

THE CARMELITE NEWS

MAY 1983

WHITEFRIARS — FAVERSHAM — KENT

Published by the Carmelites of England and Wales

SPRING . . . ?

Can you cast your mind back to the first day of Spring? What a day it was. Spring — more like mid-winter, with snow and sleet and rain and howling gales sweeping across the country. I was on the M1 and wondered if we'd be sending for snow-ploughs. In fact there were speed restrictions on all motorways, and in a sort of destructive even-handed justice the storms brought down the overhead power cables on the main line from Euston to the midlands and the north — and Jim *couldn't* fix it! Factories were damaged, homes messed up, beach huts splintered into firewood, basements flooded, even a telephone exchange was put out of action — that must have saved a few bob! — and a jumbo jet coming in to land after a trans-atlantic crossing from New York was struck by lightning within inches of the rudder. Luckily no one was hurt. Unbelievably, in the midst of all this thunder and lightning, the sun still came out occasionally and shone brilliantly before the successive battalions of storm clouds began their next attack. Was this really the first day of Spring or had I got the date wrong? Snowdrifts in Spring?

POLAR BEARS

There were unconfirmed reports that in the gloomy half-light the shadowy, white shapes of polar bears were briefly glimpsed as they

moved through the sleet and snow. These sightings were not just in one place, as for instance Whipsnade, where you can expect to see the occasional polar bear out for a stroll, but were reported from places as far apart as Kent and the Cotswolds, Aberystwyth and Glasgow, London and Yorkshire. "Are we entering a new Ice-Age?" I asked myself, wondering if I'd better get a Do-it-Yourself book on how to build an igloo. (No, Grandma, we know the one we've got is big enough: igloo not big loo!)

YOU? ME?

"I feel about fame as the fellow did who found himself in heaven. He didn't even ask himself whether he deserved it. He just kept quiet and stayed."

Walt Whitman

Then I got to thinking about the places where the bears had been reported. What had they got in common? Why, Carmelite habitats of course, and to clinch matters there were no sightings except in Carmelite habitats, so to speak. The old White Cloak still has its uses, especially on a cold, stormy blizzard of a day with the sleet slashing through your scapulars!

One word of warning to those of you who may be planning a walk across the Polar Ice-Cap for your summer holiday: make sure

that the shadowy white shape moving towards you through the snow is a Carmelite and not a Polar Bear before you shake hands with it!

MAY

We friends of Carmel have a special reason for remembering Mary's role in bringing Jesus to a waiting world. One of the first things that the hermits on Mount Carmel did after they became an organized group was to build a small chapel.

They dedicated it, and themselves, to Our Lady. Their religious instinct was right. The chapel was for the Eucharist, Jesus' gift of himself from one generation to the next. But Jesus himself is Mary's gift to us. So, in a very real sense the Eucharist is Mary's gift to us. We cannot separate Jesus from Mary without detriment to our understanding of him, who he is, what he is, where he came from, what he said and did, where he is now.

INSEPARABLE

This awareness of the inseparable relationship between Jesus and his mother is vividly portrayed in the great church at the monastery at Taizé in central France. It is an ecumenical community, originally of Protestant origin and ethos yet with much understanding of Catholic tradition. That understanding has grown over the years and is nowhere more evident than in the juxtaposition of Mary and the Eucharist in the physical arrangement of the church there. Time was when the beautiful ikon of Our Lady at Taizé was displayed in the crypt. Now it is next to the

huge tabernacle set into the wall to the left of the sanctuary and surrounded by flickering lights, the focal point of the whole church. Jesus is the focal point of the whole church, past, present and future, in time and in eternity, and Mary gave him to us.

THE KEY

Her willingness to do what she thought was right in the circumstances of her life is the key to her greatness. We meet her first at the Annunciation when her "Be it done to me" was her consent to the Incarnation, the supreme moment of decision for her, from which all else flowed. But we should be careful not to treat this decision as a flash in the pan, as a one-off decision. No, it was a decision born of an attitude of co-operation with the will of God

OUR COMING NOVENAS—

June 10th - June 18th

SACRED HEART OF JESUS

July 8th - July 16th

OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL

August 16th - August 24th

ST. JUDE

— which means in practise doing what you think is right in all the concrete circumstances of your life. One decision leads to another, that to yet another and so on, and often we have to re-confirm our decisions, our right decisions, as we are tempted to go back on them because we find them difficult to live with, difficult to keep. Yet again we may have to go back on decisions that we made and now see to be wrong. That can be hard too.

