

THE CARMELITE NEWS

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WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

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Pick up the bits

Well, here we are again and it is 1976, "and all our New Year Resolutions in bits already", as my father used to say. The trouble about resolutions is that, like rules, they are made only to be broken (and, boy, how we break them!) sometimes with a crash you could hear a mile away. I well remember a crash like that as if it happened only yesterday. I was a student at the time—and that wasn't yesterday—in the house by the sea that had been rented for our use during the month of August. It was a gracious house, far too gracious to be safe with us boisterous spirits in possession of it, full of knick-knacks and lovely furniture and carpets and delicate paintwork smiling upon us. Now our superiors in their wisdom, and they were right, collected nearly all breakables of any value into a box room and locked the door. Very sensible of them, you'll agree.

There was just one piece, or to be more precise, there were two, a basin and ewer of some value and considerable beauty, which were not put away because they were in the room allocated to the senior brother. He had the privilege of having a room of his own while the rest of us, the common herd, had to sleep four or even six to a room. It was a good job we had a bathe in the sea every day, a paddle at

least, or the odour of sanctity would have been unbearable!

You know how some people just keep on nagging you and don't know when to stop? Well, this chap was one of them. Eventually we got so fed up with him that we decided to have a bit of fun at his expense. We jammed his door by tilting a chair under the door knob and waited for bedtime. We succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. He pushed and puffed and pushed again while getting more and more exasperated at our words of encouragement. Finally he gave a tremendous shove. The door shot open, he shot through it, fell over the chair which had skidded from behind the door and hit the ewer and basin like a torpedo. The crash was like the crack of doom. A deathly hush fell upon the place.

Then it started; a tiny half stifled chuckle at first which grew in seconds to a force ten gale of laughter. There was the devil and all to pay afterwards, but that's another story. Anyhow we felt it was worth it! He wasn't hurt, except in his pride, and, though we were sorry about the basin and ewer we felt that if they had to be broken they could not have been broken in a better cause. Sometimes you've got to cry or laugh at a situation, and laughing's more enjoyable. Funnily enough the pieces were nearly all big ones and an expert was able to put them together again.

Now the moral of this story is: if you've already broken your resolutions, smile at yourself, pick up the bits and start again. Better to keep on trying and failing than to give up trying altogether. I think it was St. Augustine who said that there were two ways to heaven, the way of perfection and the way of repentance, and for most of us it's the latter. He said that each sin repented of was another rung on the ladder of humility up to heaven, and he should know! So we shouldn't be downhearted and give up trying because we're not perfect. It's precisely the trying that counts.

REVENGE IS SWEET

The ladies who work so hard in the office tell me that they sometimes spend ages trying to make out the names at the end of your letters. So now it's my turn to tell you that "I can't read your signature, please write more clearly"! (I'm enjoying this). So there! It is the truth I'm telling you—cross me heart and hope to die—and I had my specs on too. So I'm not the only one whose writing isn't straight out of the copy book. Seriously though, it would help us to save a lot of time if you would be kind enough to print **your name and address** in block letters. You wouldn't want us to pray for somebody else would you!

ST. PATRICK

Among our Novenas in this period is the one to St. Patrick. All over the world his feast is celebrated, his memory honoured not only by the Irish and their descendants but by every nation that has good reason to thank the man

for the immense good, both spiritual and temporal, that his adopted people have done in the field of human endeavour.

How sad to think that some Irish men and women who claim they are Christian so dishonour his memory as to kill and maim those who differ from them politically; indeed they even attack those who have no partisan politics at all. Every spiritual leader worthy of the name in Ireland has condemned the violence, yet Protestants and Catholic extremists alike, ignore them and continue to write in blood another

DON'T FORGET OUR COMING NOVENAS

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

February 11th—February 20th

ST. JOSEPH and ST. PATRICK

March 10th—March 19th

ST. JUDE

April 2nd—April 10th

chapter in Ireland's long history of injustice, brutality, heartbreak and fear. Recognition of that injustice, not merely as history but as a reality of our own time, may help us to understand the violence: it cannot excuse it. And what of the children? What dragon's teeth are being sown in the heart and mind of a child whose mother or father is killed before its very eyes! I fear a terrible harvest of hatred and revenge will follow. Just as the violence of yesterday is quoted to justify the violence of today, so the violence of today will be quoted to justify the violence of tomorrow. It is a vicious circle.

