

THE CARMELITE NEWS

WHITEFRIARS - FAVERSHAM - KENT

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WHEN I WAS A LAD

Do you remember the old song that started with those words? Well, when I was a lad in the 1920's and 30's I thought I was doing very nicely, thank you, when I got my spending money on a Saturday—a whole penny! You could buy the whole world for a penny—a boy's world anyway. For a halfpenny you could buy a fistfull of enormous "gob-stoppers", huge, round toffees nearly as big as a golf ball, that effectively put an end to the talking, whistling, laughing and shouting, which were the normal signs of life in the average boy when not fast asleep.

Communication was reduced to two basic sounds: "glug" and "shlurp", this latter rather like the Welsh "ll" as in Llandudno, but with overtones of intense relish and dedication to the work in hand—or perhaps I should say, "in mouth". It was the only perceptible sign of breathing. "Glug" on the other hand—or mouth—was full of significance, even eloquence, you might say.

It indicated "yes" or "no" with an infinite variety of shades of meaning. It could be a question, it could be an answer. Sometimes it meant, "Let's go and raid Frank Brown's orchard", though personally I preferred his daughter to his apples, while at other times it

meant, "I've got to go home, because I'm already an hour late for tea and my father will kill me". What further need had we of language? We understood each other perfectly.

Then there was Sharpe's Toffee. My mouth begins to water at the very thought of it. Do you remember? No? Let me tell you, if you haven't just once in your life tasted Sharpe's Toffee, life has passed you by. It came on a flat tray in small square sections, each guaranteed to clamp your teeth together for a whole half-hour. They talk with smug pride nowadays about the new synthetic glues but they aren't a patch on Sharpe's Toffee. For a halfpenny investment you could be sure of keeping a boy's mouth shut for a whole day—apart from the split second it took to put another square into it, and no time wasted there, I can assure you. No wonder parents, fathers at any rate, were in favour of it.

It was educational too, as were gob-stoppers, because any boy would be glad to sit and read anything, even an improving book, provided he was supplied with the necessary incentive, round or square: much better than the telly and much cheaper too. Come to think of it, the sugar content wasn't all that high either, so our teeth didn't suffer that much, at least not from sugar. The real danger was that Sharpe's might

pull one out if you tried to chew too vigorously, or that a gob-stopper might stick in the throat as it melted down. Not that there was a real risk of choking: a hefty slap on the back would always dislodge it. The problem was that, as it shot out from the throat, the average gob-stopper tended to loosen, if not dislodge, a couple of front teeth. But then, every sport has its attendant risks, and gap-toothed boys were legion in the football, rugby and gob-stopper fraternity, F.R.G.S. for short. No, not Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society: toffee nosed lot!

SAVOURING THE FINER THINGS OF LIFE

Of course, even though you knew what you were going to buy when you went into the shop—Mr. White for gob-stoppers or Mrs. Burns for Sharpe's—you never asked for it straightaway. Good Lord, no! There was a long period of search and savour to be enjoyed first, with noses pressed against the counter, eyes devouring the various sweets in the jars, the smells titillating the tastebuds (ah, Bisto!), one's whole being relishing every individual item in the shop before making the plunge. We wrung every last ounce of pleasure from our visit before we came out. The purchase was a foregone conclusion, but there was so much else to be enjoyed before that happened. I wonder sometimes if we miss a lot of simple pleasures by rushing too quickly the things we like, by not taking time to enjoy all that accompanies and surrounds them, by grabbing them rather than relaxing with them and taking time to savour their full flavour.

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

A couple of months ago I thought I'd make a diversion to the old home and see what changes there had been in the last few years, not having been there since 1948. They were surprisingly few, in fact. But one major change sadly surprised me. Where Mr. White used to dispense gob-stoppers, and many other less important things I dimly remember like bread, cheese, butter, eggs and so on, there now stands—oh, abomination of desolation—a gown shop. What a let-down! Far better was the fate of the other vanished prop of my boyhood, the shop of Mrs. Burns. It had been demolished to make way for a new road (they call it progress), but at least it was a clean death!

HARD TIMES

Of course it's all very well getting nostalgic and romantic about one's childhood but one has to admit that for many, if not most people those times were hard. It was hard to make ends meet: hard for a mother, hard for a father to keep a family on thirty bob a week. Some of the children who went to the parish school with me had no shoes, not even in the winter, and a slice of fried bread was regarded as a square meal. Many a family owed its survival to the S.V.P., to the Sisters, to the parish clergy, to the Salvation Army. Thank God, there's been a big improvement since those days in many ways. Perhaps we should remember this when we complain about the times we live in. I suppose what made it less difficult than it would otherwise have been was the friendship and support that people gave each other, sharing the little they had.

Nowadays loneliness, a sense of being cut off, seems to be a big problem. We could keep an eye open for the lonely ones in our community couldn't we and draw them in?

SHARING

Talking of sharing reminds me to thank you for sharing your thoughts, your concern, your prayers, your hard-earned money and, what is even more generous, your small savings with us. Without your all-round support we could not educate our students nor even get them in the first place. We could neither maintain nor develop our work on the home front, neither could we help the foreign missions as we should. One of the ways you help us is by sending mass offerings, some of which go to support the missions abroad, some to our work at home. Of course, "Every schoolboy knows", as Macaulay said, that you cannot buy a mass any more than you can buy love.

However, to make an offering towards the upkeep and work of the priest who says the mass for your intentions is a gracious and practical way of saying, "Thank-you", to God for that mass. The priest has to find the money to live and to keep his work going: and his work is God's work. That is why you support him, isn't it?

