

The Carmelite News

SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER NUMBER, 1957

WHITEFRIARS · FAVERSHAM · KENT

Here is an account written by an Austrian journalist about the new Carmelite "Desert House" in Austria. The Carmelite Friars were originally hermits. The first rule was given to them on Mount Carmel by Albert, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, around 1210. When the Saracens overran the Holy Land some of these hermits came to Europe with the returning Crusaders. In spite of the fact that they settled down to ordinary missionary and parish work in Europe there always remained a strong yearning for the contemplative and heremitical life. Almost every century has seen some attempt to return to it. The most spectacular attempt was made under St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, the great Spanish Mystics. We are far enough away from the quarrels and dissensions of that period to admit that things went wrong. The old Carmelites of the Ancient Observance remained — that is us — but a new group called the Discalced Carmelites sprang up. The two Orders are separate,

even at the present day. More is the pity!

Under our present General, a new effort has been made to give expression to the yearning for solitude and contemplation which is always latent in the Order, and here is an account of the new monastery at Wolfnitz in Austria. The community is gathered from many countries. The rule is very strict, and while a man may join the community and remain with it all his life, he is bound by rule to remain at least a year.

This monastery will succeed because there are many who desire it. On the other hand if there is a strong call for it, similar monasteries may be founded in other countries.

It is remarkable how times change. When this same thing was attempted in the days of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, it split the Order in two. To-day, it hardly merits a column in the newspapers. It just shows how feelings have died down.

BROTHERS OF THE GREAT SILENCE.

WOLFNTZ is a flowing stream that comes down from the Carinthian Alps. A rough forest path borders it on either side, up through the valley, to a three-way fork. One path continues along the stream. The other is the only approach to the mountain village of Wolfnitz. It is very steep, scarcely more than a track, and annoyingly marked with the signpost "Private." A few hundred metres farther up, ten monks have taken up their quarters. They have withdrawn themselves to this Carinthian mountain corner, to be away from the hum of the world, to be in silence with God in the nature He has made.

The expression "village" admittedly sounds a little odd when used for Wolf-

nitz. An old church on the mountain slope, the rectory and a few farmhouses — that is all. The rest of the district is scattered far and wide amongst the woods and the fields, fields which even now are still ripe with ungathered corn. It seemed amazing to me however, that it could ripen at all at such a height, about 1,200 metres. A metre is three inches longer than a yard, so that makes the altitude 3,900 feet. Round about there is nothing but the uplands.

Yet, along comes a station wagon, jolting its way up the mountain path. At the wheel sits a monk in the brown habit of the Carmelites, Father Camillus Thale, parish priest of Wolfnitz. He is on his way to the nearest school. Without

a vehicle of some kind, he would be lost. Griffen, the nearest village is ten miles away. The nearest Post Office is about thirty miles. The only alternative to walking is a car. A short time ago, post was delivered to Wolfnitz twice a week, and it was safer to collect a telegram yourself. From the start of building there was continuous business with all sorts of places in the city. A telephone was indispensable.

So, Wolfnitz is connected by telephone with the outside world. It has electricity and, alongside an old time farmhouse, a hermitage of the most modern design. If this beautiful building did not bear a magnificent wooden cross over its portal, this hermitage of ten Carmelite monks could be mistaken for a sanatorium.

To be honest, I had imagined a hermitage; the hermitage of an Order, whose rules can rank amongst the severest. I had imagined something different—an austere building, with dark cells and latticed windows, with no mysterious habitation in sight. In reality, I found something different. I pulled up in amazement in front of an impressive, modern building, with large wide windows; a balcony in front of each window on the top storey, and green venetian blinds; a building with central heating and parquet floors; a model, white-tiled kitchen, and each cell with hot and cold water and electric light.

“Come inside,” says Father Philip, the Prior, “we have no secrets here.” He gently shut the white painted door behind us. A long, narrow corridor leads off to left and right. The skirtings are white, and the walls a delicate shade of ivory. A small staircase opposite to the door leads upstairs. The light floods in through the wide, high windows, and an almost oppressive silence hangs over the long hall.