The only way to break it is to work for reconciliation. There are men and women on both sides of the political divide who see this clearly and are courageously working for it. They are, indeed, courageous for they and their families are the targets of extremists of both camps who want no compromise of any sort. Yet bridges of trust and reconciliation must be built. The men of moderation must be supported even if one does not agree with everything they do. It is wise to give way on lesser things in order to achieve greater. Surely those leaders who publicly wash their hands of violence yet by their unreasonable stubbornness or inflammatory words provoke it are the Pontius Pilates of today, condemning the innocent to death while not themselves pulling the trigger?

Owing to insufficient space thanks and acknowledgment notices are held over until the next issue.

Let us pray during this novena as never before for peace in Ireland, a peace based on justice for all. Let us pray for more leaders who will have the courage and far-sightedness to work peacefully for this without losing heart, for it will not come easily. Let us pray that people will follow them. Let us pray that those who follow the path of violence may learn a better way to achieve a better society.

Do you think we should leave it at that? We can throw our own weight behind the bridge-builders by talking about the problem in a way that makes for moderation and reconciliation; we can support

meetings aimed at this end; we can help movements involving the co-operation of both sides; we can give our backing to politicians and parties whose policies seem to us most likely to lead to a just peace; we can help our children to avoid hatred and to understand the necessity of patience, forgiveness and respect for life; we can encourage them to seek justice in ways that are themselves just. Nor should our prayers and efforts be restricted to nine days or nine hundred days. We keep at it until peace is achieved. If all of us who take the Newsletter were to pray daily for peace in Ireland what a crusade that would be. Shall we do it?

YOUR STUDENTS

Well, they are yours as well as ours, aren't they? You may not know them but you certainly support them by helping to pay for their training, by praying for them and the priests who work with them. I'm sure you would like to know how they are getting on in Rome at our International College, San Alberto.

At the beginning of December last I went out to see them and stayed ten days altogether. Most of the time I spent with them, except for the mornings when they went to classes. The new men have settled very well and have rapidly made friends with students from other provinces, Irish, Spanish and Italian in the main. Mass is in Italian for the greater part, but the hymns are in English and Spanish too and everyone joins in. Of course the guitar is the new international language of the liturgy! If the readings were in English I think our new

men would get more out of it. The same goes for the Irish Province students, but I'm sure that Italian will soon become natural to them. Other prayers, Divine Office and the rest, are in Italian. It would be too much to expect the Spaniards to learn both English and Italian, the Italians to learn English and Spanish and the English speakers, be they English, Irish, American or Australian, to learn Italian and Spanish. The mind boggles! Lectures are in Italian but quite a few courses are in English. The priests in our college who are fluent in both languages are very good to our men and give them a helping hand. Of course we have provided them with lessons in Italian during the Novitiate Year plus a six week crash course in Rome before the start of the academic year so they had some foundation to build on. The food is plain but good and nourishing and there's plenty of it, which is important for young men. It is not too greasy, either. The seating arrangements in the refectory ensure a good mix of nationalities. They sit six to a table and the groups change every week, while no one language group may monopolize the table. You'd have laughed to hear my efforts in Spanish and Italian. I never did find out the Italian for, "I'll just be havin' plate of crubeens and a glass of stout, meself, and make sure the glass is dry before ye pour it"! They can and do join the football teams attached to the Gregorian University where they study Philosophy and Theology (some do Theology in other colleges such as the Beda).

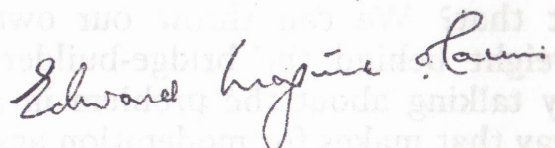
They all seem a happy lot, thank God, and send you their thanks, good wishes and a remembrance in their prayers. Incidentally, the students of the Irish and English Provinces get together once a week and have Mass and Office in English followed by tea together. You never know—if they keep that up they could be talking to each other in a year or two! Unfortunately two of the lads were in hospital when I was there (not my fault) but they are quite fit again now.

TICKETS PLEASE

You may wonder what the enclosed tickets are for—then again you may not! I know that over the years you have been great supporters of our Annual Grand Draw which is so important to us financially and I ask you to do your best for us once more. It is a bit of a nuisance, I know, asking people to buy tickets (trouble is they expect you to buy theirs in return!) but we've got to have priests, and students can't live on prayer alone. In a real sense every ticket is a bread ticket. I know you wouldn't want lads of your own to go short; well in a way these are your lads too. So please help us to feed them by pushing those tickets. They're a hungry lot! P.S. Don't forget to return the counterfoils in good time.

Until next time, God love you,

and Our Lady keep you.



(Edward Maguire, O.Carm.)