

# The Bede Griffiths Sangha Newsletter

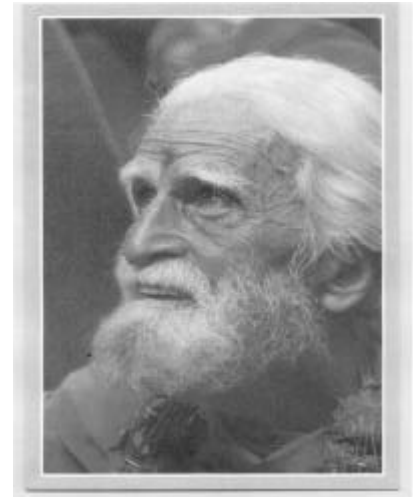
Volume 2 Issue 2

July 1999

## Editorial

I suppose that I shouldn't be surprised, but each time when it comes to putting the Newsletter together I am delighted to find how much interesting material there is to include. I hope that there is something to interest each one of you. The last edition raised questions of Hindu-Christian dialogue and the role of the Sangha so we are please to include an article written by Fr Bede 25 years ago. It is amazing that he was writing in that way when the ink on the papers of the Second Vatican Council was hardly dry.

Brother Martin's book *A New Vision of Christianity* is an inspiring collection of the themes he has been exploring with the Sangha over the last two years. We review the book and include a small extract. What is nice is that Br Martin will be with us at Park Place as members of the Sangha put this newsletter into envelopes and mail it out to you. He will be in the UK during July and I hope you will be able to hear him at one of his many engagements. Also in this edi-



tion we include a reflection on the idea of 'sangha' which although presented in the context of Buddhism is utterly relevant to what we are seeking in our own Sangha.

As one letter we received recently said, "it's wonderful to know that after having felt so isolated as far as my spiritual orientation is concerned, there are so many people of like mind to myself (albeit scattered about)".

Namaste

Adrian Rance

### Inside this issue:

<i>News from Shantivanam</i>	1
<i>Fr Bede on Hindu Christian dialogue</i>	2
<i>Christianity in the Third Millennium</i>	4
<i>Sangha trip to southern India</i>	6
<i>A review of Br Martin's new book</i>	6
<i>Videos on Fr Bede</i>	6
<i>Thoughts on Sangha</i>	7

## New Meditation Hall planned for Shantivanam

One sign of growth and new life at Shantivanam is the planned construction of a meditation hall commemorating the three founding fathers of the ashram, Henri Le Saux, Jules Monchanin and our own Father Bede. Fr George, the new Superior, has written with

news of the project We enclose with this newsletter a copy of his letter requesting individual donations to this memorial meditation hall. We do hope you will be able to contribute. Please do send your donations straight to the ashram and not to the Sangha!

# The One Mystery

## Father Bede on the pioneers of Hindu-Christian dialogue

*This article by Father Bede was first published in 1974 in The Tablet and is reprinted here by kind permission of The Tablet.*

Dialogue with Hindus is something which has grown up only very recently in India. It began, apart from pioneer efforts by some individuals, scarcely ten years ago with some meetings of a group of Christians—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—under the direction of the then Swiss ambassador to India Dr Cuttat. This group met in a spirit of prayer to prepare themselves for dialogue by meditating together on passages of the Bible and also on the Upanishads, which for many are a revelation of the depths of wisdom and experience of God. The aim of this group was always to seek to meet the Hindu in the depth of his mystical experience and to see how a Christian can come to share in this experience. The result of these meetings was a conviction that in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita there is an experience of God of a depth and significance which can only be compared with that of the contemporary Hebrew prophets.

