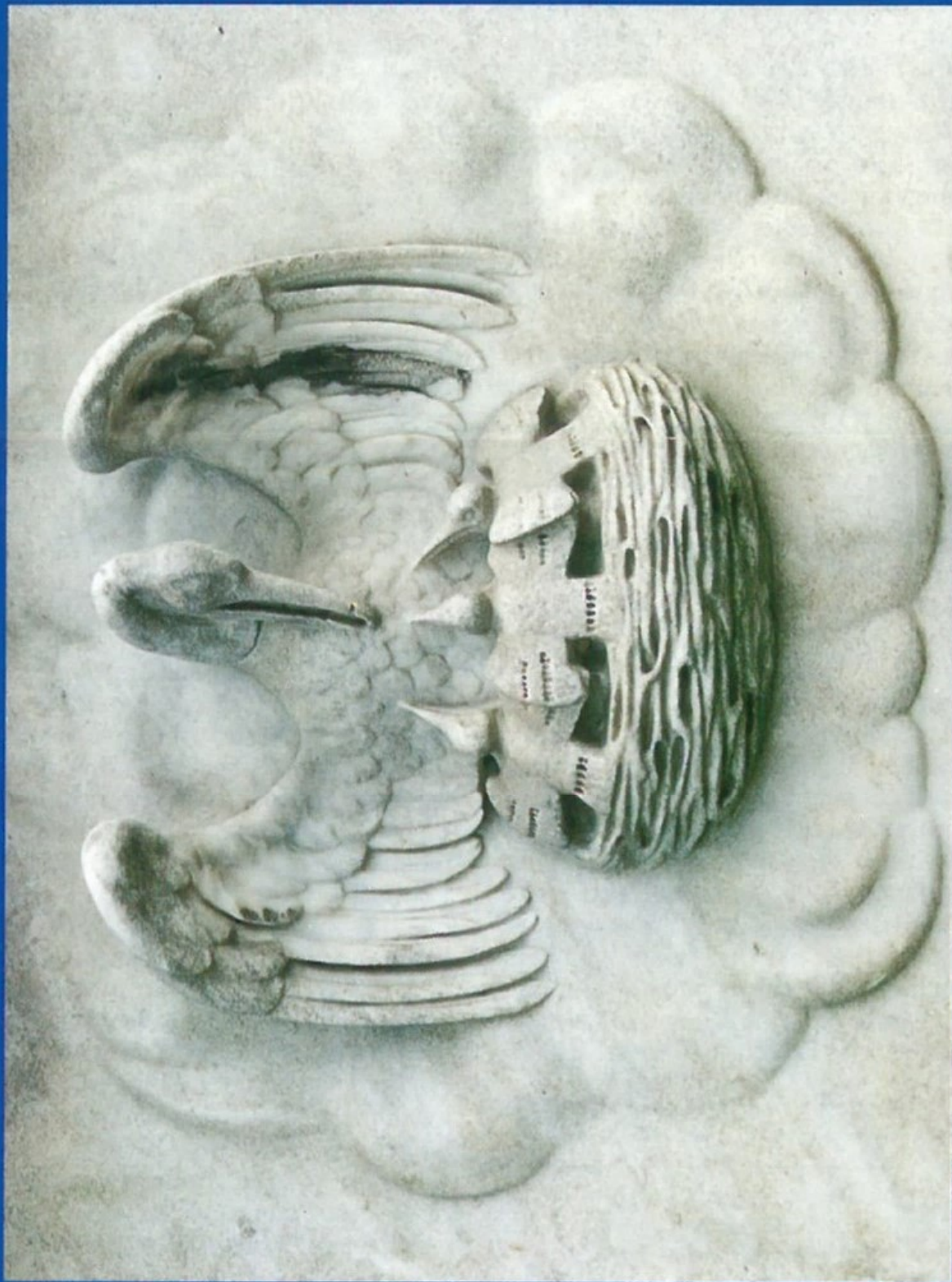


The Carmelite News



AUGUST 1993



THE PELICAN IN HER PIETY

SOME CARMELITE NEWS

Well, it isn't actually so new. In the last few years there has been some reorganization of the structure of the Order of Carmelites for Government and communication. The old structure grouped the Provinces together by language - but, to give just one obvious example of the problems this caused, Ireland and the UK are a long way from Australia, and from the USA even though we all speak roughly the same language. It was certainly easy to communicate, IF you ever met!