NO ARROGANT CERTAINTY

We often have to think, to agonise, to seek guidance of God and of others before we can make up our minds what is the right thing to do — and even then we are not always absolutely certain. We grope towards it in all humility, if we are honest. There is no arrogant certainty for those who seek to do the will of God.

Do you remember that incident in the Gospel, when Mary and Joseph each thought their boy, Jesus, was with the other? To their shock and worry they discovered he was not, and in an agony of apprehension and self condemnation they eventually found him in the Temple discussing weighty matters with the Jewish theologians, who were amazed at his knowledge and wisdom.

Aptly enough, the extract is read in the Mass of St. Joseph, poor man! Mary said to Jesus, "Don't you realise how upset we have been while you have been

sitting talking here?" Jesus replied "Didn't you know I had to be seeing to my Father's affairs?" And here is the point for you and me: the Gospel says, "They did not understand what he meant," and then says they all went off to Nazareth, with Jesus growing up under the guidance of Mary and Joseph.

ATTITUDE

The point for all who try to follow Mary is that she and her husband knew so little about God's plan for them and for their son. They had to be content, as we have, with doing what seemed right at any given time. Mary's life is a succession of circumstances which her attitude of seeking to do what was right enabled her to cope with and "do the will of God." The Annunciation, the Flight into Egypt, the return to Nazareth, letting Jesus go on his mission and not trying to keep him with her, Calvary, her role in the infant church after Pentecost are all concrete instances of her attitude to life — to do the will of God.

A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO LIVE ALONE

*I live alone dear Lord, stay by my side.
In all my daily needs be thou my guide.
Grant me good health, for that indeed I pray,
To carry on my work from day to day.
Keep pure my mind, my thoughts, my every deed,
Let me be kind, unselfish in my neighbour's need.
Spare me from fire, from flood, malicious tongues,
From thieves; from fear and evil ones.
If sickness or an accident befall,
Then humbly, Lord, I pray, Hear thou my call.
And when I'm feeling low, or in despair,
Lift up my heart and help me in prayer.
I live alone dear Lord yet have no fear
Because I feel your Presence ever near. Amen.*

T.M.L.

OLIVER TWIST

"What the 'Dickens' has Oliver Twist to do with The Carmelite News?" you may well ask. The obvious answer is, of course, that both are classic examples of what is best in English Literature — always excepting the Bard himself. Humility is all very well, but it has to be sacrificed in the interests of truth occasionally!

No, the reason I mention Oliver Twist is that he is famous as the boy who asked for more, and so do I. Once again our Raffle Tickets are enclosed with the request that you try to sell them. God knows, you give us enough from your own limited resources, so I hope you'll be able to persuade or bully or blackmail other people into buying our tickets. Thank you for all you do to help us. We remember you every day.

SILVER JUBILEE

I am sure you will remember Fr. Brennan, who used to write to you before I was thrust upon you. Well, he will be celebrating the silver jubilee of his Ordination to the Priesthood in July of this year, and it will be an occasion of thanksgiving for him, for his family and for all of his brethren and friends. I know you will remember him especially in your prayers at that time.

JULY 16th AND 20th

The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on 16th July and the feast of the Prophet Elias a few days later on the 20th are the two patronal feasts of the Order. Please remember us on those days especially, that we may be better able

to follow Mary in the simple, everyday service of her Son and be inspired, as Elias was in those far off days, to speak of the things that matter in the light of God's revelation.

VOCATIONS

We need very much your daily prayer for vocations to our Order, firstly that we may be worthy of the gift of a man's sharing his life with us, and secondly that men will want to do that.

GENERAL CHAPTER

You'll have no time for anything but prayers at the rate we are going! One last request though before I leave you in peace. The Order hold its International Meeting — the General Chapter every six years — in September of this year, starting on Monday 5th. We shall be electing a new Prior General and a new General Council to advise him. We shall be examining what the Order *is* doing and what it *should* be doing in the light of the needs of God's people. It is important that the Holy Spirit tells us what *he* wants us to do rather than us telling him what *we* want to do. We shall need your prayers very much that three or four weeks — especially as I'll be there!

Keep a sharp look-out for the Polar Bears and enjoy the warmth of the Summer.

Our Lady keep you.

Edward Hughes O.S.A.