



THE CARMELITE NEWS



WINTER 2016

Dear Friend of Saint Jude

As I sit down to write to you I am conscious that in Rome Pope Francis is canonising a member of the Carmelite Family – Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity. She had a profound sense that the Holy Trinity dwelt deep within her. This great truth was certainly true for her, as it is for all the baptised. When we were baptised we were baptised *In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. In this beautiful sacrament we are given, by God's grace, the image of God at the very centre of our being. Our bodies and souls become the place where God is at home. This gift is so deep and the action of God is so complete that this likeness can never be cancelled out or taken away. It is forever! So we can say with great confidence with Elizabeth: *I have found my heaven on earth since heaven is God, and God is in my soul*. The reason why she is very much a saint for today is that she had a real sense that each person she met had God dwelling within them and this allowed her to grow in such a way that this began to influence how she treated others. She was able to live this out day by day in her monastery in Dijon in France. Not by doing great and extraordinary things or sitting all day in some kind of religious daze but, like her sister Saint Therese of Lisieux, by doing the ordinary things with love.

In our materialistic world we tend to value people by how much they produce and, when they stop producing, some people say that they become a waste of resources. In a similar way people who may not have great intellectual or practical abilities are seen as a waste of space, time and energy. Perhaps we can ask Saint Elizabeth to pray for us, and with us, that we might have the grace to both live out the truth that God dwells in us and to grow slowly to treat other people as they deserve as God's dwelling place.

Not forever!

If you are like me then perhaps you find goodbye's hard to say. Some time ago I heard the phrase that *for Christians there is no such thing as goodbye for ever*. It sounds easy and perhaps even trite but it has helped me personally on many occasions where I have known that a goodbye was likely to be a last one as far as this way of living is concerned.

At the end of September we made our goodbyes to a great Carmelite, priest and human being. Perhaps you remember Fr. Piet when he was chaplain to the Shrine as well as parish priest here. On 30 September in the early hours just

before dawn he died peacefully at home in his room in the friary with some of his family and the Carmelite community with him. Like so many people today he had faced a long fight with cancer which he bore with great determination that he was going to live each day to the full and he did. He was conscious right up until the moment the Lord came to call him. The evening before we had celebrated Mass with him in his room and he was anointed. A little later when Fr. Brendan came to sit with him they prayed evening prayer together. Piet knew that his sister was on her way from the Netherlands and we think that he waited for her to arrive.

There were two funeral Masses, one here and one at our friary in Aylesford nearby. We estimate that between the two some 600 people came to pray and pay their respects. He was my novice master when I first joined the Order and he used to say that a good friar should be able to talk to a prince or a man of the roads and he should treat the two just the same. In many ways his testament was the wide range of people of all sorts who came to say farewell. More than 40 members of his family were able to come from Holland for the funeral!

I know that I am going to miss him a great deal as a brother, friend and mentor. I remind myself though that for the Christian there is no such thing as goodbye forever. We are almost in the month of November when we remember the Holy Souls. I know Piet would ask that you say a prayer for him. Throughout November we will be praying each day for your loved ones who have died as we look towards the day when the Love of God will gather us all together in the Father's house and what a day that will be!



Fr. Piet with pilgrims on the Feast of Saint Jude

A good book

One of my luxuries is to settle down to read a good book. I think that the reason it feels so good is because it means that I have time and time to myself. So much of my life is taken up with reading for a purpose so I spend a lot of time reading reports or books and articles I need to prepare talks or sermons. It is all good stuff, well mostly, but reading with the inevitable deadline is seldom relaxing.

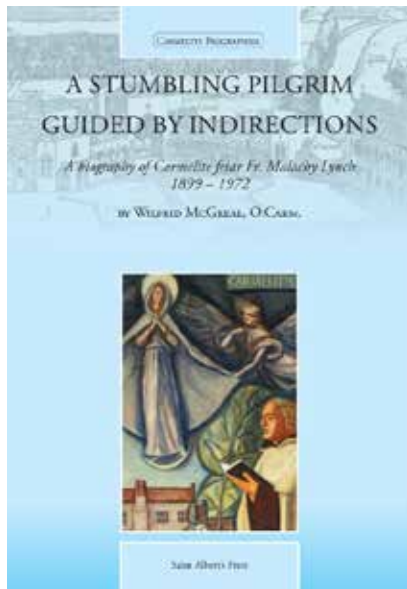
Recently we had a great celebration here at the Shrine to mark the publication of a book about one of our friars, Fr. Malachy Lynch, which Fr. Wilfrid has written. We were so pleased that the Prior General himself, the head of the whole Order, came from Rome to mark the event.



The Fr. General speaking at the book launch with Fr. Wilfrid looking on

The book has an intriguing title: A Stumbling Pilgrim Guided by Indirections. I have this book earmarked for my Christmas read when I can take a few days to rest and catch up a little. Perhaps it is a book that you or a friend might enjoy. Fr. Malachy was the brother of Fr. Elias who founded the Shrine and the two brothers stories entwine in all kinds of ways.





