

## Signposts, Starlight and Butterflies

### *Further reflections on the Pilgrimage to Santiago*

"You reach Carrion de los Condes and stay in *Espiritu Santo*. Then you leave at 4 in the morning and walk beneath the Milky Way." Such was the advice of the *hospitalario* of the refuge in Cizur Minor, a small town in the suburbs of Pamplona. There's a lot in a name. One of the most evocative names for the pilgrimage used by the ancients was "The Milky Way". As the legend goes, medieval pilgrims avoiding the heat of the day, and needing a map for their journey, followed the faint spray of starlight from east to west to their destination. So, 300km later, I awoke at 4am, and leaving Carrion de los Condes in the pitch black. Walking out onto the Spanish plains, underneath a canopy of stars was awe-inspiring. From the Journal, day 15:

*And I am brought down to size. Down, not even to the size of a small, inconsequential human being, but even smaller. Walking across arid plains at night brings one down to a realisation of being infinitesimally small. City life, day-to-day, with it's bustling around is important, let's not forget that. But it can inflate the sense of one's own self-importance. Sure, I am important to some people, but the universe has existed quite happily in this grand state long before I was born, and will continue to exist long after I am gone."*

\* \* \*

Nowadays, the pilgrimage has pulled itself into the 21st century. From the moment the pilgrim enters Spain on the Pyrenees mountains on the first day, there is a sign - a stylized yellow scallop shell (the symbol of the pilgrimage) and a yellow arrow. At every junction or fork in the road, there is a sign. Some of these are municipal signs - provided by the local authority of the region, others are more creative - hand-painted signs, wayside crosses, small statues and places of devotion, spray-paint arrows on trees, and more lighthearted decoration - such as worn out pilgrim shoes or garlands of flowers. And these continue, for every stage, every twist and turn along the path. No map is needed to walk the Camino because the path is mapped out every step of the way.

\* \* \*

And there is one more guide, noticed only by those with eyes to see. Butterflies. The Milky Way may be the name from legend, but I prefer the epithet I coined - The Butterfly Trail. The pilgrimage, as I have already mentioned, covers every conceivable terrain, from near wilderness to city

motorways, but the vast majority of the path is along small footpaths; *sendero*, in Spanish. These are bordered with small hedgerows and often follow arable fields. On the wild flowers and herbs that grow next to the paths, in the heat of summer, butterflies flock in their multitude. Human disturbance as we walk on by, along with the butterflies' daily business of looking for nectar, causes an almost constant flutter around the pilgrim. A pilgrim I met called Heike, summed this up well in a quote from a book by a famous German comedian - Hape Kerkeling. Loosely translated, he commented, "whenever I lose my way, the butterflies disappear. Whenever I return to the path, the butterflies return."From the journal, day 26:

*On most of the paths I walk, butterflies flit around like a spirit of beauty. They add only beauty to the Camino, yet they are so important. Perhaps there are butterflies on every path we walk in life. Perhaps noticing the seemingly insignificant beauty helps us to know we are on the right path.*

\* \* \*

So there are three guides. Signposts, starlight and butterflies. Do we see signposts on the path of life? Well yes, sometimes, but we often seek them a long way off, when in reality they creep up on us, and often seem to remain illusive until the fork needs to be taken. When the fork in the road comes, we often seem to know which path to take. But what if we do not see the signs? After all, there was a pilgrimage for a thousand years - long before there was a sign at every junction. Can we take inspiration from the medieval navigation by starlight? No micro-management of direction but just a big, vague map that says "this sort-of direction". The Gospels help me. The teachings of Christ have much less the feel of an intricate step-by-step guide, but more like a broad overview. Live in the Kingdom, they say, and your life will look something like this. The Kingdom of Heaven is like...And then there is the beauty. The butterflies, easily missed, are noticed only by those with "eyes to see". Not a grand vision. Not a map, but a sign nonetheless. Look at the beauty all around. The people you know who are radiant; the mystique of a foggy dawn walking to work; a telephone conversation with an old friend. We may not know where we are going, perhaps even feel like we have fallen out of favour with the divine, but look at the butterflies. The trudge seems to go on forever. We have lost all sense of direction or purpose. Or it wasn't how it used to be. But nevertheless, every corner we turn, we may just catch a glimpse of beauty, hidden in the every day trudging along the path. So signposts, yes. They are there - often noticed at the last minute or even in retrospect. But could it be that our two most important guides are starlight and butterflies?

