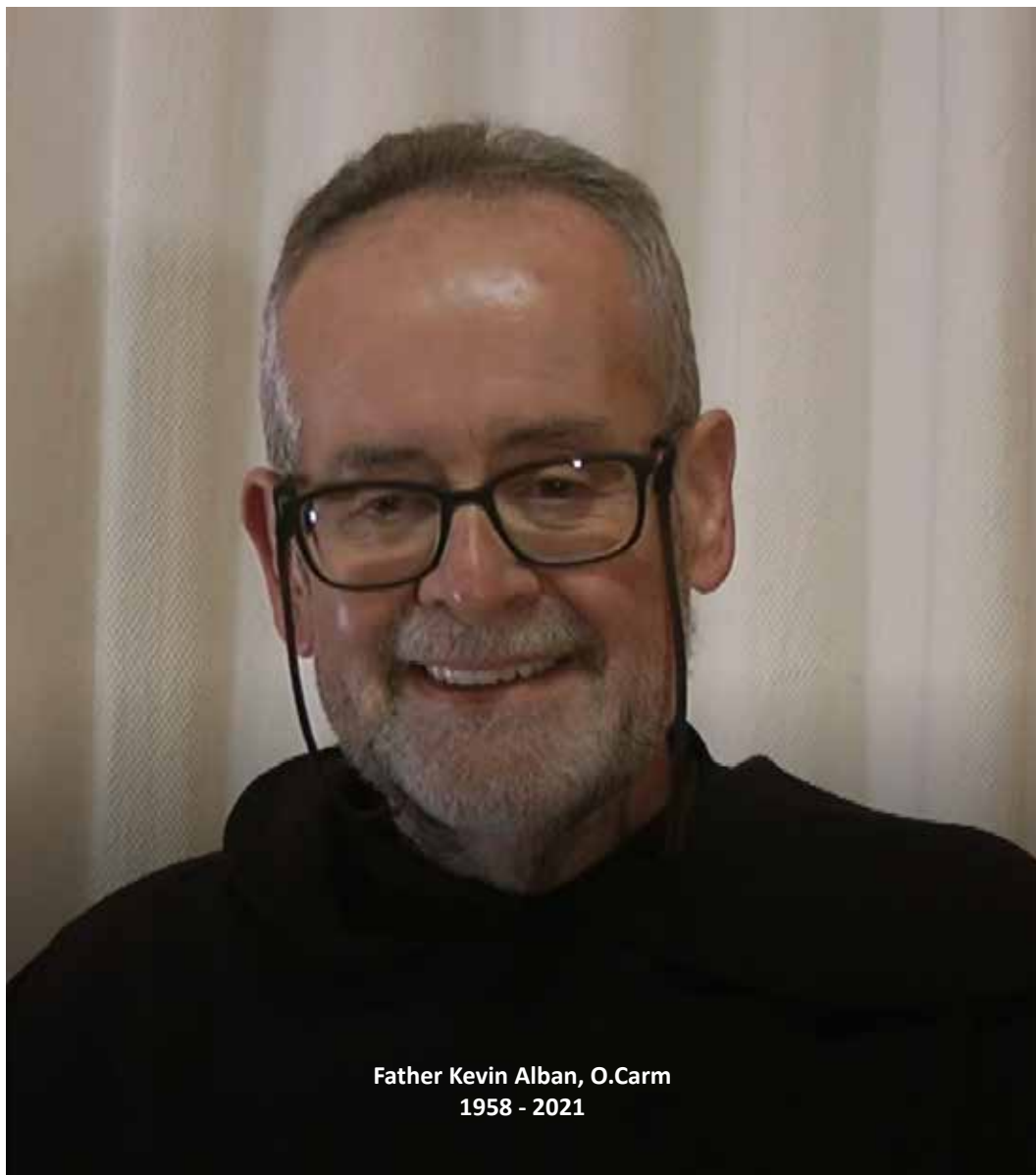




# THE CARMELITE NEWS



*From the National Shrine of Saint Jude*



Father Kevin Alban, O.Carm  
1958 - 2021

SUMMER 2021



## ***Dear Friend of Saint Jude***

**A**s we each do our best to continue living within the necessary restrictions of the current pandemic, there seems to be, among many, a renewed appreciation of our need for one another. Human beings build community. Much effort is still needed to sustain our sense of balance, rhythm, inner joy and hope. As friends of Saint Jude - our patron saint of hope - we live with an awareness of a loving God who is passionate about our wellbeing and will never desert us. If we find ourselves lacking motivation, we know we are not alone and can only do our best to be faithful to what matters most.

### **All things pass – God alone is enough**

**F**or so many, this past fifteen months has proven to be a 'heavy' time, but perhaps we can take

courage in knowing that eventually it will pass.

