

CHRISTIANS AGAINST ALL ANIMAL ABUSE

Animal Padre's Christians Against All Animal Abuse Newsletter

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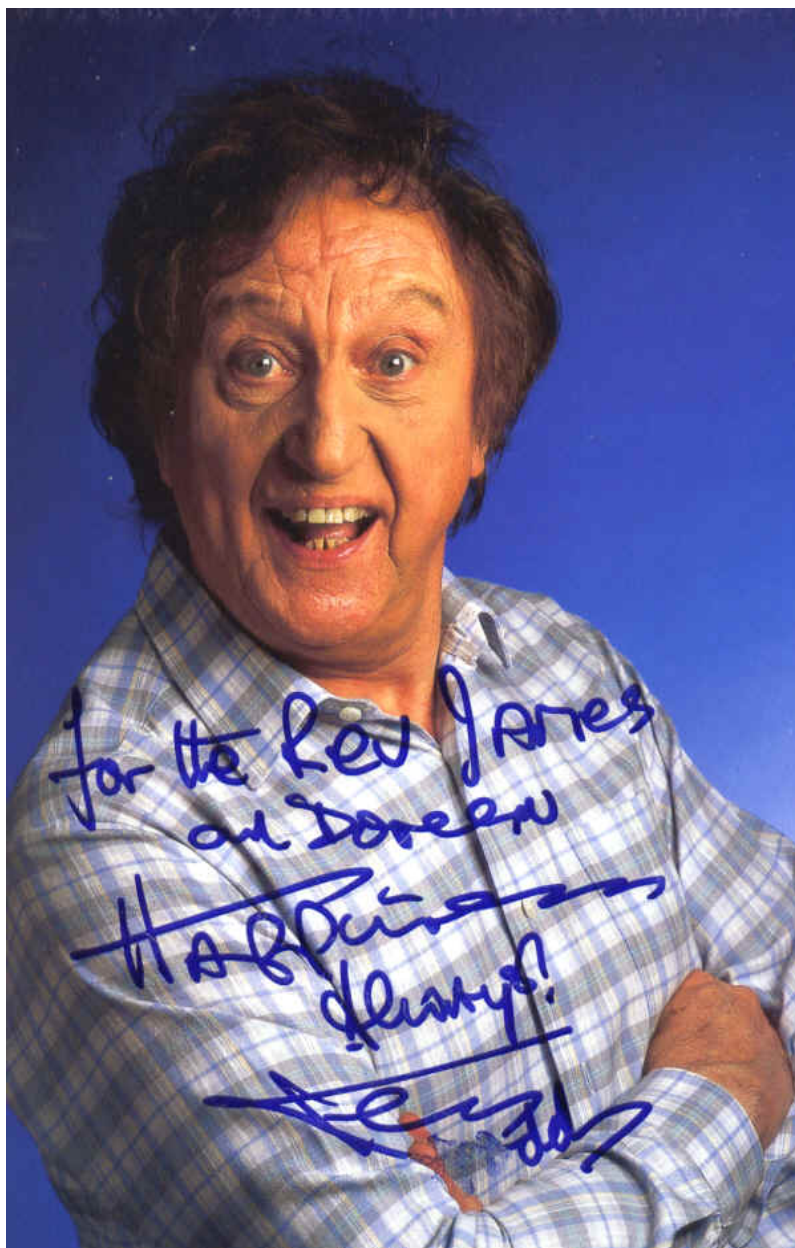
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Are We Either Positive Or Negative?

What one focuses on in this life is what becomes bigger and clearer for ones self. Do not write or phone me to convey bad news – or for that matter write it to any one else. We in the animal cause need to be transmitting out to the world good vibes and not bad ones. Tell me about your successes and your breakthroughs for the animal cause, but do not burden or depress us with more horror stories. By our very nature, we in this great cause are more sensitive than others to the suffering and sadistic practices meted out to our brothers and sisters of the animal kingdom; and there is a limit to what we can all face before we fall victims to M.E; Burn Out; and similar mind draining and body sapping diseases. A verse in the Bible reads: *'The trees of the Lord are full of sap'* Yes, not brittle, unyielding and dried up dead ones, but full of inward life that is evergreen and, consequently, outwardly bright and colourful. I'm sure that's what God wants all of us to be. Then Lord save us from ever becoming dead kindling that's only fit for the fire!

