



THE CARMELITE NEWS



SPRING 2016

Dear Friend of Saint Jude

How the time passes! When I think back to when I was a boy, time seemed to stretch on forever. Highpoints like birthdays and Christmas never seemed to come, and then were over so quickly with the next longed-for event just a faint hope in the future, endless time away. I always wanted to be older and taller, with the advice of my elders not to be in such a rush dismissed out of hand. How could they know what it was like? Obviously they had never experienced this inner urgency for time to move. If only I had known then what life has taught me over the years. The 'I wish' of my youth looking forwards has changed into an 'I wish' that things wouldn't go quite so fast. I wonder do you find the same?

Since I last wrote to you the Great Feasts of Christmas and Epiphany have come and gone, and now our eyes are turning towards the Holy Season of Lent which will be with us by the time my letter falls through your letter box. A little more of that later, if I have room after all the other news that I want to share.

First of all though, and before I forget my manners, it is my privilege to speak on behalf of my Carmelite brothers to thank you for your prayers and material generosity since I last wrote. We are truly thankful and, as you know, it really is what keeps us going. May our generous God, through the intercession of Saint Jude, bless and reward you as only God can. Thank you!

Sorrow and Joy

I have some news to share which is at the same time both sad and filled with joy. Over the last two weeks two of our brothers have been called to their reward, and both have a strong link with Faversham and the Shrine of Saint Jude.

The first to die was Fr. Joe Kelly who was parish priest here for a number of years. He was only four years ordained when he was appointed which, by anyone's standards, is young for such a role. He always retained a great love for Faversham and the memories of his younger days here. He loved to tell the tale of the housekeeper in those days, who was a force to be reckoned with (I came to know her years later and, allowing for the fact that she might have mellowed with the passing of years, the younger version must have been terrifying!). Anyway, there was one thing that the members of the Carmelite

community loved, which she could not abide, and that was bacon. So it was that, on the morning of her day off, a good fry up was cooked by the brothers with plenty of – you’ve guessed it – bacon. Now of all the cooking smells that linger, bacon is amongst the strongest. The frying friars would then have to spend the rest of the day with doors and windows open to clear the smell. Joe would tell with delight that the housekeeper’s first visit on returning to the friary was to the kitchen, where she would stand and sniff the air; suspicious of what they had been up to, yet with never enough evidence to convict! The Lord came for Joe just as the sun was rising on the morning of the Feast of the Epiphany. May he rest in peace.



Fr. Conleth in his younger years

The second brother was Fr. Conleth Doyle who came to Faversham to work at the Shrine when Brother Anthony McGreal died. Brother Anthony, who was uncle of our current prior Fr. Wilfrid, worked alongside Fr. Elias Lynch in the establishment of the Shrine. Conleth took his place. In 1975 he then went to Rome to begin studies for priesthood, and because his health was poor was ordained early in 1978. He and Joe were in the same nursing home in later years. Hearing that Joe had died, Conleth declared his intention of following him, which he did just a few days later. For a man ordained early for health reasons, you might not have expected him to ‘make old bones’, as they say where I come from. Well, Joe was just a young thing in his 80s when his time came; Conleth reached the ripe old age of 93!

I know that you will keep them both in your prayers. As you do, you might kindly whisper a prayer that God send two good new brothers to take their place in the vineyard.

The strange happening of Saint Jude, Pope Francis and the Year of Mercy

AS I write that heading it sounds like the plot from an Agatha Christie story or a Father Brown adventure! As you will be aware, I am sure, this year has been proclaimed by our good Pope Francis to be a 'Holy Year of Mercy' when we focus as a whole Church family on the mercy of God – something which Saint Jude specialises in. In the course of this year the Vatican is organising a series of gatherings for those involved in different areas of ministry, to help them reflect on how they can incorporate this message of Mercy into their work. Because our Shrine is a place of pilgrimage, we asked Matt our Development Manager to take part along with two others. They were able to stay with our brothers in Rome.

Matt took with him one of the new statues of our friend Saint Jude which have just recently arrived from Italy. These are copies of the beautiful statue of Saint Jude by Adam Kossowski, an artist closely associated with the Carmelite Order. It depicts the Saint holding a copy of his letter, which is one of the New Testament letters in the Bible.

Now some may say that it was just good luck, or others might sense a touch of heavenly intervention, but Matt found himself with his companions in an area of the audience hall where he would have the chance, perhaps, to shake hands with the Pope. When the time came though, Matt was close enough to reach forward and hand Pope Francis the small statue of Saint Jude. The Pope gave a broad smile and asked, before taking it, 'Is that for me?' Being reassured that it was, the Holy Father took Saint Jude's statue in his hands before passing it to the archbishop accompanying him.

I am sure you know that there are rare moments in life when things just seem to come together. We feel that this is one.



Our new statue

Mercy

You may not be aware that the Holy Father has just had a book published which is called *The Name of God Is Mercy*. I am part way through reading it, and can highly recommend it. It is made up of a series of conversations between the Pope and a journalist.

