
THE CARMELITE NEWS

WHITEFRIARS
FAVERSHAM — KENT

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OVERWEIGHT

The Sisters at Aylesford asked me if I'd take a Christmas cake out to Rome for the students. I like to travel light, but I could hardly refuse such a kind offer. So I said, "Of course. I'd be delighted", and thanked them very much. A couple of days later they said they'd made some Christmas puddings for the students and if it wouldn't be too much trouble . . . !! What can a man do? You're beat before you even start! The cake and puddings (yes, in the plural!) arrived. I couldn't get them into my large suitcase and had to borrow another.

If you have a friend who would like to receive our Newsletter please let us have their name and address.

So, full of Christmas Joy, Peace and Goodwill to Men (but having certain reservations in regard to Women!) and laden with two heavy suitcases I set off for Rome.

At the check-in desk I put the bags on the scales and hoped I looked confident. "You're overweight", says this slip of a girl, very smart and efficient. I thought that was a bit personal—and unfair too, considering I've lost two stone in the last few years but I kept my cool and said, "It's the Christmas cake and Christmas puddings", with a sort of daft smile on my face. I felt such a fool. "I was referring to the bags", says she,

with a certain chilly aloofness. "So was I", says I, wishing to God the floor would open and swallow me and wondering how I was ever going to get out of this situation without the police being called. (They aren't keen on people who carry machine guns in their baggage and pretend they're Christmas cake!) Anyhow she looks at me with an expressionless face, and I blurt out, like a small boy caught raiding the pantry, "For the students in Rome you see", praying that I'd wake up and find the whole thing was a nightmare. Thank God she gave a big grin then, wished me and the students a Happy Christmas and let me off fairly lightly. I turned away with a sigh of relief only to see the grinning faces of the passengers immediately behind me, who had enjoyed every moment of the show. Never again!

Anyhow all the students are well and send you, as do I, best wishes for 1977 and assurance of prayers. We had some good long talks about serious matters and some fun too.

SLAVERY

In the days of the slave trade, when black people from Africa were torn from their families and homes and country and shipped across the seas to provide cheap labour for their so-called "masters", the anti-slavery societies struck a medal. On it was the figure of a man bowed down under the weight of his chains. The inscription read, "If I

am human, then surely I am your brother too.”

As you know, it took a lot of time and a bitter struggle to persuade people that slavery was evil. Eventually sufficient people with sufficient influence put so much pressure on their governments that the slave trade was condemned and officially outlawed. So a grim chapter in the story of man's inhumanity to man came to an end.

Thank God, some christian people were outstanding in their work for abolition of this terrible traffic, but, sadly, one has to say that not all their fellow christians supported them and that many christians were involved in and profited by it during the period in which it flourished.

BLINDNESS

Isn't it extraordinarily baffling to us to try and understand how people could reconcile such in-human treatment of their fellow human beings on the one hand with their belief in Christ on the other? And yet, I wonder if we are not sometimes and in some ways smitten with a sort of blindness? I mean the sort of blindness that prevents us from seeing what we should do in practise with the principles we see in theory.

We are well aware of our blindness, if it is physical, because we find ourselves holding the morning paper or telephone directory at arm's length, or taking ten times longer to thread a needle and we are always wanting more light.

But there is a deeper and even more important sort of seeing than that involved in the physical apparatus of the human eye. I mean the sort of seeing that we refer to when, after someone has explained

something to us, we say, "I see", meaning, "I understand". There can be a terribly destructive blindness of the understanding, all the more terrible and destructive because we may not even be aware of it. It damages us, it damages those among whom our lives are lived. It damages our own growth in those qualities which make us fully human: kindness, mercy, forgiveness, tolerance, justice, patience, cheerfulness, loyalty, humility, concern for others, courage, openness and so on. And because of its effect upon others it damages their growth in these same qualities too. We do not follow Christ by being less human but by being more

DON'T FORGET—

Our Coming Novenas in honour of

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

February 11th — February 20th

SAINT JOSEPH and SAINT PATRICK

March 10th — March 19th

SAINT JUDE

April 11th — April 19th

human in the right way, and so our blindness of understanding impedes our following of Christ, our union with God. And it can impede other people's union with God because our lack of understanding and its effect on our lives puts them off; they do not like what they see in us who claim to be following Christ. Can you blame them? It is a sobering thought to realize that our blindness of understanding, "hardness of heart" as Christ himself called it, can impede the work of the Church in its task of reconciling men and women to God and with each other. What we need is the ability to see ourselves as we are, to see what we are doing to others and

with others. We need something or somebody to help us to see. We need to pray much, with a deep realization of our need like the blind man in the Gospel, "Lord, let me see".

