

WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

The Carmelite News

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THANK YOU

I should start this letter first of all by two very big thank-you's. The first is for all those who wrote to wish me well in the new venture and who were kind enough to say that they liked my first Newsletter. It is no joke to step into the shoes of somebody like Father Brennan who had been writing it for so many years and had become well known to you. Everybody needs a pat on the back and a word of praise encourages even the most thick-skinned—or those who pretend they are. The second thank-you, and it is a very big one, is to all of you who so kindly sent in donations following my reference to the increased number of students.

HAVE YOU REMEMBERED ?

It is still not too late to send in your Dead List. The souls will be sharers in a Daily Mass for the Dead throughout the year.

Your generosity is truly great and deserves great blessing. Need I say that you will be remembered in my Masses and prayers? You may be assured that the students remember you too. By-the-way, talking about encouragement, I had a marvellous experience recently. I was giving a Retreat extending over a few days when an elderly lady approached

me and said, "Father, I just want to tell you that you are giving a lovely Retreat. The talks are marvellous. The only trouble is that I am stone deaf and unfortunately cannot hear any of them."!!! How's that for a back-handed compliment!

Holy Father's Blessing

You will notice from the leaflet enclosed that the Holy Father has very graciously given his apostolic blessing to all those who help with our Burses. We thought that we should reproduce the original so that you could have a personal reminder of this great favour for yourself. It will be a reminder not only of the Holy Father's concern for us but of the concern we ought to have for him in his great work in leading the Church and indeed the world.

A rose by any other name

I note that quite a lot of you have been unable to decipher my signature. I have been called McGee, Murray, Mayer, Mageer and a variety of other names, but not one of you has called me anything like the names I have been called by schoolboys when I was teaching them, thank God. To set your minds at rest I hereby officially declare that my name is Edward Maguire and I have asked the printer to print it under my signature in future. Somebody said it was like



a doctor's prescription, in which case, I suppose, since alcohol can be prescribed on the National Health, I could be called McGuinness! Now let's stop name calling and get down to business.

* * *

Wake up man

That is how St. Augustine, the great Bishop of Hippo in North Africa focussed attention on the birth of Christ when he wrote about it fifteen hundred years ago. He said, "Wake up, man—it was for *you* that God was made man!" I was reading these words the other day and as I thought about them it occurred to me how personal a feast Christmas is. It is the feast that reminds us, perhaps more than any other, that God is with us, not just with us but one of us. We all try to identify with a baby: big hard men suddenly become gentle and even uncertain, a woman's natural tenderness goes out to it, and a child is fascinatedly drawn to it. No wonder God chose this way to draw us to him. He wanted and wants our love, not because he needs it but because we do. We need to love God if we are to grow to our full potential as human beings. We need human love too, but God created the human heart so big that no human love alone can fill it: it needs also to grow by loving the limitless perfection of God, and God's way of helping to make this easier for us was to become the most lovable object we humans know—a baby. The babe, of course, becomes the child and the child becomes the man, the man who healed the sick, encouraged the despairing, cleansed the

sinful, brought light to darkness, died and rose from the dead.

When we celebrate the birthday of anybody we celebrate their whole life, which is the result of their birth; and everything they have done, all the gifts and talents which have enriched those they moved among are celebrated on their birthdays. So, when we celebrate the birth of Christ we are not just celebrating his birth but we are celebrating everything that his life means to us. Dag Hammarskjöld, who was the Secretary General of the United Nations and was killed in an air crash while he was trying to bring peace to the troubled Congo, summed it up this way in a note he wrote on Christmas Eve 1960: "For him who looks towards the future, the Manger is situated on Golgotha, and the Cross has already been raised in Bethlehem."

Don't forget the Coming
Novenas—

ST. JUDE

16th - 24th December

HOLY CHILD OF PRAGUE

25th December - 2nd January

Whatever reasons we may have for rejoicing at Christmas, and please God they will be many, let us never forget the basic reason—God became man for me to help me to love him. It's personal isn't it? And so we respond to God quite rightly by making this feast the celebration of all the love there is in our lives—we put ourselves out to show people that we really do



love them: husbands, wives, children, grandma's and grandad's, boy-friends and girlfriends, uncles and aunts, all the family, all our relatives, all our friends. We troop off to Mass together and receive in Communion the Christ we see depicted in the crib. Amid all our joy, love, prayer let us spare a thought for those who are not so fortunate as we: those who have no families, those who are separated from them, those who are working on this day—policemen, doctors, nurses, and others like them who keep essential services going. Remember we could not cook our Christmas dinner unless the power workers were on the job, but being on the job means being away from home. I don't begrudge the Post Office workers or the transport men taking time off at Christmas to be with their families.