A high, double door leads into the chapel. There the sunlight streaks in through the high, narrow pencil windows and from three sides of the church there is a beautiful view of the mountains. “Whoever prays here,” says the Prior, “must feel himself in the midst of nature. We have no wall decorations. The splendours of the view are our paintings.”

“This is really a place, where we can

still live according to the ancient statutes of our Order,” said Father Philip. “We were a long time looking for such a place, before we found Wolfnitz. We chose it for many reasons. First, here was extensive property and scarcely a more secluded or lonely situation in the whole of Austria. Look at the countryside. The nearest of the tiny farms is quite a distance from us, and beyond the monastery you will find only the loneliness of the mountains, the silence of the woods, and scarcely a human being. The ‘hustle and bustle of the world’ is far away below us in the valleys.”

“What we have built here is not a sanatorium for tired priests,” said the Prior with a smile. “Whoever comes here is bound to stay a full year. A full year’s cycle up here, in continuous prayer. He must undergo not only the warm, sunny period but also the hardships of winter in the mountains. Whoever, after a year, or several years of complete solitude in this hermitage, goes back to his former way of life, with its troubles and worries, should be able to carry out his work with renewed vigour. For this end, the monks spend as much time as possible alone in their cells.”

The cells are simple and unadorned although the architect designed them on modern lines. The highlights are the large, wide windows, and glass doors leading from the cells to each balcony, from which one can enjoy the unforgettable view of the Carinthian lowlands and the Border Mountains of Yugoslavia. All the cells face south, so that from morning to evening the sun lies over the balconies of the monastery.

Of the sixteen cells, one remains vacant. This is at the disposal of the General of the Order or his representative. Far away from the distractions of the world; in the solitude of their cells, in the stillness of the woods, the Carmelite monks can spend their days and nights in contemplation and prayer. They pray for us and for you; for those who cannot follow their example, and we rely on their prayers. They cannot carry on their apostolate without our help and we shall freely give our help to them—Mass stipends, donations, and our prayers, for a continuance of the contemplative life.

PROGRESS IN FATIMA.

A letter from Sister Elizabeth of the Institution of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Casa do Beato Nuno,
Cova da Iria,
Fatima, Portugal.
6th July, 1957.

Dear Father Elias,

Father Berthold will have written to thank you, I believe, for the literature you so kindly sent him, and has suggested that I should write to you as well, which I do with pleasure.

Since I wrote in May, we have gone back to very uncomfortable conditions, for the builders are in full charge. The house echoes to the sound of constant hammering, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. with one hour's break at midday. The Portuguese are certainly not afraid of work, and even go on after the "knock off" has sounded. They are very slow but very thorough, but having very little machinery or modern tools, seem to make little progress. The method here seems to be to pour in cement, to cover air-bricks with it, and then to spend days hammering it out to the shape required, and to hammer out whatever grooves are necessary for pipes or wires. The facing of the outer walls is thrown on with small trowels.

It would be no good to be in a hurry here! They have a certain obstinacy of conservatism, which, I am told, is hard to overcome. When they reach zero hour though, they rise like larks to it, and can perform veritable miracles, as they did here for the 12th—13th May. We are hoping and praying that the same thing will happen for the August Conference!

Another of their idiosyncracies is that they loathe to put the finishing touches to their work, so that hardly a room in the house is quite ready. The 5 nuns who are here, are most patient. They have 4 house and kitchen girls to help them, but they have almost given up the attempt to keep a part of the house clean—there are men pottering about everywhere—so they concentrate on the kitchen and on the sewing of household linen. Their own wear and tear needs quite a lot of time too, for my very practical eye has noticed that the nun's habit, with its overalls, aprons, sleeves, etc., needs much more attention than the laywoman's clothes.

My work for pilgrims is at a standstill

of course, for we cannot have many and Fatima is a strange place, in that the concentration of pilgrimages is always at the 12th and 13th of the month. We are expecting about 60 for this coming gathering, and another largish group at the end of the month. I spend my time learning Portuguese, but lack opportunities for practice in talking, except when I go out to the shops; only one of the nuns is Portuguese and she is the busiest of them. The Spanish ones do not seem to have a strong linguistic sense, but I am trying to teach them some English. I help them with the sewing in the afternoons.