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

You don't need me to tell you of the Novena we have for this Feast nor of the appearance of Our Lady at Lourdes. One of the extraordinary features of this devotion is the great *spiritual* healing that comes from Mary's prayers. What hits the headlines is the cure of a physical illness, and rightly so, but far more important and far more common is the healing of the soul that so many people gain from prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes whether at the great shrine or in the privacy of their own homes. Let us then all join in prayer to Mary for ourselves and for others, as this Feast comes round once again.

LENT

What shall we do about Lent this year? (Perish the thought! sack-cloth and ashes, bread and water, for six weeks!) What if we made our whole Lent a time of prayer for understanding? What if we prayed every day for a better understanding of ourselves, our husbands, wives and families? What if we prayed for a deeper understanding of the needs of other people, of our neighbours, our fellow workers, our town, our country, the parish, the whole church? What if we prayed for an end to the bitterness, harshness, fear, lack of forgiveness, selfishness, self righteousness, rash judgement, back-biting, resentment, suspicion in our lives? And in the praying try to think about it with a true understanding, try to see

things as Christ would see them. How to do this is the question.

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 ragg'd 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

"LORD LET ME SEE"

Well, what if we simply started each day of Lent with the simple prayer, "Lord let me see", and repeated it quietly to ourselves at intervals throughout the day? Then we could read a bit from the life of Christ in the gospels, perhaps in the relaxed atmosphere of the evening after tea or just before going to bed, to see what Christ is saying to us in his words and in his actions. Reading and thinking like this is real prayer because it is a way of letting Christ talk to us and trying to understand him. It can be very helpful to have another person share this prayer of reflection and

understanding because they can sometimes see what we miss, and in this way they are God's helpers in leading us to a better understanding. As we understand better so we come to want to do something about our lives not just for Lent but for always. We want to admit our failings and to be reconciled with God, with our fellow

It would help us if you put your full name and address on your letters.

human beings and with the Church, whose work has suffered from our blindness. In this way our doing without this or that, our going more often to Mass or the Stations become with our prayerful reading of the Gospels a part of our endeavour to understand, to forgive and be forgiven. Isn't this what all of us so need? It will help to make our participation in the sacraments of Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) and the Eucharist so much more fruitful too.

HOPE AND JOY

If we prepare for Easter like this we are bound to have an increase of faith and hope and joy and a renewal of our lives as a result. We shall come to understand as did Saint Paul, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me". That is the secret, to rely on Christ. Which does not mean that we sit back and do nothing for ourselves. If God became man to encourage us by word and example and inspired Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to set it down in the Gospels, then surely to God we ought to read what God has written for us and think about it and apply it to our lives! (Who says I'm going on

about it? Well, maybe I am a bit —just a bit!)

RECIPES FOR COLDS

This time of year nearly everybody gets some sort of cold or chill or 'flu. Here are a couple of remedies given me by a Spanish lady: -

The first: Take a beaker of boiling water and add 2 teaspoons of honey, 2/3 teaspoons of brandy, 2 soluble aspirin; mix well. Drink this and get straight into bed.

The second is more exotic: Take ½ tumbler of red wine and fill the top-half with hot water. (It doesn't really matter if you do it the other way round). Add 2 dessert spoons of sugar, 4 cloves, 1 piece of cinnamon stick, 1 slice of lemon; boil well, strain, drink and get into bed.

The third was given me by an old Irish woman many years ago for 'flu, and it runs like this:

Put a bottle of whiskey and a glass at the side of your bed and light a candle next to them. Then get into bed, making sure there are plenty of blankets on and start gradually sipping the whiskey. When you see two candles put the glass down, put the top on the whiskey bottle, blow both candles out and go to sleep. This is guaranteed to get rid of 'flu in twenty-four hours but you may have a headache! Incidentally, if you find that Grandpa is getting the 'flu too often change to recipe No. 1 above!

Until next time,

Our Lady keep you!

Yours in Carmel,

Edward Augustin Lam.