



JBMS NEWSLETTER

Published by The John Bradburne Memorial Society
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UK Registered Charity No. 1046483

WINTER 2012

MUTEMWA CELEBRATIONS AND SOMETHING PRECIOUS IN THE COOKING-POT

On Saturday and Sunday 1st and 2nd September the 33rd Anniversary Celebrations took place at Mutemwa. Large crowds gathered for the celebrations even though there was a National Congress organised on the same weekend. Some Pilgrims went to the Congress in Harare, and then speeded off to Mutemwa!

The celebrations began at 3 p.m. with the recitation of the Rosary led by Br Alfred Patience Tigere OFM. Then followed the Penitential Rite in preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fr Jim Hasson OFM conducted the penitential service and gave a beautiful homily, all in Shona. Many pilgrims come to Mutemwa to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. During the time of individual Confessions pilgrims also visited the Tin Hut and there Daniel Chidemo OFS, National Minister of the Secular Franciscans, gave introductory talks on the life and



times of John Bradburne. This was very well received.

As the crowds gathered, there was plenty of congregational singing and this prepared the way for the first talk on the theme for the Celebrations this year, *Love One Another*. The first talk was given by Fr Rungano, Diocesan priest. He spoke of love in the family. A second talk was then given by Fr Raymond Mupandasekwa CSsR, this talk focussed on forgiveness as an expression of love. Fr Raymond arrived just in time even though he

got a puncture on the way and didn't have a spare tyre!

We then had the Holy Hour of Adoration. This was led by Fr Sylvester CSSp. It is a great experience to witness the silent adoration of the people, in the silence of the night, all kneeling in prayer. Holy Mass then began at 11 p.m. The principal celebrant was the parish priest Fr Patrick Ngwenya. Fr Patrick lives at All Souls Mission, Mutoko and Mutemwa is part of his parish. The preacher at the Mass was Fr Simplicio

JBMS was founded in 1995 to support the Mutemwa Leprosy Settlement in Zimbabwe in the name of its late warden.



Musemlovri, Diocesan from Masvingo Diocese. The prayers of Intercession were led in different languages.

Around midnight the torch-light procession made its way to the Mountain, Chigona. This is a unique part of the Mutemwa Pilgrimage each year. We all know how much John loved to climb this mountain each day. On the mountain throughout the night there was singing, praying and listening to talks. Some pilgrims also slept, didn't that happen too in the Garden of Gethsemane!

The morning Mass began at the John Bradburne Site at 6.30 a.m. This was also a memorable celebration. The patients from the leprosarium were there, the orphans from Mother of Peace Community, and the many pilgrims. Whilst at night there was the darkness during the celebration of the Mass, now all was light with Brother Sun resplendent. The sun seemed to give all a new

energy ringing out a new day with plenty of singing. The principal celebrant was Fr Linous Mukumbuzi OFM from Assisi Mission at Nharira. The preacher was Br Naison Manjovha OFM, a Deacon. He preached a powerful sermon on the meaning of true love. The Gospel Procession with the book of the Gospels was very memorable. The procession was accompanied by the boys and girls from the Orphanage, the girls in golden dresses and the boys wearing golden shirts and dark trousers. A girl in her golden dress and a floral wreath on her forehead carried a cooking pot on her head with the smoke com-

ing from the pot! But where was the Gospel book? That's what the Deacon asked as she approached him at the altar. He was going to take the pot and bring it to the celebrant!, but she said to him in a low voice "*No, not the pot, take the lid off and look inside*" and there it was, the Gospel Book, the Word of God had been cooked and now the Deacon was to share it with the people!

Yes, another year has come and gone and the annual anniversary has been celebrated with each year the numbers attending increasing. The celebration was organised and planned by Cyprian Chipwere and his team, the JBMS (Zim) committee. As the pilgrims set off on their homeward journeys they were happy to have been there to ask the intercession of John Bradburne in their many needs, and to experience the joy and peace of the celebrations, hoping to come again next year to this place of prayer and inner healing.