The small, English speaking colony here has admitted me to their circle and been most kind. I learn all the local news through them, and am invited to meet any special English visitor, who may be invited to the house of the oldest English resident, whose daughter has entered the Carmelite Convent at Coimbra, and who is therefore, very interested in all matters Carmelite. She is very well disposed towards this house and will be a very good friend, I think. Naturally, I am not backward in making use of these opportunities.

There is a certain peace and dignity about Fatima which is a thing apart, and marks it off from the other Shrines that I know. Lourdes has been so overcrowded with shops and hotels that, outside the Sanctuary grounds, it is more like a tourist centre. Here there are no hotels, as yet, and the shops are all small and discreet. The land around the Sanctuary has been kept comparatively free, and, although there is building going on everywhere, it is all well spaced out. This house of Beato Nuno is beautifully placed on high ground and immediately behind the Basilica. There is no direct motor road to it, but many small field paths. Motor roads are being laid out in all directions, but the number that have been started and not completed is just amazing to the English mind. They just come to an end after a few hundred yards. Another has been started, and they will come back to finish the first some time in the future.

The Portuguese are a simple and contented people, with few needs and very child-like. It is good to hear them singing as they work, and to live with folk with

such a sane outlook on life.

I hope I haven't bored you with such a long screed, and hope too that you are much better, despite the heat. Here, it seems to be always tempered by a delightful breeze.

Every good wish to you and to the Community.

Yours very sincerely,

ELIZABETH M. YOUNG.

Our Coming Novenas

THE LITTLE FLOWER

Sept. 25th — Oct. 3rd

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

Sept. 29th — Oct. 6th

SAINT JUDE

Oct. 20th — Oct. 28th

WATERED DOWN

The reason why Americans have got such nice pink chubby faces, is because they have a habit of drinking half a pint of water on rising, another half a pint before breakfast and a pint at night. They are the most extensively irrigated

people in the world. I wonder if they get any sleep?

»O—O«

No man is so old but thinks he may live yet another year.

ST. JEROME.

»O—O«

THANKS.

Thanksgiving to St. Jude for favour received. MARY BRIFFA, MALTA.

Thanks to Sacred Heart and St. Jude for success in exams.

Y. A. AGIUS, MALTA.

Thanks to St. Jude for successful operation. H. CAMPBELL, LIVERPOOL.

Thanksgiving to St. Jude, Infant of Prague for favours received.

ANN McDONALD.

Thanks to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Jude for favours received.

M. HARWOOD.

Thanks to St. Jude and Blessed Martin for favours received. M. K. MALONEY.

Grateful thanks to St. Jude for favour received. N. CARBONE, MALTA.

Thanks to St. Jude for favour received.

ROSE FARRELL.

Thanksgiving to Our Lady of Mount Carmel for favours received.

E. SPRINGGAY.

Thanks to Infant Jesus of Prague for favour. E. DE NEGRI.

»O—O«

OUR BURSES.

	Already acknowledged.			Increase.		
				now		
The St. Jude Burse No. 2	...	£1117	6 8		£1153	6 8
Holy Child of Prague Burse	...	558	9 3		567	9 3
The Holy Face Burse	...	174	15 4		179	15 4
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Burse	...	253	18 6		263	18 6
Little Flower Burse	...	213	12 6		219	12 6
St. Anne Burse	...	66	3 6		72	3 6
St. Anthony Burse	...	139	5 6		143	5 6
St. Martha Burse	...	907	16 6		909	16 0
Sacred Heart Burse	...	624	15 0		630	15 0
St. Philomena Burse	...	33	8 6		37	8 6
Immaculate Conception B.V.M. Burse	...	61	15 0		65	15 0
Our Lady of Dolours Burse	...	21	0 6		22	0 6
St. Pius X Burse	...	14	10 0		16	10 0
Immaculate Heart of Mary Burse	...	24	13 6		27	13 6
Fr. Titus Brandsma Burse	...	16	7 6		19	7 6
St. Joseph Burse	...	13	10 0		16	10 0

Our Lady keep you!

Yours in Carmel

M. E. Lynch O.T.