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We are all largely reflections of what we focus on most and, consequently, can one wonder that Ken Dodd – a sympathiser with my humble efforts for the animals – is so exceedingly bright and active in his eightieth year? He is constantly focused on bringing happiness in to the lives of others and the result is that he is brimming with energy and joy. What one gives out comes back. Light attracts light. It's the law of attraction. Consequently, Doreen and I look out for this greatest of all comedians coming to our area, and when we return from his lengthy show then we are completely rejuvenated and – strange as you might think - spiritually blest as well. Amongst the joy and elation he creates I find, in a sense, that Jesus has joined us too. At times I really feel His presence in such a midst and one could all most weep for joy.

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Sadly, I feel that – on the contrary - a large percentage of those within our great cause are most unhealthy adverts of the liberated life we envisage for our animal friends. Indeed, I, myself, am no exception here and – having in the past, striven to transform much of Christendom single-handed – have paid the price quite dearly. One of the saddest occasions was having to turn back from conducting a whole week's spiritual retreat on animal welfare due to increasing exhaustion, before reaching ones venue. And another occasion was forcing myself when experiencing flu like symptoms, to go and conduct a pet funeral in the south. I not only succeeded in doing this but I afterwards ended up in Basingstoke hospital where the prognosis was one of pneumonia!

Perhaps on a much lighter vein I had a few years previous published my book: 'How To Bounce Through Life - With Vim, vigour and Vitality'. Indeed, it received – and still does! – much commendation; but the fact is: I needed to practice what I was preaching to others! The day after I'd sold signed copies of it to an assembled gathering of the National association Of Clergy Hypnotherapists at St Louis, Missouri, I had to sit down to give my prearranged lecture to the assembly. Yes, I'd been hit with an appalling form of jet lag which persisted for the conference's duration. 'Did I feel embarrassed?' 'You bet I did!' Perhaps the Man upstairs was saying I'll teach Thompson down there to be a little more humble in future. Perhaps not!

We Need To Listen To Our Bodies

A positive mind can achieve remarkable results, but a body worn out with facing perpetual horror and unalleviated gloom is bound to crack; and mine has more than done it once. And I'm actually writing this while awaiting a hip replacement. Yes, my mind would have me down at Dover Docks one day and off to Spain, confronting bullfights, the next. But my body says at 77 'James, I'm going to slow you down a bit as I don't want you to go to Heaven as yet: you see, the animals here need you around a while longer'. Friends, long last, I'm beginning to realise that what this casing of a body tells me is for my own good. Without wishing to be in any way impertinent I wonder if you have as yet started to take notice of what YOUR body is trying to tell you?

I've been actively associated with animal rights since 1968 and have witnessed, first hand, many devout souls cracking up or else plodding on in a most decrepit and unbecoming state. Yes, and I'm sure you'll agree with me that it does little good for our cause. There are those who – because of a consistent veganism – should be glowing adverts for the movement, yet many of them are dragging themselves along as if at death's door. And there are many others who – though they might be the first to decry or pour scorn on animal tested drugs – are permanently on the same, themselves, because of a host of afflictions from high blood pressure to sleepless nights. Mind you, it would be a miracle if blood pressure remained normal after repeatedly antagonising the police as scabs. Yes, as much as it would be a miracle to sleep in tranquil bliss after having focused on photos and cuttings illustrating vivisectionists at work!

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Let us never forget that Jesus, during a mere two and a half years ministry, preached a gospel which later transformed the world. You may ask: 'how on earth could He have accomplished it?' Well, He spent days and nights apart from others in solitude and prayer; and – quite paradoxically - much time in feasting, merrymaking and in associating with some of the most undesirable of folk. The fact is, His life was truly one of a mixed and varied diet, and I sense that much of ours needs to be the same. We must certainly 'work hard' for the animals; but if we are wise then we must also 'play hard' for ourselves; and whichever of these we are doing, one needs to be fully cut off from the other. *'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy'* and we ignore that old saying to our ruin!

