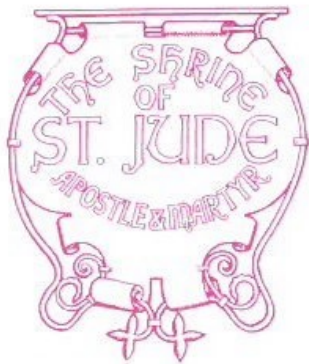




The Carmelite News



Christmas 1997



A Holy and Happy Christmas to you



GONE HOME: Since my last letter two of our priests have been called to their everlasting reward. Fr. Donald Grant, O. Carm. suffered cancer cheerfully for ten years – although he never smoked and only very occasionally took a glass of wine. He worked right to the end. He died peacefully in his native Scotland. He was the first Carmelite to be ordained in Scotland and the first to be buried there since the reformation. We pray that he will get many more to join us. He was a great teacher, preacher, spiritual adviser and had a great way with the youth. I received him into the Order and professed him when I was Provincial so I knew him well. It is hard to see such a young, talented man die, he was only fifty. But God's plans are not ours and we willingly accept His Will. The other man, Fr. Lawrence Walsh, who was in his early seventies, spent most of his life teaching Maths in our schools in Wales and Cheltenham. I worked closely with him for ten years in Cheltenham. A man very much dedicated to helping the young. We had some wonderful times together. I have clear and very happy memories of the help he gave me, as a young priest, starting my ministry in this country. He was a thoughtful and supportive brother. He died on the Feast of the Little Flower on the 1st October, after saying Mass, of a massive heart attack. May the Lord give both a great share of glory, with Mary the Mother of Carmel.

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX: As you read in the papers she was declared a Doctor of the Church. She is only the third woman to be so honoured. According to Church tradition there are two main conditions to be a doctor of the Church. Firstly is to have eminent learning and secondly to have achieved heroic sanctity. To be a doctor is to be a teacher. So one must have knowledge of God and things divine to fit them to teach not only in the Church but of the Church as well. The Little Flower did not have a lot of schooling but after reading her "A Story of a Soul" one cannot doubt her knowledge of the things of God. Also one cannot but be impressed by her sanctity on a day to day basis as recorded in simple language in her writings. It is a great honour for St. Thérèse but it does not add anything to her glory in heaven. It simply high-lights the value of her "little way". It is a great honour for the Carmelite Order to have three Doctors or Teachers of the Church, two women and one man i.e. St John of the Cross; St. Teresa of Jesus and now St. Thérèse of Lisieux. The conferral of this honour by Pope John Paul II was a fitting climax to her centenary year.

PROFESSIONS: I was fortunate to attend the Solemn Profession of Bros. Michael and Mark on the 25th October in Aylesford, the feast of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, who gave their lives for the Lord. It is a beautiful ceremony and touches something deep inside when one sees two young men vow themselves, for life, to the service of God and his Mother in the Church. It is heartening, but unfortunately rare nowadays, for someone to commit themselves for life. Many options were open to them but they

chose the Lord. There were many, apart from the Carmelites, of family, friends, relatives and supporters present to rejoice with them on the great occasion and pray for them. Our Fr. Provincial offered the Mass, received their vows and preached an uplifting homily. They are grateful for your prayers and I am sure you will continue to help them.

NOVENA: You will notice that I have brought back the novena to Our Lady of Lourdes, as quite a number asked for it. Each of us have our own special petitions and needs to be prayed for during the novena. We should also include the needs of others, especially those praying the novena, in our

prayers. In this way we are not only helping others but also getting help from many holy people. Given the sad publicity priests and bishops have been getting in recent times may I suggest that we add a special petition each day in our prayers. Day One: we pray for priests to remain faithful; Day Two: Pray for priests who have erred for true repentance and reparation; Day Three: Pray for those who have been hurt or scarred by misbehaviour of priests; Day Four: For family life, the cradle of vocations; Day Five: More vocations to the diocesan clergy; Day Six: More vocations to the religious life; Day Seven: Vocations to the Carmelite Order; Day Eight: For missionaries; Day Nine: For sick, retired and deceased priests and religious.



