



THE CARMELITE NEWS



SPRING 2017

Dear Friend of Saint Jude

I trust that this finds you well and that your friends and family are also well.

Fr. Piet

It was wonderful to receive so many letters after my last missive both promising to pray for Piet and sharing memories of him and his ministry. Often we think that ministry has to do with leading worship, celebrating Mass and the sacraments and these certainly are important in the life of a community and the life of a priest. Most of the memories aren't around amazing sermons, though he was a great preacher, but of his warmth, his welcome and his humanity. In one sense words are easy and an actor can stand on a stage and deliver powerful words that move us to joy and laughter or to sadness and tears. The actor can then leave the theatre or the priest can leave the church and be the most terrible person in the world to be around. This doesn't take away from their skills as a speaker. It does, however, lead to the question of just how joined up they are inside between what they say and the things that they do.

In this sense Piet was all of a piece. There was no pretence and the words he preached were followed through in how he lived and especially how he welcomed people wherever he was called upon to minister.

I thank God that I had the privilege to know him and especially having him as my novice director in my first year as a Carmelite. However, as I have just said, words are the easy part and it is the imitation which is hard so perhaps when you get to the part in your prayers for the weak and sinful you might slip in a word for me.



We are all called

One of the great aspects of our faith which was brought to light again by the Second Vatican Council is that “vocation” is not just something for priests and nuns or doctors and nurses. We are all called to be good news for others. Some are indeed called to a particular way of serving or a particular way of life but we are all called and that is what vocation means. It comes from the Latin word *vocare* which means to name or to call.

I remember my mum telling me about our parish priest when I was born who was very strict about what name a child could be given. First of all it had to be the name of a saint and, if at all possible, the name of the saint on whose feast you had been born!

I won't give the game away but I was born on the feast of a saint with an unpronounceable Greek name! As was the custom in those days, she wasn't present for my baptism because it happened when I was just four days old and she hadn't been “churched”. You can imagine her relief when my godparents brought me home with plain old Antony which was allowed because his feast came just a few days away from the day I was born. (In case you are now wondering about the “E” in my signature, it is for Edward which was my Grandad's name.)

Anyway, the twin meaning of *vocare* should hopefully remind us that we are not just called, but we are also called by name. You might say “well what can I do?”. It doesn't take great learning or long years at your books to be a minister of God's grace. All it takes is a little kindness. One of the stories that I love is of Saint Francis de Sales who was bishop of Geneva at the time of the Reformation when it was the stronghold of those who took a Calvinist view of Christianity and Catholics were a minority. His famous phrase is that you will catch more flies with a teaspoon of honey than with a whole barrel of vinegar. If we can be kind in what we do or say, then we are true ministers of the Gospel and like our heavenly Father who is kind and full of compassion.

Blessed Pope Paul VI said that our world today doesn't need teachers but witnesses. This is something that with God's grace we can all be.

Thank you

Once again again I can only thank you for the support of your prayers and for the material help which comes to support us via the Shrine. I'd like to share what I think is a good news story which friends like you have made possible.

Open your doors

As you know God has given Good Pope Francis a heart with a special concern for those who are poor and who are rejected. In a particular way he has shown concern for the increasing number of refugees in the world. Millions of people who, through no fault of their own and not because they are on the make, have had to leave home and have no means of support. In a special way he has called on the religious orders in the Church to make a home for them.

We have looked at how we, as Carmelites in Britain, can respond and, looking carefully at our resources, we have decided that we have enough to buy a house which we can make available in a part of the country where house prices aren't too crazy.

The house which we are buying is suitable for an extended family and already has provision for someone who needs everything to be on the ground floor, either because of age and infirmity or perhaps because of injury sustained in the violence from which they have fled. It is close to shops and schools and also not just to local churches but, also to the mosque. As with all the help which we try to give as an Order it is based on need and not on a person's belief. The press and media are so full of lies, especially about our Muslim sisters and brothers. We would all do well, I think, the next time we hear the word "Muslim" to think: doctor, nurse, teacher, social worker, father, mother etc. As Pope Francis has said there are Christians who do terrible things and some who do them, they say, because they are Christians (God help us!). None of us would wish to be associated with their acts of terror or brutality or prejudice. Perhaps one way in which we can be in ministry in our society today is not to buy into the idea that any one group of people or faith or colour is anything but a gathering of human beings.

