



# THE CARMELITE NEWS



WINTER 2013



**Welcome to the Carmelite News**, the newsletter that promotes the work of the British Province and the national Shrine of Saint Jude. Please feel free to pass this copy to friends and family, or ask them to sign up to our newsletter.



When you receive this newsletter, we will be on the edge of winter, but the autumn has been so exciting, I wanted to share the news with you.

In September the General Chapter of the Carmelite Order took place just south of Rome in the conference centre belonging to the Italian Carmelites. We were away from the city and nearby there were olive groves and vineyards. Even though it was well into September, the days were balmy with warm sun and gentle breezes. We were blessed with a good place to do our work. The Chapter is a time for Carmelites worldwide to gather to reflect on our mission for the Church and the world.

At the beginning of our meetings, we had a message from Pope Francis asking us to be prophets of hope and that we should renew our allegiance to Jesus Christ. He also said that we should be missionaries of God's love and tenderness, that we should discover the inner pathway to love through prayer.

The Pope's message of support was reinforced by Cardinal Braz de Aviz who is the head of the congregation that cares for religious. The Cardinal was an unpretentious, jovial figure who wanted to assure us of his support.

I find the rich variety of backgrounds among my fellow Carmelites fascinating. One of the friars that impressed me was an older man from the Philippines who works in Papua New Guinea. His work with tribal people shows how sensitive missionaries have to be when they work in developing countries. Papua has immense natural riches so it is hoped that the people benefit from any development. What has struck me is how fast the Order is growing in parts of Asia.

**Please Remember**

Tick the box on the Intention sheet if you require a reply to your letter

This year there are over thirty novices in Indonesia. East Timor continues to flourish with the help of the Australian Carmelites, and it is hoped we can make foundations in Hong Kong and Singapore. In all of these developments your generosity has helped us to support this significant growth.

## The Shrine

Back at Faversham, we have a new development manager at the Shrine office, Matt Betts. I have known Matt through going on the Catholic Association Pilgrimage to Lourdes, where he is Chief Brancardier (in charge of all male non-medical helpers). I have always been impressed by his calm and care for the sick. Matt is delighted to be able to be involved in the St Jude apostolate as he knows the Carmelite Order well. I know he, together with Cheryl and Linda in the office, will ensure you will be cared for whenever you contact us by letter, email, or phone.

Lots of changes in Faversham. The old packing machine that our team used (see below) to send the newsletter has now been sold for parts, as we no longer have a use for it. The packing machine was a wonderfully old, large, and (mostly) reliable contraption, and so it did feel like the end of an era when it left the centre. As you can see in the photo below, it was a truly fine piece of machinery.

The old Newsletter office is now called the Shrine Office and Information Centre. It was called the Newsletter Office, because the main job was to print, sort and send out the newsletter from here - even though the staff also worked at and serviced the Shrine.

The team still work on the newsletter and the replies, but it was decided that it would be much better to rename the building to a more generic one.



The Information Centre has been freshened up and is now ready to receive visitors who want to ask questions about St Jude, or purchase something from the Shrine.

The garden here at Faversham has been extraordinarily beautiful this year. I have never known such colour. The lavender attracted scores of bees (and wasps), and the hollyhocks have grown to enormous heights. Fr Piet has worked hard to keep everything in order, and he has added to the beauty with an abundance of plants.

During the summer, when I am in the Provincial Office, I keep the door open so I have the chance to meet pilgrims who drop in. It is quite amazing to see where pilgrims come from – we are a truly united nation.

Besides the gardens being so well tended, the driveway has been re-tarmacked. Recent winters have played havoc with the driveway making it dangerous. The work has cost a pretty penny, but the new surface will last for years to come.

## Meet Matt

“I was born in Todmorden, West Yorkshire. I am married to Terri and we live with our cat, Treacle. We are looking forward to the arrival of our first child, due in February.”



“I first met members of the Carmelite Order in Lourdes and have always been fascinated by their great love and allegiance to Jesus Christ - something that inspires me.

Terri and I have subscribed to this newsletter for a number of years and have always enjoyed reading it. I am looking forward to serving you all and developing the Shrine over the next few years.”

## The Feast

The celebrations for the Feast of Saint Jude were a time of blessings and it was lovely to see so many pilgrims here. We were very lucky that the St Jude storms (as the media named them) did not damage the Shrine. It was very windy on the Monday and trees near us were blown over, but no real damage was done. I was also interviewed by various radio stations and newspapers, and we were able to tell them that everything was carrying on as normal - and so it did.

