



Pilgrims Newsletter

Aylesford



Autumn 2017

Dear friend

I am writing this Newsletter as the new Prior. To my surprise I was asked by our new Provincial, Fr. Kevin Alban, and his Council to become the Prior again. Some of you may remember I was Prior here for three years up to 2008. Since then I spent four years in our inner city London parish of English Martyrs, Walworth and more recently back here as a member of the community. As this is the second time I have served as Prior here I have been called the *“recycled Prior!!!”*

News of the Community Past and Present

Fr Damian is now on sabbatical until January. It is hoped that he will have a good rest during this time. Fr. Ged Walsh, who is at present the University chaplain at York, will join us in September and a little later Fr. David Fox will be returning here.

At the end of August Bro. Paul de Groot, who is our Bursar, will be marking forty years of religious profession while I will be celebrating my Silver Jubilee of priesthood in December. Jubilees are occasions for us not just to look back to the past with gratitude, but to look forward to the future with hope.

Earlier this year I travelled to Norfolk with Paul de Groot for the Renewed and Reconfirmed Solemn Profession of Sr. Elizabeth Obbard at Quidenham Carmel. Sr. Beth, as she was known here, spent more than ten years at Aylesford until a few years ago when she returned to Quidenham. Many of you will remember her as she directed the choir, looked after visitors and gave some retreats here. Please pray for her and her community. There are some young sisters at Quidenham and it is a large community of Carmelite Nuns who are following in the footsteps of St. Teresa of Jesus.

We have news of three of our former novices. Severin Tyburski made his Solemn Profession in the German Province at Mainz on the feast of the Annunciation. At the end of April, James Eivers was ordained a priest at Terenure College, Dublin. Kurt Mizzi was ordained a Deacon in Malta in June. Severin and Kurt were novices here in the 2011-2012 novitiate, while James goes back to Fr. Piet's last novitiate here in 2007-2008. Please pray for Severin, Kurt and James.

Pilgrimages

All the regular pilgrimages have taken place this year. The Legion of Mary, the Missionaries of Charity and Co-workers, Queen of Peace, the Italian, the Knights of St. Columba who have been so supportive of us over the years. There was a large Nigerian Pilgrimage and the following week the Syro-Malabar pilgrimage. The end of July saw the Caribbean Pilgrimage who always have a joyful presence.

Scenes from the summer



Fr Francis



Sr Beth



The felled beech tree by the pond

A few weeks earlier we had a large number for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Pilgrimage. As you know, at Aylesford we use blue vestments that are worn on major feast days of Our Lady. The original blue vestments are now sixty years old as they were first used at the ordination of Fr. Andrew Donnelly in 1957. The community are hoping that we can commission some new blue vestments. The making of vestments is a great skill and many of our more elaborate ones have been made in memory of some of our dear friends and benefactors. As Aylesford is a centre of pilgrimage our vestments are used frequently by ourselves and visiting clergy. We have to look at replacing some of the older ones but we can only do this when we have sufficient donations.

It was good to see so many of our Third Order here for our celebration of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Two members of the Aylesford Chapter made their first profession of promises and a member of the Lee-on-Sea Chapter made her profession of vows. The Mass was presided over by our new Provincial, Fr. Kevin Alban. He was assisted by Fr Michael Cox, the new Chaplain to the Third Order. It was a happy day celebrating the many gifts and joys of the family of Carmel.

The last of the Stone Masons

In July, we heard that Vincente Ballister, pictured right with Adam Kossowski, had died in Valencia, Spain. He was one of the Spanish stone masons who built the Shrine. He continued to **work here after the Shrine was completed and he laid the floor in St. Joseph's Chapel and put up most of the ceramics under the watchful eye of the artist, Adam Kossowski.** His last major job here before he returned to Spain was rebuilding the altar in the Cloister Chapel in 1972, due to the liturgical changes. May he rest in peace.



Our Lady of Fatima

As you know this year sees the centenary of the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima. A few years ago I was able to visit the shrine there. I was struck by one talk which mentioned that Our Lady often appears when the country she visits is undergoing a difficult or painful time in their history. When Our Lady visited Fatima in 1917, Portugal, along with most of Europe, was in the midst of the First World War. The country lost so many of their young men who did not return and those who did were never the same again. The shrine in Fatima promotes the title of Our Lady as Queen of Peace. I know many of you pray daily for peace in the world and in our communities.



