

Father Paul's Autobiography (continued)

In 1974, at the age of 22, he joined the Novitiate at Worth and the following year he began travelling up to London to study with the Jesuits at Heythrop College, which he did for five years. He greatly enjoyed Biblical studies, and failed to understand philosophy, but was well-trained in cycling up steep hills (from Three Bridges Station back to Worth). After his ordination in 1979, with his two companions in the Novitiate, Frs Alexander and James, he began to work in the Worth Parish, in West Hoathly and Sharpthorne, celebrating Mass in St Dunstan's each Sunday.

In 1984 he was allowed to go to Peru, to join other members of the Community (including Fr Alex and Fr Richard) working in a big parish in a poor area on the outskirts of Lima. Here he was privileged to meet and work with the poor, enjoying their warm friendship and admiring their strong faith and their courage. In 1990 the Worth Community asked the monks in Peru (and in Dulwich) to return to Worth, and he began to work again in the Worth Parish in Crawley Down, celebrating Mass each Sunday in the village Church of All Saints. In 1992 he was granted a sabbatical year to study the Psalms, first in Oxford, then, for five months, at Tantur College, on the boundary between Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories, overlooking Bethlehem. (The College was founded by Pope Paul VI to promote ecumenical dialogue among Christians, and to encourage understanding between different religions, especially Jews, Muslims and Christians). Here he witnessed the daily humiliation of Palestinians as they tried to get to work within Israel proper at the checkpoint just outside the gate of the College. He completed the year by visiting Brazil, looking especially at the relevance of Liberation Theology in the understanding of the Psalms. On his return to Worth he was made Parish Priest, which post he held for three years, before returning to Brazil, to live and work in a small Benedictine community in Goias (in Centre West). Here he did some pastoral work among farmers who, with the support of the local bishop, had occupied one of the many massive and unproductive estates in the area. Here he learned about the issues of Land Reform, and the work of the Church's Land Commission (CPT) and the Movement for Those Without Land (MST). He also tried to organise the community's liturgical music, and learned how to make Caipirinha (Brazil's national cocktail). In 2000 he returned to Worth and soon began to visit the Immigration Removal Centre (now two centres, Tinsley and Brook) by Gatwick Airport, visiting and praying with those detained by the Immigration Service. (In the UK this detention has no legal time limit, and so is the cause of much mental illness and distress among detainees). He collaborates closely with the Gatwick Visitors Group, which is supported by several Worth parishioners.

He is very happy to be working again in the parish, meeting many old friends and making new ones, and would be very pleased to be introduced to those whom he does not yet know.