At the weekend, I was very pleased to meet a new group of volunteers this year helping us out for the first time. I was very grateful to them for their time. I made lots of soup each day to keep them warm and it was all well received. I was also pleased to congratulate a group from Croydon (see photo below) who have been visiting us for ten years!

I always see Saint Jude as a beacon of hope. Life can have its dark moments and times, when it seems that too much is asked of us. It's at such moments that we need to trust that God's love will never desert us. Let us place our trust in the one who never ceases to love us. When we feel up against it then we can turn to Saint Jude, Our Lord's kinsman, and ask that he intercede on our behalf. Let us pray then for strength, peace of mind and the awareness that we are special to God. We must not let people belittle us, our dignity comes from our relationship with God and how we love that truth.



## The Province

Just after I returned from Rome, I headed off again for a weekend to Salamanca to see our new novice, James, receiving his habit. Salamanca is now the place where our European novices begin their journey as Carmelites. Salamanca is also part of the Carmelite story because John of the Cross studied theology at the university way back in the 1560s.

Meanwhile, back at Aylesford on 19 October, I received Paul Jenkins' solemn vows (see cover and below). Paul is a great worker and always a generous support wherever he ministers. May God bless James and Paul on their journeys.



Unfortunately there was sad news elsewhere in the province. Death is always unexpected, even when there has been a long illness. Brother Tom Johnston, still a young man, died of a heart attack recently at Walworth, where he ministered. Tom was a gentle, shy man, but always unassuming. He cared deeply for the elderly around Walworth and was a friend and neighbour to many. We miss him for his kind presence. When it came to his funeral, the church in Walworth was packed, as was his committal in Aylesford. That there were so many, said so much about how greatly he was loved by all. I believe Tom is in the communion of saints and he will be praying for us all and for vocations to Carmel.



## **Pope Francis**

Pope Francis continues to bring us hope through his compassion and understanding. He has become a significant voice for peace and justice in Syria. The sufferings of the people must cry out to heaven and the Christian minority has known brutal attacks. It is so sad to see these Christian communities that date back to apostolic times being driven out of their ancestral homes. It is also important that world leaders listen to the Pope as he counsels the route of negotiation and justice, respecting human dignity.

The highlight for me during our Chapter was our visit to Rome for the Pope's General Audience. Over a hundred friars, nuns, sisters and lay Carmelites were present. We were a significant presence highlighted by our white cloaks. The audience was in St Peter's Square with over fifty thousand pilgrims. Pope Francis made time for as many as possible, especially the sick, and he spoke beautifully about the Church as a merciful mother caring especially for those on the margins.

## **Advent**

The year passes all too quickly and soon Advent and Christmas will be on the horizon. I know the shops often have their Christmas displays up and running by October at the latest, but for me the preparation for Christ's coming among us begins with Advent, the beginning of December. The readings at Mass from the prophet Isaiah are especially beautiful and repay quiet reading not just at Mass but during the week.

On the second Sunday of Advent, Isaiah speaks of harmony in nature and life. This is because in his vision people will be guided by God and they will live by wisdom - by loving knowledge. The prophet speaks of wonderful harmony and peaceful co-existence. Later on Isaiah speaks of joy and gladness that will come when we let God have the prime place in our lives. I hope these brief references to Isaiah's message will encourage you to open your Bible and spend some time reading the prophet Isaiah, as you will find a wonderful message of hope, and a vision of God's purpose for us all. I believe that if we can be reflective in Advent then we will be able to welcome Christ, when he comes at Christmas, with a heart longing for ever closer union with our Saviour.

# Thank you

Again, a great thank you for your support which means so much, especially as times are still so hard. Let's hope the winter is not too severe as that will keep the heating bills from being too high. The paradox is that climate change is causing extremes of weather. I pray for your good health and please don't forget your flu jab!

Anyway, I am getting too serious, so now time for some humour. Here's one of my favourite Tommy Cooper jokes: A priest, a rabbi and a vicar walked into a bar. The barman says, "Is this some kind of joke?"

Know I always keep you in my prayers at Mass and when I say the Divine Office. I am sure that you pray for me as I try to be as faithful to my calling as a Carmelite Friar. Let us live in hope blessed by Our Saviour Jesus Christ and Mary his mother.

God bless, Fr Wilfrid McGreal, O.Carm

## Remember our Novenas

Novena to the Holy Infant of Prague: 17 - 25 December

Novena to Saint Jude: 12 - 20 January

Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes: 3 - 11 February

## Would you like to receive the newsletter via email?

We can send this newsletter via email, instead of through the post. If you would like us to do this, please let us know at [newsletter@stjudeshrine.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@stjudeshrine.org.uk)

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