

THE CARMELITE NEWS

MAY 1984

WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

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TITUS BRANDSMA

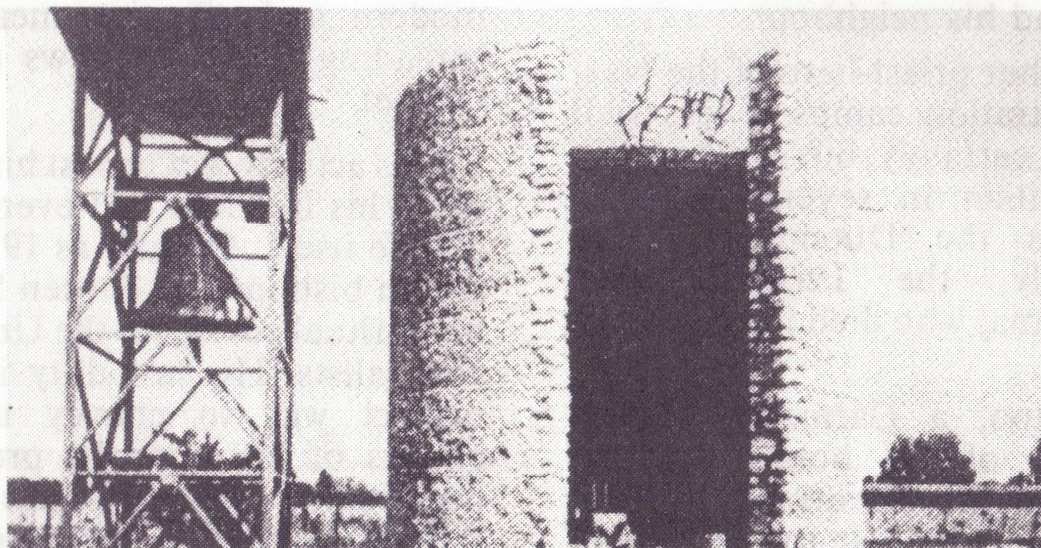
As you probably know, there are plans for the Pope to go to Holland this year — it should be a good experience for both guest and hosts, and I'd love to be a fly on the wall when they really talk to each other in private! Incidentally, did you ever notice how some people "talk to each other"? They do just that and only that. They never *listen!* Words, words, words, and no space between for listening. . . and they call it conversation! Of course you and I would never be guilty of that would we? Never, What, never? Well, hardly ever!

To get back to Holland: there are rumours, there are hopes, that during his visit John Paul II might beatify Titus Brandsma. It occurred to me that it might be opportune to recall to your mind

who and what he was: "now is the acceptable time," as the liturgy tells us at the beginning of Lent.

ESPERANTO

It so happens that a friend of mine who wishes to remain anonymous, wrote a brief article for the Catholic Esperantist magazine "Espere Katolika" at the end of 1982 and has given me permission to publish his English version. Here it is — a little gem, I think you will agree, and for those of you who may know, or be interested in Esperanto I publish Fr. Titus's poem in that international language together with an English translation. The magazine, by the way, is circulated to over thirty different countries — a journalistic achievement that would have pleased Fr. Titus!



"Memorial Chapel of Penance at Dachau."

A MARTYR FROM FRIESLAND

*Jesuo, kiam mi rigardas Vin,
denove mi ekvivas de Vi mem.
Ĉar Via Koro daŭre amas min,
kvazaŭ per aparta amikem'.*

*Kuraĝon plian tio jam postulas,
aflikto devas esti mia ĝoj';
ĉi-maniere mi al Vi similas
kondukas al la Regno kruta voj'.*

*Mi estas en sufero ja benita —
por mi sentebblas ne plu la dolor',
sed sort', ho Dio, plene elektita
por unuigi min kun Via Kor'.*

*Ĉi tie tutsilenta, tutsoleca,
mi restu, kie vintra frost' tremigas;
forestu kompanio homfracteca —
ĉi tie izoliĝo ne lacigas.*

*Tial ke Vi, Jesuo, apudestas;
neniam pliproksimis amo Via.
Do restu kie mi, kaptito, restas,
Jesuo dolĉa, ĉefbonaĵo mia.*

(Transl. by Fr. Albert Groeneveld).

*'Before a picture of Jesus in my cell'
February 12th-13th, 1942*

Dear Lord when looking up to Thee,
I see Thy loving eyes on me;
Love overflows my humble heart,
knowing what faithful Friend Thou art

A cup of sorrow I foresee,
Which I accept for love of Thee.
Thy painful way I wish to go;
The only way to God I know.

My soul is full of peace and light:
Although in pain, this light shines
bright.

For here Thou keepest to Thy breast
My longing heart, to find there rest.

Leave me here freely all alone,
In cell where never sunlight shone.
Should no one ever speak to me,
This golden silence makes me free!

For though alone, I have no fear,
Never wert Thou, O Lord, so near.
Sweet Jesus, please abide with me;
My deepest peace I find in Thee.

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"Every Catholic Esperantist, if not every Catholic, already knows of St. Maximilian Kolbe, himself an Esperantist, who sacrificed his life for a fellow-prisoner in Auschwitz/Oświęcim — a crowning gesture of Franciscan devotion to God and his neighbour.