Prayer for Priests: Lord Jesus, you have chosen your priests from among us and sent them out to proclaim your word and to act in your name. For so great a gift to your Church, we give you praise and thanksgiving. We ask you to fill them with the fire of your divine love, that their ministry may reveal your presence in the Church. Since they are earthen vessels, we pray that your power shine out through their weakness. In their affliction let

them never be crushed; in their doubts never despair; in temptation never be destroyed; in persecution never abandoned. Inspire them through prayer to live each day the mystery of your dying and rising. In times of weakness send them your Spirit, and help them to praise your heavenly Father and pray for poor sinners. By the same Holy Spirit put your word on their lips and your love in their hearts, to bring good news to the poor and healing to the broken hearted. And may the gift of Mary your mother, to the disciple whom you loved, be your gift to every priest. Grant that she who formed you in her human image, may form them in your divine image, by the power of your Spirit, to the glory of God the Father. Amen. *O Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to you. (3 times)*

(Approved by the Bishop of Dublin)

ST JUDE: If I was to print all the letters we get here about the power of St. Jude I'd need to publish a paper larger than "The Times". The following is just a sample we received from a lady in Germany. We enjoyed the simplicity and directness of the child's faith. She wrote "St. Jude really does help, though sometimes he takes his time about it. Some little time ago my daughter was looking for work, The youngest one said to me 'Nana, your St. Jude's not helping you much this time is he?. Let me have a word' He knelt down and with an enormous shout said 'How about listening to my Nana, if you don't I'm going to tell God's mum about you'. Truthfully, the next morning my daughter had a phone call, asking her if she would be a translator for several business people. When he heard it, David said "You see, Nana, you just have to shout at him, after all as he is so old I guess he is deaf as well!!" It is heartening to see so many individuals, family groups coming daily, from various places, including many overseas visitors. We have had a number of coach loads on organised days of prayer. It is so encouraging to see Christians from other denominations and also many non - Christians e.g. Muslims, Hindus etc. coming to seek St. Jude's intercession. We are all children of the one loving Father. A large number had planned to come from Manchester on the Sunday before the feast but unfortunately the leader had to go to hospital with a serious complaint and a number of the others were ill. They were disappointed, but we hope to see them in the New Year. All the Masses and the special devotions, on the actual feast, were packed out and everyone was cheerful. Not only from London and the home counties but from Harrogate,

Liverpool, Oldham etc. they came, and indeed one from Canada. Although there were many different nationalities it was like one large family gathering. Obviously St. Jude is a great bonder.

PRAYER

I know not by what method rare
But this I know God answers
prayer;
I know not when He sends the
word
That tells me fervent prayer is
heard,
I know it comes soon or late,
My part is but to pray and wait,
I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the guise I
thought
I leave all care with Him above,
Whose Will is always one of love.

NEW BOOK: You remember, I mentioned in a previous letter that our General Chapter had met. Part of its deliberations are now published in book form. It is called *Journeying With Carmel*. The cost is £4.95 plus post and packing. Our Prior General has written a letter introducing it. Two of our top theologians have special articles, found nowhere else, on the development of Carmelite Spirituality. It is a book to be read slowly, although easy to read, in order to reflect on and absorb the richness of the teaching. It contains the distillation of our spirituality over centuries written for the present and future spiritual development of those attracted by Carmelite Spirituality. It would make a very suitable Christmas present.

