



# Pilgrims Newsletter

## Aylesford

Summer 2018

### Dear friend

We receive a number of letters from pilgrims who reflect upon their past experiences of Aylesford. Recently we received a letter from one of our former novices, who had lived here at the time of the great flood, on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1965. He was known as Bro. Martin. He wrote this letter to his father that Christmas. After his father died he discovered the letter and sent it to us for our archives. I am grateful to him for sending it to us and I thought I would share some extracts of his letter.

### The Flood of 1965

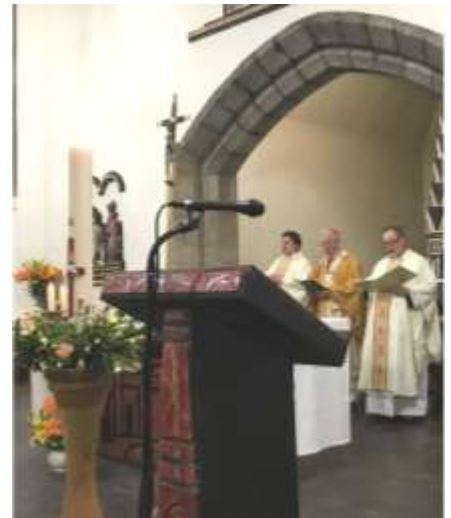
*"It was on that day, I discovered that in religious life.... NOTHING....takes priority over food!! So, dinner was served, and we ate in silence as the reader continued to read aloud from a book about Henry Garnet. However, he had a job to be heard because the kitchen soon started to submerge and there was a great noise of comings and goings outside as the Pilgrims' Hall people were being evacuated to the upper floor.*

*Just as we were starting our pudding, the first trickle of water came under the door and quietly advanced halfway across the floor before going down a crack in the floor boards. As the second and third trickle followed their leader under the door, the Prior (Fr Richard Hearne, who had been here only one week), was forced to burst out laughing and give a 'prosit', which meant we could now talk. However, there was still no question of leaving our pudding because at this point Br Nuño came splashing along with the basin of clay from the pottery and built a six-inch wall across the doorway. I can proudly report that no puddings went uneaten!*

*So, dinner finished as usual, and then we would normally have walked from the refectory back to the Cloister Chapel saying the 'Miserere'. At this point the flood at last broke the routine when the Prior looked out of the door and said "you can dispense with the Miserere to start with". He then proceeded to hitch up his habit and splash up the passage to the cloisters which were still dry.*

*It was now 2 o'clock, and as high tide was at 2.30pm, the flood had just about reached its peak, so let's try and draw a line of the high-water mark. Although the Shrine was now fully surrounded by water, the chapels themselves remained dry because they are two steps higher up. The water was then continuous through all the kitchens, the Pilgrims' Hall, the main courtyard and its ground floor guest rooms. The water line then went on behind the enquiry office and a little way up the drive before turning out across the grass beside the pond and away out across the car park fields.*

*I returned past the repository where the water was up to the top of the counters, but since they keep most of their stock under the counters over half of it was ruined. This, I think, is the third worst area in the flood. The two ladies who run the shop have a tremendously large supply of everything, even though little business is done in the winter. Of the 'Infant of Prague' alone there are about 7 different size statues and 15 of each size. Then there are numerous smaller plastic things with similar quantities. In fact, it is the opinion of some people that there should be a flood once a month in there to clear all the junk out!*



The Archbishop of Southwark, Peter Smith, visited The Friars on the 29th April and celebrated at Mass.



An old archive picture of the damage caused in the repository by the flood.

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The opposite side of the yard was thankfully not so deep. In the cow sheds eight calves were standing in a foot of water, and beyond that forty pigs had got their trotters wet, but none of them were lost.

That Friday night we had Compline an hour early and went to bed early in preparation for the morrow. A few of the community were up to watch the 3am high tide, but the water stayed in the river. The next day the fire brigade pumped out the boiler houses; **Malling council started to pump out the sewage pit under the new courtyard; and we borrowed a large 'sludge' pump to remove the many ponds of water that still remained.** During the afternoon Bro. John and two of the sisters did an amazing job of taking all the laundry to a laundrette in Maidstone and spending three hours on six machines, while passers-by stared at the strange sight! The sewage pumps were working again on Sunday afternoon, and then John Lofthouse (the electrician) and I restored the motors in the carpenters' shop by the following Friday, and the laundry in eleven days."

The Carmelite community and the many volunteers, under the leadership of the new Prior, quickly made good all the flood damage. The floods continued over the years but never as devastating as the one of 1965. Fortunately Aylesford was designated a flood zone, so in 1998 the Environment Agency undertook major flood defences both in the village and here at The Friars.

## Bl. Oscar Romero

In February there was a showing of the film 'The Claim' which is about the life and death of Archbishop Oscar Romero. The film was introduced with great passion by Julian Filochowski of the Archbishop Romero Trust. As Archbishop, Romero spoke out against social injustice in his native El Salvador. He was assassinated while presiding at Mass for the Carmelite Sisters. When he was Archbishop of San Salvador, he was described as the "voice of the voiceless"; now that he has become a Blessed in the Church he is now "named of the nameless." Those who came to the film were inspired by the dedication and the self giving of the Prelate.