Fr. Liam McCarthy OFM



JOHN'S MYSTICAL MARRIAGE IN SANTA MARIA A MIANO

In memory of Fr Claudio Rossi

From the beginning of September, 1952, John lived in Mater Dei church, Palma Campania, south of Italy, mainly in the organ loft. He was the church sexton, helping Don Francesco (the Parish priest) at Mass and cleaning the sanctuary. Not too much work, and John was free most of the day, either to pray or to go out into the little town, sometimes with his recorder. Palma has the reputation of being a Marian city as half of its numerous churches and chapels are dedicated to Our Lady, with many processions and special events. John's devotion towards the Mother of God increased during his time there.

Soon he was climbing the gentle slopes of Mountain Sant'Angelo (2780 feet) which dominates the city. A thousand feet above Palma lies Castello, a hamlet surrounding the ruined medieval castle from which it earned its name. The view is awe-inspiring, with majestic Vesuvio, Sarno plain and, far away, Torre Annunziata near the Mediterranean sea. John walked along Via Trebbuchi, a path gently climbing through orchards, then in the mountain forest. It is how he discovered, on the left side, the small Chapel of Santa Maria a Miano, a small building with a classic façade and a very simple bell-tower. Entering it, his attention was drawn to the expressive painting of Madonna and Child, and he prayed there.

This chapel has a story, transmitted, maybe embellished, through centuries. For ages, bandits have been hiding in the Sant'Angelo forest, ransoming passers-by. In the 17th century, a man walking through the woods was attacked. He fled through chestnuts and oaks, but his pursuers eventually caught up with him. Running out of breath, he invoked the Madonna and lo, a thick bush of wild roses, orchids and gorse surged from the earth in front of him. He threw himself in. His pursuers passed both sides of the bush and he could then hear their outbursts of rage. When they had disappeared, he left the bush and promised to Our Blessed Lady on the spot to build a chapel here. He started building a small sanctuary with the help of the Castello villagers, which took the name of Santa Maria a Miano, and a painting of Madonna and Child was placed there. The people of Castello and Palma began to go there, and for the procession on Easter Sunday afternoons, Monday *in albis* and St John feast. And the chapel bell was rung to help anyone who got lost on the mountain, to help them find their way. Around 1920, the painting and its frame were destroyed by fire. A local celebrity, Pietro Caliendo, was then commissioned to paint a new one, in his Napolitan Verism style. He took as a model a local woman and a young boy, Ottavio Manzone, the three

were still living in Palma when John was staying there.

John returned many times to this chapel and his devotion to Mary grew. At Candlemas, 1953, he climbed the Sant'Angelo slopes up to Santa Maria a Miano, and there, he offered a mystical marriage to Our Lady (involving of course perpetual fidelity and terrestrial chastity), and felt that his proposal was accepted by the Mother of God¹. An echo of his joy still pervades a poem written 22 years after the event :

At Candlemas, at half-past-six or so,
I married Her in Nineteen Fifty Three;
Green between Apennines and shining Sea
Campania lay wakened to the morn,
And, to the fact that Mary's married me,
I'll wake the world and shake it with my horn!

The Caliendo painting may be no great art, but its realism grips you. It is important, concerning John's devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to notice that the painting in front of which he consecrated himself to her is not of a pretty young girl (contrary to the one in Mater Dei church where he lived), but of a mother, maybe in her thirties, whose features reflect the hardness of life, with a ghost of a questioning smile². The Child has the freshness of a four-to-five-year-old, shyly but invitingly smiling. The

most remarkable features of the painting are the eyes, which look right at you and catch your own. Mary's gaze is noble and restrained, showing maybe some weariness, while Jesus' is confident and encouraging. In fact, Madonna and Child are questioning you ("Who do you say that I am?") as well as they are to be contemplated.