The beautiful cover of Fr. Wilfrid's book

Thank you!

Once again thank you for all your prayers and for the generosity of your material support. Given the hard times we live in it really is overwhelming and it spurs us on with confidence knowing that we are helped by friends like you. Another phrase I keep going back to, this time from my Grandmother who was a wise woman with great faith, *God will never be outdone in generosity!* So it is that we pray that God will bless and reward you and your loved ones out of the abundance of his grace.

Times change

... and not always for the better do I hear you say? I was saddened recently to hear that one of the friends of the Shrine had said that we were changing it into a business! The reason for this was that we have made it possible to donate to the Shrine on-line (as the saying is, so by computer) and that it is possible to purchase religious items and books using a debit/credit card.

I can promise you that the last thing on our minds is to turn the Shrine into any sort of business and, if we have given this impression then I can only apologise. For a start I don't think that our friend, Saint Jude, would be at all impressed!

We have, however, introduced new systems in response to people who have been asking to be able to purchase items or to donate using, you might say, modern means. We hope that this is helpful and of course the good old fashioned ways continue to be there.

Be wise

I know that I always say this but I am going to repeat myself because I believe that it is important. It would be a lie to say that we would get by without your generosity. However, the winter is coming and, yet again, they say it is going to be a cold one. Please make sure that you have enough put by for the heating bills before you think of sending anything to the Shrine. God will not see us go short.

Infancy

As the year turns so Christmas is just below the horizon with the Holy Season of Advent to help us prepare. There is so much of Christmas already in the supermarkets as they seek to cash in on what for many is now a secular holiday.

I try in small ways to follow the Christian way of preparation even to leaving my Christmas cards and letters unopened until the Day itself. Small wonder that society is exhausted with merrymaking when Christmas dawns and it is common now to hear of people taking down the tree and decorations on 26th December! In my community one of our ways of setting the scene is to put up the crib in the chapel on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. We decorate the chapel and the house and then all is ready when we come to celebrate First Vespers of Christmas in the evening. The final act is to place the infant into the crib after midnight and then Christmas has come.

Children of the World

Today it seems more than ever that children and infants are at the receiving end of all kinds of brutality and as the great powers fight it out for their own ends the poor are the ones who are trapped, often defenceless. The media speaks of migrants as if they are some lower form of human life: a concept much loved by the Nazis and now back in fashion.

Let's not forget that the Holy Family were forced into exile and lived there as refugees until it was safe for them to return home. God alone knows when the war-torn lands of our world today will be safe for families to return home. Your generosity has enabled us recently to provide some funding for those working to provide a good daily meal and a day at school for children who would otherwise go without. Neither you nor I are likely to meet them this side of heaven, but in their name too I would like to say thank you.

A smile with a Christmas theme

Just before Christmas a man nipped into confession with a turkey in his arms. "Forgive me, Father" he said, "for I have sinned. I stole this turkey for my family. Would you please take it and settle my guilt?"

"Certainly not," replied the Priest. "You must return it to the person from who you stole it from."

"Well I just tried," the man said, "but he's refused. Oh, Father, what should I do?"

"If what you say is true, then it is all right for you to keep it for your family."

Thanking the Priest, the man hurried off home.

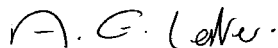
Sometime later when confessions were over the Priest returned to his house, and there in the kitchen saw the empty space where his turkey had been waiting!

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 the Feast which is just a few days away and especially when I come to the altar for Midnight Mass.

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

In Carmel,



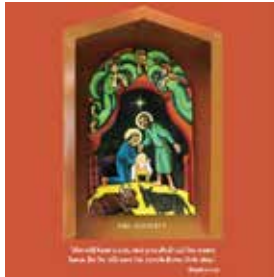
Fr. Tony Lester, O.Carm., Prior Provincial

Forthcoming Events

Christmas Carols at the Shrine

3 December 2016

12pm onwards



Singing starts at 2.30pm, but there will be plenty of activities before and after. We will be singing all the great carols in the Shrine of Saint Jude. Everyone who attends will need to get their voices ready for a good and celebratory singalong!

Mince pies, mulled wine, teas and coffees and fruit juice will be available. A book stall with lots of fiction and non-fiction will also be available.

The whole day will be a great Christmas celebration.

Further information on all our future events can be found on our blog:
<http://tinyurl.com/JudeEvents>

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

Remember our Novenas

Novena to the Holy Infant of Prague: 17 - 25 December

Novena to Saint Jude: 12 - 20 January

Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes: 3 - 11 February

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Front cover - Fr. Piet Wijngaard, O.Carm at the Summer Celebration 2015. All photos, copyright Order of Carmelites.