

The Carmelite News

SPRING 1997



“Happy Easter”



BITS AND PIECES: As Shakespeare said "Troubles come not in single spies but in battalions". One of our great workers left us last year. We were training in a good replacement when, unfortunately, she got ill and had to leave. So we had to start another new trainee, who is doing very well. That as you can understand has badly affected our replies to you. Thank you for your patience and consideration!. Many thanks also for all the cards, good wishes, prayers and help you sent. I do keep you in my daily prayers and Mass. As you know early in the New Year we had the double affliction of snow, ice and a bad flu. That also decimated our staff for some days, and put the work further behind. But God is good and with us. We must look on the bright side. Spring with the sunshine, birds warbling away morning and evening, flowers in their magnificent colours all lifting our spirits after the gloomy winter days, is still to come as I write this. When you stop to think isn't creation marvellous and the Creator so good to give such variety and such reasons for hope and joy. By the time you get this we will be into the Spring with lambs gambolling in the fields and everything fresh, young, beautiful and lifting our thoughts in thanksgiving and praise to Him who inspires such hope and lofty thoughts.

I was in the student house since

I last wrote to you. I can assure you all the students and priests were all "in the pink of health" T.G. and working hard studying from great big tomes and writing long erudite essays, Thank God I don't have to do that - I'd never get through. They enquired about you, St. Jude's clients, and assured me they were praying for you. In fact they have a beautiful wooden statue of St. Jude, carved over fifty years ago for our house in Wales, in the entrance porch to remind them, if that was necessary.

I spent a week with the three novices before Christmas, two from England and one from Ireland. I was asked to share some of my experiences and stories with them. I was very impressed by their enthusiasm and eagerness to hear about my travels and how the Order is progressing in other parts of the world —e.g. in Indonesia, which has only 3% catholic population in a Muslim country, the Order is increasing at such a rate there is difficulty in training all the students. From your contributions we help them. I enjoyed myself in Cheltenham, with the novitiate community, although there were no races on !. I knew the house well as I spent the first ten happy years of my priesthood teaching there. There is a wonderful family spirit among them and we are hoping for more new novices in Sept. So keep up your prayers and sacrifices! The Lord will reward you.

Back in November 1973 I was to lead a group of about twenty people on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Divine Infant in

Prague. At that time of course, the Communist were in power. I applied for a visa. They did not refuse one but kept stalling until it was too late. Another Carmelite went in my place. Recently a number of pilgrims asked me about leading a pilgrimage to the famous Shrine. I wrote to five pilgrimage operators and got only one positive response. I had hoped to organise one for late September, when it would not be too hot there. The cost is much higher than I thought it would be. £618 for the week with some extras on top. If there are sufficient numbers I am willing to try again. But I would need to know by the middle of March. Are you interested?



Since I came here I noticed a number of pilgrims in wheel chairs and people who could not manage stairs. Unfortunately, as the Shrine is on a steep slope, there are many steps to St. Jude's Shrine. Now, at last I got a ramp built, according to regulations, to the Shrine's rear entrance from the car park. This will make it much easier to get in and out, for those with difficulties. One young, active client of St. Jude has contributed some of the cost. I trust St. Jude will help us pay off the rest of the cost. But it is worth it for the sake of those who would not otherwise be able to visit our small but beautiful Shrine.

**PLEASE TICK BOX ON INTENTIONS LEAFLET
IF YOU WANT A REPLY**

MORE DEVELOPMENTS:

Many people when they visit St Jude's Shrine light a large votive candle. We did not have a decent place to put them. They were on a tin tray of sand on a table. It always looked out of place and never appeared to be clean. I got a proper candle holder made by an artist in metal work. It is simple in design but beautifully executed and enhances the beauty of the Shrine when it has its full complement of 60 candles burning at the same time.



LENT: We were brought up to do penance in Lent like giving up things. In the old days we had the "hard fast" and of course the absti-

nence from meat every Friday. The Church has eased the fast nowadays and left the responsibility on each of our shoulders to do some penance during the sacred season to prepare us for celebrating the Sacred Triduum when we enter afresh into the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Our Saviour. Fasting is good for us and is necessary for our spiritual growth. It can be a very helpful way to pray during Lent. Fasting means to choose to deprive myself of whatever keeps me from living the message of Jesus. So fasting is much more than not just eating or drinking certain things. It might be fasting from uncharitable thoughts and words about others, from wasting time with idle chatter during work, from watching TV so I

can have some time to pray or be with others who need me, or from buying something so that I can contribute financially to others who need help. Fasting becomes a prayer whenever I intentionally let it draw me to change my ways so that I am living Gospel values.

Perhaps it might not be a bad thing to reflect, this Lent, on the effect of receiving Our Divine Lord in Holy Communion. The following is a reflection which I find very challenging. It asks us to listen to its words, with mind heart and soul, and then make a real response.

