



Pilgrims Newsletter

Aylesford



Winter 2018

Ditching: Arts and Crafts

Like so many people I enjoy a little trip out. Recently I drove to East Sussex to visit the quaint village of Ditching. For about seventy years it was the home of a religious community of artists and craftsmen called the Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic. The community made vestments, produced silverware, printed books and posters. We still have some of the Ditching vestments in use at Aylesford. The vestments were made from hand spun Assam silk. Two of which have been lovingly restored by a local seamstress. One of our friars, Fr. Brocard Sewell, was a member of the community in the 1930's. He learnt the art of printing while there. Here at Aylesford he established a printing press in 1950's called St. Albert's Press. He was editor of The Aylesford Review which was published until 1967. The Ditching community were part of the arts and crafts movement.

The Genealogy of Jesus

One of my favourite feast days is Our Lady's Birthday. It was the traditional day of our religious profession. This year we remembered that Fr. Wilfrid McGreal was marking his Diamond Jubilee of religious profession. That day it is always tempting to use the shortened form of the Gospel as the long Gospel includes Matthew's account of the genealogy of Jesus. It is far more than a list of difficult to pronounce names. Matthew reminds us that Jesus is the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecy to Abraham.

This Gospel was the preferred Gospel for the Advent Liturgy for our parish school English Martyrs, Walworth, as there were a lot of African children who could relate to the concept of ancestors. Jesus, like us all, had a family and, like so many of us, had skeletons in the cupboard. In the genealogy of Jesus there is the naming of four women as ancestors of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. All were foreigners, in irregular unions but were instruments of God. God takes the mess and brokenness of our lives of those with an open and contrite heart.

One of my favourite stories is that of Ruth and Naomi. Ruth's great act of faith is telling Naomi, who wants to leave Ruth in her own country and return to Naomi's native Bethlehem after their husbands have died. Ruth is determined to stay with her mother-in-law and says to her: "For I will go where you go, and stay where you stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you go I will go." (Ruth: 1-16) Ruth was the great grandmother of King David and therefore she was an ancestor of Jesus.



Our Lady of Aberystwyth

Advent

For me this is the lost season as we are already thinking of Christmas. There is so much to be done: Christmas cards to be bought and sent; presents to be thought of and then what shall we have for the dinner? Who is going to be invited and will they eat what we offer or do they require special diets. Are we tempted to try some new recipes that we have seen on a TV programme? Christmas is such a busy time and that is why I feel we have the gentle season of Advent of waiting with hope and expectation. Jesus comes to be with us in our humanity, into our human history, to offer peace, mercy and reconciliation. He comes to be with us in every situation of our lives. He comes to dwell with us.

So in this busy time of the year when there is so much for us to think in our planning of Christmas, the Church asks us in this

Forthcoming Retreats & Events

Light Up A Life

2 December

Heart of Kent Hospice Candlelit procession and Service. 4.30pm

Advent Retreat

7-9 December

A weekend starting with a joint ecumenical service, exploring how the coming of God into our world gives us hope, enabling us to deepen our relationship with God

Cost: £173 single, £168 senior citizen, £156 shared. Day fee £15

Carols by Candlelight Concert

14 December

7.15pm with Medway Concert Brass Band.

Rejoice and be Glad Day Retreat

26 January

This day will help us explore what it means to **be holy in today's world. We will draw on the words of Pope Francis and the 'cloud of witnesses' who have travelled the road before us.**

Blessed are those who Hunger and Thirst for Justice Day Retreat

23 February

Led by Pat Gaffney, General Secretary of Pax Christi UK, how can we create a just and fair **society in today's world.**

Further information available on our website



season of Advent to ponder and reflect with Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, John the Baptist and the prophets 'what does this mean to me today in my life?' May we find time in the silence of our hearts to ponder, reflect and ask what the birth of this baby means to me in my life today in 2018.

This year we will reflect with the Gospel of Luke. On the first Sunday of Lent we are reminded that we are people who wait with hope. The Gospel ends **with the words:** *"Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man."* (Lk: 21:36)

For the next two Sundays we hear of John the Baptist. On the Second Sunday Luke gives an historical instruction of the world that John the Baptist was entering into as he was a figure of an historical age as this is not a legend but a true story.

We also hear on the Second Sunday of Advent a quote from the Prophet Isaiah: *"A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord."* (Is.40:3) This is a familiar passage from the Prophet Isaiah and all four Evangelists apply this quote of John the Baptist. How do we use our voice? Do we use it to build and create? Or do we, at times, use our voice in a distractive way? The wilderness is a solitary place, a desert where in the peace of our hearts we encounter Jesus.

In the Gospel on the Third Sunday people asked John about how to live a good life. There was even confusion that he might be the Messiah but he made it clear that he was the one preparing the way for Jesus by announcing the Good News to them. We can proclaim the Gospel by living it as John the Baptist suggested. May we find a desert to reflect during this busy time of our lives on where the Gospel leads us today?

Along our Advent journey we meet the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. Then we turn to John the Baptist and on the fourth Sunday we meet Mary and her cousin Elizabeth.