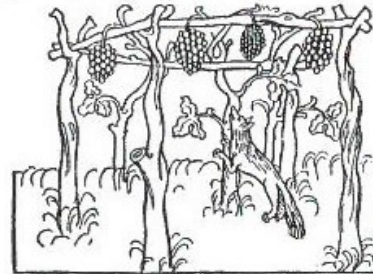
So after a lot of debate the Provinces are now grouped more by geography, so it is easier to meet and work together, but less easy to communicate without misunderstanding. And one of the first fruits of this reorganisation was a meeting of representatives of the Justice & Peace groups of each of the Provinces in the new North European Region. And so it was that three Carmelites from the Irish Province and three (including me) from the Anglo-Welsh Province met last November in Bamberg (in Germany) with representatives from the Dutch Province, the two German Provinces, the Polish Province and the newly emerging Czech Province. What we discussed and planned I will tell you about another time: what I want to speak of now is something about the Carmelite Priory in Bamberg where we all stayed. The welcome we received and the hospitality we were offered could not have been better. Nothing was too much trouble for our hosts to ensure that everything went smoothly for our meetings. After our work - and it was quite hard going trying to understand each other as the meetings were conducted in various sorts of English - each evening in the recreation room we were plied with bread and butter, cheese,



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pâté, sausages and a variety of very fine Bavarian beers, and we talked and exchanged stories and even sang. It was all very enjoyable, but what caught my eye in the recreation room was the decoration on the window shutters. There were lots of simple designs and very bright colours, all very attractive but because the shutters were folded back I couldn't make out what the pictures actually were. But on our last night one of the older German Carmelites - perhaps to stop a draft - closed the shutters of one window and, immediately I saw the picture complete, I realised it was a modern version of this one which was engraved in 1477:



It is an illustration of the fable of the Fox and Grapes (which because he couldn't reach them he said must be sour!) from Aesop's Fables. And when later all the shutters were closed each of the four windows was a vividly coloured picture of one of the fables.

LEARNING FROM NATURE

The idea of looking at how animals (or even plants) behave, and drawing a moral has always attracted human beings, especially those who tried to teach the young, because having talking animals interested their charges and almost unconsciously got the message across. So when Caxton first began printing books in London with the first successful commercial printing press to use moveable type, one of the books he knew would be a best-seller was Aesop's Fables. He translated them himself from a French version which was itself a translation from the first big collection of the many fables that circulated under the name Aesop and which was made in 1477 by a German called Steinhöwel. He made his collection from some Latin prose versions by a man called Romulus (who had made his version

about A.D.100 from some verse fables by Phaedrus). To this basic collection Caxton added 76 more from various sources, including 27 from a Latin writer called Avianus (about A.D. 400) who was translating from the Greek version by Babrius (about A.D. 80). (Just to make matters more complicated we cannot say for sure that any of them are actually by Aesop, even if he really existed!) Out of all this Caxton made his edition with 167 fables by Aesop (perhaps!) and printed them - with the famous engravings - in 1483. And they have been in print ever since.

Here is Caxton's version of the story of the Ant and the Grasshopper with its illustration. Caxton's Aesop, Book 4, Fable xvij: of the Ant and of the Sygale (= Grasshopper) (Hint: read this out loud)

It is good to purveye hym self in the somer season of suche thynges wherof he shalle myster and have nede in wynter season as thow mayst see by this present fable of the sygalle (= grasshopper) whiche in the wynter tyme went and demaunded of the ant somme of her Corne for to ete. And thenne the Ant sayd to the sygall: what hast thow done al the somer last passed? And the sygalle ansuerd: I have songe. And after sayd the ante to her: Of my corne shalt not thou none have, and yf thow hast songe alle the somer, daunse now in wynter.



And therefore there is one tyme for to doo some labour and werk, and one tyme to have rest. For he that werketh not ne (= nor) doth no good shal have ofte(n) at his teeth grete cold, and lacke at his nede. This very same moral was drawn from the diligent industry of the ant many centuries earlier in the Bible. In the book of Proverbs, chapter 30, verses 24-25 we read "Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise: the ants are a people not

strong, yet they provide their food in the Summer." And in that far distant age even the plants talked to make a moral fable. In the baked clay tablets from Akkadia there is a fable in which the Tamarisk and the Date Palm debate with was most useful to mankind (proving the point that both are, in different ways) and in the Good Book (Judges 9:7-15) there is a dispute among the trees about which one should be king of the forest. Now we know that animals and plants do not talk: but in the fables they only say things that seem in character - what they might well say if they could speak. And this is because they are fairly common things done and said by common animals and plants that everyone can see for themselves. In other words, a good fable keeps its feet firmly on the ground. And quite a few of the characters in the fables were used by artists as symbols of virtues to be imitated or vices to be avoided. There are countless pictures and carvings in which in the background are found the animals from the fables reminding us of the point of the picture, like ants congratulating someone on their industry and foresight, or grasshoppers warning of the danger of wasting opportunity in idle pleasure.

