



The Carmelite News

WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

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THE LAST ROSE OF THE SUMMER

An elderly lady in her eighties wrote me a letter in which she said, among other things: "I brought a lovely red rose home from my daughter's. As soon as I arrived I put it into a slender glass vase and placed it on a table by the window. It's been an excuse not to polish the table for ages in case a petal should fall!

I've sung 'The Last Rose of Summer' to it—a great favourite of mine. Perhaps it's a fellow feeling! It's beautiful. Some folk say, 'Talk to your plants', but I go one better. I sing to mine!"

Isn't that a lovely picture? I thought the bit about not polish the table was a gem! Can't you just see yourself doing the same?

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE

Talking of elderly people reminds me of a white haired couple I met the other day when I was out walking in the country. The sun was brilliant, and the sky a sapphire blue—more like June really, and I've had many a June without too many days as good—just the day for the open air, and not to be missed at any time, but least of all in November with winter coming.

As I walked along the side of the woods with the heather underfoot and the leaves a million different

shades, I came across this couple sitting with their backs against a log and the furze behind keeping the cool of the slight breeze off them. They were drinking a steaming cup of something, and the thermos flask stood between them.

It seemed churlish to pass them by, so I stopped and greeted them. Such a lovely couple, full of warm smiles. "Lovely day," I said. "Just right for coffee." (Not that I was dropping a hint, mind you. Oh no.)

"Yes, it is a lovely day," said she, "but it's not coffee, it's soup. Would you like some?" Well, you could have knocked me down with the proverbial feather. I did the usual, "Well it's very kind of you but . . . ; thank you all the same but . . ." He said, "I can recommend it. It's consomme, if you like it." Like it! I felt like *Oliver Twist*! Anyway, with great alacrity I allowed my arm to be twisted and accepted a cup of their soup. It was delicious. I sat down and joined the party.

AUTUMN

Now the interesting thing was that during the fifteen minutes or so that I stayed there at least half-a-dozen other people walked by with dogs or children or both and everyone looked across at our couple once or twice, smiled, stopped, exchanged a few words and then moved on with a smile on their faces.

This couple did something to people. They radiated a sort of serene happiness, obviously enjoying each other and the day and the chance meeting with other people—not to mention the soup! It was infectious. I felt better for meeting them, and it was clear that all those others did, who came and stopped and talked and moved on smiling.

SERENITY

There's a rather special beauty, I think, about the Autumn of a marriage, of a friendship, of a life. There's a certain quality of serenity, an ability to face what life may bring because one has learned to face it so often already. One has developed one's strengths, has recognized one's weaknesses and learned to handle them. Perhaps most of all, one has found the inner core of one's being and come to terms with it and with the God who created it in love and keeps it in existence in love and draws it to himself in love.

BEING

The Autumn of our lives is a time of **being** rather than **doing**. The search, the discovery, the ambition, the achievement, the fulfilment, have all been experienced, and now there remains to be oneself: with God, with loved ones with the whole wide world.

The role of those in their Autumn is to be their own best and lovely selves and by being such to show others how to be so. Shakespeare puts it beautifully:

"My way of life is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf;" and he tells us what should accompany that state:

"Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends."

May it be so with us, my friends.

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.
He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.*

Jeremiah 17:7-10

PEACE AND QUIET

About a month ago, in mid-October, I went to a place deep in the English countryside to give a week's Retreat to a group of Sisters from all over the country. It was a beautiful building with surroundings to match. If you couldn't make a prayer or two there you'd never make one. That goes for the priest leading the Retreat too!

The Sisters who ran the place were most welcoming and natural and hospitable. They gave me a little suite of my own, bedroom, bathroom (oceans of hot water!) and sitting room, and at the end of the corridor a small pantry with toaster, fridge, electric kettle and so on. "This is the life," I said to myself, and resolved to shew my appreciation of such hospitality by partaking of it. How else?

Now one night I'd been working late and finished about eleven o'clock. I felt a bit peckish and thirsty so I tiptoed quietly along to the pantry and popped a couple of pieces of bread into the toaster and put the kettle on. All was absolutely quiet and still—not even a mouse moving. Out with the

butter and milk, brew the coffee, butter the first piece of toast, stretch for the second and—screeeeeeeeeng!!!

I nearly jumped out of my skin. I looked quickly at the toaster and kettle—both O.K. Then I remembered there was a telephone on the corridor and rushed across to get it, silently cursing the fool who had designed such a banshee of a bell. But it wasn't that either.

Then I heard doors opening and the pad-pad-pad of slippers on the carpet round the corner. There they were in a swift-flowing but orderly stream: down the stairs, along the corridor, down the next stairs in their multi-coloured dressing gowns. No rushing—a tribute to their training—and only slightly bending the Major Silence!