As far as communications with our fellow animal activists are concerned, let us talk of our successes, our breakthroughs and our victories. And, as we do the latter – focussing with gratitude on our achievements – then our feelings will be great and they will reflect in our countenance. Reliable psychologists assure us that 'one positive thought is a hundred times more powerful than a negative one'. And, what is more: 'our thoughts create our feelings.' Positive ones create within us exhilarating feelings; whereas negative ones create emotions that result in feelings of doom and depression. And whereas the former revive and energise our bodies for further tasks ahead, the latter – dwelt upon! – result in lethargy and a downward spiral most injurious to the physical frame..

Why do I mention all this? Because the animal activist world frequently has an unhealthy proportion of dedicated folk who are not only doing havoc to the only body and mind that they have, but they're also passing it on unwittingly – through a downcast spirit – to others within the movement as well. Consequently, we all need to assess our selves – certainly myself included! – and ask: 'Am I a ray of sunshine to others (as my wonderful wife Doreen -who took the following recent photo in Rhyll, opposing blood sports - always is) or am I a damp squib? Well, God forbid!

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Well, looking at the above photo, I sense I could have been a little jollier myself! Admittedly, I had painful knees but that is hardly a justifiable excuse. Judi, to the left of me - a former cabaret star - is 60 next birthday. She's an optimistic vegan and it certainly shows! Amongst ourselves, we really need to spur each other on by dwelling on our achievements and not on our afflictions; upon our assets and never assumed debits. Is it not true that within the armies of this world no conveyor or harper on about misfortunes would be tolerated. Sometimes they've been taken outside the barracks and shot against the wall' And all because they were guilty of undermining morale! Well, dear friends, we are in a warfare against appalling evil, so let us spur each other on positively, then we'll feel not only great ourselves but also a wonderful inspiration to our colleagues.

Another Animal Blessing Service In Aberdeen!

Animal Blessing Service at Craigiebuckler Church Hall, Springfield Road, Aberdeen on 10 June 2007 at 3 pm. More information from Myrna Forrester - tel 01224 313367

I first met Myrna in the middle 1980s. She asked me to hold a service in the hall of her prestigious parish kirk. It was truly an innovation in to Scottish Presbyterianism. Yet, every year since – and sometimes in the church itself - it has been repeated annually under the ministry of successive ministers. Myrna, a regular worshipper at her church is a living testimony of what one determined member of a place of worship can accomplish.

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The photo is one of the mid eighties. I'm blessing a doggy while the parish minister, who graciously assisted, looks on. This was one of the first such services, and the numbers subsequently attending quite dramatically increased down the years. This was quite an innovation in those middle eighties and such an invitation followed after my own type of animal blessing within the Episcopal church, of which I was priest, had received resounding publicity via both press and TV coverage.

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THE SUPREME PSALM OF CHRISTENDOM: 'THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD'

These opening words of the 23rd psalm are – along with that which follows – an analogy concerning God and His dealings with us. Yes, one reflected through the way a far off shepherd cared for four legged creatures entrusted to his or her care. (Yes, there were occasional shepherdesses in those days as well!). These far off guardians of animals bred sheep for their wool. They are not to be confused with those who feasted on their flock following their ritual slaughter! The latter being the end product of so-called 'faithless shepherds' or 'hirelings' quoted and denounced in other sections of Holy Scripture.

The whole psalm – attributed to King David who'd once rescued a lamb from a lion's mouth – assures us that one has no need to ever doubt the magnanimous compassion and care of God for us, as it was comparable to a good shepherd's care for the flock of animals entrusted to him. But of even more relevance to the Christian, Jesus the Son of God – born amongst animals! - enlarged upon the analogy further: "*The good shepherd*" He said, "*is willing to lay down his life for the sheep!*" Consequently, should one happen to go astray, then the good shepherd will not rest day or night until he finds it! And should it be wounded, then such an animal carer will bind up the dear creature's wounds. Indeed, a delightful old gospel hymn sums it up well:

*'There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold;
But one was lost on the hills away, Far off from the gates of gold;-
Away on the mountains wild and bare, Away from the tender shepherd's care
Yet none of those ransomed will ever know just how deep were those waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night the Lord endured, until He found that sheep which was
lost'*

Well, I don't know about you, but – as I see it - two things stand out in marked contrast to this top analogy of Christianity in today's world; something that is, regrettably, overlooked by professing church goers and their leaders as well!. It is the impersonal and insensitive way that cattle are so frequently transported, unlovingly handled, blasted off country roads, and ultimately sold for live export. A sad reflection of how we may well have progressed in our heads; but how dangerous when we have regressed so appallingly from biblical standards with our hearts. And is not this the result of a pitiable system that gives top priority in education to those who soar in the secular curriculum, but are void of any incentive to evolve in the moral and spiritual spheres? Such a one sided educational system is lethal indeed..

