



THE CARMELITE NEWS



SUMMER 2017

Dear Friend of Saint Jude

I trust that this finds you just as well as can be. Let me begin by wishing you all the graces and blessings of the Holy Season of Easter. I haven't quite lost my marbles and I know that by the time my letter drops through your letter box Easter will probably feel like it has come and gone. But as I write it is early on Good Friday morning and my letter to you has to be done today because by this time tomorrow I will be on my way to Lourdes with HCPT – a charity which provides a pilgrimage holiday for children and young adults living with disability or learning difficulties or social need. I travel both as a helper and as the group's chaplain. Little time for writing then in the next week. I will carry you with me to Lourdes and you will be in my prayers, especially at the Grotto.

Times of Change

As you know the Shrine of Saint Jude is served by the community of Carmelite Friars. As a religious family we go back some 800+ years and our origins are lost in the mists of history. One thing that you might expect, even of someone who learns slowly, is that after 800 years something might have “gone in” in terms of learning lessons. In our case one of the lessons that we have learned is that it is not a good thing for a man or woman to be in a position of responsibility for a long time without a break. It isn't good for the community and it isn't good for the man or woman concerned.

If your memory is good then you might remember that I was elected to serve as prior provincial in 2014 having previously been in the job from 2002 – 2008. In February of this year we held our elections and, I am happy to share with you, Fr. Kevin Alban was elected to succeed me and he will do so from the opening of our Provincial Chapter in May. Fr. Kevin has lots of experience within the Order especially abroad but, you may remember, he also served here in Faversham as Shrine Director. So perhaps our friend Saint Jude had a hand in the choice.

This then will be my last letter to you as prior provincial and the next letter will be written by Fr. Kevin.



Our new Prior Provincial, Fr. Kevin Alban, O.Carm

No such thing..

I think that I have written to you in the past that there is no such thing as goodbye forever for those whom God loves. I am always conscious when I write that, in the main, I am writing to someone whom I have never met. I am, however, looking forward to lots of conversations when God gathers us all together in the home God has made ready for us. Not only will we be able to share together about our love for Saint Jude but we will be able to do so in his good company.

So, as I say farewell may I ask the support of your prayers for me in the days ahead. I hope to have some sabbatical time for rest and renewal. Pray also for Fr. Kevin as he prepares to pick up what, today, is a heavy burden. I am sure that for him, as it always has been for me, writing to you and to the other friends of Saint Jude will be a moment of joy and of peace in the midst of less welcome tasks.

Because it is beautiful

In the First Letter of Saint John (Chapter 4 and verse 18) we find the beautiful expression *...perfect love casts out fear...* It is a phrase that I love and often quote especially when celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) with people. Fear can be a redoubtable enemy slipping in behind our most well constructed defences. In my experience it can be at its most powerful in the wee small hours when everything else is stilled.

Remember our Novenas

Novena for the Feast of the Sacred Heart: 15 - 23 June

Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel: 8 - 16 July

Novena to Saint Jude: 3 - 11 August

There are all kinds of things which can make us afraid and some of them are quite natural and are there for our defence. Sometimes though they can be exaggerated. For me heights are a big fear. Over the years - several times - I have had the opportunity of doing a parachute jump to raise money for charity. Even the thought makes my blood run cold! Needless to say I have never taken up the offer even though I know that there are thousands of people who jump out of aeroplanes every day for fun.

By now you are probably wondering where I am going with this. Well just stay with me and I hope it will become clear.

Recently I had the opportunity for a week of holiday with a friend who had booked a narrow boat for a week. We were to go down the Llangollen Canal from Ellesmere in Shropshire into North Wales and down to the town of Llangollen. It was a great opportunity to slow down for a while and to take life at a different pace. The fastest you can go on a canal is 4 miles per hour. If I share with you that in narrow sections it was quite common for people walking along the tow path to be going faster than we were afloat then you will get the idea.

All was wonderful and the sun was shining. However, the time came when we had to cross the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct which carries the canal across the River Dee over 100 feet below. The aqueduct is a masterpiece of engineering from the Industrial Revolution and took 10 years to complete – but it is very high up, very high up indeed and there is only a fence on one side, on the other there is a sheer drop.



Pontcysyllte Aqueduct – the family in this picture seem as unworried as my friend!

Needless to say I was more than nervous and, to make matters worse, we had to make the crossing on the outward and return journeys.

Well, there was I dealing as best as I could with my fears whilst my friend was happily wandering about the boat, taking photos and even leaning over the side to check out the view downwards!

On the way back I eventually could keep my peace no longer, so I asked him how he could be so calm and collected and not be frightened. His answer has stayed with me now that the holiday is over. "Because it is so beautiful!", was his reply. My thought went straight to the text from Saint John and I thought to myself that perhaps beauty shares something of that power which love has to cast out fear.

Whatever is lovely

At the end of his Letter to the Philippians (Phil 4:4-9) Saint Paul says this:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

In a world which can seem very frightening and where there is so much hurt and pain this is good advice, I think. However, I don't think that the apostle is asking us to draw the curtains and retreat into a world of lovely thoughts. I think, rather, he is inviting us to see past the hurt and the pain to how much good and beauty there is, and allow that greater and deeper truth to keep our hope alive in a way which allows us to continue, through our lives, to make a difference for the good.

Certainly as a result of my friend's wise words I will try, moving forward, to see the beauty more than the danger and I hope to be able to better negotiate my path through life as a result.

Easter

It is not an accident that the message the Risen Christ brings to his disciples is: *Peace be with you, do not be afraid*. He has gone into the deepest and darkest place of death itself and comes back to tell us that there is nothing to fear. He has conquered death itself and, even though each one of us will have to make that journey when our lives in this world come to an end, we know who is waiting for us. As our eyes close here and open in that new world we find Christ waiting for us with those words of the resurrection: *Peace be with you, do not be afraid*.

I think that those are words we all need to hear again and again because our world can seem to be a frightening place. Let us place our trust in Christ and not allow ourselves to be dehumanised to the point where we begin to reject and exclude others because of their colour or belief or way of life. It takes courage but the world needs us to live out the truth that we are all sisters and brothers.



Keep in contact with the National Shrine of Saint Jude

Website: <http://www.stjudeshrine.org.uk>

News blog: <http://tinyurl.com/StJudenewsblog>

Donate on-line: <http://tinyurl.com/DonatetoJude>

On-line shop: <http://tinyurl.com/SaintJudeShop>

Thank you

You will no doubt know that I always say a word of thanks for the prayers and generous help we receive from friends like yourself. In all kinds of ways it keeps us going. In this final letter, though, I would also like to say thanks for the way in which we at the Shrine are included in the life of so many families who share their news, their sorrow and joy with us. It is a privilege and it is something I will miss but I am confident that it will be something which will help and sustain Fr. Kevin.

I hope that you will know that you will never be far from my prayers and I would like, if you would allow, to make the words of Saint Paul my own:

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Through the intercession of Saint Jude, apostle and martyr may the good God bless you and your families and loved ones. And may 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



Forthcoming Events

Summer Celebration

27 May 2017

ALL WELCOME

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. We have included a poster at the end of this newsletter - please can you add to your parish notice board?

Friends of Saint Jude who cannot attend can purchase a pillar candle which will be lit on the day for your intentions. [Click here to purchase a candle.](#)



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