*Steve Hickman*

A Reading from *The Revelations of Mechtild of Magdeburg* also known as *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* [from Celebrating the Seasons by Robert Atwell]

Lord, my sin because of which I have lost you,  
Stands before my eyes like a huge mountain,  
Creating between us  
Darkness and distance.  
O Love, above all love  
Draw me to yourself again.

But Lord, the prospect of future falls  
Plague my mind:  
They beckon to me like the mouth of a fiery dragon  
Eager to swallow me whole.  
O my only Good, help me now  
That I may flow sinless towards you.

Lord, my earthly being lies before me  
As an acre of dust  
On which little good has grown.  
O sweet Jesus Christ,  
Send me now the fruitful rain of your humanity,  
And the gentle dew of the Holy Spirit  
That I may plead my heart's sorrow.

Your everlasting kingdom  
Lies open before my eyes  
Like a wedding feast,  
Inviting me to your everlasting banquet.  
O true lover  
Never cease to draw to your side this lovesick bride.  
All the gifts I have ever received from you  
Stand before me as a heavy reproach  
For this your highest gift humbles me to the dust.

Then God who gives us everything answered thus:  
'Your mountain of darkness shall be melted away by my love,  
Your enemies shall win no victory over you,  
Your acre has been scorched by the rays of the hot sun  
yet its fruit has not been destroyed.  
In my kingdom you will live as a new bride,  
There I will greet you with the kiss of love

And all my Godhead shall sweep through your soul;  
My three-fold being shall play ceaselessly  
In your two-fold heart.  
What place then has mourning?  
If you were to pray for a thousand years  
I would never give you cause  
For a single sigh.'

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## FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

**23<sup>rd</sup> February - 8<sup>th</sup> March**  
**London - the world's largest Fairtrade City**



On 23 October, London was declared the largest Fairtrade City in the world. This was the culmination of a drive launched in 2003 by the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and backed by current Mayor Boris Johnson, who described the declaration as 'super news.' Across the capital, 20 boroughs now have Fairtrade status, five of which are Olympic boroughs. Almost 1,000 retailers and 600 catering outlets now sell a range of products which carry the famous FAIRTRADE Mark.

But as seasoned campaigners will know, the work doesn't stop after declaration. Sophi Tranchell, chair of the Fairtrade London Steering Committee said:

'We hope that people all over London will continue to do their bit by joining their local campaign and getting their schools and workplaces to stock more Fairtrade Marked products.'

### Here are some ideas :

### Say it with Fairtrade Flowers

*The figures*

55,000

Workers directly employed in the industry, mainly young women

56.64

Average life expectancy for Kenyans

25%

Proportion of cut flowers sold in the EU that come from Kenya



### *The facts*

The first Fairtrade flowers arrived in the UK shops in 2004 and since then the market has grown rapidly, with 83 million stems sold in 2007, bringing enormous benefits to the farms they are sourced from. At Ravine Roses, Fairtrade certified since 2004, Koske Vincent, chair of the Joint Body, outlined the responsibilities of deciding how to invest the Fairtrade premium received by the workers.

‘It is a very democratic and transparent process. The Joint Body advertises to collect suggestions for the use of the premium – from the workers and also from the community, so that gives the elders their opportunity too. We look for projects against certain criteria – there must be no duplication, they must be manageable, most people must have voted for them, they must be sustainable.’