NEW YEAR: Aren't we all great at making New Year resolutions! But not so good at keeping them. At the feast of the Epiphany when we admire the

Three Kings for bringing their gifts to the new born King we may feel a teeny weenie bit jealous of the gifts compared with ours. Do we ever stop to think of the trouble and hardships they willingly accepted in order to get to Him. They travelled through hot days, cold nights, wind and sand storms. No air conditioned aeroplanes or comfortable cars or ready cooked food handed to them. Just the rough ride on camel back and cooking in the open. Are we willing to make sacrifices to get close to Him? We are willing but do we have the "guts" to put into action what we desire?. This year in preparation for the millennium the Pope has dedicated it to the Holy Spirit. We should pray regularly to be open to the Spirit's promptings and make the effort, like the Wise Men, to draw closer to the Lord. May the Spirit be with you to enlighten, strengthen and comfort you throughout 1998 so that it will be a year of peace, happiness and success for all of your friends and families.

DISCOURAGEMENT: It was once announced that the devil was going out of business and would offer all tools for sale to whoever would pay his price. On the night of the sale they were all attractively displayed, a bad looking lot. Malice, Hatred, Envy, Jealousy, Sensuality and Deceit, and all the other implements of evil were spread out, each marked with its price.

Apart from the rest lay a harmless looking wedge-shaped tool, much worn and priced higher than any of them. Someone asked the devil what it was.

"That's Discouragement", was the reply. "Why do you have it priced so high?" "Because", replied the devil, "it is more useful to me than any of the others. I can pry open and get inside a man's conscience with that when I could not get near him with any of the others, and when once inside I can use him in whatever way suits me best. It is so much worn because I use it with nearly everybody, as very few people yet know it belongs to me." It hardly need be added that the devil's price for Discouragement was so high that it was never sold. He still owns it and is still using it.



Christmas: As we prepare for the great family feast of Christmas it might be helpful to think of how Mary, the mother of the Lord felt as she looked forward to the happy event of the birth of her Son, the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Like any mother she would be confident, that God would take care of her as He did his chosen people down the centuries as He prepared them for the great revelation of His Love. We might spend the first week considering and thanking Him for all the gifts, material blessing as well as spiritual graces, and help he

For Your Diary:

Half day retreat on the THIRD Saturday of April; May; June; Aug; Oct.
i.e. April 18; May 16; June 20; Aug 15; Oct 17;
Day starts with Mass at 11 o'clock and finishes with devotions at 4 o'clock

has given us. It would help us to appreciate more fully His ardent love and great care for us. In the second week we could look at ourselves and see what changes we need in our life e.g. kind to people we meet, helpful, cheerful, just, honest etc. more attentive at our prayers and to include others, especially those in difficulties, so that we are better prepared for, and can enter more fully into the joy of the feast. This will help us to look forward with greater confidence to his second coming in glory. In the third week we could concentrate on the fact that He came in silence and poverty among the poor. They were the first to hear the joyful news, not from men but from heaven. It would be good to do something practical for the poor and lonely or at least to pray that He will come into their lives in a special way this Christmas. In the fourth week we might think of Mary's journey to Bethlehem for the census and how God uses ordinary people and events to achieve his aims and objectives. If, like Mary, we try to leave ourselves open to his influence and grace it is surprising what he can do through us and the peace that comes with it. No doubt Mary must have felt concerned, but confident, on that journey to Bethlehem. So we, too, when things are difficult and the outlook is bleak will take courage from Mary's example because our loving Father is with us, as with her. At the end of her life she could look back with gratitude as she entered

the glory her Son had prepared for her. Our life on earth is a kind of advent or preparation for the eternal family feast in heaven. May your preparation for the Christmas be simple, gentle and sincere for a feast which is a foretaste of the joys to come.

Love, life, peace and joy
Are the gifts of Mary's boy.
May they be yours this Christmas-tide
And in your heart and home abide.

Until we meet again may our
Mother keep you at her side.

Yours sincerely,

H. A. Brennan, O. Carm.

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

STOP PRESS

Shrine Closed

for repainting and floor repairs
January 12-23 1998



DO NOT FORGET OUR NOVENAS

To Holy Infant of Prague:	17th - 25th December
To St Jude:	17th - 25th January
To Our Lady of Lourdes:	3rd - 11th February

The Carmelites, Whitefriars, FAVERSHAM, Kent • ME13 7JN
(A Registered Charity)