News of his death came a few hours before the Installation of Robert Runcie, as Archbishop of Canterbury. Many saw echoes of the martyrdom of St Thomas of Canterbury, while others, including St. John Paul II, saw similarities to the life and death of St. Stanislaus, who as Bishop of Krakow was martyred by King Boleslaw II. St John Paul II, when on pilgrimage to El Salvador, paid a surprise visit to the tomb of the Archbishop. Archbishop Romero became a blessed in 2015. Soon after showing this film we heard that Romero will become a saint in the autumn.



St John Paul II at the tomb of Archbishop Romero

In one of the new Eucharistic Prayers we pray: "Open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters; inspire in us words and actions to comfort those who labour and are burdened. Make us serve them truly, after the example of Christ and at his command. And may your Church stand as a living witness to truth and freedom, to peace and justice, that all people may be raised up to a new hope." The Church continues to pray for those who, like Oscar Romero and so many others, model themselves on Christ and are true shepherds to the People of God.

## News

After Christmas and in the New Year there were a number of deaths of former members of our staff and their relatives. Some of you may remember Ian Jenner, who was on our maintenance staff for nearly thirty years; he also served in the Knights of St. Columba; also Mabel Squires who worked on the domestic staff for many years. Finally J.R. Rothwell who maintained our boilers for many years. The Church prays daily for those who have died. A death whatever the age of the deceased, is painful.

## Sunday 24th June

# SUMMER FAYRE



We do hope some of you may be able to join us for our annual Summer Fayre, which will be on Sunday 24th June this year. We have a good selection of entertainment from a daredevil arena act to a petting zoo and lots more. The Grand Draw will take place at the end of the day and the winners will be notified straight away. A list of the winners will be printed in our Autumn Newsletter so thank you to all who returned your tickets.



Hopefully our prayers with yours will remind those who grieve that they are not alone in their grief and that we are people who walk in the light of the Resurrection.

During the winter months there is time to do the many jobs that we are too busy to do during the summer. The Laundry staff took full advantage and during this quieter period they undertook the washing of the sleeping bags of the local centre for the homeless. These came to us from Maidstone Care who provide so much support to the homeless and the needy in nearby Maidstone. Also, once a month there is a collection of food for the food bank.

At Aylesford we are blessed with a number of volunteers, many of whom work in the gardens. Some have recently been assisting our staff and the community in restoring the benches, chairs and tables that were originally in the **Pilgrims' Hall and Prior's Hall**.

The snow at the end of February is now a distant memory but it was quite thick here. One morning when I opened the shrine I could see quite clearly the foot prints of a fox. After inspecting the pond he visited the shrine. A more pious visitor suggested that he may have said a prayer or lit a candle!!!

Our first pilgrimage of the year was, as usual, the Tamil Chaplaincy who came for Palm Sunday. This year they were led by Bishop Paul McAleenan, one of the Auxiliaries of Westminster. We were joined for Easter by the Southwark Youth Services who were on retreat here over the Easter Triduum. They were **also here the Saturday before for 'Born For This', which is a musical dramatisation of the Passion Story, performed by young people from around the Diocese. It was very moving and good preparation for Easter.**

I was amazed how many people braved the wet, cold weather on Good Friday for the Liturgy that day. We were more fortunate with the weather on Easter Sunday. The Shrine looked so beautiful with the hundreds of lilies and the Easter Garden. All the masses were well attended. The following Saturday saw the Divine Mercy Pilgrimage. May is always a busy month for pilgrimages.

This year two of the community celebrate significant milestones. Fr. David Fox will be marking forty years of his religious profession, while Fr. Michael Cox will be twenty-five years.

## Our Lady Untier of Knots

During the summer months we celebrate a number of significant feast days of Our Lady. We will be able to use our new blue vestments that have arrived recently. July sees the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. For Carmelites Mary is our Patron, Mother, Queen and Sister. While in August we commemorate the Assumption of Our Lady. We remember that the original Church built



by the medieval Carmelites was dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady. This feast reminds us that Mary is the model of the church in its perfection. Mary is that perfect disciple.

Whenever Pope Francis goes on a foreign pilgrimage he dedicates his mission to Our Lady. The Pope has a great devotion to Our Lady Untier of the Knots. While the Pope was a student studying in Germany, he discovered a Baroque, seventeenth century painting of Our Lady, in Bavaria. The Pope took a postcard of the painting back to his native Argentina. The picture shows Our Lady undoing the knot of a long piece of ribbon.

## Forthcoming Retreats & Pilgrimages

### Glorifying God in the Garden 2 June

A day exploring how creation can speak to us of the glory of God.

### Our Lady Queen of Peace Pilgrimage 2 June

12 noon Mass, 2.45pm talk, 4.00pm Exposition & Benediction.

