



THE CARMELITE NEWS



NATIONAL SHRINE OF SAINT JUDE

DIAMOND JUBILEE 1955 - 2015



SPRING 2015

Dear Friend of Saint Jude

It only seems five minutes since I was finishing off my last letter to you, and already Matt in the Shrine Office is at my heels reminding me that Easter is early this year! At the moment there is little sign that Spring is on the way, but I am sure that it won't be long before new life is pushing its way through the earth and buds are appearing on the trees.

Our friends the bees

It is amazing how small happenings can bring big changes to our lives. Let me share a little story with you... Some five or six years ago I went into the friary kitchen to make myself an afternoon cup of tea. Whilst I was waiting for the kettle to boil I noticed a solitary bee buzzing in the window, wanting to be free but not getting very far (now there's a metaphor for the human condition!). Mindful of the need to care for our bees I carefully caught it in a drinking glass with a piece of card to cover the top, just in case it didn't appreciate that I was trying to be a helpful human! So, balancing my bee in a glass with one hand and negotiating the back door into garden with the other, I went outdoors to let her go. Now you may be wondering how we had managed to get so friendly that I knew it was a she not a he? More of that later...

Anyway, there was I feeling very ecological and not a little pleased with myself, when I heard one of my Carmelite brothers shout "Never mind that one! What about those?" His office overlooked the garden, and when I looked to where he was pointing I could see a swarm of bees neatly huddled into a perfect cone on the branch of our tree. He had watched the swarm come into the garden and settle on the tree. Well, we did the only sensible thing and found the number of a local beekeeper, who said that he would be round to collect them.



Sure enough, within the hour, the doorbell rang and there was a man dressed, as you would expect, in a beekeeping suit. He duly gathered the bees into a sort of miniature hive. I was fascinated by the whole process, as were my Carmelite brothers. This led the beekeeper to remark how odd we were. He said that most times when he was called to collect a swarm, the callers were indoors with the windows locked, hiding behind the sofa till they were gone. We, on the other hand, were out in the garden watching what was going on. I said that I was fascinated. It was then that he made the fateful comment: "Well, if you would like to know more, and maybe keep bees yourself, I can help you get started." The rest, as they say, is history. Later that year my first bees arrived, and I now have two hives.

Now I am sure you are wondering how I know that my lone bee in the kitchen window was a she-bee and not a he-bee! It's because she was a worker bee, and it may well come as little surprise to many of you to learn that pretty much all the work in a hive is down to the she-bees. The he-bees are only around in the Summer, and they spend all their time eating, lazing around with their mates, and generally just waiting for the chance of a little romance with a passing queen bee. 'Nothing strange or marvellous there' I can here you murmur!

So over the years I have been learning the ways of bees or, better put, having to let the bees teach me themselves. They have some important lessons for us which I try to take to heart in other things. Let me share some with you:

Slow down

This is the first lesson to learn. So many of us, and those around us, are in such a hurry. My job as the Provincial of the Carmelite Friars keeps me very busy, and the temptation is to rush things through. I learned early on that bees do not appreciate a rushed visit and, as you can imagine, they have their own way of letting you know!

Be attentive

The bees expect to be the sole focus of your activity. Lack of attention causes carelessness and, if you are careless, you begin to hurt the bees. Seeing so many bees one could be tempted to think that with such a number (over 50,000 in one hive at the height of the summer) one bee here or there doesn't really matter. Yet each one has her (and yes sometimes even his) own job and place.

As Cardinal Newman famously said: “God has assigned to each of us a work that God has given to nobody else”. Being attentive brings me to my next lesson which is...

Be gentle

The gentler you are then the more rewarding the experience is for all concerned, and a whole new world opens up which is the mystery of life in the hive. The great Fathers and Mothers in the Early Church often used bees to illustrate many of the virtues, and in a less technological world than ours bees gave the wax to make candles to lighten the darkness, and honey for sweetness. Not to mention, of course, the mead blend of ale and honey for which medieval monasteries were famous.

Like Spiritual Bees

The Carmelite Order to which I belong, and which has the care of the National Shrine of Saint Jude, began on Mount Carmel in Palestine. An early European pilgrim, Jacques de Vitri, who visited Carmel and met the hermit brothers living there, described us as being like ‘spiritual bees making sweet honey for the Lord’. In those days our Order wore a striped cloak, and so I suppose seeing the brothers going in and out of their hermit cells in their stripy mantles brought to his mind the image of bees in the hive. I like to think that having taken up beekeeping I am not too far from the Carmelite Tradition.

Thank you

From the bottom of our hearts thank you for all of your great generosity, both in prayerful as well as in material support. With times so hard it is amazing just how generous people are. Often in my ministry as a priest I find myself listening to people talking about their lives and looking for a word of encouragement, or in the beautiful Sacrament of Reconciliation a word of healing and forgiveness. Sometimes I am so completely at a loss as to how to reply that I hardly seem to be able to string two or three words together. It is amazing – and any priest will tell you this – how people come back later to say thank you, share how helpful your words were, and how it was just what they needed to hear.



What is happening in the mystery of this encounter? It most certainly isn't that the priest has suddenly become wise with a perfect answer! I firmly believe that this is one of the ways in which God uses your prayer. When you offer your prayers and, indeed, your sacrifices and sufferings for the Carmelites and our ministries, you give a gift to God which God can then use. Somewhere between my stumbling words and the person I am speaking to, your prayer comes in and gives God the space needed so that the effect in the heart of the person is far beyond what I could hope to achieve on my own.

So it is that when God gathers us all together in heaven, and we see clearly in the light of God's love just how we have been able to help each other on the journey, don't be surprised if a total stranger comes up and says "Ah, it was you – Thank you!", and you remember perhaps the prayer or act of kindness which you offered up.