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As uttered before – and such repetition can be a good thing! - we have everything to fear from those who are ‘educated’ to acquire heads as large as footballs while their hearts are as atrophied as peanuts. Yet we have nothing whatever to fear – and everything to gain - from those in our great cause who are prepared to ‘lay down their lives’ for more vulnerable life than their own. Indeed, Christians are called to be the guardian species; faithful stewards over the rest of God’s creation. And I tell you that none fulfil this calling as much as animal rights activists. What a pity that politicians couldn’t see this. How blinkered and short sighted they appear to be. Yes, and none more so than Dictator Blair, and his dumb babes from whom one might have expected some feminine sparks of compassion! They promised an animals’ charter when they first came into power, yet are notorious for not keeping to their word.

For justice and compassion to be revived in this decadent nation the strong must surely be taught to protect the weak; and such acts of virtue should not be confined to ones own species. There are more animals – yes, insects too! – than there are humans; and we have a Christian duty to care for them. God has given US a human life! Well, what an awesome responsibility! *“To those that have been given most; from them God will require most!”*

Just one lighter note! Please note, the fourth word of the title of this article is a personal pronoun: ‘My shepherd’! The good shepherd of old knew each sheep by its name; and when he called them, they individually responded. Well, we are also like wayward sheep, and He calls us by name. But in the midst of this world’s secular and business pursuits – within such a hectic life style – we don’t always hear Him. Consequently, sometimes, unpleasant experiences are allowed to overtake us so that we might begin to ask: ‘what is life all about?’

To quote one example, I would occasionally say to those in the hospitals, over which I was diocesan chaplain,: *“God sometimes allows us to get on our backs so that we might look upwards to Him!”*. What is more, a victim of the Piper Alpha oil-rig disaster had been rescued from blazing oil covered waters within the North Sea. He needed my ministrations speedily; so getting attired in ‘operating theatre’ gear, I prayed earnestly for guidance as to what one should say. But the patient beat me to it! *!“Padre, the Man upstairs has brought me through this for a purpose”* he cried. *“I know the Lord’s Prayer. Will you say it with me?”* The top surgeons - who were fighting for his life - momentarily stood back as we repeated the prayer together. Tears of gratitude began to stream down the dear fellow’s crusted face. I tell you, that dear man spiritually passed from death to life that very hour. He knew, in his heart, for the first time that God had been, metaphorically, calling him by name for a long time - had long been searching him out. Yes, this particular patient had been ‘painfully upset’ for a time so as to be ‘powerfully set up’ forever!

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The 23rd psalm itself – as fittingly expressed by its once reprobate author David (He'd been an adulterer, a liar and a murderer!) - starts with speaking about God in the 3rd person: 'The Lord'! It consistently speaks of 'He'. But then later, it moves on to speak of Him in the 1st person: 'Thou' and 'me'! Yes, as the far off gifted author of this psalm of excellence ponders on this analogy of the Almighty, his own relationship begins to evolve from the concept of a far off God to that of One who is intensely close and personal. Yes, while to some others, this spiritual evolvement is discernible via intonation aswell. Here is an example of the latter: two veteran worshippers were invited to read this same psalm in church, and it fell on consecutive Sundays. The first Sunday's was the turn of a retired actor; and on finishing his reading a fellow worshipper was overheard to remark *'He obviously knows the psalm well. He read it fluently without as much as one recourse to the open Bible in front of him!'* Well, a week later, the reader of the same psalm was an aged worshipper who had undergone much sorrow, trial and heartache in life.. He was an unlettered man and a manual worker – just as the Lord Jesus had been! Well, a comment from the same quarter as the previous week was again overheard. It was akin to this: *"Well, that retired actor, last week, certainly knew the psalm; but – I've got to give it to him - today's reader appears to know the very one it speaks of!"*

My friend, real Christianity is all about encountering a Divine friendship. Metaphorically speaking – who knows? – you may well be that one 'wayward sheep' for whom our Good Shepherd gave His life. He has, as it were, left the ninety-nine and is searching and calling you by name. And – if so - then all you need to do is respond with a: *'here am I Lord'* uttered from the heart, and life will never be quite the same again. He'll no longer be just a past man from out of history but *"a friend that is closer than any brother!"* and your favourite hymn may well be top favourite 'Amazing Grace', just as ex slave trader, Rev. John Newton's was!

