

**Affirming Catholicism**

Many people have asked me about the organisation called 'Affirming Catholicism' of which I am a member, so here goes.

The first thing to say is that it's not just about being nice to Roman Catholics though we are and should be. Affirming Catholicism is about the Church of England and it affirms two things. The first is that the Church of England is a catholic church and the second is that the catholic approach to Christian faith contains spiritual riches which are important to the Church.

'AffCath' began in the early 90s when a number of people in the 'catholic' part of the Church became increasingly uncomfortable with the approach many catholic Anglicans were taking. They seemed very negative, rejecting anything new. The most obvious example of this was the Ordination of women as Priests though this was by no means the only one. It was also becoming clear that Evangelical approaches to faith were becoming increasingly prevalent within the Church. I am not critical of such Evangelical approaches; they have much of value to teach us, but they are not all there is to be said, and the negativity of much catholic Anglicanism was discouraging people from hearing their positive contributions.

'AffCath' reckons it represents the mainstream of the Church of England and it offers a catholic Anglicanism which is able to affirm and embrace change. It values tradition but as a base from which to grow rather than an immovable reactionary force. In the words of Archbishop Rowan Williams (one of the founders of "AffCath"), a river to swim in rather than a pond to sit by. 'AffCath' offers the Church the riches of the catholic styles and traditions of spirituality and encourages the Church as a whole to value and affirm them.

I've been a member of AffCath since its inception and I chair the Diocesan group. Peter Lock and Jeremy Worthen are also members, as are a few other members of our Congregation; indeed Peter joined the AffCath group in General Synod.

As an offshoot from AffCath, some of the Clergy members have formed something called the "Society of Catholic Priests" (snappy little title isn't it?). Michael Gentry and I are both part of this and Michael Skinner, an old friend of BPC leads the Diocesan branch. The small red cross you sometimes see in my lapel is the badge of this group. We shall be meeting here at BPC on 23 July when Bishop Michael will be our guest.

There are some leaflets in the ambulatory which set out more details of what AffCath is about and also contain the programme for this year. All are welcome; do ask if you want to know any more.

*Michael Camp*

# Christian Aid Week 11 - 17 May