

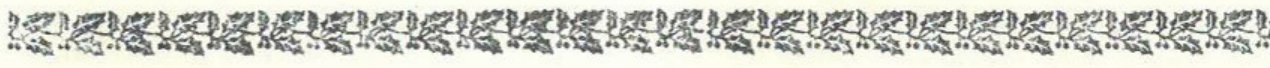


The Carmelite News

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Whitefriars - Faversham - Kent



Martyrs Old & New

THE golden roof of St. Peter's shone in the brilliant light. The magnificent colours of the mosaics stood out in great detail. The great throng of people was hushed as the Papal procession moved solemnly up the centre aisle of the great Basilica of St. Peter's before the canonisation. I felt privileged to be in that procession with representatives of other Orders and secular clergy from every Diocese in England and Wales. Then came the Bishops and Cardinals in their purple and scarlet and last of all His Holiness vested as a Bishop for Mass.

It was a thrilling moment when the great organ notes pealed through the high dome over the floodlit Altar and the Mass and Canonisation ceremony began. Words cannot describe the splendour, the beauty and solemnity of such an occasion. I felt a little proud of the Bishop who formally asked the Pope, in Welsh, to canonise the Martyrs. He is a past pupil of our College at Aberystwyth in Wales. There was a great burst of applause after the Holy Father had formally canonised the Forty Martyrs. There was joy radiating from every face. The great ceremony lasted two and a half hours, after it everybody waited in the great square of St. Peter's for the Pope to come to his window to say the Angelus with the crowd and give them his blessing. Immediately the frail white-robed figure appeared at the window there was great clapping and cheering and shouts of "Long live the Pope".

While we were away in Rome there was a magnificent turn out at the

Friars here at home, for the Eve of the Canonisation. Forty priests led by the Vicar General of the Diocese concelebrated Mass at the Main Shrine of Our Lady. Nearly five thousand people were present and walked in the Torchlight Procession afterwards which ended with the blessing of the relic of St. Edmund Campion, one of the New Saints.

One afternoon we visited the Catacombs of St. Callistus outside the city walls. The vast Roman Campagna that stretches from the Eternal City to the Alban Hills is formed from a deposit of lava from some long dead volcano.

You can burrow down into the sandy soil with perfect safety. It is easy to tunnel through. In the dim light underground the soil seems a purple colour. It has the consistency of sandy rock and comes away in chunks. During the persecutions the Early Christians burrowed down into this soil to bury their dead. The Roman plain became a vast maze of underground passages. These catacombs as they are called, are altogether over fourteen miles long. We visited a small portion of them. They contain small chapels and assembly rooms some of which are open to the public. The mode of burial of the early Christians of the third and fourth centuries was peculiar. They hollowed out a space in the tunnel large enough to take the body which was then placed in the niche and the opening sealed with a slab. On this slab was the name of the person and age and sometimes an indication of his work. On one is written "Porker". He supplied rashers! Sometimes five bodies can be found

buried one above the other from near the floor right up to the ceiling.

The tunnels or passages are about the width of a man generally and even at the widest points one can easily touch the sides by stretching out ones arms. The first burials were made at an easy height then the space below and above was filled and when more room was needed they just lowered the floor level.

I wonder where they put all the sand they dug out as there are three different galleries there and each is about twelve feet high. The body of a martyr was usually put in a marble coffin. This was placed against a wall and a half circle was hollowed out over it to show it was the tomb of a Martyr. Sometimes the walls were roughly plastered and frescoes painted on them. Some of these frescoes can still be seen. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered up on the tomb of the martyrs and the priest kissed the tomb to show honour and veneration for the martyrs. Ever since then our Altars everywhere contain some relics of the saints, and this is the reason why the priest still kisses the altar before saying Mass. The catacombs are rather dark and eerie, nevertheless it was a great experience for our group of pilgrims in Rome for the Canonisation of our Forty Martyrs to rub shoulders with the tombs of early martyrs and walk where they and the early Christians have walked and millions of pilgrims since.

The priests in our group were very fortunate to be allowed to say Mass in one of the little alcoves. They stood around the simple altar as the early Christians did. One became aware of the continuity of the Christian religion and the sacrifice of the Mass in that hallowed spot. Here were we of the twentieth century offering up the same sacrifice in the same place as they had done. It was truly very moving to hear our people singing the Credo and Faith of our Fathers in that holy place in the depths of the catacombs. I needn't tell you that I prayed for you all during that Mass and for all your families.

On the Monday after the Canonisa-

tion, on our way to St. Peters for the audience with the Pope (which some of us didn't get in to) we called in to our own International College near the Vatican and said Mass for our group. It was my first time to say Mass there since I left Rome in 1959. It is still the same quite simple chapel and I could not help recalling that thousands of Carmelite Students who studied there had gone to carry the message of the Gospel and the love of Our Lady to the four corners of the earth.

