



Dear Friend of Saint Jude

GREETINGS FROM THE Shrine of our friend and patron whose intercession we need more than ever at this time.

Once again this Christmas, I would like to write to you, a supporter of the Carmelites in Britain, a more personal letter which includes our very special Christmas card just for you.

It was so strange to celebrate the Feast of Saint Jude with so few people – I celebrated with the Carmelite community in Faversham and Mr Matt Betts, the Development Manager, keeping me company as I celebrated Mass in the shrine chapel itself. Perhaps I could share a few thoughts from my homily that day:

“We know very little about St Jude, except that he was one of the Twelve. St Luke is very

clear in his gospel, which we use on the feast day, that he is part of that special group that was gathered around Jesus. He and his other eleven companions listened to Jesus’ teaching, were instructed by him and were able to ask questions of him. It is this group that the writer of the Letter to the Ephesians, which is the First Reading for the feast, says is the foundation of the Christian community. The author uses the image of the Temple to describe this new building that is not really a building at all.

Now the Temple was at the very heart of Judaism. It was the centre of faith, of worship, of religious debate, of culture, of politics. It was the centre of Jewish identity itself. So, to say that the Christian community is the new Temple and that

the apostles and prophets are the foundations is a highly significant statement. This new Temple is made up of human beings and undergirded by those who were closest to Jesus and sent out by him on mission – the apostles. And Jude is one of these foundations.

However, the climax of this part of the letter comes when the author declares that this new Temple is *“with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.”* This is the same cornerstone that has been rejected by the builders (Ps. 118). This is no ordinary building: it is made up of all of us, built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets and it all revolves around Jesus Christ. We are all called to be close to Jesus as the apostles were. We are in his Temple – and

A message of hope for today

National Shrine of St Jude



he is in us. Discipleship is not an ideology or set of beliefs but following a person. We live this relationship by developing our connection with him in prayer. This is the inspirational model that Saint Jude offers.”

We managed to celebrate the feast well using modern technology: the nine days of the Novena were led by a variety of friars and others, Mass was offered online, there were two reflections, an interview with the Mayor of Faversham about the importance of the shrine locally, and a video on how St Jude’s letter can help us during the pandemic. This huge effort was co-ordinated splendidly by Matt Betts, to whom go our thanks.

WHEN YOU RECEIVE this, Advent will have started.

Advent is when we expectantly prepare for the coming of Christ into our

world. It is a time of hope and of reflection and so well suited to the quieter time we shall all be living for a while. This is a period which brings us very close to Mary. She too must have lived a quieter life in the last few weeks of her pregnancy as she waited for the birth of her child. Mary can be an excellent model for our quiet, expectant discipleship.

Mary also reminds us that the period before the birth of Jesus and the Christmas season is a time of enquiry and of dialogue. Saint Luke reminds us:

*But Mary was very confused about what the angel said. She wondered, “**What does this mean?**” - Luke 1:29*

Everyone was surprised when they heard what the shepherds told them. Mary continued to think about these things, trying to understand them. - Luke 2:18-19

Part of our discipleship involves an engagement with and an enquiry into our faith. Mary provides the model for us again, as the two quotes above indicate. She did not fully understand everything that was being asked of her, nor everything that was going on around her.

Does that sound familiar in the times we are living? What does it all mean? How can we comprehend our world? Mary finds a way forward by trying to listen to God’s will in her life. This requires quiet reflection and getting in touch with the God who is deep within us.

After the success of the Virtual Feast, we will have an online live feed of a Saint Jude candle each Sunday of Advent as a way of encouraging this time to reflect and pray with each other. This will take place at 11am every Advent Sunday.

Please do add your intentions to our Advent Flower too. We will leave the petitions with Jude throughout Advent, but also during Christmas.

Of course, the whole point of Advent is that it directs us towards the coming of the Son of God into the world. The celebration of Christmas each year reminds us that God became a human being like us. That is why we can know him and his love for us. But what does this mean in practice?

One of the very hard lessons we have learnt this year is that we are fragile. The message of Christmas is that God has become fragile like us. He knows what it means to be a human being because he became a little baby – weak, vulnerable, helpless and defenceless. In Jesus we have the one who understands us fully and deeply in our fragility.

The other big lesson we learnt is that we depend on one another. The way the country came together in observing all the rules and regulations was an important example of this interdependency. There was a common spirit and a common purpose and each one knew they had to play their part for the sake of others. Christmas is God's entry into our world of networks and relationships.

The humanity of Christ is part of our common humanity: he had a family, friends and eventually disciples as well. So, the presence of Christ in our community is a real, living one.

Christmas reminds us that we need one another, but it also reminds us that we are on this earth to look after and work for one another.

Christmas joy is not a thing to be kept to ourselves,

but to be shared by others. The transformation of our human nature which we celebrate at Christmas is seen in concrete terms in our commitment to other human beings. That is why I am sending you the enclosed beautiful Christmas card to honour the birth of our Saviour and to give you an opportunity to express your love and care to family and other friends.

We are now preparing for Christmas in the Shrine Office, and you will find the usual opportunities to order Christmas cards with this mailing. In these difficult times where many of us have not seen family or friends for nearly a year now, Christmas cards become ever more important in contact. Please rest assured that we will send all received orders before we close for Christmas - please send before 15 December.



OFCOURSE CHRISTMAS is so much more than cards or decorations.

We recall:

the amazing

the incredible

the awesome

fact that **our God** became a **human being like us**.

That is the real point of our celebration. Not only do we

recall that God became a human being, but that we human beings are enabled to take part in the life of God: *"...may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity."*

That is our Christian vocation to be like God. Christmas is the answer to our deepest longing that God will understand

and identify fully with our human struggle.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and all those whom you love a Blessed Christmas and a Holy 2021. May Saint Jude intercede for you and may Mary watch over you with maternal love!



Kevin Alban O.Carm.
Prior Provincial



Remember our Novenas

Novena to the Holy Infant of Prague

17 - 25 December 2020

Novena to Saint Jude

9 - 17 January 2021

Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes

3 - 11 February 2021

Please recycle or pass this newsletter on to a friend after you have finished reading it - thank you.



 **Carmelite Friars, PO Box 289, Faversham, ME13 3BZ**

 **01795 539 214**

 **newsletter@stjudeshrine.org.uk**

 **www.stjudeshrine.org.uk**

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