But perhaps the two greatest pioneers in dialogue with Hindus were Fr Monchanin and Fr le Saux, two French priests who founded the ashram of Shantivanam in 1950 in South India on the banks of the Cauvery river. Fr Monchanin who took the name of Swami Paramarubi Anandam, the Bliss of the Supreme spirit, was both a scholar and a very holy man, who conceived his vision of a meeting with Hindus on the level of contemplative experience in the thirties when even the ecumenical movement among Christians was only just beginning, but unhappily he died in 1957. Yet he left behind a legacy, not only in the ashram which he founded, but also in the principles which guided him in the dialogue with Hindus which are of permanent value. Fr. le Saux, a Benedictine Monk, who took the name of Swami Abhishiktananda, the Bliss of Christ, continued his work at Shantivanam but finally retired to a hermitage in the Himalayas, where he wrote several books of extraordinary insight and through his own experience of God gave an inspiration to the whole Church in India.

Fr le Saux himself died only two months ago, but his work is being continued at Shantivanam, and last month a Hindu Christian dialogue meeting was held at Shantivanam, which may be considered as the fulfilment of much which both he and Fr Monchanin had sought. The meeting was organised by the Commission for Dialogue in India, and was attended not

only by two bishops on the Dialogue Commission, but also by Mgr Rossano from the Secretariat for non-Christians in Rome, who gave a key-note address of outstanding importance, as showing the principles of dialogue which are now accepted officially by the Church. There were over 50 people, Catholic and Protestant, Christian and Hindu, present each day for three days. There was throughout an atmosphere of extreme openness and friendliness, which when one considers the atmosphere of fear and suspicion which prevailed until recently on both sides—and which still prevails in many—was itself an achievement.

But the discussions themselves were of great interest. The tone of the meeting was deliberately made personal and existential. Each one was asked to answer the question; What does my religion mean to me and how do I relate my partners in the dialogue?" This meant that it was not an academic discussion of religious differences which leads nowhere but a sharing of religious experience which leads to a real communion in the experience of God. This became very clear in the prayer services which were held in common in the chapel, which is built in the style of a Hindu temple. The Hindus felt perfectly at home and the service was composed of readings, prayers and chants from both Hindu and Christian sources. It is a deeply moving experience to listen to Hindu prayers and songs expressing sorrow for sin and longing for grace, the call for self-surrender and the bliss of union with God. At this level Hindu and Christian meet in a shared experience of communion with one another and with God.

The basic principle of this meeting, said Mgr Rossano, was one of mutual enrichment by sharing experience. In every religious tradition not only Hindu and Christian, but Buddhist and Muslim, African and American Indian, there is an immeasurable depth of religious experience, each group experiencing the divine mystery through its own language and symbols and patterns of thought. In the dialogue it is understood that each one remains true to his own tradition of life and thought, but seeks to open himself to the experience of the reality of God in a different mode of thought and expression. The comparison was made of the white light which is broken up into different colours—red, blue green, yellow—which appear different and even opposed, but which when traced back to their source are

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(Continued from page 2)

found to be one. The origin and goal of all religion is the same the one inexpressible Mystery, in which the ultimate meaning of human existence is to be found. This was expressed in the declaration of a group of theologians from east and west at a seminar on Evangelisation. which was recently held at Nagpur in north India. "An ineffable mystery they declared, "the centre and ground of reality and human life, is in different forms and manners active among all peoples of the world and gives ultimate meaning to human existence and aspirations. This mystery which is called by different names but which no name can adequately represent is definitively disclosed and communicates in Jesus of Nazareth."

This, of course, expresses the Christian point of view. For a Christian the disclosure of the mystery is to be found in Christ, for a Buddhist in the Buddha, for a Hindu in the Vedas, for a Muslim in the Koran. Each has his own unique insight into the mystery and we have to learn to share these insights with one another. To relate these insights to one another, to see the relationship of each to the whole, is the function of theology today. In this task the Christian theologian cannot work apart from the Hindu, the Buddhist and the Muslim, who are all engaged in the same work, just as the Catholic theologian cannot work apart from the Protestant. In this process we have to make sure that nothing of the essential truth of each religious tradition is lost. We are not seeking a syncretism in which each religion will lose its own individuality, but an organic growth in which each religion has to purify itself and discover its own inmost depth and significance and then relate itself to the inner depth of the other traditions. Perhaps it will never be finally achieved in this world. but it is the one way in which we can advance today towards that unity in truth, which is the ultimate goal of mankind.