What is not so well known about Fatima, is that on the sixth apparition on October 13th, Mary appeared as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Sr Lucia, the only visionary to live to adulthood and who later became a Carmelite Nun, when she testified to the diocesan tribunal in 1924, insisted that Our Lady on that occasion looked similar to the statue of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel which was in the parish church in Fatima. Fr Killian Lynch, when he was Prior General, met Sr Lucia who spoke to him about this aspect of the apparitions and was surprised that it had not been better reported. Our Lady appeared holding the Scapular that so many of you wear. For me the Scapular is a way of following in the footsteps of Mary, who was the first disciple of Jesus. All devotion to Our Lady should lead us closer to her Son. By wearing the Scapular we are deepening our baptism commitment.

The first Prior of Aylesford, Fr. Malachy Lynch, suggested the daily prayer to accompany the scapular be **simply "Use me today."**

Fr. Killian later became Prior of Aylesford, succeeding his brother Malachy. Much of the Shrine was built during his term as Prior and it was Fr. Killian who brought a copy of the Fatima statue of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel to Aylesford. It is now in the sacristy. I was impressed by Fr. Killian when I was a young friar, as when he was not giving retreats or writing he would be seen working in the gardens.

Blessed Titus Brandsma

This year also sees the seventy-fifth anniversary of the death of Blessed Titus in Dachau concentration camp on 26th July 1942. Bro. Raphael, another Dutch Carmelite who was also in the camp at the same time, recalled a few days before Titus died he celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Though he was rather weak and frail, Titus was able to greet with a handshake the other Carmelites in the camp. As well as the two Dutch Carmelites there were several Polish Carmelites, including Blessed Hilary Januszewski. Brother Raphael spent many years after the war in our international College in



Rome. He was a figure of inspiration for young Carmelites. He also spent a summer here in 1977, mostly painting pictures of the Shrine. The way that Blessed Titus bore his last days in Dachau left a lasting impression on Raphael. It is hoped that there will soon be news of Titus becoming a Saint in the Church.

Letter from our Prior General

Every year our Prior General, Fr. Fernando Millan Romeral, sends out a letter to the Carmelite family around the time of the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. This year Fr. Fernando not only reminded us that the 26th July saw the seventy-fifth anniversary of the death of Titus Brandsma, it also saw the fifteenth anniversary of the death of the great Carmelite theologian, Bartolome F. M. Xiberta. Fr. Xiberta was an Assistant General of the Order. He came here in 1951 for the return of the relics of St. Simon Stock. In our archives there is a booklet about St. Simon and the Scapular devotion, written by Fr. Xiberta. He was one of the theologians who attended the sessions of Vatican II. This is what Fr. Fernando wrote in his recent letter to the Carmelite Family about Fr. Xiberta, *"The last few years he was totally disabled because of a stroke. He hardly articulated any words. Perhaps he was realizing what he had once said about his work as a theologian: "we, poor teachers of theology, must talk about extremely high mysteries, before which it would be best to remain in silent contemplation..."*

I am sure you, like me, have met sick and handicapped people who bore their sickness and weakness with fortitude and grace, strengthened by their faith that Jesus is accompanying them on their pilgrim path. One of my favourite days at Aylesford is the Sick Pilgrimage, when Aylesford becomes a little Lourdes. There the witness of the sick and weak comes first; they are always welcomed and valued.

Little Flower

St Theresa of the Child Jesus has become one of the most popular saints. She was fully aware of the love and mercy of God. She prayed for her family, for the young missionaries who travelled to China and Malawi, for criminals and for those on the fringes of society. For St. Theresa no one was beyond her prayers.

In the 'Story of the Soul', aware that she was terminally ill and hadn't long to live, she wrote the following reflection: "Yes I have found my place in the Church and it is you O my God, who have given me this place: in the heart of the Church, my mother, I shall be love. Thus I shall be everything, and thus my dream will be realized."

During the summer months we receive a number of school groups. The highlight for many of them is to see the relic of St. Simon Stock in the Relic Chapel. **Recently, one cheeky boy shouted, "I know where the skull is kept"**. On the tour I like to remind our pilgrims of the importance of relics. Relics include anything that once belonged to a saint. Relics are a visual reminder of a holy life. Saints are a sign-post to God. They allow the light of God to shine in their lives.

I like to tell our younger visitors that as saints can come in all shapes and sizes, so do relics. In the childhood home of St. Theresa at *Les Buissonnets* in Lisieux, her dolls' house, many other toys and even some of her jigsaw puzzles are preserved. These then are all relics of one of the great saints.