The Visitation

On the Fourth Sunday the Gospel is the Visitation. It is the story of two other women who are supporting one another. When Mary hears the message of the angel and all that God was asking of her, she goes to support her older cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth is in the long line of women in the Bible who give birth late in life. I think of Sarah, Hannah and the mother of Sampson. I like to think that Mary went to the hill country of Judea not only to support her



On 25th October Bro. Michael McMullen died peacefully. He first came to Aylesford in 1955 and was professed in 1957. He trained as a potter under the well known potter, David Leach, alongside David's son John Leach. Some of the Holy Water fountains in the shrine were made by Bro. Michael. Due to ill health he retired from the pottery in 1977 and became the Guest Master. He continued in this role until a few years ago. Sadly, due to ill health, he moved to a nursing home four years ago. He was very much missed by the community and the many pilgrims he ministered to over the years. He is remembered for his gentleness and the warm hospitality he provided for the guests he welcomed. Many spoke of his listening ear.



cousin, but also to seek the advice and experience of an older woman. In Luke's Gospel after the birth of Jesus we hear that Mary treasured these things in her heart. Mary pondered, reflected and ruminated on the events of the early childhood of Jesus. Mary had a listening heart. Where best for her to go after the encounter with the angel Gabriel than to Elizabeth. She had the maturity of years to advise and support her younger cousin. It was Elizabeth who was the first to acknowledge the unborn Jesus as the Son of God, as she addresses Mary as the "mother of my Lord". This was a messianic title. Elizabeth, with her experience and faith, was able to express who Jesus truly was. As Elizabeth encountered Mary the child in her womb leapt for joy. The unborn John the Baptist was greeting his unborn cousin Jesus. There are so many famous pictures of this scene of two pregnant mothers meeting one another. The image along the Rosary Way is full of colour and life. Elizabeth was a friend and support to Mary during the early days of her pregnancy.

Christmas

Most people love Christmas but there are some who do not look forward to this special day. For some it can reinforce their loneliness or bring back unpleasant or buried memories. The biggest event that takes place here in December is the Light up a Life ceremony arranged by the Heart of Kent Hospice. Christmas is a time that we remember our beloved family members who are no longer with us but are with us in spirit. It is very noticeable the number of people who come here to light a candle in memory of a beloved deceased relative during the Christmas season.

As we look upon the figure of the child in the crib may the pain and suffering of the past year be overcome by the peace and love that the child Jesus came to bring? During his life there would be healing but rejection and suffering at the cross. However, from the cross we travel to the light of the empty tomb. Christmas is a season of light in the darkness of our world. We celebrate the birth of Jesus when the days are short but the nights are long. Our Christmas candle reminds us of the light and beauty of Christ. Darkness does not have the last word but may the light of Christ shine in our lives and our community.

News

As you are aware much restoration work has taken place on the shrine. The roof of **St. Joseph's Chapel is now complete as is the drainage and soak away. The scaffolding** has come down and is now erected around the Relic Chapel which is the next roof to have attention.

September saw Adoramus, the Eucharist event in Liverpool. Our Eucharistic afternoon was well attended and finished with Benediction.

We had a weekend retreat for the Little Flower and quite a number came for pilgrimage on the Sunday. There was the traditional blessing of the roses at the statue of Thérèse in the Rosary Way.

Fr Ged was in Rome for the Canonization of St. Pope Paul VI and for St Oscar Romero. While St Oscar Romero was alive, as he stood up for the rights of the poor and oppressed, he was known as "the voice of the voiceless". Now that he is a saint he is "the name of the nameless". We placed his picture in the Martyrs Chapel between St. Thomas Becket and St. John Fisher, two Bishop Martyrs.

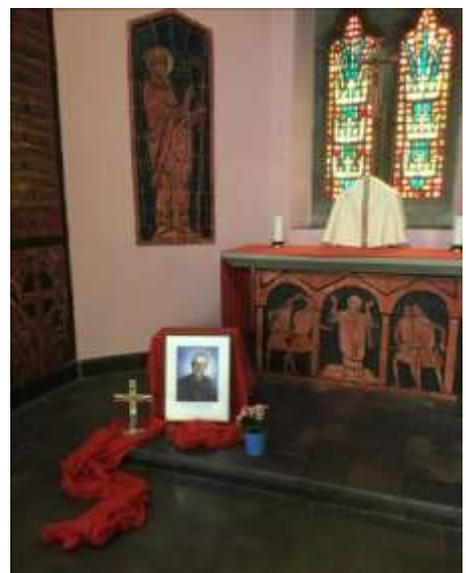
The following week Fr. Ged, together with Fr. Paul Jenkins, attended the Synod in Rome on Young People in the Church. They both spoke of the joy and enthusiasm that the young people brought to these meetings. They came from all around the