The great Carmelite mystic, Saint Teresa of Avila said: *"Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices."*

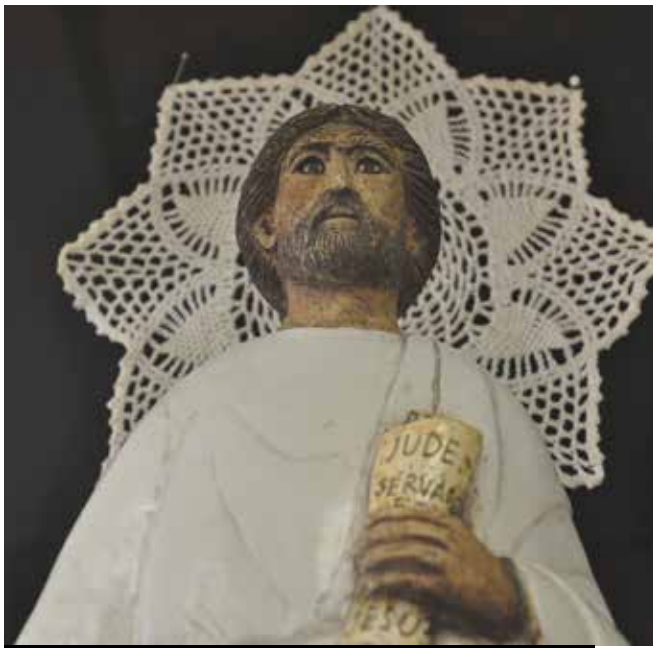
In the UK there are positive signs that perhaps at the end of June, if the government's roadmap to easing lockdown restrictions proves accurate, we will be able to move around more freely, gather in larger numbers, meet with our extended families, and perhaps even open the Shrine of Saint Jude again. However, we will proceed cautiously and sensibly, taking one step at a time. As Jesus rose from the tomb on the third day, so we too will rise.

### **Fr. Kevin Alban, O.Carm.**

**I**wrote in the spring issue of 'The Carmelite News' that Fr. Kevin Alban was seriously ill. I am saddened to write that Fr. Kevin died very peacefully at home in his Carmelite community on 4 May aged 62 years. He had inoperable cancer.

Attributable only to his tremendous faith, Fr. Kevin accepted what was happening with great peace. He said, *"Very few people have the grace of knowing that they are going to die soon."* He wished to thank you for the prayers that had been offered for him. He was convinced that this was why he felt such serenity and was without pain.

Please do pray for him, his family, his Carmelite brothers and sisters, and so many friends who mourn his loss.



Statue of Saint Jude - Adam Kossowski (Shrine Information Centre)

“..Fr. Kevin could certainly share company with people from every sort of background..”



Fr. Kevin Alban

As you might imagine, messages of condolence and pledges of prayer have flooded in from all around the world. The Requiem Mass for Fr. Kevin was at Aylesford Priory, not far from the Shrine of Saint Jude, on 17 May. Thankfully, some of the restrictions about numbers had been lifted by that time, and so we were able to welcome a good number of people from all walks of life.

At different times, Fr. Kevin and I had been novices under the direction of Fr. Piet Wijngaard, O.Carm. One of the things we both remembered from that first year of our lives as Carmelites was Fr. Piet telling us that,

as friars, we needed to be able to relate to “duchesses and dustmen”. Well, Fr. Kevin could certainly share company with people from every sort of background. I think, however, that even he would have been surprised that there were two bishops at his funeral and a long procession of friars and priests. We were grateful that Archbishop John Wilson (Southwark) was able to join us for the Reception prayers the day before Fr. Kevin’s funeral. Both Carmelite centres in Kent, the Shrine of Saint Jude in Faversham and the Shrine to Our Lady, at Aylesford fall within his diocese.

Fr. Kevin had chosen as the Gospel reading for his funeral the account in John’s Gospel which relates that Mary was at the foot of the Cross when Jesus was crucified. Carmelites see in Our Lady a great contemplative figure, whose whole person reverberated with the presence of God in her son. Fr. Kevin recognised that the tremendous empathy of the mother of Jesus was a gift he wanted to reflect in his own life.

Like Saint Jude, we are people of hope and believe that the Resurrection of Jesus is the gateway



through which all of us rise to new and transformed life. We now entrust Fr. Kevin to the loving arms of an incredibly welcoming God, the God who loves without limits. During his Requiem we also heard one of the famous writings from Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, in which she discovers that her vocation in the heart of the Church is love. If each of us can find ways to make love real in concrete acts of kindness, what a transformation God would work through us.