Those projects include funding further education for workers and a community shop where the costs of items such as bicycles, solar panels and sewing machines are shared between individuals and the Joint Body.

Workers on flower farms in Kenya face the same challenge of rising food prices as others across the world. The rising cost of food causes hardship for the poorest, because it is that on which they spend the majority (up to 80 per cent) of their income. Selling more of their flowers on the Fairtrade market would help workers like Koske deal with price rises, because being able to invest the Fairtrade premium on projects such as the community shop leaves more money for food from their wages. Although the demand for Fairtrade flowers is increasing, there is still a long way to go.

Shoppers in the UK are sometimes reluctant to buy cut flowers from outside the EU because of concerns about the treatment of workers and the environmental impact of growing and importing flowers. Cut flowers are the only Fairtrade product routinely air freighted, and *research suggests that growing and transporting flowers from countries such as Holland is far more energy intensive than those grown in and shipped from Kenya*. For more on this, please see [www.fairtrade.org.uk/qandaclimatechange](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/qandaclimatechange).

Under Fairtrade standards flower farms must commit to improving the working and living conditions of their workers beyond the industry’s statutory obligations; workers have the right to join a union for example and they are not allowed to be forced into excessive overtime to deal with peak periods such as Valentine’s Day. The Fairtrade premium makes a huge difference to communities otherwise deprived of opportunities we take for granted, such as secondary education. Finlay Flowers supplies roses and lilies to

Sainsburys and Co-op. Workers there chose to use the Fairtrade premium for materials and teacher training to thirty nursery schools in the area. It has also bought books for a secondary school library, provides bursaries for secondary school pupils and three university scholarships.

The opportunities Fairtrade gives workers in Kenya are needed now more than ever. The recent post election crisis displaced thousands of families across the country and highlighted the need for urgent investment in community development projects. At the peak of the violence that tore the country apart, Fairtrade certified flower farms provided shelter, water and security to many of the migrant workers in the worst hit areas. Now that stability has been restored the Fairtrade premium can play a powerful role in bringing the community together and replacing destroyed structures.

Emeritus Kasee, general manager at Ravine Roses says:

‘We wish more people would buy Fairtrade flowers. This will help us get more services like health clinics, better schools, sports facilities and much more than bringing an immediate improvement to our lives. It is the way to make the most difference in the rural areas.’

As well as the readymade bouquets for sale in supermarkets such as Tesco, Sainsburys and Waitrose, Kenyan grown Fairtrade flowers of all kinds can be found in mail order mixed bouquets from the likes of Next Directory, Interflora and Postal Bouquets.

Single stem Fairtrade flowers, used by florists to make bouquets, will be available in selected independent florists from 2009.

## **Fairtrade Recipes**

**Hot Dark Chocolate Fondant** [Make it before Lent or save for an Easter treat!]

Serves 4

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 12 minutes

125g (4½ oz) butter, diced plus extra for greasing

150g (5½ oz) Fairtrade caster sugar, plus extra for coating the ramekins

125g (4½ oz) Fairtrade dark chocolate, chopped

3 large eggs

35g (1¼ oz) plain flour



## **Method**

Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6  
Lightly butter four 100ml ramekins or other ovenproof dishes to a maximum size of 150ml (5fl oz) each, and coat the insides of each with 1 tsp caster sugar. Place the butter and chocolate in a bowl and set it over a pan of barely simmering water.  
Melt gently and set aside.  
Beat the remaining caster sugar and eggs together, then mix in the flour.  
Fold the chocolate into the egg mixture and pour into the ramekins.  
Bake in the oven for 10-12 minutes until risen.  
Serve immediately.

This recipe features in the *Fairtrade Everyday Cookbook*, published by Dorling Kindersley, alongside more than 100 mouthwatering dishes using Fairtrade ingredients, with contributions by supporters, producers and celebrities.



