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# THE CARMELITE NEWS



*From the National Shrine of Saint Jude*

## Dear Friend of Saint Jude

Since the lifting of restrictions in July, it has been good to be able to welcome pilgrims to the Shrine of Saint Jude. The sense of joy has been tangible and is visible in the smiling faces of so many now that the shrine and church are open each day (9am – 5pm) for quiet prayer and reflection. Visitors often comment on the unique sense of peace that is experienced here, and maybe this is because they find a space where they can be completely themselves – open, honest, humble, grateful and with hearts longing for the healing love that ultimately only God can give.

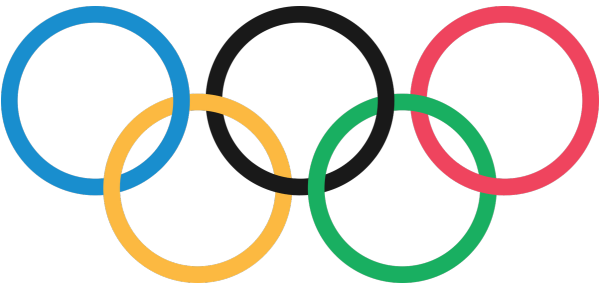
Even before we were able to re-open fully, many came to this tiny oasis simply to stroll in the beautiful Whitefriars Contemplative Garden or to sit on a bench in gentle meditation, knowing that prayer is not dependent on being physically in the shrine. As you know, a 'Garden of Hope' is also being cultivated ready for October. We can pray wherever we are; we need to be simple, silent and sincere, trusting that God knows, accepts and loves us even more than we do ourselves.

Perhaps in our own homes we might find ways to create a space that enables us to focus on the love of God transmitted through the person of Jesus and in and through those holy men and women who have gone before us whom we acknowledge as saints. A cross, an image of a saint, a bible, a lighted candle can help our minds and hearts to be focussed on and drawn to the One who loves us into a deeper experience of life. For those who are unable to visit this sacred space, the Carmelite community continues to pray and light candles before Saint Jude's statue for the intentions of all his friends.

We were pleased to celebrate Mass and pray on 4 September with the first organised group since the COVID-19 outbreak. Although a reduced number than previously, because we are still carefully observing social distancing, the Annual Sri Lankan Pilgrimage was a day of special celebration of the hope to which our patron directs us. We are now looking forward to celebrating the great feast of Saint Jude on 28 October and weekend of 30/31 October.

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## Ambassadors of hope



During the summer sports' enthusiasts were treated to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The spirit of dedication, camaraderie, pure focus and determination are always inspiring. The competing sportspersons were ambassadors for their sport and their country. Saint Paul, writing to Christians in the early Church, spoke of disciples of Jesus running the race with the determination of Olympians... but for a prize that neither withers nor fades. Saint Jude's sense of commitment to and focus on the person of Jesus was marked by a complete dedication and offering of himself. He trusted, became a preacher of Good News and continues today to be an icon of hope. We too are called to be ambassadors of hope.

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## Do not lose heart



Sometimes we can be successful in what we set out to achieve. However, most of us will also have experienced failure. From time to time we may feel disappointed that we are not able to live up to the goals we have set ourselves. We can wonder if our expectations of ourselves or of others are unrealistic. Even others' expectations of us can become crushing if we allow ourselves to live according to their demands. Projects, efforts, initiatives or even relationships in which we may have invested time, energy and commitment may appear to have come to nothing. We can be left feeling disheartened, disillusioned or even despairing.

Do you remember the story in the gospels of Peter and his companions working all night to catch fish without any success (Luke 5:1-11)? Jesus appears on the scene and invites them to try again, but in a different direction. He tells them to cast their nets into the deep water, and they are amazed at the resulting catch of fish. Here at the Shrine of Saint Jude we thank God for the amazing generosity of our benefactors who enable your Carmelite brothers to support our ministries, projects and appeals in this country and indeed around the world.

In every situation, we as disciples of Christ, need to listen to his voice and act on what he says. At the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-11), when the wine had run out, the mother of Jesus tells the stewards to "do whatever he tells you". Again, people are amazed. I wonder if we sometimes measure success by our own standards and according to our own efforts without reference to what God is asking of us. If we include a real openness to God in all our decision-making, planning and action, perhaps we will be surprised at what happens. If we make a regular prayerful space for God in everything we do, perhaps like Peter we will hear the call to find a new way, a new direction, a new hope: "put out into deep waters". So often we are limited by our own restricted vision, but when we allow God's vision to be at the centre of all that we are and do, amazing things become possible. So, let's make a resolution to do whatever God tells us and allow ourselves to be surprised.

Apparent or real failure does not need to have the last word, because God will be with us in every circumstance and situation. As friends of Jude know, even when situations are so very challenging and difficult, God can and will help us through them. Jesus transformed water into wine at Cana. The fruitless night's labour of Peter and his fellow fishermen led them to become his strong disciples. They witnessed the abundant catch of fish that ensued when they followed the instruction of the man who would become their life-guide and Lord. God called the disheartened Peter to change direction and work alongside Jesus. Peter's life and mission would now involve drawing people into the nets of God's loving embrace and the kingdom of justice and peace.