The first reading at the Mass was about the prophet Elijah, another great Carmelite symbol, going to a cave on Mount Horeb and having an intense and intimate experience of God in the sound of sheer silence (1 Kings 19: 4-14). As a Carmelite, Fr. Kevin cultivated an inner space where a real longing for the

experience of God in gentle silence could be nurtured. Now he is with God who has created a space for him in the heart of divine love. Maybe we all need to find that inner cell where we can encounter the God who is in the heart of each one of us.

### **Becoming a friar**

**T**he first formal step in someone becoming a Carmelite friar is called the novitiate. Normally, before becoming a novice, one spends a good period of time reflecting, praying and discerning the will of God with the help of a trusted friar who has good experience. God wants all of us to find fulfilment and happiness, and it is important that the way of life we choose for ourselves is a way of life God has chosen for us. Join us in praying that young people in our society today might be open to being generous in

their response to God's call. Maybe you know someone who simply needs to be prompted to begin thinking about a dedicated life as a Carmelite.

You will be aware that the Carmelite Order forms communities all over the world, and it is important to us that we cultivate a spirit of inclusive internationality. I dream of the time when our own communities reflect every ethnic group that forms British society today. As part of being an international Order, often we are able to respond very quickly to appeals to disasters. Earlier this year, the areas where our friars in Timor-Leste minister were stricken by severe floods.

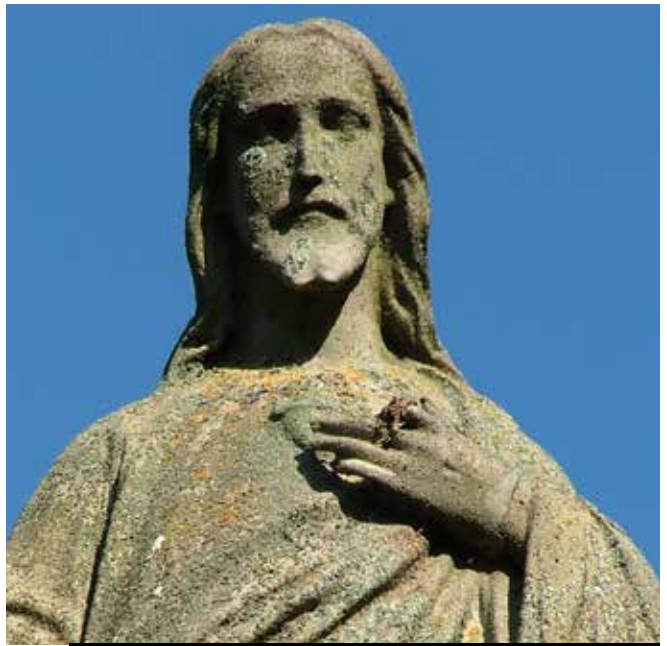
Thanks to the generosity of the friends of Saint Jude and others, we were in a position immediately to send donations amounting to £11,500 to help with the

much-needed rebuilding of devastated lives. We renew our thanks for all your generosity. Our friars there have been working tirelessly to coordinate relief and pastoral help. As you support the Shrine of Saint Jude, you are also aiding our efforts to help others.

### Sacred Heart of Jesus

The novitiate for 'budding' friars in Europe is in Salamanca in Spain. One young man who hopes to enter this stage of Carmelite formation has been spending the last ten months in one of our communities. He has been learning about life in community, the spirit of prayer and the kinds of ways in which Carmelites seek to be of service to others. He has also been learning a lot about himself. Recently, he wrote a short reflection on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is shared below:

"For countless people throughout the centuries, the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus has brought hope and consolation. For many people my age, it is just a picture with a red light under it that hangs in our grandparents' home. But for me, the image of Christ's pierced, burning heart is the simplest, yet most powerful



Statue of the Sacred Heart (in the gardens of the Parish & Shrine)

depiction we have of the love of God."

"We hear John of the Cross describe God's love as a living flame that burns the soul. For me, the Sacred Heart is the image of this love, a love for humanity so great that it would sacrifice itself so that nothing can stand between us and the Father."

"Fire, as we know, gives us light, warms us and gives a glimmer of hope to those lost in the darkness. Just like fire, the love that we see in the Sacred Heart warms us, gives us light and warmth and draws all people towards it. In the moments of our own darkness and

despair, in those times when we are lost and simply do not know which way to turn, Jesus invites us to gaze upon this burning love so that it can soothe, brighten and draw us to the Father."

"In the saints, we see a reflection of the Sacred Heart. They are models for us of hearts that are on fire with the love of God. They are not just images of distant heroes. They are first and foremost witnesses to our own possibility. Like the saints before us, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an invitation for us to be set alight by the love of God so that we can be beacons of his love in a sometimes dark and lost world."