I think that living in a world where everything has a price-tag attached, it is perhaps increasingly difficult to get our minds around something which is just there and for free. Probably a good example, and one thing that governments have yet to charge us for, is the air that we breathe.

For the Jewish people the name somebody was given wasn't just a question of what was fashionable at the time. Very often we hear in the Scriptures that a person has their name given by God. At the Annunciation, Mary is told to call her son Jesus, and the name Jesus has a meaning. It means 'God saves'. So the name of a person isn't just a handy way of catching their attention, but rather it sums up who they are and what they are about.

The Pope is all too well aware that, for all kinds of reasons, many people have been taught that God is a harsh taskmaster, and we seem to have to persuade God to love us by doing good things. Mercy, in that case, has a price-tag, just like a bag of potatoes in the shops. Sadly there are some priests, and religious, and Christian people in general who feel it is their duty to make things as hard as possible for people, as though the generous, loving, tender-hearted God revealed to us in Jesus is, in fact, small and petty-minded.

Being merciful and loving isn't just what happens when we get things right, or when God is in a good mood. They are of the very nature of God, who cannot be other than merciful and loving. At the time when Saint Thérèse of Lisieux was alive, there was great emphasis on the justice of God, in the sense of punishment; but God, Thérèse says, is indeed just because he knows we are weak and judges us accordingly with mercy.

I thank God that I grew up with the awareness that, no matter what I did, I was always my parents' son whom they loved. I knew that there was nothing which would make them throw me out of the house, or stop me having a place at the family table; not that they approved of everything I did by any means, and would point out where I needed to change and grow! The important thing was

that their love did not depend on my changing. Certainly my parents were not more merciful or understanding or loving than God is.

As one very wise Canadian priest once said: 'We can over-estimate all kinds of things, but we can never over-estimate the mercy of God.'

Children and Grandchildren

Many of the letters which we receive at Faversham speak of the concern that people have when their children and grandchildren stop going to church, and the writers worry about their family's salvation. I hear this also many times in my ministry as a priest. My normal starting point is to ask the person to tell me about their son, or daughter, or whoever it may be. Now the beauty is that they see their relative with the eyes of love, and the people they describe are good, gentle, generous, loving their children, concerned for others, and so on and so on. I try to explain, then, that when it comes to practising the faith there is much more than attending church, and it has always seemed to me that the person they are concerned for is doing a pretty good job. Just as they see their family with the eyes of love, then so does God, even more so.

Being part of the Christian family gathered for worship has its place, certainly, but it is not an absolute. We are asked to do so when we can, when it is possible. Sadly, in the church of today, there is much more than distance that can make it difficult for people to attend with integrity and enthusiasm.

The important thing is that we simply continue to love others, regardless of how they measure up to our standards, and trust that they are safe in God's hands, whose desire is for all to be saved. This is why he sent us the one who saves, Jesus!

Our new statue

It may be that, like Pope Francis, you would like to have one of our new statues of Saint Jude. This is certainly possible, and you will find details of how to obtain one with our intentions sheet.

Remember our Novenas

Novena to Saint Joseph: 11 - 19 March

Easter Novena: 19 - 27 March

Novena to Saint Jude: 7 - 15 April

Lent

The Liturgy of the Church reminds us each year that Lent is a joyful season, when we seek to prepare to celebrate Easter ‘with minds and hearts made new’. How might we help what God is doing in us this Lent, and in the Holy Year of Mercy? Perhaps you will allow me to suggest a short prayer to say each day:

*Merciful Father,
help me to trust that you love me;
help me to believe in your mercy
so that I can be merciful, like you, with those I meet.
I ask this with confidence in Jesus’ name. Amen.
Saint Jude, Apostle of Mercy, pray for me and all my loved ones.
Amen.*

Now before I go...

A man was coming out of church one day, and the priest was standing at the door as he always did to shake hands. He grabbed the man by the hand and pulled him aside. “You need to join the Army of the Lord!” the priest said.

The man replied, “I’m already in the Army of the Lord, Father.”

“Well then, how come I only see you at Christmas and Easter?” the priest asked him.

The man whispered back: “I’m in the secret service!”

Easter Blessing

When you read my letter Easter will be on the horizon. May the blessings of the Risen Christ fill your heart and mind, and give you renewed hope. Until we meet again, may God be with you, and Our Lady of Mount Carmel cover you with the mantle of her special protection.

In Carmel,

A. G. Lester.

Fr. Tony Lester, O.Carm., Prior Provincial





Summer Celebration 28 May 2016

Timetable

- 11.00: Devotions with Anointing
- 12.00 – 13.00: Picnic on the grounds
- 13.30: Open Air Mass
- 14.30: Saint Jude procession through the Holy Door
- 15.00: Brown scapular enrolment

The summer is always very beautiful at the Shrine, and it will be lovely to see visitors at the Summer Celebration. All welcome.

Friends of Saint Jude who cannot attend, can purchase a pillar candle, which will be lit on the day for your intentions. These can be ordered through our intentions sheet.

Please note that the Shrine is based at:
34 Tanners Street, Faversham, ME13 7JW



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Saint Jude, pray for us!

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