



# People and Events

## Social Diary

City of Lincoln Circle will celebrate its *300th meeting* on Saturday 15th January 2005, combined with its annual Ladies Night. The event will be held at Branston House Hotel, Branston, nr Lincoln in the presence of Grand President. Registers at 5.00 pm and meeting at 6.00 pm. Dinner Dance will follow at 7.45 for 8.00 pm. This meeting will replace the normal 3rd Tuesday meeting on 18th January. Also from November 2004, the Circle's monthly meeting will revert to an 8pm prompt start.

**Aylesbury Circle's** meeting on Monday 14th February will be a Ladies Night and their *600th Meeting*. It will take place at the Spread Eagle Hotel, Cornmarket, Thame, Oxfordshire in the presence of Grand President John Clarke and Bishop James O'Brien. Registers 7.00pm and the meeting 7.30pm. Dinner including wine £35. Black Tie. Bookings by 27th January to Steve Pullen, 21 Pevensey Close, Aylesbury HP21 9UB, Tel: 01296 427096, email: sdpm@pullen.f2s.com

## Meeting Notices

**Ashton-under-Lyne Circle's** January 25th meeting will commence at 7.30pm and be followed by a buffet with the Ladies.

**Knutsford Charter and Clergy Night** takes place on January 31st 2005 at Knutsford Golf Club on Mere Heath Lane, Knutsford. Dress formal, 7.30 for 8.00pm - cost £20. It is NOT a meeting night. The principal guests are Grand President John Clarke, Provincial President Tony Keane, (Prov 17), Director Frank Hinds and several members of the local clergy. Contact the secretary for any other details.

**Leamington Spa Circle** meeting will be on Wednesday 5 January usual time and place.

There will be no triple meeting of the **Liverpool Circles** in January, but there is a joint meeting of **Liverpool** and **City of Liverpool** at the Adelphi Hotel on January 6th commencing 7.30pm. All enquiries/bookings should be directed to Tony Garrigan on 01928 572404.

**Reigate Circle's** February meeting (Treasurers' Night) has been changed from the 9th February 2005 (Ash Wednesday), to Wednesday 16th February. The register will open at 7pm and the meeting will start at 7.45pm sharp.

The January 25th Meeting of **South Bucks Circle** will be a joint meeting with West Middlesex Circle held at High Wycombe.

**South Shields Circle** meeting in February 2005 will be held on the 3rd Thursday of the month instead of the 4th, ie 17th February 2005, at the usual time and venue.

## *Au Revoir... or should I say 'Hasta Luego'!*

I was in Exeter in mid-July for a great Conference organised jointly by the Dioceses of Portsmouth, Plymouth and Clifton. The theme of the week was looking at how to communicate God meaningfully today in our world and culture. The keynote speaker was Fr Ronald Rolheiser OMI who gave an excellent hour long address each day. I was one of an 'army' of workshop facilitators, with over 40 on offer. My workshop was a ninety minute interactive reflection on how we can explore our very 'personal vocation' in such a way as to then communicate God to others with confidence. As people arrived I asked them to choose from a pile a small 'white stone' - collected the previous day by my father from Brighton beach...collaborative

ministry in action! This symbolised the 'new name' by which God knows us that will be revealed to us in the Kingdom when we stand in the full light of the presence of Jesus, the Lamb. One lady of mature years, as she was leaving, said to me: "I've been struggling to know what my vocation is for years and years...I came to this workshop hoping to once and for all sort it all out...and I'm none the wiser" I wasn't sure if she was speaking

tongue-in-cheek or genuinely wanted her money back! Hoping that the former was the case, I simply smiled and said: "Never give up...keep searching...the journey continues". For me the journey of my life, and my faith, is about to take a new and big turn. I want to take this opportunity to say farewell and a very genuine word of thanks to the Catenian Association and the Catenian Vocation Initiative Group. My term as Director of the National Office comes to an end on December 31st at which point I begin a sabbatical in Spain, before heading off in the summer to work in distant Peru.

For me going and working for a period in Peru has always been an important and deeply felt part of 'my journey with the Lord', like a piece of the jigsaw still to be slotted in. I spent some months there when I was a gap year student, between school and university. I lived with priests from my own Diocese of Arundel & Brighton and was deeply touched by the faith, joyfulness and generosity of the people... many of whom had next to nothing materially.



It was there, 22 years ago, that the seed was sown that led me some years later to apply to train for the priesthood. Returning to Peru to 'give back' some small part of my priestly ministry has been a dream in my heart for all these years. We face our own 'challenges' of declining numbers of priests and seminary students but the challenge faced in Peru and other parts of the world is much more pressing. I had an email the other day from the Bishop in the Diocese to which I shall be seconded. He

said that there is only one priest to every 16,000 Catholics and over 1300 scattered communities to be cared for. It's so important for us, as Catholics, to have a strong sense of supporting and belonging to the universal community of faith that is the Church.

Working in the national vocations scene for the past two and half years has been a challenge, not without worry and difficulties but one full of privilege and joy. I have met so many wonderful people and throughout the time I've felt a

steady stream of goodwill and enthusiasm towards our new work for vocations ministry from so many different directions. The twin tasks we were entrusted with by the Bishops of England & Wales, namely of fostering a new 'culture of vocation' alongside the promotion of the diocesan priesthood and all the particular vocations in the Church, has certainly been a 'wide brief' to pin down.

All the time we're on a learning curve, discerning the priorities for this important work of the Church. I'm delighted that Fr Paul Embery, a priest of Lancaster Diocese who brings great experience, will be picking up the mantle and taking over as the new Director and I'm sure continuing to value greatly the links with the Catenian Association. If I find a Catenian Circle in the Andes I shall very happily make myself known! Let us all continue to pray for one another. Once again thank you for your kindness and support over these past years.

**Fr Kevin Dring**

The National Office for Vocation: tel 020 8458 6017 enquiries@ukvocation.org - www.ukvocation.org