Another priest-hero of the Nazi concentration camps is less well known, certainly, but similar to St. Maximilian in several respects. This is the Dutchman (more precisely, the Frisian) Titus Brandsma, who died in Dachau in 1942.

He too, a Carmelite to the marrow of his bones, had an outstanding devotion to the Mother of God. He too, in spite of chronically weak health, achieved

high academic honours, culminating in his nomination as rector of Nijmegen University in 1932. In addition — and here also he has much in common with St. Maximilian — Fr. Brandsma was very active in journalism, as a modern and effective means of spreading the good news of the Gospel.

This activity was to cost him first of all his freedom and eventually his life itself. As early as 1935 the Dutch bishops had chosen him to be spiritual adviser to the Union of Journalists. His last duty in this respect was to convey to the editors of the Catholic press an important decision (all the more difficult because of its foreseeable consequences) which had been

reached by the Hierarchy: the editors must at all costs resist Nazi demands that they should publish advertising matter on behalf of the party. Fr. Brandsma communicated this decision, not by letter, but, with great moral courage, in a series of personal visits. He had just finished the round trip when the Gestapo arrested him.

In Dachau, where the guards persecuted him with a cruelty exceptional even in that notorious place, Fr. Brandsma soon became known for his courage, self-sacrifice and transparently Christian goodness of heart. He survived only five weeks there, during which time he prayed for sadistic torturers and comforted and encouraged fellow-prisoners, till a lethal injection put an end to his sufferings. He made an unforgettable impression on many whose only other interest at that time was the struggle to stay alive. "If anyone was a martyr," according to the testimony of a fellow-sufferer, "it was Titus."

Dachau was the last station on his Way of the Cross. At the first, in prison at Scheveningen, Fr. Brandsma had written a poem whose message is no less valid for the world of today." (It is printed in Esperanto and English at the top of page 2).

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

Those whose lives were touched by Titus knew from their experiences of him that he was "a light in the darkness for the upright" showing others the way by his love, his courage, his gentleness, his learning, his deep respect for people, especially for those whom

the world regards as lowly. They were lifted up by his holiness, his humanness, his humility and joy, his abiding loyalty to the truth as he saw it. So many of them did not survive the death camps. They need no formal statement from the church upon the qualities of this man. Neither in one sense do those who have survived — they already know from experience. However, in another sense, they do *want* even if they do not *need* a formal recognition, in public from the Church that this man is an example to be followed.

OUR COMING NOVENAS—

SACRED HEART OF JESUS

June 10th - June 18th

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

July 8th - July 16th

SAINT JUDE

August 16th - August 24th

INSPIRATION

They want it — we want it — because the inspiration that such a man gives is always needed — perhaps never more than today when the rights of the individual are so systematically ignored, restricted, undermined and blatantly attacked all over the world.

The battle for the hearts and minds not only of individuals, not only of a new generation, but of whole nations and continents is being fought by the media, the TV, the radio, the newspaper, the magazine, and paramount among those who make the media work for good or ill, for truth, for falsehood, for liberty or slavery is the journalist. This is what the Dutch

bishops recognized in the 1930's in their opposition to Nazism. That's why they chose Titus to be spiritual adviser to the journalists. That is what cost him his life at the hands of the Nazis.

The world — and the church in the world — desperately need men of his outstanding calibre to inspire others to serve the truth with the same respect for it as he did.

RAFFLE

You will notice that its raffle-time once again and you'll be wondering who you can persuade to buy them. Well, try to remember the people you have bought raffle tickets from in the last twelve months and then get a bit of your own back by selling them ours! If you can manage to sell them we will be grateful. If you cannot — and I know some of you just cannot manage to do so — just destroy them and don't worry about it.

ZIMBABWE CARMELITES

You will be interested to know that the Carmelites in Zimbabwe have opened a new house for the training of priests for the Order there. Our cheque from here, which comes out of your donations, of course, was the first money to be put into the financial account of that house, and our Carmelites there asked me to thank you for your support, not just on this occasion but on others too.

I will tell you about my stay there on another occasion when I have more space, but the missions have been restored again after the war there, though they still need help, especially now when the

awful effect of three bad harvests due to drought is causing great food problems.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS

As May, with all the promise of summer brings a light to the day and a lift to the heart that has been absent in the winter, so the thought of Mary, "our life, our sweetness and our hope" gives us encouragement, a light and a lift to the spiritual element in our workaday lives. She knew only too well what the "winter" of life can be, yet she always lived in hope, in that quality of mind and heart that trusts in God while at the same time, not neglecting one's common sense and initiative, one's patience and humour to deal with the here and now as well as we can. "Now" is all we are given. So let us pray for ourselves and each other in May, at Pentecost, on the feasts of Mt. Carmel and the Assumption: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners *now*."

May Mary's Summer bring warmth and hope into your lives and mine. God bless. Keep smiling.

Until next time.

Our Lady keep you.

Edward Hughes O.S.A.

P.S. Many people have asked for the date of the Aylesford SPRING FAYRE. It is on Monday, 28th May at 11.30 a.m. — of course!