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# THE CARMELITE NEWS

FEBRUARY 1986

WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

*Published by the Carmelites of England and Wales*

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## LEGS ELEVEN

Bingo! and a Happy three quarters of a New Year to you all! I hope that you will be able to call "Bingo" loud and often as your number comes up in the game of life — especially when you particularly need it; and we all do from time to time.

I was not intending to write an essay on Bingo — and I haven't either — but it occurred to me, as I prayed for inspiration, that I first wrote a New Year letter to you in 1976, which is precisely eleven years ago. Given the way the Spirit works, it was only a fraction of a second before the penny dropped and — Bingo! So here we are on our way in 1986 — who'd have thought it, eh? we'll show 'em! — still on the field of play, even if our legs aren't as nimble as they used to be, and knowing that while you lose some you certainly win some, and the Lord loves a cheerful loser.

## LOSERS?

Come to think of it, that's not a bad way of playing any game is it, especially the game of life? I know people — and I'm sure you know even more — who seem to win all the time and have it all, yet are never satisfied, never content, never happy, never enjoy what they've got and certainly never enjoy what they are. Who would want to be a perpetual winner and be like that? Far better, surely, to be a cheerful loser, able to live with oneself and the

little one has got and to laugh at the rest. Perhaps that "little" is not so little either.

## ACCEPTANCE

The ability to accept oneself as one is, to live with the bad as well as with the good that makes up every individual, you and I among them, is perhaps the most fundamental element in living with oneself or with others in reasonable contentment. Maybe that's not so surprising, since that's the way God accepts us — and you can't follow a better example than that!

## FACING FACTS

"God is Love", says St. John. What a perfect summing up from the greatest theologian of them all. NOW, if there is one thing about genuine love — not your soppy, syrupy, sickly, soapy, sentimental, selfish mush that has pirated the name, but the real thing — if there is one thing about genuine love it is that it faces facts, it doesn't pretend, it doesn't *have* to pretend. God faces facts. He knows the truth about everyone and everything, you and me included; which isn't surprising when you come to think of it, because he made everyone and everything and keeps us all in being. So, if God can love the lot of us despite all our flaws, then I should try to do the same, starting with myself and moving outwards — no dear, we're not moving out and leaving you by yourself, and it's not true that we

don't care about you or we wouldn't leave you to starve! Who started this?

## **RIDICULOUS**

Did you hear the ridiculous story of the three Irish priests who died and went up to the Pearly Gates? St. Peter met them, checked their names and saw they had a good record. "Well, gentlemen", he said (after all, politeness costs nothing!), "everything seems to be in order, but there's just one little point to be clarified. You see, the boss has got fed up with complaints from the angels that they're being kept awake half the night by heavenly Irish clergy playing cards. So if you're card players, you'll have to go to the other place; nothing personal, you understand, and no hard feelings either way". Two of the priests looked at each other, nodded, shook hands with Peter and departed; no hard feelings either way. Then Peter went inside. "Hey, boss," he said, "what do you want me to do with that nincompoop out there?" I told you it was ridiculous!

## **GIFT HORSE**

There's an old saying: "You shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth". I wonder if we indulge in just that? I mean that life itself is a gift; that our nature, our talents, our personal qualities of mind and heart, soul and body are all gifts, from God and from others.

Instead of bemoaning the flaws, what about recognizing, enjoying, using and giving thanks for the good things, for the gifts? And the best way to give thanks is to use our gifts as much as and as well as we can. If we use our self-examination to recognize the good in us and see how we might make it even better, more effective in our own lives, more beneficial for

others, we shall be saying "Thank you" to God in the best way possible. At the same time, and in the context of seeing what is good, we spot those things in ourselves that hinder what is good from becoming even better and we work out how we can overcome them bit by bit and with patience. Use eye-drops before resorting to surgery!

## **KNOW-ALLS**

It's false modesty to deny one's gifts, and it is pride to pretend the gifts are of our own making. So why don't we face the facts about ourselves and give thanks to God for the enormous amount that is good and ask his help to improve it and reduce what hinders it? You could take a few moments off, each day in Lent, to think, pray, judge and act along these lines. And don't tell me you haven't enough good points to last more than a week! As the man said: "I may not have many good points, but knowing them all is one of them!" Come on then, you know-alls.

## **PRINTERS' DEVILS**

You know the sort of howlers that misprints cause? Well, I saw two gorgeous ones a few weeks ago in the same article. The article was about Titus Brandsma, the Carmelite martyr who was beatified last November, and was headed "*BEAUTIFIED CARMELITE*". I'm sure he'd have appreciated that, as a journalist himself! In the same article the writer gave a sort of potted version of the Carmelites. Among other items, he mentioned that a feature of our tradition is our special "*devotion to Our Lary*". We await further revelations with bated breath. Is "The Night that Lary was stretched" really the work of St. John of the Cross under another name and

adding a new dimension to "The Dark Night of the Soul"? Truth can be stranger than fiction. Watch these columns!