Mozambique

God is never outdone in generosity. Thank you, and be assured of a daily remembrance in my prayers, those of all our brothers, and those whom your legacies, donations and Mass stipends reach through the National Shrine of Saint Jude.

Just before Christmas I had a letter from our Father General in Rome asking that we Carmelites in Britain help pay for the completion of a house for our new brothers in Mozambique to live in. The Carmelite presence in Mozambique is very young and the nation is still recovering from the effects of a long civil war. So the appeal isn't for a new luxury house to replace something older – it was to provide a house, full-stop! At the moment our brothers there do not have a house where they can live together as Carmelites do, to pray the Divine Office and to celebrate the Eucharist. We were able to give a speedy answer saying that we would help. Father General has asked that I pass on his gratitude, and that of the brothers in Mozambique, to those who have made this possible which I now do.

As a small extra token of thanks, those who are the lucky winners in our Summer raffle this year will also receive a jar of honey from my bees!

Anniversaries and Jubilees

For some reason we know that anniversaries of births or marriages and other significant events are more than just another day, especially when we get to figures like 25th, 40th, 50th and 60th. We give these anniversaries names like silver, ruby, golden and diamond, naming them for precious metals and jewels. These are normally times of celebration and rejoicing. In our Carmelite communities we do the same for anniversaries of our brothers' religious profession and ordination.

2015 Jubilee Year

In the course of this year we will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the National Shrine of Saint Jude. Father Elias Lynch was the Carmelite friar responsible, and I love the way in which he tells the story of how this came about. Below you can hear him tell the tale in his own words. As you will see, he is not so much the founder of the Shrine as a man of faith who became an instrument of God who had decided that Saint Jude had work to do in our increasingly complex world.

Just to give a little context, in those days one of the ways in which Fr. Elias was trying to raise funds to support the Carmelite ministries and to educate our new brothers for service was through producing holy pictures, and he had a small printing press here in Faversham for that purpose. Fr. Elias wrote...

"I did not know much about the devotion to Saint Jude when I started producing religious pictures. They were the usually accepted ones – the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Conception and so on – in black and white, not very good, nothing original. In fact, we were rather ashamed of them. Printing is a peculiar job. You produce a whole page of print and then you feel you ought to lighten it up a little bit. So, you put in a picture. We had rotten paper during the war. Anyway, we produced black and white pictures of the saints, in connection with the Novenas we sent out during the year.

Once you start producing religious pictures, people get the idea that you are unlimited in your range. They think that you can supply any religious picture they like to name. Our great trouble was Saint Jude, the Apostle and Martyr, patron of hopeless cases. People used to write to us and say, "Have you got a picture of Saint Jude?" Now, that poses a difficulty. He, or she,

is a well-meaning religious person. If you haven't got a picture of Saint Jude, you have to write back and say "No". That means a personal letter and costs 3d. It involves personal correspondence. In the end, we decided that the only way out was to print a large number of pictures of Saint Jude and send them out to everybody. I found an old German picture of Saint Jude with a club big enough to murder anyone, and I reproduced a quarter of a million pictures of Saint Jude and his club, with prayers in honour of Saint Jude, and sent them out broadcast to all who called on us.

I got more than a surprise. I was caught in a tidal wave. People started sending in Masses of thanksgiving to Saint Jude; donations to the Shrine of Saint Jude – which didn't exist; petitions to the Shrine of Saint Jude – which didn't exist. Start dealing with a movement like that and you have got something on your hands. The upshot of it was that we decided to create a Shrine of Saint Jude, Apostle and Martyr, patron of hopeless cases, or as some people like to say, patron of difficult cases. The trouble was to build it; to put something there that would be recognisable as a Shrine. The war ended. We got building plans, and started work. After two years - it is there."

And here it still is, 60 years later. I really love that expression "caught in a tidal wave"! A sure sign that the hand of God was on the project. As we friends of Saint Jude know only too well, it is a tide of grace which still flows most especially to those in most need.

A Jewel

At the solemn dedication 60 years ago, Archbishop Cyril Cowderoy of Southwark referred to the Shrine as a "Jewel" in the Archdiocese. I am happy to share with you that this year Archbishop Peter Smith will be coming to celebrate the Mass of Thanksgiving on the Feast of Saint Jude. We will keep you informed of what will be happening and when, so that even if you are unable to join us in person we can be united in prayer.

In my next letter I will share with you the moving story of how the statue of Saint Jude came to be in the Shrine.

Until Next Time

Well this time I seem to have wandered on somewhat; that is the problem when you give someone the chance to talk about their hobby! Before I go here's hopefully a smile for you...

Little Philip was spending the weekend with his grandmother after a particularly trying week at infant school. His grandma decided to take him to the park on Saturday morning. It had been snowing all night and everything looked beautiful.

His grandma commented, 'Doesn't it look like an artist painted this scenery? Did you know God painted this just for you?'

'Yes,' replied Philip, 'God did it. And he did it left-handed.'

This confused his grandmother so she asked him, 'What makes you say God did this with his left hand?' 'Well,' said the lad, 'he must have done, because we learned at church last week that Jesus sits on God's right hand.'

And so, until we meet again, may God bless you and all those who are dear to you, and may Our Lady of Mount Carmel shelter you beneath the mantle of her special protection.

In Carmel,



Fr. Tony Lester, O.Carm., Prior Provincial

Remember our Novenas

Novena to Saint Joseph: 11 - 19 March 2015

Novena for Easter: 28 March - 5 April 2015

Novena to Saint Jude: 5 - 13 May 2015

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