## A searching heart

I remember a large image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in our home. Perhaps I was fortunate, or perhaps things were made easy for me, by being raised in a family where the practice of faith went unquestioned. Prayer, Mass and the other sacraments, engaging with different aspects of the Church's mission and ministries were taken for granted. Until.... Well, until I myself began to delve more deeply into what had been passed onto me. I came to a moment when I was no longer content simply to accept everything blindly.

Although there has always been something of a rebellious spirit in me, it wasn't enough for me merely to reject what I had been taught and shown. I felt the urge to understand and to assimilate, interiorise and integrate it for myself. I wouldn't talk in terms of conversion, for that can be radical for many people. Rather, my eyes and heart were being opened to a deeper mystery that called for an acceptance in faith that would begin a very different journey.

Now, years later, as a committed Christian, as a most willing disciple of

Jesus, as a Carmelite friar and as a still-developing human person, I find myself re-interpreting my life story. I am tremendously grateful for the foundations that my parents, sister, brother and others laid for me; I rejoice at the good teachers I had who enabled me to question without arbitrarily dismissing the most important things that have become central in my life. I offer gratitude to God for divine patience, relentless calling and amazing forgiveness and compassion.

## United in prayer

As the weather improves, spend time somewhere reflecting on how your own faith developed and grew. How has your individual and personal faith been tested and deepened? As we continue to trust, we continue to search.

## The Shrine

I mentioned earlier that we hope to open the Shrine again at the start of July. We are working hard on making sure we can do this and welcome you back again. Let us pray that we can be together again soon. Please do check on our website or call the Shrine Office to double-check (at least until the autumn newsletter).

However, don't forget that we have many ways available to you for us to meet virtually. We prayed with some of you online in the nine days up to what would have been the Saint Jude Summer Celebration. It was great to 'see' many of you in this way and pray together. It was also pleasing to know that many of you were praying with us at the same time as we were on Zoom. Thank you.

The Feast of Saint Jude is normally a large celebration, but we will have to wait and see how things go this year. We will make sure any details are included in the autumn newsletter.

After the success of the first book of reflections, we are producing a second one (title to be confirmed). It includes many of the reflections written in Lockdown 3.0, but some new and exclusive reflections, too. You can pre-order this on the intentions sheet.

Finally, thank you for all your support in these difficult times. Since 1955, prayers and donations have enabled the charity to support the presence and ministries of the Carmelite Friars in Great Britain and worldwide.



Through the intercession of Saint Jude, the Carmelites at the Shrine of Saint Jude will be praying for you.

Please pray for us too. Together let us create praying communities of faith, hope and love.

Fr. Brendan Grady, O.Carm.  
Chaplain

### ***Notice Board***

#### **Remember our Novenas**

##### **Novena to the Sacred Heart**

3 - 11 June 2021

##### **Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel**

8 - 16 July 2021

##### **Novena to Saint Jude**

19 - 27 August 2021



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



#### **Saint Jude Online Shop**

The Saint Jude online shop is stocked full of items including medals; prayer cards; books; rosaries; statues & much more - Saint Jude, but lots of other saints and areas too. This shop supports the presence and ministries of the Carmelite Friars.

[www.stjudeshrine.co.uk](http://www.stjudeshrine.co.uk)  
or call 01795 539 214



 <https://www.facebook.com/saintjudeshrine>

 <https://twitter.com/saintjudeshrine>



**"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD."  
- Jeremiah 17:7**

Shrine of Saint Jude - a message of hope for today  
[www.stjudeshrine.org.uk](http://www.stjudeshrine.org.uk)



## God in the Time of Covid-19 II

A second collection of reflections written during the 2021 lockdown. Each reflection is written by friars and others. These will be useful at any difficult time. The book will be printed at the end of June. Pre-orders can be purchased via the intentions sheet.

The book will be produced in memory of Fr. Kevin Alban, O.Carm.

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

 **01795 539 214**

 **[newsletter@stjudeshrine.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@stjudeshrine.org.uk)**

 **[www.stjudeshrine.org.uk](http://www.stjudeshrine.org.uk)**

Donate online: **<http://tinyurl.com/Donate2Jude>**

Online shop: **<http://tinyurl.com/SaintJudeShop>**



**Registered Charity: No. 1061342**

Front cover - Fr. Kevin Alban. Newsletter photos taken by Dr. Johan Bergström-Allen, Mr. Matthew Betts and Fr. Brendan Grady. All photos © Carmelite Charitable Trust. Carmelite News has been written by Fr. Brendan Grady, and is designed and edited by Mr. Matthew Betts. The newsletter is correct at the time of printing. Contact the editor on: [newsletter@stjudeshrine.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@stjudeshrine.org.uk).