Two months after this Candlemas event, John had an argument with some Palma *ragazzi* (youngsters) in Via San Felice, just in front of Mater Dei church. Across the street lived a family with several attractive daughters. Rosa (or Bruna, according to others), one of them, sang all the time and caught John's attention. One day, he spoke to the boys about Rosa and said that "in England 'dark-eyed beauties' are especially admired". The boys burst out laughing: "*The Inglese* has a crush on Rosa", and that became a matter for teasing him. After all, John is not even 32-years-old and looks ten years younger; and even if he works sometimes as a garbage collector, his manners are upper class and he is, moreover, Catholic.

But one day John told them that he was already engaged and, shortly after, invited the ragazzi to meet his wife ! On 9th of May, the day after Our Lady of Pompeii celebration at Mater Dei church and all over Palma, here they were, Don Francesco, John and the youngsters, climbing Sant' Angelo mountain in the heat. When they went in the chapel, John showed them the painting "That's her !".

Strangely, Don Francesco, whom I questioned nearly 50 years after the event, has no recollection of the boys' reaction, but remembered well that they all prayed and later returned to Palma humming folk love songs³.

Strange as it may seem to current mentality, the mystical marriage and the vows John made in Santa Maria a Miano, a turning point in his life, are perfectly orthodox. In fact, this devotion used to be quite common during medieval times, especially for monks and priests. Many saints have illustrated it: St Robert of Molesmes, St Hermann Joseph of Steinfeld, his English contemporary Edmund of Canterbury, blessed Alain de la Roche, the founder of the Rosary fraternities, to whom we may add in some sense St. Bernard or St. Francis. Later on, St Jean Eudes had been "a summit in the history of spiritual wedding with the Virgin" (B. de Margerie). John is thus in good, and holy, company.

The theology of this mystical marriage with Our Lady has been developed by Dionysius the Carthusian, the "ecstatic Doctor" of the 15th century. He details the scriptural roots of this devotion (Book of Wisdom) and its deep Christocentrism, adding: "Let each of us married to this Blessed Virgin by the fervor of love for her and desire". The most recent study on the subject is the one by French Jesuit Bertrand de Margerie (1994). This theologian is more cautious than his illustrious predecessor - Freud and the "Age of suspicion" have been in the meantime - but shows that this excep-

tional and very rare spiritual path trodden by saints in former centuries is legitimate, although quite perilous nowadays. He applies to mystical marriage the principle of analogy set by 4th Lateran Council (what is common with human marriage is infinitely less than what separates them). He asks prudently to stick to the "higher psychism (intellect, will)" and not develop "lower psychism (sensitivity, imagination)", for fear of psychoanalytic suspicion. John however followed them both, sometimes audaciously, but even if he heard about Freud or Freudism (a few occurrences in his poems, and jokes on "unafreud" a neologism he cobbled together), but his mystical marriage with Our Lady to which he remained faithful all his life was deep spiritual *agapé love*. We may say about it what Chris Robson writes about his poetry, "as upsetting for the devout as for the savants of current patterns and theories of psychoanalysis".

Didier Rance

¹ "An important event for John while at the Parrochia mater Dei was something he later described as a "marriage" with Our Lady. In other words, he took a private vow to her not to wed in this world, but to serve her and her Son as a celibate" writes John Dove in *Strange Vagabond of God*.

² 15 more years will pass before John associates his Marian devotion also with pictures of pretty young girls - and this will also occur in Italy !

³ This account of John mystical marriage with Our Lady is based on the late Fr Rossi report of his 2003 visit to Palma and Campania (see JBMS Newsletter Summer 2003), and on my own 2010 visit.

AUGUSTINIAN SISTERS VISIT JOHN BRADBURNÉ'S BIRTHPLACE

This summer Sister Genevieve Meve and a group of fellow Augustinian sisters from Boarbank Hall travelled to Skirwith Village in Cumbria to pay their respects to John Bradburne who was born in the Skirwith Vicarage. John's father, Reverend Thomas William Bradburne was the Anglican Rector there. Four of the five Bradburne children were born and baptised in the Church there.

Sister Genevieve has a great devotion to John and was delighted when the new book on Bradburne by Didier Rance was published this year in French. We await a translation of the book into English in due course.



FOLLOWING IN JOHN BRADBURN'S FOOTSTEPS- CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AT MUTEMWA.