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### May Blessing

White birch trunks  
And rippling bluebells  
Through the chapel window  
Safe, supportive silence  
And myself at peace  
The Skreen in May

Anna Corser  
The Skreen Retreat May 1999

## Fr Bede videos

### **A Human Search** £23.50

This is a 59 minute video recording the story of Fr Bede's life, from his childhood and school days, up to his last days at Shantivanam. A wonderful story!

### **Discovering the Feminine** £23.50

Filmed at Shantivanam a few months before he died, this 32 minute video describes his experiences following his stroke in 1990, and his discovery of the feminine.

### **The History and Interpretation of the Bible** £23.50

A 40 minute video in which Fr Bede explores the way in which the Bible was written and looks at changes in Christian thinking and biblical interpretation.

### **The Wisdom of the Prophet** £23.50

Fr Bede explores the relationship between modern science and spirituality. The video was recorded in Perth, Australia in 1992. The first part is 52 minutes long and is followed by an 84 minute talk on the reality that lies beneath the dogma of religions and scientific rationalism.

### **The New Creation in Christ**

5 volumes at £95 or £20 per volume.  
A recording of Fr Bede's 1991 John Main Seminar given in New Harmony USA in which he explores the Christian meditation tradition of John Main and offers a vision of the new spiritual consciousness.

*These videos are available from Medio Media Ltd, the publishing arm of the World Community for Christian Meditation.*

at  
23 Kensington Square W8 5HN London UK.  
Tel: 0171 937 4679  
Fax 0171 937 6790

### **Beyond the Darkness**

Shirley du Boulay

Members of the Sangha will be pleased to know that Shirley du Boulay's acclaimed biography of Fr Bede is published as a paperback on 1st July by Ryder, price £9.99.

The Ryder hardback edition will soon be out of print so if you want one for yourself, or as a present, it might be a good idea to buy it as soon as you can.

# Christianity in the Third Millennium

## Brother Martin

For two thousand years Christianity has been saying that when Christ was born wise men from the East left everything and came to worship the tiny baby and offered him gifts, but King Herod, who thought that the child was a threat to his power, position and continuity wanted to kill the child and in fact he killed all the children suspected. But Christianity which accepted Jesus following the example of wise men, has transformed herself into a Herod and preoccupied herself with her power, position and continuity and has been killing every child who appeared to be a threat to her position, power and continuity; has become extremely suspicious of every creative idea, become extremely cunning, like Herod, to get the information of those who are seen as a threat to her and extremely quick in taking action against them. When one desires continuity of one's power and position one becomes a Herod; when one renounces one's desire for power and continuity, one becomes a wise man. For those who want to continue every child is a threat, but for those who want to discontinue, every child is a blessing. In the third millennium Christianity will renounce her desire for power, position and continuity and thus transform herself into wise men, and leaves her security in search of the Child and offers all her accumulated riches at the feet of the Child to be used by the Child.

For two thousand years Christianity has been teaching the way of "Becoming Perfect" not knowing that it is the desire "to become" that made humanity fall from its original state of holiness and wholeness and the life of unfolding. This life of 'Becoming Perfect' has become a tremendous burden on the shoulders of the people. In the third millennium, Christianity will not teach the way of 'Becoming Perfect' but will teach the way of 'Unfolding' which is the life of God in us. This frees human beings from the burden of becoming perfect and gives them rest. But the way to arrive at this life of 'unfolding' is the way of 'Repentance' which is nothing but silencing the movement of 'desire to become'. So in the third millennium the spirituality will be concentrating on the negative way of silencing the 'desire to become' rather than the positive way of reaching the artificial ideals of perfection. The life of 'unfolding' cannot be the goal of spiritual life. It is something that happens naturally and spontaneously when one silences the movement of desire to become. Just as a fish in the ocean, ignorantly searching for the ocean, is helped to stop its searching and find that it is al

ready in the ocean, so the humanity will be helped to stop all its searching for God and find that it is already in God. It is this process which is called 'repentance'. Jesus proclaimed the good news saying 'The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent'. Which means God is like infinite ocean, everywhere, 'repent', means, like fish, stop all your movements and find that you are already in God.