For the person of faith, God is constantly at work in all kinds of unpromising situations, bringing life out of loss and failure, and order out of chaos. Let's not give in to discouragement. We need to keep putting out into the deep water that Jesus will show us. We can trust in his direction and presence with us because we know that he is faithful to his word.

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## Memorial Mass for Father Kevin



In our last newsletter, we announced the death of our brother and friend, Father Kevin Alban, O.Carm. On 11 August, Carmelite friars from Aylesford, Cheltenham and Faversham (pictured with Mrs Alban above) travelled to Teignmouth in Devon to join with parishioners at Our Lady and Saint Patrick's Church for a Memorial Mass for Father Kevin. Father Kevin spent many of his formative years there where his faith was nurtured. It is the church in which his mother, Yvonne, is a very much-loved member. It was good to be with her, her friends and their incredibly warm and welcoming Parish Priest, Father Mark Skelton. Please continue to pray for the repose of the soul of Father Kevin and pray for his family and friends during this time of grieving.

As we move from summer to autumn we might reflect on the seasons of our lives. Just as the natural seasons of the year mark transitions from one time of the year to another, so our lives – physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual – follow a pattern of change and development. There is a letting go with each season of the human heart, in order to come to greater freedom and a deeper experience of life in God. Each human season prepares us for and opens us to the next. In November we pray with greater intensity for all those who have died, entrusting them to new life in God. For the Christian, death opens us up to the horizon of the Resurrection.

Jesus' call to his disciples was rooted in his relationship with God. It was inspired by the same Spirit of God that he passed on to his disciples. If we stay close to him, we too will be agents, ambassadors of the same healing and peace that he gave to his followers. Where there is darkness, we ourselves will be light; where there is fear, we will be courage; where there is despair, we will be hope.... because the power of the Resurrection, the very life of Jesus, will be within us. Our ultimate vision is of life in and with God whom we know to be both the source and fulfilment of all goodness, truth and beauty.

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## Carmelite Milestones



Friends, family and friars of the British Province of Carmelites gathered on 11 September to witness and celebrate the Profession of Solemn Vows of Brother Richard Green, O.Carm (pictured above).

This is a very important step for any Carmelite. Coming with a doctorate in physics, Brother Richard began his formal Carmelite journey when he became a novice in 2015. Since that time, he has reflected, prayed and studied and has been involved with different pastoral ministries. After studying philosophy in this country, he spent the past three years at the Gregorian University in Rome studying theology.

We were, of course, delighted when we heard of his desire now to commit himself for life fully and without reservation to prayer, community and service in the Church as a Carmelite. Soon he will begin post-graduate studies in theology in London and will also develop new pastoral skills. Please remember him often in your prayers.

The following day, 12 September, Matthew Janvier was received into the European Carmelite Novitiate in Salamanca, Spain. Originally from Sheffield, Matthew is a teacher, a talented musician and has great skills in icon writing and other forms of art. Before asking to be admitted to the Carmelite Novitiate, Matthew spent time getting to know Carmelites in different communities. Please also pray for him and the other men in the Novitiate from different countries as they seek to do God's will in their lives.

Another milestone for the Carmelites was on 1 September when John Toryusen took up a newly created post as Carmelite Young People and Formation Coordinator. John will be responsible for encouraging the development of new opportunities for young people of different ages to engage with their personal spiritual journey and to help them develop tools that will open them to discover God's will in their lives. He will be helped in this endeavour by Carmelites and a group of young adults who will form a community.

John is a married man with his own family and comes from a very strong background in this ministry, having worked for the past twenty years with the Archdiocese of Southwark as its Director of Catholic Youth Services. John has had a long association with the Carmelites, and we are delighted that he has now taken on this new and exciting role. Add him and this project to your daily prayers please.

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## Provincial Chapter



As this newsletter begins to arrive in your inbox, the British Province of Carmelites have just completed their Provincial Chapter. This is something that happens every three years but was delayed for a year this time because of Covid. We looked back with thanksgiving for all that God has done over the past while and tried together to discern how God wishes us to move forward in our efforts to grow as praying communities serving God's people. Be sure that all the friends of Saint Jude were very much in our prayer.

# Thank you for your support



The generosity of your heartfelt prayer and donations support our friars, those who work closely with us and our efforts to share God's love in so many ways. You make things possible. Over the coming while, you will be supporting Matthew in his novitiate in Spain, Richard in his ongoing preparations for ministry, the new Young People's project coordinated by John, our support of refugee families resettling in this country (of which I may write more next time), as well as our commitment to continue supporting missionary efforts in other countries. We thank you. We thank God, and we always remember that God is never outdone in generosity. A jaded mindset does not countenance possibility, but because you are a friend of Saint Jude and a friend of the Carmelites, your spirit of hope makes you an ambassador and opens your mind and heart to God's will and future.

Those who hope always communicate freshness and create opportunities for others. Such is the dazzling promise to which we are drawn as we place our trust in God.

United in prayer,

Fr. Brendan Grady, O.Carm.

Chaplain to the Shrine



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