enlisted men; there were times when he was at hand precisely when he was needed, to give the sacraments to soldiers dying in battle. And he was more of an expert in the ways of the desert and its inhabitants than any of the military. He was really unique, and this is why at every stage the army was there to help him.

Charles was plagued by an increasing conviction that he was needed elsewhere. Deep down in the south of Algeria, in an area called the Hoggar, there was a network of tribes called the Touareg. They had their own language. They were extremely violent and savage; they conducted lethal raids on each other's villages, and practised slavery. But they were not such entrenched Muslims as the Arabs at Beni Abbes. There was more hope, in Charles' eyes, of converting them. And they were certainly among the poorest and most abandoned of all God's children. Charles was egged on by an officer who was his personal friend, Colonel Laperrine. Years ago, they had been junior officers together. Laperrine was close by, so his advice was more cogent than anyone else's. Laperrine was always there at his elbow. Military convoys would be leaving for the south, he said, on 6 September and 15 October, and Charles could take his pick. In the event both convoys left without him, because the war blazed up close by, and Charles had to look after the wounded and bless the graves of the dead troops. But this was only a temporary delay. On 13 January 1904 with the blessing of the bishop, he set off on his first visit to the Touaregs.

A Captain in the Regiment stationed at Beni-Abbes sets the scene for us. "Fr. De Foucauld left on foot, driving in front of him a couple of donkeys which carried his modest baggage. (Laperrine was to say later "His packing is a miracle of neatness. He would make a sailor jealous.") I had him accompanied for 75 kilometres, as far as Guerzim. There he joined up with the military convoy which was heading south. I made sure that there would be a horse available, if he wanted to use it, but afterwards I discovered that he did not do so. From there on he travelled with a charming cavalry officer, in whose tent he said Mass each morning." Charles himself, in his diary, explains why he undertook the journey. "A convoy is leaving this morning for the Touareg region. I can join this convoy, and maybe no other priest will have the chance for a long time, for years perhaps, so I consider it my duty to go." What he tried to accomplish when he got there, he explained in a letter to a friend the following June: "To get into conversation, to distribute medicines and alms, to show hospitality, to insist that we are all brothers in God and that we hope one day to go to the same heaven, to pray for the Touaregs with all my heart. That's my life." Charles was a year away from his home at Beni Abbes. He returned in January 1905, but in May he was off again: the Touaregs had captured his heart. At the same time, he missed bitterly the silence and the regularity of the monastic life he had developed for himself. "My vocation is solitude, stability and silence." But there was a more insistent vocation, to carry the presence and the knowledge of Jesus to a people so far away from the Church and from European civilisation. "The main element of my vocation, and of the Little Brothers (he spoke of them as though they already existed) is to imitate Jesus in his life at Nazareth, on the way of the Cross, and in his death." Thus he established his priorities.

Captain Dinaux, who afterwards became a general, in article written later describes Charles on the journey. "He walked at a lively pace, bent forward, leading a camel by the reins, while his

catechumen, Paul, led the other. His face was emaciated. His beard was bushy, and he used to trim it himself, with great strokes of the scissors. His face was lit up by the deep expression in his eyes, which were ardent and penetrating, and the great toothless smile which betrayed at all times the affectionate sympathy and goodwill he had for everyone. Humility, gentleness, spirituality, all these were expressed in his nervous body, which was controlled by his will, and a desire for spirit to triumph over matter. You could not help loving and respecting him. He wore a white gandoura, with a leather belt round his waist, and a rosary with big black beads. On his breast he had sewn the red heart with the cross above it.... his bare feet were cracked, but he had stitched together some camel-skin shoes for himself, which he held on by a cord between the toes.”

What is remarkable is, of course, that while all the others in the convoy were on horseback or camel-back, Charles walked. Sometimes it was a stage of forty kilometres, dictated by the pace of the camels. Sometimes they did a forced march to cross a particular part of the desert, travelling by night as well as by day. From 5 a.m. the sun was incredibly hot, with a temperature in the shade between 40 and 50 degrees: each of them drank 8 or ten litres of water each day. He was unbelievably tough. When they reached the place where they were to camp, and the soldiers collapsed on to their sleeping bags, Charles went all round the camp making sure that the officers and men were all right, doling out medicines and little glasses of altar wine, and paying particular attention to the native soldiers. He would go back to his own tent then, and start his language studies, studies which he was to maintain until his death 11 years later. He was determined to be a brother to the Touareg, and how could you be a brother without being able to talk? And indeed Charles was notorious for striking up conversations with Africans of all descriptions, throughout this interminable journey, and however tired he was. Writing to his cousin, he talks about “breaking the ice”, and gaining people’s confidence and friendship. “With all my power,” he says in a letter to his spiritual director in Paris, “I try to show these poor lost brothers that our religion is all charity, all fraternity, and that its symbol is a heart.” But there was another motive for his studies, and that was to translate the four Gospels. Years before, during his four years in Nazareth, he had developed an incredible love for the Gospels. He wanted above all to share their secret with everyone he met. The project mushroomed even beyond this, and eventually Charles was to devote all his waking hours to composing a Touareg dictionary, a colossal undertaking. In his diary for July 1904 Charles describes how, during a prolonged halt in Touareg country, he built a little chapel out of branches, with a cross on top of it. Inside, he pitched a tent; and at one end of the chapel, a simple altar with a tabernacle on it. For him, this was hugely significant. The Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was key. “Sacred Heart of Jesus, thank you for this, the first tabernacle in the lands of the Touareg! May it be the first of many, and proclaim salvation to many souls! Radiate out from this tabernacle on all those round about, people who surround you yet do not know you.” The radiant power of the Blessed Sacrament was, for him, almost physical.