The Provincial, Fr Kevin Alban, blessing the roses at the St Thérèse pilgrimage



Fr Kevin and Fr Ged with the Sacristan, Mark, for the pilgrimage Mass



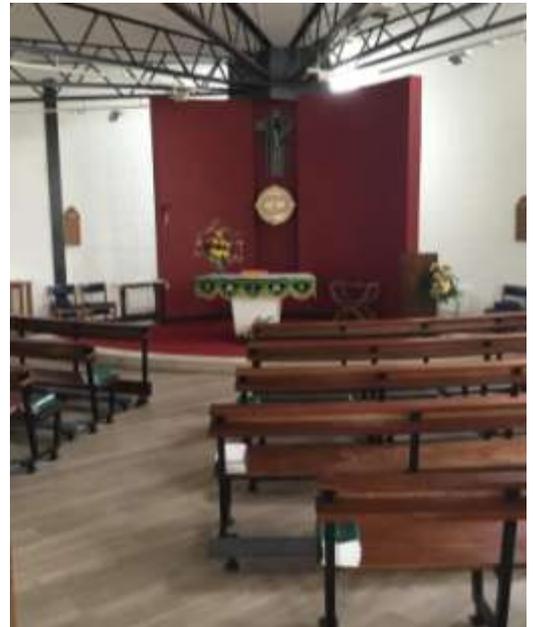
St Oscar Romero's shrine in the Martyrs Chapel

world. Pope Francis made a point of meeting and speaking to as many of the young people as possible. After their week in Rome, Ged and Paul both thought that there is a lot of hope for the future.

At the end of October I represented the Province at the rededication of the new church in Aberystwyth. The Carmelites ministered in the parish for nearly seventy years. While there the Carmelites took care of the parish, a Late Vocations Centre and the University Chaplaincy. The first Prior there in 1936 was Fr. Malachy Lynch. He later went on to build the church Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Lampeter, which he described as his dress rehearsal for Aylesford. I was struck by one of the prayers read by Bishop Thomas Burns at the ceremony **just before the readings of the Mass. The Bishop prayed, "May the word of God always be heard in this place as it unfolds the mystery of Christ before you and achieves your salvation within the Church."**

We are looking forward to our Christmas Faye at the end of November. Don't forget to get your raffle tickets back in to us in time. The Draw will be taking place not at the Fayre but on Thursday 20th December.

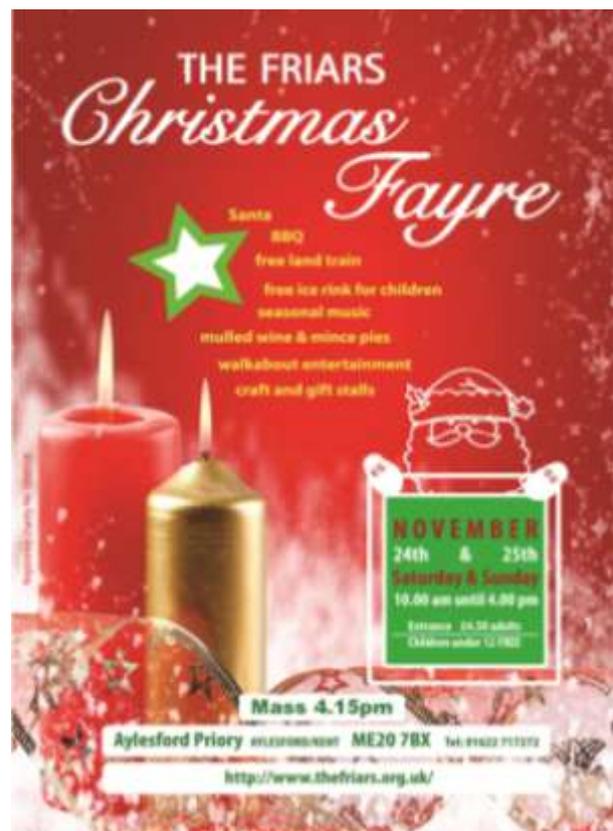
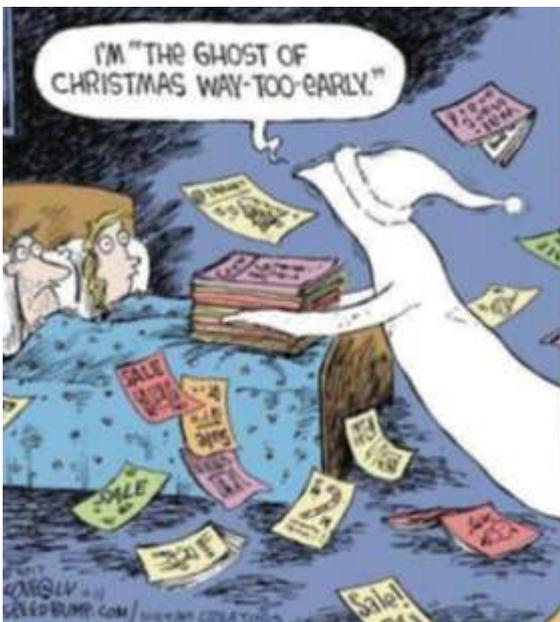
Please be assured of the twice daily prayers of the Carmelite community for all our benefactors and for all who ask for our prayers. May Advent be a season of light and hope as we wait with hope and expectation for the coming of the Lord.



The rededicated church in Aberystwyth

Francis Kennedy, O.Carm.

Prior



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