

(See 12 January for the rescue of the sailor, Tony Bullimore.)

(See also 11 March re Dr Alexander Fleming.)

- 1 In his laboratory in St Mary's Hospital, London, Doctor Alexander Fleming was breeding some germs for his research. In a small round dish he was growing some staphylococcus bacteria - the cause of a number of diseases from boils to pneumonia.
- 2 When Fleming returned from holiday on this day in 1928 he saw that the lid of one of his bacteria cultures had fallen off. What looked like a bit of fluff had landed on the plate - it was some fungus that had blown in through the open window. Around that fungus all the bacteria had stopped growing or had been killed. The green fungus looked like mould on stale food, and Fleming set out to grow it by feeding it on more of the bacteria. He identified the fungus as a mould called 'penicillium notatum'.
- 3 Fleming's laboratory assistant had a sinus infection. Knowing that this mould had killed off the bacteria that caused various illnesses, the lab assistant volunteered to take some of the mould. His health improved.
- 4 In 1940, just after the start of the Second World War, two scientists working in Oxford isolated the active ingredient in that fungus, and called the medicine "penicillin", after the name of the mould. Penicillin was not harmful to humans, and it saved the lives of many soldiers during the Second World War. Powdered penicillin was sprinkled into the open wounds of soldiers who would otherwise have died. Penicillin can also be given in tablet form, or can be injected. It became known as "the miracle drug" and it has

saved the lives and suffering of many people since then.

- 5 Sir Alexander Fleming and the two other scientists were awarded a Nobel Prize in 1945. Fleming remembered how the fungus had blown in through his open window onto a plate whose top had fallen off. He acknowledged that chance and co-incidence had played a great part in this great discovery. He said: *"There are thousands of different moulds, and there are thousands of different bacteria. It was chance that that mould was in the right place at the right time."*
- 6 *Let us pray:*

**Lord, give us each day  
the wisdom to recognise  
which things are important,  
and which things are not.**

**Show us how best  
to use the time and talents  
you have given us.**

**Help us to use all opportunities wisely  
that we may give in service to others  
the good gifts we have received  
from you. Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in  
*'Praying Each Day of the Year'*  
a 3-volume book  
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine  
to research this topic further.

This material is part of  
the prayer and education website  
of the De La Salle Brothers  
in Great Britain:  
[www.prayingeachday.org](http://www.prayingeachday.org)