But the medieval writers often repeated stories from ancient sources that they did not understand because the creatures concerned were rare, indeed often never seen at all by the writers. So there was no check on their imagination and the most incredible things were repeated and improved upon in the telling. Thus an ancient brief description of the Indian Rhinoceros by a Greek writer eventually became the fabulous UNICORN, whose alleged behaviour (strong and wild, but tamable by a virgin) led it to be used as a symbol both of Christ, and of Our Lady, depending on which part of the incredible story woven around this animal you emphasised.

The **pelican** provides a nice example of a misunderstanding of an animal (because rarely seen close to) becoming the chief symbolic feature. The long beak of the white pelican has underneath it a red sack which serves as a container for the small fish that it feeds to its young. In the process of feeding them, the bird presses the sack

against its neck in such a way that it seems to open its breast with its bill. The reddish tinge of its breast plumage and the redness of the tip of the beak fostered the notion that it actually drew blood from its own breast. And this version of events (slightly elaborated upon) was incorporated into an important book (called **Physiologus**) which was widely copied in the middle ages, giving this account: *The little pelicans strike their parents (actually calling to be fed) and the father strikes them back, killing them. But on the third day the mother pelican strikes and opens her breast and sprinkles blood over her young. In this way they are revived and made well. So our Lord Jesus Christ says also through the prophet Isaiah: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me." (Is. 1:2) We struck God by serving the creature rather than the Creator. Therefore he deigned to ascend the cross, and when his side was pierced, blood and water gushed forth unto our salvation and eternal life.*

Under the influence of the **Physiologus** and books based on it, the pelican became considered an apt symbol of Christ the Redeemer, and has had a wide usage in Christian literature and the decoration of Churches. As examples it will do to mention just the passing reference in Dante's *Paradiso* (XXV.113) and the sixth verse (omitted in most hymn books today) of Thomas Aquinas' hymn *Adoro te, devote* which we know as *Godhead here in hiding*. Because it is usually omitted I give it here in full:

*Pie pellicane, Jesu Domine,
Me immundum munda tuo sanguine:
Cuius una stilla salvum facere
Totum mundum quit ab omni scelere.*

*(O Holy Pelican,
O Jesus, Lord,
wash away my
uncleanness in
your blood, of
which one drop
would suffice to*

free the whole world of its sin.) In Christian art this image is employed from the Middle Ages but especially in the Renaissance and

in the Baroque period.

From the late Middle Ages, the symbolism changed slightly as the pictures themselves became misunderstood, and the pelican, seen as if feeding, not reviving, its young with its own blood, became a symbol specifically of the Eucharist, and so especially in baroque art the pelican is found as a decoration on altars, pyxes, chalices, tabernacle doors, antependia (if you ever see such a thing today!) and humeral veils (also becoming rarer!). (Occasionally it is used as a symbol of any self-sacrificing individual such as a benefactor. For example, the badge of one of the "Houses" into which my secondary school was divided for purposes of competition was the pelican "feeding" its young with its own blood. This was a reference to the man after whom the House was named and who had kept the school going at some difficult time in the past out of his own pocket. But such uses are rare. Certainly in religious art the pelican symbolises Christ.)

THE POINT, AT LAST

The picture of the pelican feeding its young with its own blood sometimes turns up on coats of arms, and following the heraldic fashion has a special phrase to describe it. It is referred to as the pelican "in her piety". Which gets us to the picture on the front cover. The picture is of part of a grave-stone. Here the pelican in her piety clearly symbolises our receiving new life (fully entered after our death) coming from the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, and him risen again.

And we can apply that redeeming, life-

giving grace to those who have died but not yet achieved the beatific vision by our prayers

FORTHCOMING NOVENAS

Little Flower	23rd Sept - 1st Oct
Holy Rosary	7th - 15th Oct
St. Jude	20th - 28th Oct

and Masses for the dead, calling on our Pelican, our Lord Jesus Christ, to bring them into the fullness of his new life.

THE HOLY SOULS

The Church reminds us each year to pray for the dead by celebrating the feast of All Souls (1st Nov., and Nov., 15th for All Carmelite Souls) and the indulgences attached to the prayers for the faithful departed in a cemetery (1st-8th Nov.)