The overall impression you get from what Charles wrote at this time, and what other people wrote about him, is his intensity. His love for Jesus and his thirst to bring Our Lord to the Touareg, burned like a fierce fire. This was the secret of his sanctity. Maybe it also made him a little naive. His old friend Laperrine was not above using Charles for his own purposes. If he was to pacify these warring tribes, to instal a man of peace at the heart of them would be a master-stroke. More than that, a man of peace who had taken the trouble to learn the local language, but who at the same time was an intimate friend of the French army of occupation. What better ambassador could there be? Brother Charles did not see himself as an ambassador for France, but as a missionary for Christ. But in order to achieve this, he sometimes seems in his simplicity to be too much in the Colonel’s pocket. On the other hand there were times when he became very disillusioned with the French army. There was an occasion when Laperrine, who served under the Governor-General in Algiers, came up against another officer and his troops who answered to the French Colonial Office in Paris. Laperrine had pacified the Touareg in his territory, and they were now officially the allies of France; but the other officer had done no such thing, and was still on a war footing with them, which involved sorties and attacks and bloodshed. The fault was with the chaotic and dysfunctional way the French behaved in Africa. The two officers almost declared war on one another, and it took Charles de Foucauld to calm them down. These skills he had. He was a

curious mix of worldly wisdom and holy innocence.

That intensity of love shows itself in the way he would plant himself in front of the Blessed Sacrament and pour out his heart - often on paper, in his characteristic clear spidery writing, in pencil or black or violet ink. The diary that he kept was kept out of obedience to the Bishop. But it gave Charles the chance to be almost obsessive in his exactness. On the journey we are describing today he jotted down instructions for future missionaries. How to make a water skin, when to pray, what to wear, what sort of camels to use ... not the very fast ones like the troops; not the very slow ones like the baggage trains. The best alms to distribute: dates for preference. If there is space in the missionary's luggage he should bring vegetables with him, chillies, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, beetroots, turnips, pumpkins, onions; date fig, apricot and peach saplings. For every projected month of his stay the missionary should carry 130 needles, 50 handkerchiefs and a pair of scissors, for trading purposes. Then the medicines. Zinc sulphate for eye conditions, mercury for syphilis, potassium iodide for rheumatism, quinine for fevers, bismuth for intestinal complaints. And so, on and on. He sounds like a military quartermaster. Charles de Foucauld was a very exact man, with a talent for planning and micro-management which perhaps he had learned in the army, or maybe inherited from his noble forebears. The tragedy is that his very intensity frightened people who did not know him. When he was laying the foundations for the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart he went so far as to design their first monastery in all its detail, actually sketch it out, as well as write a Holy Rule for them. But there never were any Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart. In his intensity, Charles left people behind.

Charles de Foucauld was beatified three years ago. His cause took a long time. It started, I believe, in 1927. Many people undertook to advance it, but this was a very unorthodox and unaccustomed saint. Apart from anything else, he wrote so much, and when someone is going to be beatified or canonised, every word has to be analysed. Maurice Bouvier was really responsible for a labour of love in correlating so much material. But what shines through all that writing and all that activity, all those journeys and all those encounters with Touaregs, Arabs and Frenchmen, is the burning, intense love which occupied his soul. He was totally in love with Jesus, with a white heat of intensity. And he brought that same white heat of intensity to bear on everyone he met, caring about them more than they would ever know, and longing to be the humble means of their salvation.

Dates for the Diary:

- **Celebration of December 1st** – London gathering on 27th November at Corpus Christi Church, Brixton Hill, SW2 5BJ
Arrivals from 11:00am for tea/coffee. Please bring some food to share.