If you are a regular reader of the JBMS Newsletter, you will probably remember a number of articles I have written in recent times for this publication; all of which have been on the theme of walking in the footsteps of John Bradburne, who himself walked in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi.

I have previously written about my 322 mile walk in the summer of 2011, when I took no money or food to experience something of the nomadic and vagabond style of life that John Bradburne led. My next wish is to spend some days in contemplative prayer at Mutemwa, something which we know that John Bradburne spent many of his days doing.

On the 7th January 2013, I will be flying out to Zimbabwe, and my first stop will be Mutemwa. I will stay at Mutemwa until 12th January. My days at Mutemwa will involve a combination of two things; first, I will spend my time speaking to staff and residents at the village and offering my assistance wherever it is required. The second thing I will be doing is praying. I hope to spend many hours each day at Mutemwa in contemplative prayer.

John Bradburne spent so many of his days in deep prayer and because of that, one cannot help but feel the incredible spiritual atmosphere when one visits Mutemwa, the prayers of this holy man are saturated in the surrounding soil, the buildings, the mountains, the trees. I now feel called to spend some days at Mutemwa which will enable me to carry on, albeit briefly, John's work of offering prayers to God. I personally feel called to follow in John's footsteps as much as I possibly can; he is a huge inspiration to me.

My only sadness is that I cannot spend longer at Mutemwa. I am currently working full time as a Licensed Lay Worker for the Church of England, in the parish of Braunton, in Devon. If God wills it, I will be ordained a Deacon in September 2013, and priested in 2014. Due to my commitments to the Parish I can only be in Zimbabwe for a certain length of time. For this reason I have divided the time I will spend in Zimbabwe into three parts. The first part will be at Mutemwa as I have mentioned. The second part will be to spend some time working with a community of Anglican nuns at St Augustine's, Penhalonga. The final part will be

to help and assist a community of refugees, at Tongogara Refugee Camp.

If I can ask you to pray for the sisters at St Augustine's and the refugees at Tongogara I would greatly appreciate it. The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe has suffered great persecution in recent years from the Government and the Police, yet the CZR Sisters at St Augustine's have stood firm in the face of arrests, violence and intimidation.

The Refugees at Tongogara have all fled from horrific situations, most have seen friends and family members murdered. They now find themselves relying on basic UN aid, year after year, with little hope for the future- it is only their faith that keeps them going.

I will be in Zimbabwe from 8th to the 19th January, please pray that I will be of use to the people that I meet.

By Ben Bradshaw



Geza Vermes, the world's leading authority on The Dead Sea Scrolls, who knew John Bradburne in Louvain in Belgium, in the 1950s, has written, in the September 2012 issue of Standpoint Magazine, a fascinating article on My Life Among the Saints, where he commemorates a quartet of martyrs whom he knew personally. Three Hungarian priests of his youth have been beatified and are now venerated as martyrs. An English friend (John Bradburne) may soon join them!

This magazine is fairly widely available but if anyone would like a copy of the article please contact Celia at info@johnbradburne.com

MUTEMWA RESIDENTS PROFILES

Colletta Mafuta : 73 years



Colletta Mafuta was born in 1941 and came from Mudzi in Mutoko. She was born into a family of five girls, and she is the first born. Colletta suffered from leprosy when she was aged 12.

Her parents also suffered from Leprosy and were staying at Mutemwa until they returned to their home in Mudzi after they had been treated and could manage.

Colletta was married to a leprosy patient and had seven children, four sons and three daughters, and she now has seventeen grandchildren.

Her children grew up in an orphanage at All Souls Mission in Mutoko. Colletta never stayed with all her chil-

dren as she was not able to take care of them because of her illness. They however regularly come to see her at Mutemwa.

Her husband and her other 3 sons have since died. She is a resident at Mutemwa and stays with her grandson who helps her with her domestic chores.

Colletta is a full member of the Roman Catholic church and used to help so much in cleaning and preparing for church functions.