In the 1920's, when a penny went a long way, you could live for a day on five bob and have something over. In those days a pint of milk cost two old pennies—it costs twelve times as much now, while a loaf of bread which cost four old pennies then costs fifteen times that now. So to get the buying power of the 1920 five bob into

your pocket you need at least £3.50 in today's money. In fact you need more, because we haven't taken into account the extraordinary rises in other commodities, fuel for example. Yet some people still make a mass offering of 25p, a quarter of a pound, the old five bob, because they've been used to that for years. It simply is not possible for a priest to keep himself for a day on 25p, let alone have something over for his work. To a comparable extent the same applies to an offering of 50p. Nowadays £1 is regarded as the minimum offering, and you can see that it has not kept pace with inflation!

DON'T FORGET—

Our Coming Novenas in honour of
THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS
June 16th — June 24th

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL
July 8th — July 16th

SAINT JUDE
August 16th — August 24th

I hope you don't mind my mentioning this matter. As I say, I think it is force of habit rather than anything else that is at the root of the problem. I'll leave it to your own good sense. What I should *not* like to happen is that a person who genuinely cannot afford more than 50p or 25p should be put off by what I have said. There is no need for that to happen at all.

STOCKTAKING

In September representatives of the whole Carmelite Order will assemble in Madrid. They will come from Asia, from Africa, from North and South America and from Europe to look seriously together at the Order, at its way of living, to see how it is meeting the needs

of God's people today. It is a sort of stocktaking, a General Chapter we call it, and it happens every six years—we cannot afford it any oftener! Please remember us in your prayers especially in September so that we may better understand what we need to do and may have the good heart to do it. Remember us too on the Feasts of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16th July, and of St. Elias the Prophet, 20th July. We shall pray for you too. All of us need the faith and love that characterized Mary, and the courage to stand by what is right that was so noticeable in Elias.

Incidentally, I had to make a short visit to Rome recently in connection with the Chapter and I managed to see our students. All of them send their good wishes to you. I prayed for you in St. Peter's at the Altar of St. Jude and before Michaelangelo's Pieta, that most moving of all pieces of sculpture—Mary with the dead Christ in her arms.

NOVENA NOTES

Just as Christmas reminds us that God is one of us in the person of Christ, so the feast of the Sacred Heart reminds us that Christ still

lives and intercedes for us. He knows our difficulties not only because He is God but especially because He is man. Let us approach Him with confidence, particularly about family problems. He will bless homes where he is honoured.

In July we remember the Scapular which we wear as a sign of our trust in Mary's loving concern for us, and in this we follow her Son.

August brings to mind St. Jude, one of Christ's apostles, who triumphed over suffering and death. We ask him to pray for us in our difficulties because his prayers are powerful with God.

NIGHT-CAP

I'm glad you liked the recipes for 'flu. One old toper said he didn't just take a night-cap, he took a whole night-gown! Thank you for all your letters. Hope you have a lovely summer. Stay clear of the sharks. Goodnight and God bless.

Until next time,

Our Lady keep you!

Yours in Carmel,

Edward Ignace Lam.

THANKS

Gratitude to St. Jude: H.W., Thornton Heath.—To Ss. Jude, Joseph and Anthony: E.H., Newry.—To St. Jude: B.M.F.S., Harrow.—To St. Jude: M.J.R., Longford.—To St. Jude: An.C., Scunthorpe.—To St. Jude: R.T.L., Perugia.—To St. Jude: M.K., Dublin.—To St. Jude: R.H., Longniddry.—To St. Jude: R.M., Belfast.—To St. Jude: E.K., Hamilton.—To St. Jude, Blessed John Ogilvy and Margaret Sinclair: M.K., Glasgow.—Ss. Jude and Martin: M.D., Kilkenny.—To St. Jude: W.H.—To St. Jude: B.M., Kildare.—To Sacred Heart, Our Lady, Ss. Jude and Martin: M.McL., Tyrone.—To St. Jude: M.O.B., New Ross.—To Ss. Jude and Joseph and Our Lady: Anon, Nottingham.—To the Sacred Heart, Ss. Martin and Jude: A.K., Derry.—To St. Jude (Helper of Hopeless Cases), and Our Lady of Lourdes: S.M.N., Smallfield, Surrey.—To St. Jude: M.G., Pennyburn.—To Ss. Jude and Martin de Porres: M.T., Richmond.—To Ss. Jude, Martin, Rita, Joseph, Martha, the Sacred Heart and Our Lady: P.J.M., Newry.—To St. Jude: M.McA., Portglenone.—To St. Jude: B.H., Liverpool.—To St. Jude: B. Quilty, Clare.—To St. Jude and Our Lady of Lourdes: D.M., Manchester.—To St. Jude: K.C., Tullamore.—To Our Lady, Sacred Heart and St. Jude: C.H., Glasgow.—To Fr. Doyle and Fr. Titus Brandsma: A.H., Thomastown.—To St. Jude and The Child of Prague: M.G. and Mother, Gallinagh.—To Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Ss. Joseph the Worker, Martin and Jude, and the Sacred Heart: W.M. and St. Gerard Majella.—To the Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and St. Jude: S.O.R., Mullaghmore.—To the Infant Jesus, Our Lady, Ss. Jude and Theresa: M.S., Walsall.—To the Sacred Heart, Ss. Jude and Anthony and Our Lady: L.L., Glack.—To the Sacred Heart, Our Lady, Ss. Jude, Gerard, Anthony and Martin: M.D., Liverpool.