**Join thousands of people and eat a Fairtrade banana between noon on Friday 6 March to noon on Saturday 7 March to set a world record for the largest number of Fairtrade bananas eaten over a 24 hour period!**

The finale of Fairtrade Fortnight 2009 will be a huge event bringing together the whole Fairtrade movement, from producers to school children, with you, the Fairtrade campaigners at its heart. From noon on Friday 6 March to noon on Saturday 7 March, we will attempt to break the world record for Fairtrade banana eating. We were inspired by Ashbourne Fairtrade Town Initiative's award-winning and record-breaking banana eating event they staged in Fairtrade Fortnight 2008. All over the world, our producer groups, Fairtrade colleagues and supporters will be taking part.

## **Why bananas?**

Bananas symbolise the challenges in international trade. Many people who grow and harvest bananas endure unacceptable working and living conditions, including the suppression of independent trade unions. The workers' local environment is often ruined by toxic chemicals and intensive farming. But it's not just banana farmers who face these challenges, it's millions of farmers and workers in developing countries, on whom we rely for our food and drink and lifestyles. They are kept in poverty by unfair trade

rules and poor market access.

One in four bananas bought in the UK is Fairtrade. As part of our strategy, *Tipping the Balance*, we want to make half of all bananas sold in the UK Fairtrade by 2012. This world record attempt will make it absolutely clear to retailers – we all want Fairtrade bananas, for us, for producers, for the planet.

Please join us. We need everyone to play their part to make our message as powerful as possible. [http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get\\_involved](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get_involved)

## **Ready, set, GO FAIRTRADE!**

**London, Sunday 22 February, 11.00 - 16.00**

Remember last year's Fairtrade Fairground on London's South Bank? This year's launch event for Fairtrade Fortnight 2009 will be even bigger. Be there to enjoy the games and activities, stalls and samples, speeches, sports stars and celebrities.



2012 is Olympic year for the UK, so now's your chance to get in training alongside Olympic heroes, with our sporty games using Fairtrade products. If you're better at cheering from the sidelines, we need you there to support our NGO partners in their campaign for trade justice, and you'll also get the chance to meet a few of our producer partners from all over the world who will be chatting about the changes Fairtrade is helping them make for the future of their communities. If all that exercise and excitement gives you an appetite, there'll be a mouth watering selection of tasty Fairtrade treats to try and buy too.

We want to demonstrate what a passion there is for Fairtrade and make sure that as many Fairtrade products as possible are used in the London 2012 Games. This will show the rest of the world that here in the UK, we are committed to making a difference to farmers and workers in developing countries.

If a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker but the universe does not prove the existence of a great architect, then I consent to be called a fool. - *Francois M Voltaire*

Marie Curie  
Cancer Care



Join Marie Curie Cancer Care's biggest fundraising event The Great Daffodil Appeal. We want everyone to donate for a daffodil badge and

wear it to show their support for Marie Curie Nurses.

Daffodil Day this year is on **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March** we would be extremely grateful if you could donate two hours of your time to go out on the streets and help collect and cover North London in Daffodils! We need as many volunteers as possible so why not bring friends or family along to help you – you will have much more fun and raise twice as much money!

Call 0845 601 3107 or visit [www.mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil)



REGISTERED CHARITY NO 328213

This charitable trust for deprived and disadvantaged children is currently **looking for a new Treasurer**. This is not a hugely onerous job: Wednesday's Child is only a small trust which operates in the local North London area, and currently makes grants which average a total of about £25,000 each year. The role mainly involves keeping simple income and expenditure accounts, with no fixed assets or investments, and claiming Gift Aid repayments from the Revenue. Our current Treasurer (who is very sadly being forced to retire by ill-health) has done a splendid job of building a database of supporters, linked into an accounting software package. We are thus looking for someone with basic IT skills, and ideally (but not necessarily) a little accounting experience. Wednesday's Child is run entirely by volunteers, so this is a job which would be done from home and in your own time. The Treasurer would become *ex officio* a new Trustee and be able to play a full part in the selection of projects to be given grants.