The Carmelites have always prayed regularly for the departed, and membership of the Carmelite Holy Souls Society is our special way of fostering this ancient devotion.

We have a Dead List that is renewed each year when people send in their lists of dead relatives and friends to be included in our prayers for the Holy Souls. By sending in a list a person automatically becomes a member of the Carmelite Holy Souls Society for the year.

The privileges of membership are:-

1. A daily Mass for deceased relatives and friends through the year (except the three days of Holy Week);
2. Twelve special Masses (the old "Ternary" Masses) for deceased members and benefactors;
3. A share in the Masses, prayers and good works of the whole Carmelite Order.

There is one thing about this ancient Holy Souls Society which is unusual. There is no fixed membership fee, or annual subscription. This is fitting because it is a Society for the rich and for the poor. People give what they can afford. They write the names on a sheet of paper provided by the Society called an

"Altar List of the Dead", and send them in to us. Some of these lists come back with two or three names only, others read like a litany of relatives and friends.

This year, by way of an experiment, the form for your dead list is joined to the "My Intentions" leaflet. Please don't forget to fill in your name and address on it when you return it.

SAINTS OF CARMEL (10)

The day before Holy Souls is All Saints - a feast to celebrate all those whose sanctity was hidden from the world and known only to God. But sometimes that sanctity is revealed later by supernatural events occurring through the intercession of the saint, or even by more direct action by God. And this was the case with our saint of Carmel for this issue of the Newsletter. It was the incorruptibility of her body after her death that directed attention to her hidden life.

Anna Maria Redi was born in Arezzo (Italy) in 1747. After a devout convent education in Florence (1757-1764), she entered the Carmelite convent as a novice in response to a supernatural admonition from St. Teresa of Avila in 1765. Despite the strong Jansenistic atmosphere of the time she had a strong personal devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and she took the religious name of Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart. She died suddenly and unexpectedly (after 18 painful hours, of what was probably peritonitis) at the age of 22 on 7th March 1770. Her body was

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incorrupt 15 days after her death, and an episcopal investigation was begun into her short life. Many miracles are ascribed to her intercession, especially in Florence where most of her life was spent and where her body - still incorrupt - rests today. She was beatified in 1929 and canonised in 1934.

There seems little to chronicle in the five years she spent in Carmel. Although not strong herself she was for most of her time employed in tending the sick. Her sisters testified to the enquiry that she was marvellously charitable, putting to profit every opportunity which a cloistered life could afford to sacrificing herself for the benefit of others, while maintaining an unclouded brightness and equanimity even when she herself was more fit to be a patient than a nurse. Her spiritual director testified that she was led on a genuinely Teresan path from the assiduous contemplation of the humanity of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, to the deep experiences of the divine life, seeing in the devotion to the Sacred Heart a "loving, in return, the source of Him who has loved us so much", a divine intimacy - a friendship - between the soul and God. An intimacy that was clearly pleasing to God.

St. Teresa Margaret Redi was moved by this love for God to love her neighbour in all sorts of need, but especially in sickness - even as a child it was so. So perhaps we might today appeal to this young saint to intercede for the sick known to us.

Father, you enabled St. Teresa Margaret Redi to draw untold resources of humility and charity from the Sacred Heart of the Saviour: through her prayers may we never be separated from the love of Christ, and may these we now remember be restored to health. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Slowly name the sick you are praying for).

In the current calendar her Feast is celebrated on 1st September.

ODDS & ENDS

Thank you for remembering to make cheques, postal orders etc., payable to **The Carmelites**. It has certainly simplified the banking during the return of the Draw Tickets. Please remember to do it every time, simply The Carmelites, and we shall have no trouble benefiting from your generosity to us.

Here at the Shrine of St. Jude (whose Feast is 28th October) I am often asked how he became known as the Saint for desperate situations, and the answer I have to give has been "I don't really know. People just tell me he answers their prayers in times of need." However, I think I have discovered where it all began. But I will keep the details until I am sure. For now, I would like to appeal to you for some information that will help me fill in the gaps. Would you cudgel your gray matter a little and dredge up the answers to these simple questions, and then write and tell me?

1. When (and where) did your devotion to St. Jude start?
2. How did it begin? Did you read about the Saint - if so, where and when? Did someone else with a devotion to St. Jude recommend him to you - if so, who, where and when? Did someone give you a prayer leaflet, etc? So please, tell me **where, when** and **how** you came to have a devotion to St. Jude.

And that brings me to an end for this time. Be good, keep the faith, and say a little prayer for us now and then.



David J. Fox, O. Carm