We will be working with the local authority who will identify those most in need of help. We wanted to share this good news with you so that you can pray that it will be a resource that God will use and so that you can know what you have been a part of.

The Lenten Spring

By the time that my letter reaches you we will be a good way along our Lenten journey towards Easter. Whilst it may feel like the same old thing every year it is worth remembering that we are never the same people even two days running. Life changes us, and the small and big choices that we make also give a direction to our life.

This is why the Church, as a wise mother, knows we need to take time to stop and reflect on the journey. Are there choices we have made that do not lead towards God and the Reign of God in the world? Taking a steady look, are there changes that we need to make to come back to ourselves. Certainly there have been times in my life where I have found it difficult to recognise myself and I have needed to turn back to God from whom the gift of myself comes.

Like the return of the prodigal we find our poor tales and excuses lost in the embrace of our loving Father who has been watching and longing for our return and who calls us by name.

Please pray

Since I last wrote two of our great friends here at the Shrine have died. You will remember that not that long ago I wrote about Cheryl Tabrett, who had worked in the Shrine Office for many years, and was retiring. Sadly the news has just reached us that, after a period of illness, she has died. Alongside this news, one of our local parishioners, Hazel Colyer, has also recently died. Hazel was a great helper at the Shrine and worked very closely with Matt and the team here.

Both will be sadly missed and both were mothers and wives. Please keep them and their families in your prayers and we pray that Saint Jude may welcome them into the presence of God.



Cheryl



Hazel

An empty Shrine

The photo below shows a very rare view of the inner shrine without the 16th Century statue of Saint Jude; the reliquary; and the iron gates. These were all removed so that the area could be freshly painted. It was last painted 12 years ago after the fire which engulfed the Shrine. The second picture shows the statue temporarily placed in the Shrine Office.

The Shrine, the mosaic apse, ironwork and exterior frieze in mosaic were designed by Michael Leigh A.R.C.A., who worked on various churches including some of the mosaics in Westminster Cathedral.

The carvings of the Twelve Apostles round the apse in the inner Shrine are by Anthony Foster. He was Eric Gill's principal assistant, and Gill had a very high opinion of his work. The design was based on the Malmesbury Apostles. St. Paul has been substituted for Judas Iscariot.

This redecoration took place thanks to a kind donation from a friend and supporter of the Shrine: Mrs Bharadwa. We are very grateful to her and her family for the donation.



A smile

A little girl meets God:

Little girl: What is a million years like to you?

God: Like one second.

Little girl: What is a million pounds like to you?

God: Like one penny.

Little girl: Please can I have a penny?

God: Just a second.

Farewell

I will draw my letter to a close with the promise that I will remember you and your loved ones in prayer at the Shrine of Saint Jude at Easter.

Until we meet again, may God bless you, and Our Lady cover you with the mantle of her special protection.

In Carmel,

A. G. Lester

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

Remember our Novenas

Novena to Saint Joseph: 11 - 19 March

Novena for Easter: 8 - 16 April

Novena to Saint Jude: 4 - 12 May



Forthcoming Events

Summer Celebration

27 May 2017



The summer is always very beautiful at the National Shrine, and we look forward to welcoming friends of Saint Jude to our special Summer Celebration.

Timetable

11.00: Devotions with Anointing

12.00 – 13.00: Picnic on the grounds


13.30: Open Air Mass


14.30: Saint Jude procession

Our address for visiting is: 34 Tanners Street, Faversham, ME13 7JW.

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

ALL WELCOME

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Front cover - The Shrine of Saint Jude redecorated. All photos, copyright Order of Carmelites.