For two thousand years Christianity has been teaching a spirituality that divides God and creation and the spiritual persons are asked to renounce the world for the sake of God, thus creating a duality of God and creation as if they are opposing one another. Unfortunately nobody can renounce the world in a real sense, as everyone is dependent on the world until one's death. But in the third millennium Christianity will not teach the spirituality of renouncing the world but will teach the spirituality of renouncing the ignorance that God and the world are two opposing realities. God and creation are an inseparable unity, though creation has its beginnings and end. God is like Infinite Ocean and the creation is like the formation of ice on the ocean. Just as water and the ice are not two independent realities, but one reality in two aspects: formless and form, infinite and finite, so also God and creation are two aspects of one reality. When the ice knows that it is the manifestation of the water, it is wisdom. But when the ice imagines that it is a stone then it falls into ignorance and wants to become water, though it is essentially water. This creates the artificial duality of water and the stone and the artificial distance between the reality (stone) and the ideal (water) and invents artificial means how to become the water and this creates the artificial psychological time. It is the ignorance of not knowing one's true nature that has created the ways and means and the religions as different paths. It is the realisation of one's true nature that frees one from the ways, the means and the religions. Truth cannot be arrived through a way. For the way implies distance and the distance is born of ignorance. The only way is the way of repentance that tells that the truth cannot be arrived through a way.

Only by renouncing all the ways and means that one comes to the realisation of one's true nature that one is the manifestation of the truth or the solidification of the water and there is no need to become water and one is not really a stone.

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All the ways, the means and the religions have value in as much as they help people to the realisation of this truth. Just as water and ice are an inseparable unity so also God and creation are an inseparable unity. To choose God is to choose the world also for God includes the world; but to choose the world is not choosing God for the world does not include God. The world is not bad, it is the manifestation of God. When the sages say to renounce the material world, they mean the artificial world of desire born of ignorance. It is this desire that binds a person. So to renounce the world means to renounce the ignorance that created the desire to become, to possess and to acquire. The world is the desire and the desire is born of ignorance hence the world is ignorance. It is the ignorance that binds one to the world. Once the ignorance is renounced one is free from the world and the world becomes a place of joy.

The desire to become, born of ignorance, binds one to the world and the true wisdom of oneself, frees one from the desire and makes one see God in the creation and creation in God. The desire to become plunges one into the unending ocean of unfulfilment and dissatisfaction, but knowing one's true nature frees one from the ocean of desire and transforms it into the ocean of joy and fulfilment where the life unfolds itself as the sun radiates its light. This is not monism. This is not pantheism, this is not panentheism. It cannot be put into any category of the mind. The relationship between God and creation cannot be defined. When the mind wants to define it then it becomes a murderer. It wants to kill the truth and put it into a tomb. How God manifests this universe is beyond the comprehension of the human intellect. Every 'ism' is a tomb and the truth cannot be put into a tomb. Here the mind has to keep silent by saying, 'I don't know and I can't know'. Then the mind becomes a sage.

For two thousand years Christianity has been teaching that only the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ and only the priest has the power to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. But in the third millennium Christianity will proclaim that the whole universe is the body and blood of Christ and the whole universe is Christ and the Eucharist. Every human action is an eucharistic celebration in which one transforms the spirit of God into one's own flesh and blood and gives to his or her neighbour as a gift of grace and love, like a radio which receives the electro-magnetic waves and transforms them into sound just as creating is the continuous eucharistic celebration of God in which the spirit of God is made into material universe so also human action has to be an act of eucharistic celebration.