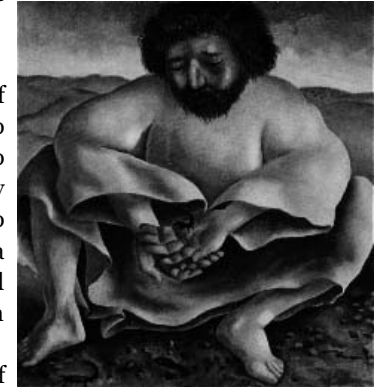
Would anyone who reads this – or anyone you know – be interested in taking on this worthwhile task to help local children in need? If so, or if you would like more information, please ring Gill Perrin on 020 7435 8103 or email [c.g.perrin@btopenworld.com](mailto:c.g.perrin@btopenworld.com) If you are not already familiar with Wednesday's Child, you can find out more by visiting our website: [www.wednesdayschild.org.uk](http://www.wednesdayschild.org.uk)

Gill Perrin

## Forty Days and Forty Nights

At the end of this month we enter the season of Lent: those 40 days when we follow Jesus into the wilderness and prepare ourselves to celebrate his Easter victory. In the last century an artist called Stanley Spencer planned to create a series of 40 paintings, each depicting a day in the wilderness. In the end he completed nine, one of which is this month's painting from 1939: 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions.'

The painting is owned by the Art Gallery of Western Australia but can be viewed online, along with the other 8 in the series, at [http://www.artgallery.wa.gov.au/collections/documents/spencer\\_conv.pdf](http://www.artgallery.wa.gov.au/collections/documents/spencer_conv.pdf)



Stanley Spencer lived and worked in the village of Cookham in Berkshire. The village and the local countryside were the setting for many of his paintings, and the village's inhabitants his models. Through their everyday life he was trying to glimpse and convey the transcendent. 'Angels and dirt' he called it: the divine seen in the ordinary. So in a painting of Christ carrying his cross, Jesus has the face of the local grocer.

Another villager modelled for this Jesus in the wilderness: a strong, hefty, broad figure. This is a great contrast to the Christ of stained glass windows who often seems too good to be part of our world. Here is real life: a large man filling the canvas with his head, his hands and his feet. This figure of Jesus comes as a shock: a very human model, ordinary with nothing handsome or special about him, apart from his tunic which seems to sprawl and undulate like the hills around. Here is a Jesus born into this world and one with this world.

There are two focal points in the painting – the neat, little scorpion and the massive, unkempt head contemplating each other. One is life in all its hefty reality; the other a tiny creature able to squeeze that life out by one swift flick of its tail.

Jesus is shown in the wilderness pondering the life and ministry called of him by God – a life and ministry that will take him from the countryside into the towns and villages and take him also to the death of Good Friday. Will he find the strength and renewal to embrace that ministry during his time in the desert? During Lent as we follow Jesus, we seek to live for God. That may

mean dying to all that separates us from God. He has a ministry, a calling for each of us. As we contemplate that calling in this season of Lent, we may find it is a calling that leads us through these 40 days to life and Easter life – we may find it a journey that calls us to die to self to find our God.

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### **Sign up for support**

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Andy Burnham, has recently announced that English Heritage, the Government's lead adviser on the historic environment, is making available £1.5 million to part-fund 30 Support Officers to help congregations of all faiths manage and maintain their historic places of worship.

It is now up to each diocese or group to draw up its own job description, depending on the particular needs of their historic buildings. No two Support Officer jobs will be exactly the same. Some will focus on essential repairs, others on opening churches for tourism, community projects and cultural events.

### **Free resource for delving deeper into the Bible released by Bible Society**

Christians can now reconnect with the Bible using a resource based on an ancient Scripture reading method - *Lectio Divina*.

*Lectio Divina* (Latin for 'spiritual reading') follows a four-step approach - reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. The resource was released by Bible Society to encourage Christians to reconnect with God through the Bible's life-changing message.