Summer Fayre 2017

The Summer Fayre was once again a great success and raised over £10,000 on the day. The

Draw winners were:

1st Prize J K White from Maidstone
2nd Prize G Pierce and 3rd Prize Geoff



We have now moved on to starting the arrangements for the Christmas Fayre which is on the 25th & 26th November. We do hope some of you might be able to join us over that weekend but if not you can still join in the Winter Grand Draw. I hope you have found your draw tickets included with this Newsletter. If you would like some more please give Kelly or Clare

Forthcoming Retreats and Pilgrimages

29 Sept - 1 Oct Thérèse of Lisieux Weekend Retreat

A reflection upon how Thérèse's experience of God's mercy can help us today.

Robert Colaresi, O.Carm
Cost £160 single, £155 Senior, £146 shared

1 October Little Flower Society St Thérèse Pilgrimage

12 noon Gathering Service & Blessing of Prayer Banner, 2.15pm Blessing of Roses, 3pm Mass.
Exhibition of Mission's work.

8 October All Filipino Marian Pilgrimage
1.30pm Rosary Procession followed by Mass

14 October Entering the World of the New Testament Day Retreat

An opportunity to consider the social and cultural factors that would have affected the biblical authors and their intended audiences.

Michael Cox, O.Carm.

21 October Wellbeing Day Retreat

The day seeks to explore how we can find Christ through our whole being: body, heart, mind and soul.

Peter Tyler

25 - 26 November 2017

THE FRIARS CHRISTMAS FAYRE

10am - 4pm

Seasonal entertainment, craft and gift stalls.
Entrance £4.50, children under 12 free

Our Lady of the Assumption statue

In the last newsletter Fr. Damian mentioned that a new statue, a replica of the one of the Assumption by Michael Clark that is on the Shrine, had been commissioned. I am pleased to inform you that it has arrived. The replica truly reflects the beauty of the original. Michael Clark was proud of the statue and this is what he wrote some years ago: *"I was particularly gratified when the Royal Society of British Sculptors awarded me the Otto Beit Medal for this work as hitherto the Society had tended not to take religious sculpture too seriously. It was also most encouraging to receive this award from my professional colleagues"*. I like to think that Michael Clark would be pleased with this new statue. You will find details about ordering it in the Intentions leaflet.



Rest in Peace

You will see enclosed the November Dead List. I am reminded of the importance of prayer for our beloved dead. Last year here at Aylesford I encountered a lovely lady who appeared to be so cheerful. Then she looked at me and said, *"Do you not recognise me? The last time we met was at my children's funeral."* I remembered immediately that her children had died about six years before in very tragic circumstances. She spoke to me of how she had come to terms with her bereavement with the prayers and support of her many friends and her deep faith in the love of God.

When the nights begin to get long and the days shorter we choose the month of November to pray for our dead. We pray for our beloved dead and commend them to the Lord of the Resurrection. Sometimes it can be difficult to say the final farewell. We pray in November not only for those who have died but also for those who are left behind, that they may experience peace and acceptance.

Our Lady will provide

Our finance manager, who keeps a close eye over our expenditure, has reminded me of some of our recent projects. With your generosity we were able to tarmac most of the drives around the priory and now most of the pot holes are just a distant memory. We are currently refurbishing the toilets next to the Tearoom and Shop. Sadly, one of the beech trees near the pond had to be felled as it was badly rotten. Some large branches came down suddenly one evening and fell into the pond. Our grounds staff, aided by volunteers, have now cleaned up the pond area. We are fortunate to have so many volunteers who come twice a week to work in our grounds. The gardens look tidy and cared for due to the hard work of our grounds staff and our invaluable volunteers.

I remember meeting Fr. Malachy when I was boy. By that time he was a frail old man but came across as a man of deep faith. When he was restoring the medieval buildings and later began building the Shrine, he often had bank over-drafts of several thousands of pounds. His superiors and bursar were often terrified when they saw the Aylesford accounts but he would simply say **"Our Lady will provide"**. **It is with the same faith that I have to appeal to you for a donation no matter how small or large.** Aylesford would not be the place it is without your prayers and support. The community pray twice a day for all who make it possible to fulfil our ministry here at Aylesford.

Finally

A priest and a vicar are standing by the side of a road holding up a sign that reads, "The end is near! Turn around now before it's too late!" A passing driver yells, "You guys are nuts!" and speeds past them. From around the curve they hear screeching tires—then a big splash. The priest turns to the vicar and says, "Do you think we should just put up a sign that says 'Bridge Out' instead?"

Thank you for your support and prayers. May God bless you, your families and everyone you love.

Francis Kennedy, O.Carm.

Prior

The Friars, AYLESFORD, Kent ME20 7BX Tel: 01622 717272

email: newsletter@thefriars.org.uk web: www.thefriars.org.uk

A Registered Charity - Registered Charity No. 1061342