"Remember when you came back to your seat and closed your eyes and put your head down reverently and talked and talked to me? I wanted to tell you to open your eyes and look at my BROKEN BODY ALL AROUND YOU. I tried to catch your attention – the time the child stood on your foot and spoke to you – but you didn't see me and didn't hear me. I was the embarrassed old man with the terrible cough in front of you hoping for some understanding; the unmarried mother at the end of your seat hoping for a nod of welcome; the large family in the seat across the aisle from you – and almost had the impression you disapproved of me. I was the woman in the brown coat whose husband left her this week and whose heart was being eaten away all through Mass – and a friendly smile would have been a great support to me. I am your wife who cooked and prepared and coped with the children and all the burdens of the house while you sat and read the Sunday

papers and then went to the club. I am your husband, your children, and you stamped and huffed and gave us the silent treatment for three long hours after Mass, that blackened and deadened the whole atmosphere of our home. I am your teenager in whom you have lost belief – and your nagging is driving me crazy. I am your neighbour next door about whom you spend so much time gossiping and criticising; I am your fellow parishioner whom you meet every day in the street and you ignore me – busy about your own affairs. Please don't keep me at bay any longer! Don't talk to me. LISTEN – I don't want you to go on loving my Spirit and ignoring my BODY. I don't want you to open your mouth to receive my body – and close your eyes and ears to shut it out. Stop thinking on me as some spiritual being in the skies. I AM ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE and you cannot have me without them. When will you understand you cannot have Holy Communion with Me if you don't have communion with your brothers and sisters? Some day I will ask you how your spouse and family grew in

One day Good Pope John XXIII visited the hospital of the Holy Spirit in Rome, which is run by a religious congregation of sisters. Mother Superior, deeply moved by the Papal visit, went up to him to introduce herself.

"Most Holy Father, I am the superior of the Holy Spirit !" she said.

"Well I must say you are lucky," replied the Pope, I'm only the Vicar of Jesus Christ."

love and faith. How your neighbours fared. How did they all live THEIR MASS. How did your family spread its love across the neighbourhood and how did they celebrate that love at Communion on Sundays”.



EASTER: In the Old Testament in one of the prophets we read: “I myself will pasture my sheep. I myself will show them where to rest – it is the Lord who speaks. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them”. How consoling and comforting to reflect on these words of Our Father. What loving care, consideration and compassion are expressed from the heart in them. He has fulfilled them in His Divine Son. He is our true Shepherd. He has told us that he came to save the world and not to condemn it. And to save it He suffered so much and gave His life for it and for you and for me. It is the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the root and cause of our joy. We know with certainty that He has overcome sin and death and won for us a place of glory with the Father in Heaven. More than that, because He is fully human He knows our weaknesses and like the Good Shepherd is constantly watching over us. He

wants us to grow in love of Him and our neighbour. When ever we wander or stray He comes looking for us ever so gently and patiently and he does this by the means he has left us. The Mass and the Sacraments are His gifts to us to overcome those drawbacks and share in His Divine life here and hereafter. So often we don't see what He has done for us because we are taken up with our immediate problems and we don't take time to look at life with the eyes of faith. In a displaced persons camp in Europe, at the end of World War1 where the people were ill-fed ill-housed and ill-clothed, a Catholic Chaplain was trying to give some hope and comfort to the unfortunate people. He met a Russian Count, who had lost his family and all his possessions in the war. His job was to clean the toilets of the camp. The Chaplain sympathised with the gaunt man dressed in tatters over his misfortunes. His reply, with blazing eyes, was immediate “it does not really matter, Father, the Lord is Risen”. What great faith to look through and beyond the misfortunes to the glory prepared for us.

May the exultant joy and peace that was in Mary's heart on that first glorious Easter morn be with each of you and your families.

May she keep you enfolded in her mantle of love and protection,

Yours sincerely,

H. A. Brennan, O. Carm.

Hugh Alphonsus Brennan, O. Carm.,
Shrine Director.

If you intend joining us for the half day retreat on 1st March
11.00am until 5.00pm PLEASE DROP US A LINE

ANOTHER STUDENT WRITES

"My name is Donald McGarr, and I'm a Carmelite brother studying for the priesthood and living in our community in East Finchley, London. I am 28 years old and was born in Chertsey, Surrey, a little town on the river Thames about 20 miles from London. I am an only child of Irish parents. I was educated by the Salesians but I first felt called to religious life after leaving school. With a youth group I belonged to, I went on retreat to the Benedictine Abbey in Sussex. The experience really touched me since I had never realised that groups of men could live together whilst totally concentrating their lives on God, praying together each day, working together and drawing strength from the love of God which they shared. But I did not feel drawn to the Benedictines. After looking at some other orders, and purely by chance, one day I discovered the Carmelites. I was at Aylesford, attending an All Night Vigil for vocations, when it occurred to me to ask who ran this place. One of the brothers took me into the office and explained about the Order, its history and its work. The more I heard, the more I wanted to

hear; I was falling in love. I decided to apply to join and was sent by the Carmelites to a college for late vocations – I was 19 !!. After that it was recommended that I did further studies. I did a degree in English and Classics after which I joined the noviciate. Three and a half years later, I am still living the Carmelite life and growing day by day in knowledge of myself and of God. I am now in my third year of studies. My love of the Carmelites was first kindled whilst I was praying for vocations. I want you to know that your prayers are most important for us as we study and grow in our life as Carmelites. And thank you also for all your support to us through the Shrine of St. Jude, and for the many other ways in which you are so generous to us. We don't forget you in our prayers. We trust you will continue to support us with yours.



Please remember our Novenas

St Patrick.....	March 9th - 17th
St Joseph.....	March 19th -26th
Easter.....	March 30th - April 7th
St Jude	May 15th - 23rd

The Carmelites, Whitefriars, FAVERSHAM, Kent • ME13 7JN
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