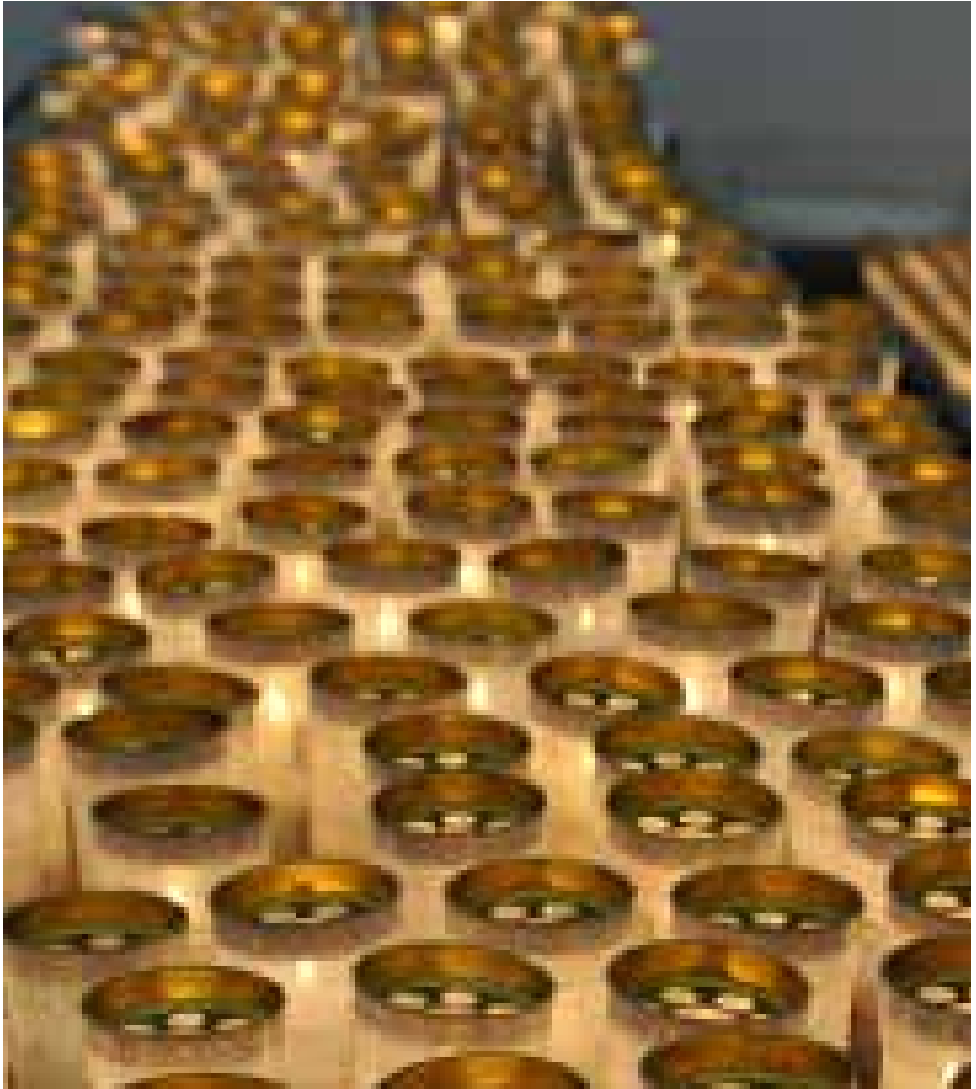




THE CARMELITE NEWS



WINTER 2014

Dear Friend of Saint Jude

I trust that my letter will reach you safely and find you well. You'll realise that there is always a gap between my writing to you and the letter dropping through your letterbox. This is because it has to go through the whole process of printing and packing before it can be posted. We are fortunate in the team who work with us here in Faversham who do their best to move things along, especially when it comes to replying to the post.

The simple things

At weekends my grandma and auntie used to go shopping to the nearby town where there was a market and bigger shops. Quite often they would bring back a small present for my little brother and me. I still remember the day when I went round to her house and demanded to know what she had brought me. I don't know to this day whether she had brought me anything or not, because I got such a smack (these were different days you will remember), and it was a while before I sat down comfortably again.

Of all the words we use to enable others to know how important they are to us the simple combination of thank you is up there with the most important. The problem with the young me was that I had come to expect, demand even, and what was initially a gift had instead become an expectation. Not only did this steal the joy of receiving, but it also stole the joy of giving.

So, before I go any further let me express a very sincere thank you to you. Whether your response to my last letter was to send up a quick prayer for us, or whether you were able to send material support I want you to know that, together with my brothers, I am grateful. You and yours are daily in our prayers both here at the Shrine, and in all our communities. The Masses that people ask to be celebrated at this time of the year for those who have died are being celebrated either here, or by Carmelite missionary priests around the world. We always remember the donor along with the particular intention.

Remember our Novenas

Novena to the Infant of Prague: 17 - 25 December 2014

Novena to Saint Jude: 11 - 19 January 2015

Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes: 3 - 11 February 2015

Hidden costs

When I went to college as a youngster, I was able to apply for a grant which paid my tuition fees, my board, and lodging. This grant also had money built in for practicalities like books, pens, paper etc.. You'll be aware that those halcyon days are long gone in England and Wales, and you may be involved in helping pay for the university or college education of your children and grandchildren.

Even back in the days of grants the government never made provision for those preparing for religious life and priesthood. It would be hard to calculate all that it costs these days to feed, clothe and educate a man through to the point of ordination - enough to say if you add up every jam butty and pair of socks it mounts up pretty fast.