Available as a free download from Bible Society's website, the booklet takes the reader through Mark's Gospel week by week for a whole year. It puts Bible verses in the context they were written and, to help the reader understand. *Lectio Divina* also encourages personal and prayerful reflection on the passage.

The booklet is available free as a download from [www.biblesociety.org.uk/lectio](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/lectio)

### **Methodist Church calls for welfare with dignity**

Methodists have expressed concern for lone parents and people receiving incapacity benefits following the recent publication of the Welfare Reform White Paper.

While the proposals offer assistance to help some of the five million people

who claim benefits find employment, the Church warned the proposed bill would impose new conditions and potential sanctions to a wide range of vulnerable people.

Paul Morrison, Methodist Policy Adviser, said: "Research from the Rowntree Foundation and others shows that those who claim benefits exist on inadequate incomes and want opportunities to work. Although a small minority may abuse the system, a package containing a focus on coercion risks stigmatising the poorest and, at worst, not treating the benefit claimants with the dignity they deserve."

"The Church believes that those who are unable to work because of illness, disability or caring responsibilities are valued and equal members of society and deserve a benefit system which acknowledges this."

**Ishmael & Isaac:** The story of these two half-brothers is found very early in the Bible, in Genesis 17 and 21. Abraham was their father but while Isaac was Sarah's, Abraham's wife, son, Ishmael was the son of Sarah's maid, Hagar.

God had promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have children but after many years they were still childless. Sarah then suggested that Abraham should have children by her maid Hagar and as soon as Hagar was pregnant, the trouble started. Sarah was jealous of Hagar and forced Abraham to send her away. God protected Hagar and told her to return to Abraham's house. There her son Ishmael was born and God promised that he would be the progenitor of a great nation (17:20).

Some years later Abraham had a son by Sarah, Isaac, and the tensions in Abraham's home became unbearable. Ishmael mocked Isaac, and Sarah again demanded that Hagar and her son should be sent away. God provided for Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness and renewed his promise that Ishmael would be the father of a mighty nation.

Ishmael and Isaac were to have significant destinies. Ishmael became the father of the Arab nations while Isaac became the father of the nation of Israel. Down the long centuries, and at the present time, the conflict between Jews and Arabs is a constant reminder of how it all began. Abraham and Sarah failed to wait for God's promise to be realised and so Hagar and Ishmael enter the story. The two half-brothers grew up in a home full of tension, bitterness and hatred - and sadly, the legacy continues to this day

**Some miscellaneous observations on modern life...**

A job at the nursery can lead to a budding career.

A will is a dead giveaway.

According to my calculations, the problem doesn't exist.

Age doesn't always bring wisdom. Sometimes age comes alone.

**Wishful**

First friend: Your problem is that you are always wishing for what you haven't got.

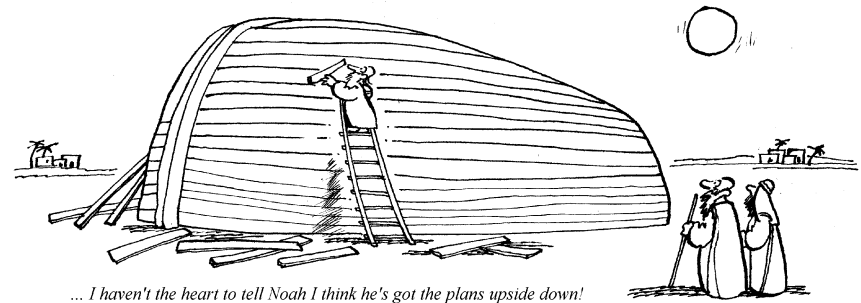
Second friend: Well, what else can one wish for?

**Efficient**

First lady: "My husband is an efficiency expert in a large office."

Second lady: "What does he do?"

First lady: "Well, if we women did it, they'd call it nagging."



... I haven't the heart to tell Noah I think he's got the plans upside down!