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THE CARMELITE NEWS

WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

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S...TRAIN...GE STORY

The other day I was returning from a meeting in London. I got into the train after checking it was the right one and settled down to read the paper in a compartment all to myself. Very unsociable, you might think, but it's so nice to have a bit of time to yourself, isn't it, and to do just what you want without interruption from anyone else? Anyway, unsociable or not, there I was at peace with the world and going in the right direction.

So immersed was I in the newspaper that I didn't notice the stations flashing by until we stopped rather a long time at one of them. The complete lack of activity must have registered on my subconscious mind, wherever that is, and I looked up from my serious study of the sports page. There on a sign staring out at me across the platform were the two words, "Crystal Palace".

You might ask, "What's so strange about that?" Well, apart from the strange coincidence that I was reading about a football team of that very name at that very moment, there was also the uncomfortable fact that Crystal Palace is **not** on my way home from London, quite the opposite!

Gone was my comfortable security, gone my enjoyable and

uninterrupted relaxation. Sheer disbelief of the "This just cannot happen to me" variety took over. You know the feeling? I **knew** I had checked that this was the right train. The indicator said so and the porter said so. What more could a person have done? Yet, unless my eyes deceived me, I was in Crystal Palace and going in the wrong direction.

PANIC STATIONS

I jumped up, grabbed my coat and briefcase, opened the carriage door — and the train started to move, while a startled porter pushed me back in and slammed the door on me. Quite right he was too. Before we reached the next station I had condemned British Rail for its inefficiency, the driver for getting lost, London for having a rush-hour and Crystal Palace for being there at all! Everybody and everything was wrong—except me, of course.

Come the next stop I hopped out smartly and tapped at the window of the driver's compartment next to mine. "Are you going to Faversham?" said I. "Yes", said the driver, "Just trust me". And this with a big smile. So I did—and sure enough ended up in Faversham only a few minutes late. Apparently there was some problem on the usual line and we had taken a roundabout route. No one was wrong; no one to blame.

Except perhaps me for getting into a stew when things didn't go the way I expected. I felt a bit of a fool to tell you the truth, which was good for me!

TRUST ME

However, I suspect that I'm not the only one who gets into a stew when life goes the way we don't expect and into an even bigger stew when it goes the way we don't want. We bother and fuss and fret and blame. Under great pressure or deep distress we even ask God what does he think he's doing, what's the point of it all, which can be a real prayer from the heart. And often the only answer is, "Trust me".

It's not always easy to trust anyone completely—not even God, we sometimes feel in our confusion. Yet it is precisely in situations of difficulty, of hurt, of weakness, pressure and confusion that trust comes to maturity and becomes our greatest compliment to anyone, especially to God.

*When evil darkens our world,
give us light.*

*When despair numbs our souls,
give us hope.*

*When we stumble and fall, lift
us up.*

*When doubts assail us, give
us trust.*

*When nothing seems sure, give
us faith.*

*When ideals fade, renew our
vision.*

*When we lose our way, be our
guide.*

*That we may find peace in
your presence, and pur-
pose in doing your will.*

A LOVELY DAY

It's a beautiful day today: sunshine, not glaring and dazzling but

gentle and mellow; the red brick of the buildings reflecting the warm light and adding to its own warmth and light; the leaves on the trees glowing yellow and red and bronze and brown. It's good to be alive! I'd like you to be with me to share it with you, this lovely day. Sharing heightens the joy of everything, doesn't it? and eases the grief too.

THE LISTENER

So often the trouble is that people cannot really share because they cannot find anyone who really listens. Oh, yes they can talk to people but they don't really share because the people they talk to hear only with their ears and not with their minds and hearts. To hear with the ears is the least courtesy, to hear with the mind is great courtesy, but to hear with the heart is to truly listen, to let the other share not just words, not just ideas but themselves.

SHE REALLY LISTENS

One of you wrote to me from hospital: "There is a very old lady in the ward, 93 I think, and she is remarkable: so ill and yet so calm and kind, so clear headed too. She is an inspiration to all the other patients, including me. She really listens and shares our ups and downs. By being just what she is she's done us all good."

People need listeners. I wonder do we **listen** as we should? to a child full of something to tell us—but we haven't time? to a husband or wife—but we don't listen to what lies behind the words? Do we listen to what is not said? to the silences?