The donations, Mass stipends and legacies which come to us through the National Shrine of Saint Jude are used in a variety of ways. The first call on the money, though, is the education and formation of new brothers for service.

Your priest!

What a beautiful thing to be able to say! On 18 October, Carmelite Friar Brother Paul Jenkins was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Peter Smith of Southwark at our friary at Aylesford. It was a great and joyful day as you can imagine. To say that he is your priest is not a flight of fancy but a simple statement of fact. It may be that you bought him some socks or paid for his bus fare to college, or one of his textbooks, or even for that jam butty! Equally God, through the gentle intercession of Saint Jude may have used your prayers to help Paul through times when it all seemed a waste of time and he would be much better off doing something else entirely.

Whatever way you helped it is certain that he would not have stood at the altar this morning to celebrate the Eucharist had it not been for you and other friends of Saint Jude.



Fr. Paul after his Ordination to the Priesthood

Left to right: Fr. Damian (Prior of Aylesford), Archbishop Peter, Fr. Paul, and yours truly

People we never met!

Well, at least people we never meet this side of heaven! One of the beauties of our Catholic Christian Faith is the way in which we are woven together into one body by the Holy Spirit of God. Perhaps when you receive this letter you may be alone and feel, as we all do at times, that there is no one on our side. Saint Paul makes the bold assertion that God is on our side. The Greek word *paraclitos* which gives us the English word Paraclete for the Holy Spirit has a whole range of meanings. It is often translated as advocate who would be someone who pleads our cause and this is true. Another way of translating the same word is encourager and this is one I really find helpful. Perhaps you have stood at the school sports day when your son or daughter or grandchild or, in my case, niece or nephew have been taking-part. Perhaps you support a football team, or were willing Andy Murray to win at Wimbledon - I'm sure you get my drift.

The Scriptures tell us that this is how God is with us - encouraging us, willing us on to keep going to the finish line. The Holy Spirit whispering in our ears: "Come on, you can do it!" Remember we are not alone, and we are helped by the prayers of people we never meet, just as our prayers through God's Providence, help them. No prayer is ever wasted!

Fr. Paul

So what will Paul be up to now that he has been ordained. What were all those jam butties and all that learning for? Archbishop Peter in his homily reminded him more than once that he is called to be a servant. To serve God in and through God's people. In the mystery of God's grace, and because we are all one body, you will be present in a particular way whenever he acts as a priest. Whether it is saying Mass and preaching in a church full of people, whispering words of peace and absolution beside a hospital bed to someone on their last journey in the small hours of the morning, or speaking words of kindness and encouragement to young people struggling to hold on to their faith - you will be there and a part of it because you have made it possible. He is your priest.

Pray

So please pray for Paul, and for Ged who we hope will be ordained soon. Pray for James who has just made his first vows, and for Richard and Robert who have just been accepted to begin the pre-noviciate. Pray please for all of us Carmelites and never doubt that you are in our prayers.



Fr. Tony on the Feast Day with two visitors Priscilla and Godfrey

The Feast

It was lovely to be able to be in the Shrine on the Feast itself and to be able to spend some time with pilgrims. It always moves me when people share with me how they have found Saint Jude to be a good friend when they have been in difficult or frightening times in their lives.

Two women who spoke to me said how they come each year to give thanks for the safe delivery of their children. One had been told that her child would be born with significant disabilities and that she should consider ending the pregnancy. The other had a difficult pregnancy and her child was born very premature. These were just two amongst very many such stories.

Anointed

As you know we always have anointing with the oil of Saint Jude – oil which we have asked God to bless through the intercession of Saint Jude, and which has been signed with the sign of the Cross with the Relic of the Saint. We anoint people with the sign of the Cross on their foreheads with the words *“Through this holy anointing may Almighty God, through the intercession of Saint Jude, help you in every need”*. The faith of the people coming forward is almost tangible and their prayer is real! The Feast weekend was the one after Fr. Paul’s ordination, so he was able to come to the Shrine to say Mass with pilgrims and in thanksgiving for you and all those who helped him on the journey to ordination.



Fr. Paul celebrating Mass with pilgrims

Christmas

By the time my letter reaches you society will be in full swing with all the commercial preparation for Christmas. I am very conscious that the most expensive time of the year comes at the time when all sorts of bills like gas and electricity are biggest. Rumours are that we are in for a cold winter in this part of the world. I would hate to think of you having to worry about keeping the heating on because you had sent a donation through to us in Faversham. So, please, think carefully and be wise. God will not see us go short.

Please be assured that when I come to the altar at Christmas I will remember you and your loved ones and all those who, like you, are friends of Saint Jude.

And finally

Wee Johnny and his family were having Sunday dinner at his Grandmother's house. Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When Johnny received his plate, he started eating right away. 'Johnny! Please wait until we say our prayer.' said his mother.

'I don't need to,' the boy replied. 'Of course, you do.' his mother insisted. 'We always say a prayer before eating at our house.' 'That's at our house.' Johnny explained. 'But this is Grandma's house and she knows how to cook!'

And so until we meet again may God hold you and yours in his love and Our Lady of Mount Carmel cover you with the mantle of her special protection.

In Carmel,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. G. Lester." The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke under the "L" and a small flourish at the end.

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



Prayers and candles at the Feast celebrations



Carmelite News is the newsletter that promotes the work of the British Province and the National Shrine of Saint Jude. Please feel free to pass this copy onto friends and family, or ask them to sign up to our newsletter via our contact details below:

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