For two thousand years Christianity has been following Jesus who leads his disciples on the road and on the boat which separates one from the direct contact with the ocean of God. But Christianity has completely forgotten the call of Jesus to Peter to leave the boat and walk on the water, which is to experience direct contact with God. But in the third millennium Christianity will realise the relativity of following Jesus on the road (a moral practical code) and on the boat (a belief structure), and will encourage her members to follow Jesus who walked on the water, and to follow Peter who made the first attempt to leave the boat and walk on the water, responding to the call of his master. Following Jesus on the road and on the boat is following through the ego. Following Jesus on the water is following through our image and likeness of God. Ego cannot walk on the water. It is very heavy. It is like a stone. It always needs a vehicle. Only the image and likeness of God which is light like a feather can walk on the water. It does not need any vehicle. So to leave the boat and walk on the water means to leave one's ego and enter into the image and likeness of God in which there is a direct communion with God.

For two thousand years Christianity has been saying that Jesus is the only way to God and the only mediator between God and human beings and that everyone is obliged to believe in Jesus in order to be saved.

But in the third millennium it will be said that Jesus is the only way to God in the sense that he came to negate all ways saying that God cannot be reached through ways or means. Only by renouncing all the ways can one find that one is already in God. Jesus came to tell humanity that there is no way to God. The only way that Jesus proposed is the way of 'repentance' which is renouncing all ways and means. Renouncing all the ways is renouncing the ego, and since it is the ego that creates ways, means and religions, renouncing his or her ego is the discovery of his or her own real self which is already in God.

*From A New Vision of Christianity, published by Saccidananda Ashram and available in the UK through The Bede Griffiths Sangha. Copies can be obtained from Kim Nataraja, Flat 3, 24 Linden Gardens, Bayswater, London W2 4ES. (The book is free but we welcome contributions to assist in the production of further publications by Br Martin)*

## Sangha plans visit to the sacred sites of Southern India

From time to time members of the Sangha have suggested a trip to India to visit Shantivanam, and other spiritual sites in India. Travelling to India can be quite daunting (but extremely worthwhile) if you are on your own and we do know that some members would welcome the chance of a trip with a group of like minded people.

The Sangha is considering a trip to Southern India in late December 2000 - January 2001. Airfares are much cheaper if we go after Christmas (we also thought that a lot of people would like to spend Christmas at home) so we are suggesting leaving just after Christmas, and spending about three weeks away.

Our first ideas about an itinerary are to include about 5 or 6 days at Shantivanam, which will enable us to experience the ashram at a deeper level. We would also like to include the Hindu temple at Chidambaram where the New Year festivities are a wonderful opportunity to experience the most holy place in Hindu southern India. We would also like to include a visit to Tiruvanamallai and Ramana Maharshi's ashram at the foot of Arunachala (Shiva in the form of a mountain), and Mahabalipuram, with its famous sea shore rock temples.

The trip will assume that people would like to spend enough time at each place to really experience it in some depth; so fewer stops rather than trying to cram everything in. The trip will be organised in conjunction with Soul of India Tours, which specialises in tours to spiritual places in India. Soul of India Tours organised the recent pilgrimage for the World Community for Christian Meditation which included a visit to Shantivanam and to his Holiness the Dalai Lama.

A detailed itinerary, and the likely cost of the trip will be published in our September newsletter. In the meantime please do let us know if you are interested. We would particularly like to hear any suggestions to be included in the itinerary before arrangements are finalised .



## A New Vision of Christianity

A review of Br Martin's book

Many visitors to Shantivanam in recent years, as well as many Sangha members who have attended our Park Place retreats, will have heard Brother Martin and will have seen how he is a worthy successor to Fr Bede as an inspired teacher. This little booklet published by the ashram contains many of the ideas that Br Martin has explored with us at Park Place over the last two years.

At first glance A New Vision of Christianity appears as a modest little publication, only 64 pages long, and somewhat in need of the attentions of a proof-reader. But within the small pages is a message that speaks directly and powerfully to the heart. It is not so much a work of theological discourse or argument, more it is pure theology, a clear explanation of the way in which Jesus revealed the presence of God in all creation.