I stood there with a half-eaten piece of toast in one hand wondering what on earth was happening—a Witches' Sabbath perhaps? Then along came the Superior—or was it the Bursar first?—with a quizzical smile and a twitching nose. "You've set off the fire-alarm, father," she said and burst out laughing. So did they all as they gathered round, which was very kind of them in the circumstances!

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

What could I say or do? If ever a man was caught red-handed it was me, with the incriminating

OUR COMING NOVENAS—

December 9th - December 17th
ST. JUDE

December 25th - January 2nd
THE DIVINE INFANT OF
PRAGUE

THE HOLY FAMILY

evidence held in my hand for all to see—and smell!

The smoke from the toast had triggered the sensor of the fire alarm just outside the pantry door, which I had left open. Peace and quiet indeed!

By the way, some of the over 60's took those stairs as well as the under 30's!

THANK YOU

As we come to the end of the year, I should like to say "Thank you" to you all. You have been a great source of help and strength and friendship to me and to our small province of the Carmelites. Where would we be without you?

With Christmas sneaking up on us I want you to know that we'll be thinking of you specially throughout Advent, and the Provincial will be remembering you in Rome on Christmas Day. I shan't be in Rome this Christmas, but I'll still remember you.

*Don't be afraid to take a big step
if one is indicated.*

*You can't cross a chasm in two
small jumps.*

AND SO TO CHRISTMAS

I can't believe that it is only a few short weeks to Christmas once again. Do you find that the year seems to be half-over before we get used to writing the new number on the first page of our letters, and it's nearly fully over before we've stopped wondering where the summer got to? Is it middle-age or an easy conscience—or both?

What shall we do for Advent? Pray of course, pray every day that Jesus will come into the hearts of men and women all over the world and be made flesh in them and so

dwell among us as he did in his own humanity so long ago. That is what being a christian means: to be another Christ, to be the incarnation of Jesus in this time, in this place.

THE VINE

Jesus himself put it very vividly when he said he was the vine and we the branches—a living unity sharing the same life (Jn. 15).

THE BODY

St. Paul expressed it differently but just as graphically when he said Christ is the head and we are his members—again a living unity sharing the same life (1 Cor. 12, 12).

TODAY

We are the eyes of Christ to see what is needed today; we are the hands of Christ to do what needs doing today; we are the feet of Christ to go where Christ is needed today; we are the voice of Christ to say what needs saying today.

We haven't got to be great at this or that, or to be in the council halls of the United Nations or Westminster or Dublin or wherever. Jesus was not one of the "great ones" was he?

ADVENT IN BRAZIL

Do you know what they do in one of the poverty stricken shanty towns of Brazil for Advent? They take the statue of Our Lady to every old and sick person and bring them Holy Communion and pray with them and talk and laugh with them—and maybe weep too, and convince them that they are not deserted, that they matter, that people care about them, that God has not forgotten them.

Couldn't we do something like that during Advent and at Christmas to let people know we care? A smile, a word, a visit, a card. Forget about presents, it is the knowledge that we care that counts. In this way, through us, the Word will again be made flesh and dwell among us (Jn. 1, 14).

May there be much love and happiness for you and yours this Christmas, and may Mary's son walk with you all along the path of the New Year.

Our Lady keep you,

Edward Hughes

THANKS

Sincere gratitude to St. Jude, Our Blessed Lady and St. Martha for prayers answered.—M.C., Glasgow.

Thanksgiving for very special favour to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and to St. Jude.—W.J.M. and family, Preston.

Thanksgiving to Our Lady, St. Anne, St. Anthony, St. Martha for many wonderful favours received.—E.G., Co. Meath.

A thousand thanks to the Sacred Heart and His Blessed Mother for helping me to pull through a difficult period.—M.M., Co. Roscommon.

Thanksgiving to St. Jude for favours received.—S.T., London, SWW.

Very grateful thanks to Our Lady and St. Jude for favours granted.—A.G., Inverness.

Thanksgiving to St. Jude, St. Joseph, Sacred Heart and Our Lady of Lourdes for help in many ways.—K.T., Sheerness.

Thanksgiving to St. Jude for "Success in Exams".—P.B., Eastbourne.

Thanksgiving to St. Jude for a wonderful favour received.—M.C., Cork.

Grateful thanks to The Sacred Heart, Our Lady and St. Martha for favours received.—B.M., Mallow.

Very sincere gratitude to St. Joseph and St. Jude for a miraculous request received.—A.M., Waterford.

Thanks to St. Jude for favour received.—M.M., Larne.

Grateful thanks to St. Joseph of Cupertino. B.B., Glasgow.