### Italian Pilgrimage 10 June

12 noon Mass, 4.00pm Procession

### Exploring the Psalms 16 June

An exciting excursion through the psalms in the light of the New Testament.

### Portuguese Pilgrimage 17 June

12 noon Mass, 4.00pm Rosary Procession

### Walking with God as a Pilgrim 23 June

A pilgrimage from Aylesford to Rochester.

### Day of Celebration sharing in the gifts of people with disabilities 1 July

12 noon Mass, workshops, 3.30pm closing liturgy.

### Nigerian Pilgrimage 7 July

10am-6pm. Rosary, Procession, Mass, Homily, Adoration & Benediction

### Our Lady of Mount Carmel 14 July

A day looking at the role of the Virgin Mary.

### Our Lady of Mount Carmel Pilgrimage

15 July 11.30am Mass with Third Order Professions & Renewal of Promises. Spiritual talk, Rosary Procession, Adoration & Benediction. Scapular Enrolment.

### All Night Vigil 28 July 10.00pm—6.00am

### Caribbean Pilgrimage 29 July

12 noon Mass, 3.30pm Rosary, Adoration & Benediction

### Prayer & Poetry 11 August

A quiet day reading and reflecting on the poetry of Elizabeth Jennings.

### Pilgrimage of the Sick 12 August

11.30am Mass of the Assumption with Sacrament of the Sick. Rosary Procession & Benediction. Scapular enrolment.

### Summer Stillness 13—17 August

Personally guided retreat. Cost: £366 single, £356 senior citizen, £332 shared.

### Catholic Tamil Pilgrimage 19 August

11.00am Gathering, 12 noon Mass, 3.30pm Procession & Benediction

### Kerala Catholic Pilgrimage 26 August

12 noon Mass, 2.30pm Procession & Benediction

### Divine Mercy Pilgrimage 27 August

10.30am—4.30pm. 12 noon Mass.

### World Goan Day Pilgrimage 1 September

11.30am Mass, 2.45pm Rosary Procession

### Polish National Pilgrimage 2 September

12 noon Angelus, 1.00pm Mass, 4.00pm Rosary Procession & Benediction



The original picture was commissioned in 1699 by the canon of the church of SS Peter and Paul's, Augsburg, to commemorate his grandparents, Wolfgang and Sophie Langenmantel. Apparently their marriage was at crisis point. They prayed that they would seek reconciliation with one another. Gradually they began to listen to one another; their new respect for one another turned to love. On the day of their marriage Sophie received a ribbon to symbolise their unity as a couple. She tied a knot in her marriage ribbon after every argument. The knots in the painting signified the pain and suffering of our lives and through the loving intervention of God and the intercession of Our Lady, the knots of our past are untied to give us new hope, self-knowledge, peace and freedom from our past. I pray while we celebrate these two great feast days of Our Lady that you will be free from the knots of your past pains, whatever they may be, and instead experience true hope, forgiveness, mercy and joy.

## Courage to Build A new

Some of you may remember a book by Edwina Fielding, about the restoration of the shrine with extracts of the early newsletters by Fr. Malachy, called 'Courage to Build Anew'. The title came from a prayer from the old Carmelite Night Prayer. It seemed an apt title to sum up the ministry of Fr. Malachy and the many people he inspired to restore the shrine here at Aylesford. When the Carmelites returned to The Friars, in 1949, the place was in a sad state of neglect due to an earlier fire in 1930, and the war years. At the same time the country was being rebuilt after the destruction of the Second World War. Fr. Malachy captivated so many people, as well as restoring the original medieval buildings; a new shrine was built, which has been described as "a prayer in stone".

Our architect has informed the community that urgent repairs are required to the roofs and overflows of the shrine. He added that a conservative estimate would be a quarter of million just to make good the roofs and overflows. I am therefore with the same spirit of hope that Fr. Malachy had, appealing to your generosity. Work on the roofs began in earnest immediately after Easter with scaffolding being erected around the shrine.

Once the roofs are repaired we can then do other repairs to the chapels. Some of the chapels need painting and the artwork in St. Anne's Chapel needs attention. Work has just begun on the restoration of the angels ceramics by Adam Kossowski on the main shrine, that were coming away from the walls. The work is being undertaken by our potters, Billy and Alan, as they are experts in ceramics. It is expected to cost £10,000. In the New Year what is known as the step down boiler had to be replaced. It provides both heating and hot water for the old block guestrooms. We are continuing with the refurbishment of the Guesthouse with the upgrading of some shower rooms. Any donation small or large towards all these necessary works will be gratefully received.

Please be assured of the prayers of the community for you, your families and friends.

*Francis Kemsley. O.Carm.*

Francis Kemsley, O.Carm.  
Prior



## Scenes from the Priory



*Billy and Alan, the potters, have begun to remove the angel ceramics on the Shrine.*



*Scaffolding has been erected around the chapels to enable the work on the roofs.*



*Fr Ged cleaning the old tables*

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