The ordinary men and women of Galilee two thousand years ago were inspired by a message that was simple and direct. It was a message that did not need to be mediated through dogma or doctrine. It was a message that the Kingdom of God was in the here and now, and that each of us is already a son or a daughter of God. Martin cuts through 2000 years of later accretion, structure and dogma to go straight back to this powerful original message. But Martin is not writing about the message in an academic sense, he is re-presenting it in a direct way that marks him out as great teacher to those who have heard him. Martin brings his own experience of God and of the unity underlying all creation. For many of his listeners he just 'turns on the light'.

The whole of Jesus' ministry was built around exposing the tension between the revelation of Moses as represented by the law and the temple, and the direct revelation, open to everyone, of their own relationship with the divine. The old revelation is about what we should 'do', the new revelation is about who we 'are'. God is integral to the whole of creation and the experience of that truth is open to all. Organised religion has its value if it shows us the way to truth, but humanity does not have to be limited by organised religion. As Abishiktananda wrote in 1955, '...the Church cannot prevent her child from going all alone to God'. All Jesus taught was the reality of 'what is'; the law's teaching can be a help to understand truth, but the law is relative and not absolute. This was the message that Jesus preached and, as Martin shows, it is as relevant to Christianity at the end of the second millennium as it was to Judaism two thousand years ago.

Br Martin's teachings are an inspiration, particularly to men and women who search for God and who would like to seek him/her through the teachings of Jesus.

## Letters

I very much enjoyed the last issue of the Sangha Newsletter. I was particularly interested in the letter from Rev. Paul Wilton in the last issue in which he expressed his surprise on hearing the phrase 'the God beyond God'. I remembered my surprise some years back when I read a sermon of Meister Eckhart on Ephesians 4.23 – 'Your hearts and minds must be made completely new'. 'God is nameless', says Eckhart for none can know or articulate anything about God. I remember in Genesis I think it is, that God was not named. And later, when Moses asked his question, God did not name him/her self. It is very easy to forget how totally inadequate language is with regard to god, and how almost impossible it is not to project on to God our notions of who God is. The phrase 'the God beyond God' inadequate as it is, reminds me of all this. So I am truly grateful to Rev Paul Wilton for prompting me to re-read this wonderful commentary from Meister Eckhart. I have truly enjoyed re-connecting with this bit of Eckhart – it was actually the subject of the first talk I heard from Br Martin in my first visit to Shantivanam.

With love & thanks

*Sheila Mary O' Donoghue*  
Belfast

## The Bridge Trust

The Bridge Trust has been established by Christians Awakening to a New Awareness (CANA). A number of groups and individuals have contributed to a discussion paper entitled "Exploring Ways Forward for Christianity into the Twenty-first Century". A number of groups including the Bede Griffiths Sangha have been invited to a Round Table to be held in London in November to discuss this topic. Other participants will include The Iona Community, the Grail, The Omega Trust, the Eckhart Society, the UK Christian Meditation Community and Catholics for a Changing World.

The discussion paper can be obtained from The Bridge Trust, 16 Appleford Drive, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 2DA. Price £3 inc. p & p

## Sangha Christina Feldman

*The following is extracted from a longer article published in Gaia House the magazine of a group that promotes Buddhist practice and meditation and is reprinted by kind permission of Gaia House.*

In the Buddhist tradition the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are referred to as the Three Jewels, all interwoven in the path of awakening. The Buddha is the symbol of our own capacity for enlightenment. The Dhamma is the path and the teaching of wisdom and compassion. The Sangha is the community of people who share the aspiration for liberation and the embodiment of it in their lives. Within the Three Jewels there is no hierarchy of importance, rather each is considered to be just one facet of a single gem; all of equal significance.

Over the last few decades as Buddhism has taken root in the western world, the primary direction it has taken is in the establishment of centres of teaching and the offering of retreats where the Buddha and the Dhamma are highlighted. In the many centres that have been established, large numbers of westerners have the opportunity to listen to the teaching of the Buddha and explore their own capacity for awakening.