Somewhere in the Old Testament a prophet prayed for the gift of listening to God. I think we should

pray for the gift of listening to each other.

FRIENDS

At the year's end we'll surely be grateful enough to thank the Lord for what good things the year has brought us, especially perhaps for help when we were not at our best. Someone wrote to me, again from hospital (why is everyone in hospital?!), about the help that friends had been and enclosed a little poem about it. Since we all need friends, and I hope we appreciate them, I thought it might echo your feelings too.

*A friend just rang
Another card just came.
They've been so good, these
friends.
They've called, sent flowers,
Brought me fruit and books and
wine.
They've cheered me up and made
me laugh a lot,
And given me the greatest gift of
all — their time.
I'd gladly give all else away
Not one last thing would I wish
left to me;
But leave me, Lord, the love of
all my friends.
It is the closest, Lord, that I can
get to thee.*

I like the bit about the wine, and hope **my** friends will take the hint if I find myself laid up. I shan't worry too much about the flowers!

*In the face of a world submerged
in hatred and violence he was
himself, in his own person, a
message of goodness.*

—Said of John Paul I

Since I last wrote to you Pope Paul VI has died, God rest him. A good and holy man and a kind one. Then came that lovely character, Pope John Paul I, who survived only

a mere month yet somehow won his way into everyone's heart. In one short month he changed the face of the papacy and paved the way for a successor like the present Pope.

I remember going into a pub in North Wales with my brother. As I was standing there drinking my lemonade—or something, a chap came over to me and said, "I like this new Pope (John Paul I). I think he would understand a bloke like me."

Last week a young woman in her early twenties, a lapsed Catholic, said, "I think this new Pope (John Paul II) is a marvellous man. He comes over as someone who understands people and really cares about them—even people like me. He gives me great hope." I think she's right.

Do you remember how natural he was on the day of his installation? How he went down to the people? how he called back the young boy whom the Master of Ceremonies had shooed away, and patted him on the head (suffer little children . . .)? How he grinned here and smiled there? How he plonked a national headpiece on his head—and he in vestments? How he escaped to visit a friend in hospital? The list could be enlarged almost infinitely.

BEING HUMAN

The point is that these two Popes in their own persons, in the way they behaved, in their attitude to people, shew that to be a man of God, a follower of Christ, is to be more human in the good sense of the word, not less. By being what they are and letting the good that is in them come through to others they shew what sort of a person

God is — an attractive person, someone who understands, someone who cares, someone who shares with us in our joys, in our sorrows, in our hopes and fears, in our friendships, in our loneliness, in our fun, in our work. They shew God to men and women like us. Because they are close to us, at one with us, and at the same time close to God we feel God is close to us and our humanity close to God, like theirs. Which should not surprise us since it was God who created it.

OUR COMING NOVENAS—

December 16th - December 24th

ST. JUDE

December 25th - January 2nd

THE DIVINE INFANT OF
PRAGUE

—
THE HOLY FAMILY

CHRISTMAS

This is what Christmas is all about. It is about God shewing himself to us, shewing he understands, shewing he cares, shewing he shares everything with us. How? By being human in the person of Jesus. And **that** is the way to God for us, just as it was and is God's way of revealing himself to us and drawing us to himself. "I **am** the Way," said Jesus.

But Jesus himself and the new Pope need us to reveal God to men

and draw men to God. We do it by letting the good in us come through to others—just as they did and do. What about that for a New Year's Resolution? To let the good that is in us come through to others? Age doesn't matter, learning doesn't matter, just goodness. We've all got some!

How do I help it to come through in me? How do I encourage it in others? That is something that will need a bit of thought, prayerful thought.

"By being just what she is she's done us all good."

—Said of an old lady

ROME

I hope to see the new Pope when I go to spend Christmas with our (that means yours too) students in Rome. We'll remember you all with gratitude.

May there be much love in your Christmas, especially in the memories. God be at your side throughout the New Year.

Happy Christmas!

Until next time

Our Lady keep you.

Edward Hughes Lewis

HELP!

Please enclose an **ADDRESSED** (**NOT STAMPED**) envelope to enable us to send a speedy reply.

THANKS

We are unable to print the large number of thanks to The Sacred Heart, The Divine Infant, Our Lady, St. Jude and many other saints; but your letter to us fulfils your intention to publish your thanks.