Joan Court To Go On A Hunger Strike In Oxford

On Thursday the 26th to Saturday the 28th of April – - at the Corn Market: outside St Michael's church, delightful Joan Court of Cambridge – a militant Quaker - will once again be holding a hunger strike and vigil. This time her 3rd - to make folk aware of animal cruelty, and especially now at the present time in Oxford, following the reprehensible decision of its university to create nothing less than a veritable Belsen for primate experimentation.

This Global Hunger Strike will be entitled 'FAST FOR FELIX' (The incarcerated primate in the Oxford labs). It will be led by Joan who is now no less than 87 years of age! - and organized by the respected PETA foundation (People For The Ethical Treatment Of Animals)

This will help to raise sponsor money all round the world for animal rights campaigns, and readers are asked to either send donations directly to Joan Court, 74, Sturton St, Cambridge. CB1 2QA, or else to PETA itself. Donations - no matter how small - will be much appreciated

N.B: I learn that as Joan's fast comes to its end around noon on the Saturday that animal activist John Curtin will be leading a peaceful march for the cause; and – though John is now a practising Buddhist – this will be interfaith and ecumenical, to which all are warmly invited

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STOP PRESS: A Saint Has Been Promoted To Glory!

Yes, the term 'promoted to glory' is an old time salvation Army one. But if ever there were a saint for the animal cause, for whom such a term is worthy, then it must be Michael Sutcliffe. For here is a fellow who was a cultured gentleman, refined and courteous, yet equally militant all the way. Indeed, his passing has just been notified to us and both Doreen and I are still quite stunned. All that one can say is that the passing of a saint is glorious in the sight of God, and I know that such a scriptural quotation is fitting for Michael Sutcliffe.

Indeed, when I first asked this wonderful fellow his name he said: 'it's not a very favourable one. I share my surname with the Yorkshire ripper!' Ah yes! But then he shared his Christian name with the archangel Michael; the one who destroys the very devil himself in the metaphorical form of a dragon. Appropriately then, Michael has always been on the tail of the devil, and never more forcefully than in seeking to wipe out the whole vile business of animal cruelty. Wherever the devil has raised his ugly head Michael has been out to destroy him; and, somehow, I don't think Michael has left us all to fight on our own. Somehow, I very much feel that Michael, Hans, Vickie, Jill – and many others – have far from left us. I really sense that these are the saints of our, animal cause and that they are – as it were – 'looking down and spurring us on from their heavenly gallery overhead.

I can only speak for myself when I say that I am encouraged to fight the good fight on this earthly arena because now Michael is spurring me forward with: 'You can do it James; you can do it' (See Hebrews Chapter eleven in the New Testament). Yes friends, there are various shades of goodness. I think of those who practise virtue to avoid Hell or Purgatory to come. 'Are you ready for eternity?' They ask. 'Are you born again?' Or 'are you a convert and have you got priestly absolution?' It would appear as if many of them are riddled through with guilt and, therefore, petrified about what happens beyond the grave. Is it any wonder that so many try to get on the right side of a cleric? You've no idea how many perks a clerical collar gives one. A contrast, indeed, when you go without one! But the highest virtue I come across is amongst those who leave eternity in God's hands – that's if they believe in Him at all! But such folk are goodness itself without any future recompense in view. Yes, and the animal rights movement is full of them and I'm glad to be a Christian cleric amongst this altruistic salt of humanity

I feel that for us who had the honour to meet him, we can all say of Michael Sutcliffe - who was suddenly promoted to Glory at 84 years of age while encircled with correspondence ready for newspapers and government departments. Yes, when seriously afflicted with macular degeneration as well! – 'I thank my God for every remembrance of you':

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The above photo, casually snapped by Doreen, reveals Michael and I on a protest march through Salisbury, while on our way to hold a vigil outside the heavily guarded, Ministry Of Defence's headquarters at Porton Down. Here, in all fairness, the Special Police who were on guard proved most courteous and helpful to us