The treasuring of peace, calmness and mindfulness that is central to a retreat is overshadowed by the cultural encouragement towards producing, competing and striving. There can exist an immense and painful separation between a meditative life and an out life which is guided by contradictory values and symbols.

Sangha, a sense of community that shares similar aspirations and a love of wisdom and compassion, plays an important role in ending this sense of separation and the feelings of isolation it can produce.

Sangha is the place we go to for inspiration, communication, support and the refuge we can rely upon for acceptance, encouragement, honesty and goodness of heart. In the coming decades it is the development of sangha, in forms that are workable for lay people, that will be the greatest challenge for the Buddhist tradition...Our challenge is to develop a sense of community that offers support and refuge to those who live a lay life.

There is a need to redefine sangha for westerners. Geographical distances and personal preferences prohibit the development of inclusive, self-sustaining community. Outside the monastery people can open their homes to others who share a dedication to depth and wisdom. Meeting together, sitting together, talking together, in these gatherings we are all teachers and students. We should never underestimate the value of these communities. They are powerful symbols that encourage and inspire us, that lessen isolation and nurture a deepening commitment to a life of awakening.

For further information about the Sangha and its activities

**CONTACT**

Adrian Rance and Jill Hemmings  
15 St Martins Road  
Canterbury  
Kent]  
CT1 1QW  
Phone +44 (0) 1227 457570  
Email arance@msn.com

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Many of you have generously returned the subscription forms with a donation/subscription fee. If you haven't yet sent in your subscription we would encourage you to do so as they do pay for the newsletter, subsidised places on retreats for people on low income and for bringing Br Martin over to the UK. Can we suggest £10 or £5 if you are unwaged.

*Overseas members have not been very good at sending in an offering. Please do so as mailing overseas is expensive.*

## Future Sangha Events

**Weekend with Brother Martin:** Park Place Pastoral Centre, Fareham, Hants, July 2nd – 4th. (NOW FULLY BOOKED)

**Annual 'Forest Retreat'** at the Rowan Tree Centre, Built Wells. September 12th – 18th 1999. A week's silent retreat based on the rhythm of the day at Shantivanam. Places limited to 14 participants. SEE ENCLOSED FLYER FOR BOOKING

**1999 Advent Retreat.** Prinknash Abbey, December 10th – 12th. Our annual Bede Griffiths Retreat in the monastery where Fr Bede started his monastic life. Booking forms will be sent with the September mailing.

**Spring Retreat 2000 – The Rowan Tree Centre** May 12th – 15th 2000. Early notification so you can put it in your diary.

*Please do send us details of any local events you are planning so we can include them in the Future Events section.*

## Mary Lewis and the Rowan Tree Centre

Mary Lewis and her husband, Anthony, founded the Rowan Tree Centre at The Skreen, their beautiful house situated in the Wye Valley near Built Wells, surrounded by the glorious rolling hills of mid-Wales.

The Centre has become a sort of spiritual home for the Sangha. We held our first retreat there and we still hold retreats, once or twice a year at the Rowan Tree Centre. Mary has been a great friend of the Bede Griffiths Sangha, and we have received much support from her as the Sangha has grown over the years.

The April retreat this year was organised by John Carreswell; it was fully booked and was a great success.

Now is the time to book for the week long retreat which this year is being held between 12th and 18th September. A booking form is enclosed. It is a silent retreat based on the rhythm of the day at Shantivanam and with daily meditation and prayers very much

reflecting the style of the ashram with its readings from different scriptural traditions and singing of Indian chants and bhajans. For some the highlight of each day is the chanting of the Guyatri Mantra under the spreading oak tree and the slow walking meditation in the early morning mist.

Mary Lewis directs the work of the Rowan Tree Centre which aims to provide people with an opportunity to explore the contemplative life. It is a sort of 'monastery without walls'. Last month, on June 27, Mary was ordained priest by Anthony, Bishop of Swansea & Brecon at the Cathedral Church of St John the Evangelist, Brecon.

The Sangha sends Mary love and prayers and delights in her ordination. We look forward to her being able to preside at our Eucharist at some of our retreats.