One in particular came to my mind, **Fr. Titus Brandsma**, he prayed in the small choir stalls which we used and are still there. He was a Dutch Carmelite who died in the "Hell of Dachau" concentration camp. During the early part of the war he fought in defence of the Catholic Press and Catholic principles against the Nazis. He also organised catholic schools. He was very learned but also a very holy and simple priest. He was arrested by the Nazis on Monday, 19th January, 1942. He was brought to a big State prison near The Hague in Holland where he was questioned and kept in solitary confinement for seven weeks. On 12th March he was taken with 105 other prisoners and transported to the "Hell of Comersfoort". There he suffered a lot and although in delicate health had to work very hard sawing roots of trees with a blunt saw. He was very roughly treated by the guards and beaten quite often, more than the others. For part of the time, although 61 years old he had to sit in a dog kennel and bark like a dog every time a guard passed, if he didn't he was beaten. All because he was so outspoken in favour of freedom of conscience. On 12th June he was taken to the terrible concentration camp of Dachau. On 26th July after a lot of patient suffering he died and his body, what was left of it, was burned in the crematorium.

Some of these thoughts crossed my mind while visiting the chapel of the College because our Father General had told me that Fr. Titus' cause for beatification has taken a great leap forward. We are hoping he will be

beatified fairly soon. Very many people pray to him for favours and there are a number of extraordinary favours on record granted through his intercession. We would be very grateful if you would let us know of any favour received through his intercession. You need to write them down as detailed as you can and send them to me, then I will send them to Rome and this will help speed up his beatification. Unfortunately there are no relics of him. I hope to print some Novena Leaflets and Booklets outlining his life very soon. It would be wonderful for the Church to have a modern martyr who stood up so bravely for the rights of conscience and freedom of religion.

On Tuesday, 27th, I went to the Sacristy of St. Peter's hoping to say Mass in the Basilica some day during the week. With so many visiting Bishops and clergy I didn't think I would stand a chance. How wrong I was. I could take practically any altar any time the following day. So I said Mass for all your intentions for your spiritual and temporal welfare at the very *tomb of St. Jude* on his own Feast Day, 28th October. I was really pleased with that and I thought to myself "That is another one up for St. Jude". His body, with that of St. Simon, is under the second altar to the right of the sacristy door.

The following is the text of the *Papal Blessing* I got for the members of our Societies and all our workers.

Most Holy Father

The Reverend H. A. Brennan, O.Carm.

Spiritual Director of the Societies of

"The Little Flower"

"The Merciful Child Jesus of Prague"

St. Jude, Apostle and Martyr

humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness

begs for all Members of these Societies

and for all who co-operate in the work of the

Carmelite Fathers,

Whitefriars, Faversham, Kent, a special

Apostolic Blessing

October 3rd, 1970

Sanctus Dominus Benedictionem Apostolicam concebit

Ex aed Vatsceius, die 13-10-1970

+ Antoninus W. Crevia Archiep. Eclm. S.P.

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

As we kneel before the crib or meditate on the 3rd Joyful Mystery of the Rosary we see before us the Divine Infant lying in the manger, the ox and

ass on either side of Him and Mary and Joseph with joy and happiness on their faces, kneeling by the manger. We realise that here is the Son of God.

That He who is all powerful became weak for our sake
He who is rich became poor for our sake
He who had the heavens for His footstool lies in the manger
He who had the choirs of angels to accompany Him now
has an ox and an ass for our sakes.
He who is God became man for our sakes.

We see Mary who brought Him into this world to be our Redeemer, our friend and helper. We ask her to bring Jesus into our hearts and souls so that we may be
Charitable like Him
Patient like Him
Kind like Him
Understanding like Him
Helpful like Him

We ask as He is weak now, we may become strong, as He is poor now we may become rich in graces so that we will enjoy the Eternal Glory of heaven with Him and His Mother.

Now it is time for me to wish you all the compliments of the Season. It is over one year since I wrote the first letter to you. Thank God it wasn't a hard year and that is because all of you have been so loyal and faithful not only in supporting us in our work but also in praying for us. For all of that we will send humble and grateful thanks before the Crib. May we say God Bless you all and wish you a Holy and Happy Christmas to be followed by a Bright New Year with many blessings.

Our Lady Keep You!

Yours in Carmel,

*H. A. Brennan
O.Carm.*

Thanks

SS. Jude, Joseph Cupertino and Martin for exam success ; The Sacred Heart, SS. Jude and Anthony, M.A.H. Our Lady, SS. Jude, Teresa and Anthony for favour, B.E.B. ; St. Jude, Corkonian ; The Sacred Heart, Our Lady, The Forty Martyrs and St. Jude, C.Q. Plymouth ; The Sacred Heart, Our Lady, SS. Jude, Joseph and Patrick, P.J.D. Worcester.

Until . . .

Having lost her husband, an old lady gave instructions as to the wording on the tombstone, the ending to be "Rest in peace". In the meantime his Will disclosed the fact that she had been treated rather badly in it. She rushed to the mason and told him to omit "Rest in Peace". "I'm sorry" he said, "but they have already been carved". "Very well" replied the Widow, "just add 'until we meet again'."

Don't Forget

Our Coming Novenas

ST. JUDE

December 16th—December 24th

THE DIVINE INFANT OF
PRAGUE

December 25th—January 2nd