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Other Christs

Of course this sharing of nature is a twofold traffic. As Christ shares in our human nature because he became man so we share our humanity with him, and, what is more, through grace he shares his divinity with us. This gives us a twofold responsibility towards Christ: firstly not to degrade in ourselves or in others the humanity which we share with Christ, secondly to allow the divinity which he shares with us through grace to show through in our humanity as it did with his. Anything that is degrading in our own lives, anything that we do that degrades anybody else is an offence against the humanity of Christ, "As often as you did it to one of these

you did it to me." So there must be honesty, fairness, truth, loyalty, kindness, sacrifice, courage, generosity and joy in our lives and in our relationships. We need to cultivate an openness to the influence of the Holy Spirit so that the grace of God may work in our souls enlightening us, helping us to see things in the light of faith, encouraging us to live in the strength of hope, persuading us to live in the fullness of Charity.

Christ was born in Bethlehem and lived a comparatively short time in Palestine, but his work has to go on, and all of us, you and I, are in a sort of way extensions of Christ's humanity. He needs us to do in our limited way what he would have done had he been around in our time. Our ears should be his to listen to others' problems, our eyes should be his to see others' needs. Our words should be his to guide and encourage, our hands his to do what should be done.

Being another Christ (St. Paul says, "I live, no not I, Christ lives in me") is not an airy fairy concept just for those who believe themselves to be perfect or highly suited to it. It is for ordinary men and women who work with all their limitations, imperfections and downright sinfulness, yet are prepared to use the gifts they have, be they great or small, for the benefit of those with whom they live, in the family, at work, at play. You don't have to be a saint to do this but it helps! You may say "Why me?" The real question is, "Why not?" Nothing would ever be done if we waited until we thought we were good enough to do it.



THANKS

To St. Martha, St. Martin and St. Jude for many favours: A. L. Mc.B. — To dear St. Jude, St. Anthony and Pope John for peace of mind and Sr. Benedicta for job: M.N., Dublin. — To St. Jude for favour received: M.G., Cooraclare. — To The Sacred Heart, St. Jude, St. Martin, Our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph of Cupertino for all graces and blessings: M.McC., Trim. — To Sister Benedicta for promotion: B.Mc., Motherwell. — To St. Jude, The Little Infant of Prague and St. Dymphna for many favours: one who believes in prayer. — To St. Jude for favours received: M.B., London. — To The Holy Child of Prague for continual favours received: D.A.W., Hampstead. — To St. Jude, St. Winifred, St. Oliver Plunket and many other Saints for relief from pain: K.J., Swansea. — To St. Jude for favours received: P.H., Sheffield. — To St. Jude, grateful thanks for favour received: C.N., Kilkenny. — To The Holy Spirit, The Holy Infant of Prague, Our Blessed Lady, St. Joseph, St. Jude and St. Joseph Cupertino for excellent exam. results: F.O., Salford. — To The Little Infant of Prague, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Anthony for two favours received: M.D., Crumpsall. — To St. Jude and the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for favours received: J.S., Chorley. — To the Most Sacred Heart for great favour received: V.P., South Stanley. — To The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pope John, St. Martin, Our Lady of Lourdes and Queen of the Most Holy Rosary for safe operation and to St. Blaise and the Sacred Heart for recovery of health: B.H., Dungannon.

* * *

The other day a country woman from a little village in Kent very diffidently asked what I thought of the following poem.

My Prayer

*Use my hands for kindly service
throughout the day to be.
I delight to take my ease,
so find a job for me.
Use my hands for some good deed
to help a fellow man.
Here, Lord are my idle hands,
Please use them since you can.
Use my lips this day, dear Lord,
to speak some words of cheer;
For my lips are all too apt,
to voice despair and fear.
Often I am angry, Lord,
So curb my tongue this day,
May I speak wise words and true
As I go on my way.
Use my heart and fill it, Lord,
with love that never tires
Cleanse it of all foolish pride
and little vain desire.
Breathe into this human clay
and mould it to thy will;
Here, Lord, is my wayward heart
O, make it quiet and still.*

* * *

Grave matter:

You must have heard the saying "Going to an early grave." A priest friend of mine had precisely this experience the other day and came back from the grave to tell me. He

was officiating at a funeral and stepped back to allow the coffin bearers to come through. It so happened that another grave had been opened up nearby and he literally put both feet in it, dropping a sheer six feet without touching the sides, perfectly vested with stole and spotless white surplice six feet down, while everybody looked for him! Fortunately he wasn't hurt in the least, just a shade surprised as was everybody else—somebody said that it cast a gloom over the whole proceedings!

* * *

Happy Christmas

From all of us here at Faversham and from the students you are helping a heartfelt wish to you all—may you have a truly happy Christmas, you and all your loved ones, and may the New Year bring you many blessings.

Our Lady keep you!

Yours in Carmel,

(Edward Maguire, O.Carm.)