- **European Holiday/retreats:**

1. **Gathering of the European countries in the Family of Br. Charles in Hautes, Vosges, France – 19th-28th July, 2011**
(information attached)

2. **Flemish Fraternity holiday/retreat at the Trappist Monks of Westmalle, Belgium – 5th-10th August, 2011.**



“Loving God, loving people, that is my whole life;
may it always be my whole life,
this is my hope.”
from a letter of Charles

November Remembrance

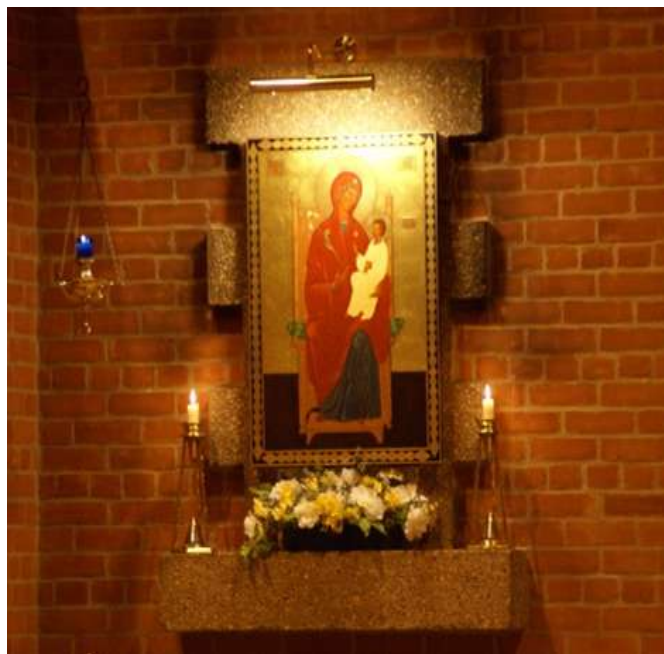
During this special month dedicated to prayers for the deceased, let us remember all of the members of the community who have died.

Thanks to Gus Carroll and Pam Ware for photos of activities.

Do you have sharing, reflection, comments?

If so please send to: Louise Russell, 80 Rattray Road, London, SW2 1BE
0207 326 0834 (cdf-gb@jesuscaritas.info)

And to end, more pictures from Walsingham



For the Charles de Foucauld European Brotherhood,
friends and any person who is interested, this letter
is an invitation to the :

FRIENDLY, EUROPEAN FAMILY HOLIDAYS
From 19th - 28th July 2011, in the Hautes Vosges, France

Take time to spend some European, family holidays in a region close to where Charles de Foucauld lived in his childhood; this is a great way of regenerating strength to pursue your various walks of life. We shall be celebrating the 20th meeting which represents the forty years that the European holidays have existed.

We shall be welcomed in the “Welcome Home – Our Lady of the Mountains, at a place called “Vic” which is at an altitude of 520 meters, in the heart of the country in the high Vosges about 15km from St Dié.

The enlightening theme of this meeting is :

“ROOTS and BUDS”

which demands a response full of meaning and hope in a moving world. A world which isolates and confines us within our own comfort and security . This theme will encourage us to reflexion, to wonder and to ask questions ... To be able to find our roots is a means of recharging our batteries !

“Similarly to a tree, our roots are anchored and our buds open to life...and also to a world full of transformation! We have to adjust ourselves to this new world in order to understand our fellow beings better...!”

The environment around the “Vic” is ideal to experience this expectation, welcoming and meeting families with teenagers and young children from various countries. Nestling in this green setting, people are living from their roots. They represent the buds which ensure the future of the region in various domaines such as agriculture, local crafts and forestry, industries which symbolize the “Nazareth” of these Vosges mountains.

History cannot be put aside from this meeting : Charles de Foucauld’s childhood and adolescence are present in Strasbourg and Nancy as well as traces of the last world war with the Struthof camp, the only concentration camp in France. Strasbourg, which is the capital of Europe, is an important symbol of the Franco/German reconciliation and the current European construction.

The spiritual activities will be the ground giving root to the day’s events. The days will be filled with visits, various workshops and plenty of distractions for everyone especially for children and teenagers who will be privileged and may have much fun in the different activities.

Holiday dates : from 19th July 2011 at 3pm
to Thursday 28th July 2011 at 2pm (9 nights)

Address : Maison d'accueil Notre Dame des Monts,
Lieu-dit « Le VIC »

BAN-sur-MEURTHE/CLEFCY (88)

Web site: Les amis du Vic

Tél : 03 29 50 31 87 Fax 03 29 50 47 42

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Provisional cost of the holiday

The provisional cost includes 9 nights full board, activities, 2 cultural outings of a day each and the organization expenses.

You will be lodged in 5 buildings with a capacity of 160 places with rooms containing 1 to 7 beds. In case of any extra bookings within the time limit, extra rooms will be available in a building in the mountains about 1,7km away but accessible by car or a 15 minutes walk.

