
THE CARMELITE NEWS

FEBRUARY — MARCH 1984

WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

Published by the Carmelites of England and Wales

HELLO THERE!

How are you all, I wonder, as we come to the fag-end of the winter? It can be a dreary time, the weeks from the Christmas Season to the end of February. March can be cold and wet too, but there is the feel of Spring in it and signs of Spring too, as snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils venture out of their earthy homes and challenge the weather to do its worst—they are coming out anyway! No, it isn't so much the March winds as the February doldrums that catch us without physical reserves now from fighting cold and damp and fog and flu (no, Grandma, their isn't a frog in the flue, we've just been talking about the weather!) and our spirits low from tiredness and the greyness of everything. We all need a bit of sunshine—and here I am!

JANUARY SALES?

Did you hear about the distraught young mother in a big department store who turned up at the Lost and Found department dressed in a black suit jacket and a slip and asked, "Has anybody handed in a black skirt with three small children hanging on to it?"

DOGMATIC ARITHMETIC

Then there was the good catholic man who was the porter of a well

known university college. Well, one day a group of rather supercilious visitors were being shown round the college and were asking a lot of questions on the way, to which our porter friend was having to find answers, often with more imagination than accuracy. However he covered his tracks fairly well and was congratulating himself on getting rid of them without mishap, when one of them asked him as they took their leave, "Whom do the statues over the porch represent?" "Ah, well," says our friend thinking furiously, "You have asked a very interesting question there." The visitor persisted: "But who are they supposed to be?" "Oh," says our man, "I thought you would have guessed from the title of the College. They represent the Holy Trinity." "But," said the puzzled visitor, "there are four statues." "Of course," replies our man, quick as a flash, "Three Persons, One God!" Worthy of St. Augustine of Hippo, who was a great one for mixing mathematics and theology.

MORECAMBE AND

WISE(DOM)

Talking of mathematics and theology, I hope we don't go back to the attitudes so prevalent once upon a time when it was con-

sidered to be a mortal sin to eat meat on a Friday. God help us, when I was a lad many families never saw a decent piece of meat from one week-end to another and at the same time other families were eating the best of fresh salmon and calling it penance! "Rubbish!" as Eric Morecambe so aptly comments from time to time. What is the connexion between that and mathematics though? Well, in their "Wisdom" the theologians used to discuss whether 1 oz of meat on Friday would be sufficiently grave material or ½ oz, or 1½ oz or 2 oz or whatever, of such weighty matters did the learned men debate—and we accepted it as Gospel! They had obviously not stopped at the average butchers—you could have eaten two pounds of sausage without any danger of eating enough meat to qualify for mortal sin!

OUR COMING NOVENAS—

OUR LADY OF LOURDES
February 11th - February 19th

SAINT JOSEPH
March 11th - March 19th

SAINT JUDE
April 23rd - May 1st

I remember too that the town I lived in was divided by a river, and on each side of the river lay a different diocese. In one there was a dispensation from Friday abstinence but not in the other. You can imagine what happened. Yes, half of the catholics of the town went over the bridges to eat meat on Friday!

DEVALUATION

Some people say the sense of sin has been lost. I wonder. Perhaps

people are just not accepting any more that "sin" in any real sense of that term can be created or dropped at the stroke of a pen, by someone in authority making and un-making so called "sins".

There lies the real trivialization of the concept of sin, a real devaluation of the term. If people today pay less heed to ecclesiastics when they try to draw attention to real sins, things that are wrong by any Christian standard, the ecclesiastics must accept at least some of the blame themselves.

LAUGH AT OURSELVES

It is good to be able to laugh at ourselves and our foibles; to recognize that people are fallible, you and I among them; to accept that criticism can be an expression of love and concern for a person or an institution rather than an expression of disloyalty. We accept that in theory, of course, but do we accept it in practice? I wonder if we are not prone sometimes to think the worst of those who laugh at our foibles, to be over-sensitive to those who criticize or disagree with us?

Here is a penance for Lent—and not only for Lent: to accept in reality, in our hearts not just in our heads, that we do make mistakes, from bishop to bus driver, from prince to pauper. If we did this the world would be so changed and for the better. If I may say so without pontificating too much, it is a salutary form of penance for all in positions of authority, great or small—come to think of it, that's pointing the finger at myself! I'd better change the subject.

