

THE EPISTLE

The Newsletter of St. Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological College

Lent

2008

LENTEN RETREAT

The Lenten Retreat for the Province of Christ the King will be held at St. Dorothy's Rest, Occidental, CA, beginning Friday night, February 29th through Sunday afternoon, March 2nd. Canon David Rodier, Ph.D. will lead the retreat.

The retreat is open to those considering a possible vocation to the Sacred Ministry as well as members of the Province and their friends. St. Dorothy's Rest is in a beautiful setting, nestled in the redwoods just north of San Francisco. It is a splendid opportunity to deepen your spiritual life and to rest for a weekend, surrounded by nature in the silence of the forest. The retreat begins at 9 pm Friday and concludes at 3 pm Sunday.

The Theological College will hold an open house on Friday, February 29th at 3 pm for all those who wish to inquire into the life and academic studies at the Seminary. Members of the faculty will be present to answer any questions regarding the college. The program will end with a Solemn Evensong in the Chapel at 5 pm.

To register write to St. Dorothy's Retreat, P. O. Box 40020, Berkeley, CA 94704 or phone (510) 841-3083.

APPOINTMENT OF CANON RODIER

St. Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological College is pleased to announce that Canon David Rodier, Ph.D. will join the faculty at the start of the Spring Term 2008. Canon Rodier, a graduate of Drury College, holds a doctoral degree from Vanderbilt University.

He recently retired as Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion at American University in Washington, DC, where he taught for 39 years. He has also been an Associate Priest at the Anglican Parish of Christ the King in Washington, DC since 1990. His research interests have centered on Buddhism and Sanskrit Studies, Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Process Philosophy and the Western, Latin strand of Christianity. He has done much work in the area of Rabbinic Studies and has a lifelong interest in poetry.

Canon David Rodier will offer a course on "The Reformation on the Continent and in the British Isles." He will be the second member of the seminary faculty to teach partially over the internet using video conferencing.

NEW COLLEGE LIBRARY AND DORMITORY

St. Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological College was established in 1979 to meet today's challenges by training new leadership for the Church. The College is located in Berkeley, steps from the world-renowned University of California.

The St. Joseph of Arimathea Foundation is planning the construction of a new library and dormitory. At present the Seminary's library is located in the "front-house" of the Seminary, but the College's important collection has outgrown its space. In addition, the new facility will provide seminarians with much needed computer workspace.

Our new library will be rooted in the study of Western Civilization, the early Church Fathers, and Scripture. It will occupy the first-floor of the new building along with a dining hall for seminarians as well as U.C. resident students. It is imperative to provide a structure that brings theological students together with their contemporaries from the University. The second and third floors of the building will expand our capacity to house faculty and students.

Western Civilization is in crisis. Many of our major learning institutions increasingly shun educating students in its history. The media constantly promotes a seductive secular substitute, which seeks to marry agnostic materialism with philosophical relativism. The annals of time have proven that without God the end of any society is chaos.

The St. Joseph of Arimathea Foundation has launched a campaign to raise \$5,000,000 for the construction of this new library and dormitory. It will serve resident seminarians in the Fall and Spring semesters. The Summer session will be dedicated to seminars for the continuing education of clergy. The complex will also continue to serve as a center for university students.

Your help is needed to develop our Seminary campus. We ask you to share in our mission to educate and train Christian leaders. Please make your gift to St. Joseph of Arimathea Foundation, P. O. Box 40020, Berkeley, CA 94704.

NEW AMERICAN CHURCH UNION PUBLICATION

Dr. Paul Russell, Academic Dean of the Seminary, has recently completed a booklet, *The Apostles' Creed*. It will be available to all parishes of the Province for their Lenten studies. Copies may be ordered from your parish or through the American Church Union, P. O. Box 40020, Berkeley, CA 94704.

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St. Joseph of Arimathea Theological College
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WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS?

Interested readers will have noticed that there are many new books and magazine issues being produced every year that claim to have “new” and “surprising” information about Christianity and Jesus. These works commonly come out during the Fall to be available at Christmastime and are designed to take advantage of the annual interest in religious matters and in the great frenzy of present-buying that comes each year.

Recently *U.S. News & World Report* published a “Collector’s Edition” entitled: “Mysteries of Faith: Secrets of Christianity.” This is a good example of this genre of publication. Its contents are a mishmash of different topics surrounding Christianity and the study of its history. It includes groups of chapters entitled: “Who Was Jesus?,” “Unearthing the Gospels,” “Martyrs, Heretics, and History” and “Miracles, Faith, and Science.” These are perfectly reasonable areas to discuss, for they have all been very active in the last 25 years or so, but they have nothing in common except a likelihood of drawing in readers whose only knowledge comes from the sensational accounts in newspapers and on television. These are not scholarly collections.

What does it mean to say that? It is not the case that there is nothing of interest or nothing written by reputable people in these sorts of productions, but the content is skewed to sensationalism. The care that separates scholarship from idle imagination is disregarded. A good example is the section at the back of the *U. S. News & World Report* “Collector’s Edition”. There are two pages called “Resources” containing 6 columns of books and DVDs for further study. It is a collection that emphasizes the sensational and iconoclastic, featuring many works by writers who are not professional experts in the fields covered. A neophyte, coming to these questions for the first time through these books, would have little sense of where scholarship in these areas really is and how broadly the range of opinions is spread. A book by Marx and a book by Milton Friedman would not represent the

“range of the field” in Economics. Similarly, a book by Bart Ehrman or Tom Wright would not represent a study of Jesus. This is not education; it is business, using scholars to sell a product.

There is no need to turn to this sort of publication for information about the life of Jesus and the history of the Church. There are many good resources to use to gain a balanced sense of what we know of early Church History and the life of Jesus. This is, in fact, a golden age for people who are interested in those subjects. Our knowledge of the ancient world is growing all the time and we can know more about the early Church than at any time since the fall of the Roman Empire.

My advice for anyone interested in learning more about these subjects (or any other topic in Religion or Theology) is to ask a more knowledgeable person to steer you to responsible books and articles to examine: books; that is, that are the expression of responsible scholarship rather than merely tools to part you from your money or to advance an agenda that is not scholarly. Read a book on these topics with your Bible Study or Book Group. I do not think that you will be using your time wisely if you just wander into a bookstore to see what they have on their shelves. You will find a lot of things there to choose from, some of them very good, perhaps. But do not be misled: the largest and most expensive things will always be put in the front of the display, and they will always be full of “new” and “surprising” discoveries about Jesus and Christianity (many of which are neither new nor true). If you are willing to spend your time and money in study, you ought to spend some of that time finding the best materials to use. Don’t ask a salesman; ask your priest.

Dr. Paul S. Russell, Academic Dean

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