She used to be in the church choir and attended several competitions. She misses the good old days when she used to be so active at these events. She still plays a big role in receiving pilgrims and lives at the pilgrim site. Colletta was one of the last residents to see John Bradburne alive and features in lots of videos on the life of John.

Sakina Phineas: 72 years

Sakina Phineas was born in 1940 in Mozambique and she came to Zimbabwe in the 1980s. She suffered from Leprosy in 1987. Sakina was sent to Harare by her sister who was looking after her and she got treatment from Parirenyatwa Hospital.

She was later transferred to Mutemwa where she was admitted in March 1998.

Sakina was married in Nyanga and she had four children, 3 sons and one daughter.

She says she is very grateful for the sister that God gave her who did not let her die but stood by her when she got affected by leprosy.

Her husband died in 1978 and the family could not find his body as he was killed during the war.

Sakina has fifteen grandchildren and her sister is looking after some of them in Nyanga.

Sakina never went to school and she spent most of her time working as a domestic worker to survive when she was still in Nyanga.



Your LETTERS

I am sending you this little letter re my son's lost and found sum of money. All my friends could not believe that I had my prayer answered. If you wish you can publish it. John Bradburne, my dear friend never lets me down!

My son lost a large sum of money on Thursday or Friday. He retraced where he had been and nothing was found. He did not at that time report it to the police as he thought no one would hand in that amount of money.

I kept telling him that he would find it because I was praying to John Bradburne, and that he has never ever let me down.. I told my son that I was asking him to tell the finder of the money to hand it in to the police station.

My son then decided to report the loss on Monday morning. On Tuesday morning, my son had a phone call asking him to call in to the police station as a sum of money had been found. Sure enough, the cash had been handed in untouched in his wallet.

Thank you John Bradburne, I knew you would listen to my prayer.

Mary Bashford

I just thought I should let you know that my son Chris, who lives in Bristol, had been looking to buy a cheap but reliable car but was let down a couple of times. A friend living in Plymouth had already said that he would buy Chris's old car. A prayer for John's help, and

it transpired that another friend in Plymouth had a VW polo to sell, very reasonably priced and for genuine reasons. So he was able to go down, sell the old car and buy a new one without any problem. He was thrilled!

Needless to add, John is still on top form when it comes to finding parking spaces for our hospital visits.

Ann Farmer

Our daughter and her family found the ideal home that they could afford in an area where few homes with character come on the market. Unfortunately another couple also liked the house, and they were in competition with offers for it. Offers were made and the other couple's was accepted because they could move very quickly. After praying to John Bradburne to intercede to help them, unexpectedly two months later the house came back on the market because the house buying chain had broken down, and that meant a delay, so the other couple had to withdraw. Our daughter and her husband quickly put in an offer which was accepted straight away, and they will be moving in to the home they love and can afford in a couple of weeks time. They are absolutely relieved and delighted. Thank you John for helping them to resolve the matter.

Cynthia Harnest

I am offering a Mass of thanksgiving to John for helping me and my family in a personal matter which we pre-

sumed could never be resolved in a hurry. I started to pray to John Bradburne for help, and in a most miraculous way the situation we were dealing with was changed on the ninth day of the novena to John. It was a remarkable experience in which I felt very close to John in my prayers. Because of this it has reaffirmed my own faith in the power of the saints and drawn me closer to God in so many ways. I pray to John now every day in thanksgiving, and he is like a close spiritual friend, he never lets me down.

I would recommend anyone to pray to John as a friend, and I can assure them he will be listening to their prayers.

Nesta Skegg

I would like to receive some John Bradburne prayer leaflets to leave with my Parish Priest for people to take. We have a regular prayer group in one another's homes and many of us already know about John Bradburne. His life is an inspiration to us. One of our friends has visited Mutemwa and climbed the holy mountain. As soon as one arrives one senses that the place is blessed by God in a special way. We were greeted so warmly by the lady in charge and she showed us around the place. We distributed the little gifts to the residents and they were so happy. Thank you for the work you are doing to support this little oasis of peace. God's love shines through here.

C K