## QUESTIONS

You may be wondering why I haven't written about Fr. Kilian in this letter, as I promised in my last. I regret to say that I left my notes behind me — I am writing this away from my base — and so cannot do things properly, as he deserves. I will do my best next time.

You may also wonder why this letter comes later than usual and without a novena to Our Lady of Lourdes. Well, Fr. Hearne and I put our heads together and decided to make a change and put in a novena to St. Patrick instead, because of the need for prayer to be focussed on the problem of Northern Ireland, which is also the problem of the Republic of Ireland and of mainland Britain.

## ST. PATRICK

Fear and hate walk the streets there. Their offspring, violence, makes new widows and orphans every week. Murder for political ends is called patriotism by extremists on either side, and there are some politicians who feed the fear and hate while disclaiming any responsibility for the violence that follows. The man or woman who tries to play a moderate and constructive role, to build bridges instead of blowing them up, to speak for justice for all as the foundation of peace for all, is a brave person indeed and a target for abuse or worse from both sides of the political divide. Yet surely such people, some of them politicians, represent the only hope for their unhappy land and deserve our prayerful support, and indeed any

other support we can give by word or deed.

Though they would be the first in their modesty and humour to laughingly disclaim the title, they are, I suggest, the saints of Ireland in these cruel days, preachers of justice, forbearance, forgiveness and peace.

Will you join in our Novena to St. Patrick for justice and peace in Ireland?

To avoid a clash the Novena to St. Joseph will start on his Feast Day. If there's no Time in Eternity he won't know the difference!

*Peace cannot be obtained on earth unless personal values are safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and talents. A firm determination to respect other men and peoples and their dignity as well as the deliberate practise of brotherhood, are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace.*

*If peace is to be established the primary requisite is to eradicate the causes of dissension. Violence thrives on these, especially on injustice. Many of these causes stem from excessive economic inequalities and from excessive slowness in applying effective remedies. Other causes spring from a quest for power and contempt for personal rights.*

Vatican II; The Church Today

## BRITAIN

While we are rightly praying and, I hope, working when we can for peace in Ireland we shouldn't forget the "excessive economic inequalities" that are becoming more and more noticeable in this country, and the

“contempt for personal rights” that accompanies and sustains them. Deprivation is growing not receding in our society and the people caught up in its vicious cycle are becoming desperate. There is a desperate need for “effective remedies”. Once again we should pray, as in the case of Ireland, for a just solution to these problems, and if we can do anything constructive let us do it. Lent is traditionally the time for considering the needs of our brothers and sisters under God and sharing with them God’s gifts to us.

### **EASTER-CUM-PENTECOST**

When one looks at the trouble spots on the International and National scenes then zooms into the problems of ordinary everyday living for families like yours and mine, including you and me — no wonder there’s trouble! — when we look at it all at the end of the winter we can feel quite depressed. But just as the Winter gives way to Spring so the depression gives way to hope: “All manner of things shall be well”. After Good Friday came Easter Sunday, and after Ascension came Pentecost. Each is vital for us.

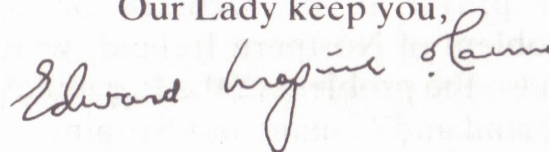
Easter is the triumph over death, Pentecost the triumph over absence. Jesus promised he would not leave us orphaned but would give us his Spirit to be with us, to be in us, as he is in his father and his father is in him, a living presence within each of us. The power of the Spirit is not out there, it is in here, in my own heart, in my own head, in my own hands.

As Mary cherished that Spirit within her and supported those who worked in the front line for her son’s kingdom of justice, love and peace, so in our small way shall we.

“Have confidence,” he said. “I have overcome the world”.

The snow-drops are out and smiling — let’s join them!

Our Lady keep you,



### **NOVENAS OF MASSES**

|             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| ST. PATRICK | March 9th-17th       |
| ST. JOSEPH  | March 19th-27th      |
| EASTER      | March 30th-April 7th |
| ST. JUDE    | April 23rd-May 1st   |

*We acknowledge many letters of thanks for favours received.*

Wherever possible, let us try and find ways of getting involved in actions of common witness, common bible work, in the promotion of human rights and in the struggle against human need. (*J.P. II to non-Catholic Christians in Nairobi*).