The allocation of the rooms will be made, as far as possible, respecting the wishes expressed at the booking time. A detailed description of the rooms may be found below. Adaptations and comprises will have to be made. Kindly indicate if you accept to share a room and if so indicate the names of the people. This also makes the charm of this type of holiday !

Remarks

1. Partial holidays can only be accepted as an exception.
2. In case of serious food allergies, kindly contact the organisers.
3. Any contribution for solidarity will be welcomed. We will take into account, individually, any person or family having financial difficulties.

Lodging per room per person

	3 to 7 beds without bathroom	Double bed/couple with one extra bed without bathroom	Double bed + extra bed with bathroom	Individual without bathroom
Adults over 18 years old	45€/day = 405€	55€/day= 495€	60€/day = 540€	60€/day = 540€
Teenager 12-18 years	32€ = 288€	37€ = 333€	42€ = 378€	
Child 3-12 years	25€ = 225€	30€ = 270€	35€ = 315€	
Child 0-3 years	2,50€ = 22,50€	2,50€ = 22,50€	2,50€ = 22,50€	
Add an extra 7€ for sheet hire				

Camping or camping-car lodging on the site per person

Camping is allowed subject to accepting full board :	
Adults 18 and over	: 38€/day = 342€
Adolescents from 12-18 years	: 30€ = 270€
Children from 3 to 12 years	: 23€ = 207€
Children up to 3	: 2,5€ = 22,50€

There is also the possibility of camping 4km from Vic (at Fraize et Anould), in case of extra requirements and at the initiative of those interested;

Descriptive of the rooms

Rooms without bathroom 8 rooms with one bed 8 rooms with two beds 2 rooms with three beds 5 rooms with four beds	7 rooms with five beds 1 room with six beds 1 room with seven beds	2 rooms with one double bed 1 room with one double bed + 1 bed NB : 34 beds are bunk beds
Rooms with bathroom 11 rooms with double bed 8 rooms with double bed + one bed	1 room with 1 double bed + 2 beds 1 room with 1 double bed + 3 beds	

Camping 10 places	Camping car 10 places
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Financial aids

If you are in a position to benefit from financial assistance for these holidays, please get in touch with the organisation in question in your country or the social welfare section in your company. Kindly contact the organisers (see paragraph information) because this center is not registered by all the organisations. If financial assistance is finally accepted, kindly enclose the certificate accepting this financial aid with your last payment.

Bookings

The bookings are recorded by order of arrival of the booking form attached.

A deposit of 20 euro per adult and 10 euro children (non refundable) should be enclosed with the booking forms.

They should arrive **before 15th December 2010**. This date is imposed by the “Vic” establishment for management reasons. After this date the bookings can only be accepted according to rooms still available.

An acknowledgement of receipt by email or telephone will be sent to confirm your booking.

The final cost of the holiday, subject to the actual room distribution, will be communicated to you by mail before the first instalment on 1st March 2011.

Means of payment :

The payment for the holiday may be made in one payment or a maximum of three payments.

The first instalment is fixed for **1st March 2011**, the second for **1st May 2011** and the third for the balance on **30th June 2011**.

Settlements may only be made **in euro**.

...by transfer to “**Fraternité séculière Charles de Foucauld – France - Vic**”

Establishment : Counter : Account to : Key RIB :
IBAN FR 76 30003 00425 00037268972 13 Adresse Swift (Code BIC) : SOGEFRPP.

<p>Please send the booking form with deposit payment to : Christian CAIRE, 7 rue Pierre Loti – 68200 MULHOUSE (France)</p>

BOOKING FORM

	Family Name	First name	Sex	Date of Birth	Nationality
Adult					
Adult					
Adolescent					
Adolescent					
Child					
Chld					

Participating in the whole holiday : In case of partial participation please contact the organization

Lodgings

Room required :
 (refer to the description - e.g. 2 room with 3 beds or 1 room with double bed and bathroom + 1 bed)

Do you agree to sharing the room : yes with : no

Camping place Camping car place

Deposit payment : 20€ x ... adults + 10€ x children =€

Payment of whole holiday in one instalment in three instalments

I benefit from a financial aid for holidays from an organisation

Full address N° Street.....

Postal code Town Country.....

Telephone Mobile phone email

Person to contact if necessary
 NAME Telephone Mobile

Address

Languages spoken Read..... Understood.....

Cultural and artistic competencies.....

Musical instrument you may bring.....

What can you bring to sell in the shop as a profit for the holiday organisation :
 (art, handy craft and do-it-yourself, home-made jams and clothes, etc...)

Mobility problem : (give details).....

Special observations : (e.g. diets).....

Means of transport :

Car Arrival - dayhour

Train Arrival - day hour Which station ?

Plane Arrival - day hour Which airport ?

A car sharing arrangement will be organized from the nearby stations and airports.