

Faith

“Ah, ma fé” we say without giving much thought to what that means. But belief is the heritage of everyone. Everyone has some kind of belief or other in their chosen way of life.

When I was a child, in the nineteen thirties, at my bedtime my mother used to sing the first verse of the hymn “Glory to thee my God this night ...” With that lovely tune in my heart I quickly went to sleep.,

At the time we lived in St Saviour’s Road and when I was older my mother used to take me, along with my brother, to the children’s services held by the Revd Frank Killer at St Mark’s Church. One fine day my mother couldn’t go and asked our nurse to take us to the church. But our nurse was a proud Scot and wouldn’t go into an Anglican church. She took us a little further on, crossed the road and we found ourselves in the Scottish church of St Andrew. The only difference I noticed was that I couldn’t kneel down. However on our return, when my mother discovered where we had been, she gave the poor girl a good telling off.

On Sunday afternoons, from time to time, I used to hear the sound of a nice band playing in the town. I didn’t quite know what it was but my mother said I couldn’t go there. She didn’t tell me why, but I am certain that it was the Salvation Army, off limits for good Anglicans!

When I was older, in about 1950 we lived in St Peter’s. At that time I had my bike and I decided to go and try another church. One morning I went to the catholic church of the Sacred Heart at St Aubin. When I got home it was I who had a fine telling off from my mother!

But with the passing of time and lots of prayers, Christians began to understand each other better. In 1971 I was a minister in England and I was invited to return to Jersey to take part in an Anglican-Methodist ecumenical project in the parish of St Brelade.

My partner in the undertaking was the Revd Gerald Stoddern and we got on really well. Even before my arrival in the island we decided to go and see examples of this ecumenical partnership in parishes in England in the company of our architect Mr David Barlow. We quickly agreed on the broad outlines of the plan for a centre at Les Quennevais and we decided that every member of the community should be invited to take part in the detailed preparations of the plan for the centre.

To our enormous delight Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother came to lay the first stone.

In five years the project was reaching its climax and it was time to celebrate the erection of the huge wooden cross which was to crown the building. We invited the musicians of the Salvation Army to the service but I didn’t tell them of my experience as a small child. A little later after the centre was opened two thousand people came each week to take part in the various activities.

Some years later, in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I was invited to preach at Mass at the Catholic church at St Clement. In my talk I mentioned my visit to the Sacred Heart all those years ago and commented on the changes in our relations as Christians. At the end of my sermon, for the first and last time in my life as a minister, the assembly applauded.