TO KEEP A TRUE LENT

*Is this a Fast, to keep
The larder lean?
And clean
From fat of veals and sheep?*

*Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?*

*Is it to fast an hour,
Or ragged to go,
Or show
A down-cast look and sour?*

*No: 'tis a Fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat
And meat
Unto the hungry soul.*

*It is to fast from strife
And old debate,
And hate;
To circumcise thy life.*

*To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve thy sin;
Not bin;
and that's to keep thy Lent.*

Robert Herrick

FROM THE HEART

That sums it up beautifully, I think. Penance and Reconciliation are matters for the heart; they come from within. Mechanical observance of some outward action that is not consciously directed to a change of heart or a deeper awareness and practise of love of God and of neighbour is meaningless. "If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever." (*St. Paul, 1 Cor: 13,3*).

ITMA

Do you remember Mona Lot and "It's being so cheerful as keeps me going!"? We have a lot to thank Tommy Handley for. He helped us to laugh when there wasn't too much to laugh at—until he pointed out the funny side of life—which means people. It's not always easy to be cheerful but it's always worth a try. A smile costs less than a scowl and is much more helpful all round: it's a ray of sunshine in a grey day, and we all need more of

them. So let's put a smile on the day and encourage others to do so in return. Mind you, I wouldn't advise an over-toothy smile or people will think you're advertising your favourite brand of toothpaste: dentifrice with artifice, you might say!

ST. DAVID

"Be happy and keep the faith," said St. David of Wales as his last words of good counsel to his flock when he was close to death. What a marvellous thing to say to his people as they mourned his passing. It is a saying we could all take to heart. Do we portray to those we meet the image of a happy person? A happiness that is grounded in our faith. It is important that people see in us something of joy despite all the trouble and hurt and grief that abounds in the world.

EASTER PEOPLE

We are the Easter People who know that the Resurrection followed Calvary and is still with us and always will be. "Give me joy in my

heart," should be our prayer not only at Easter but frequently, so that we may be encouraged in our lives and from that encouragement draw others to share in it and in the faith that inspires it.

*"Forth he comes at Easter, like the risen grain,
he that for three days in the grave had lain;
quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:
love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain,
thy touch can call us back to life again;
fields of our heart that dead and bare had been:
love is come again like wheat that springeth green."*

J.M.C. Crum.

St. PATRICK

No need to introduce him to you! Surely we shall be guilty of negligence if this feast does not remind us to pray for the Ireland to which he gave his life, his love, his faith, his work. We should not allow the extremists, who kill and maim under the name Catholic or Protestant—there is a terrible irony in a man claiming to defend the Catholic or Protestant faiths and denying Christianity itself in the process—we must not allow the extremists to dominate our minds. We need to remember, pray for, speak for, work for and encourage those people both Catholic and Protestant who strive for justice, reconciliation and peace. These hold the only worthwhile future for Ireland. They need every bit of

understanding, support and prayer we can give them.

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
they shall be called the sons of God.
Mat. 6:9.*

ST. JOSEPH

"Joseph was a just man," says the Gospel. Perhaps on his feast day we can ask the Lord to help us to be more understanding of those near to us at home and at work, to be more fair to them, more considerate in our judgements, more forgiving in our attitudes. Mary must have loved him a lot, and Jesus too. He worked for them, he lived for them. Thank God for those whose lives, whose love, whose work is intertwined with ours. Let us show them we appreciate them.

*"If you abide in love
you will abide in God
and not wander any more in darkness.
Then live in joyfulness and hope
unanxious, without any trace of fear,
at peace with yourself and the world,
in ceaseless reverence and thanks.
Because God's love for you endures for ever."*

It's time for me to take my leave, I'm sorry to say. It's been nice talking to you again. We'll pray for one another and look to the Spring with a smile. God love you.

Until next time.

Our Lady keep you.

Edward Augustine O'Leary

WE'RE SORRY

Owing to the illness of Father Bonaventure and also some of the staff, the replies to your letters have been delayed.

We are now working hard to catch up.