



PILGRIMS NEWSLETTER *Aylesford*



Br Tony O'Donnell, Jayne and Bernard Hoose with Torsten and Tiago at their farewell BBQ

Order of Carmelites
WINTER 2011

www.thefriars.org.uk

Dear Friend,

Fr. Brendan is away at the moment and I am taking over his pen for this Winter Pilgrims Newsletter. As I write there are the first signs of winter coming but autumn has been rather lovely in these parts. The trees are turning all sorts of colours and soon will be bare, preparing themselves for the new growth of spring. In winter we at Aylesford prepare ourselves in many ways for spring and summer when the large numbers of pilgrims return. It is a very rare day when no-one comes to visit for some reason but certainly in the winter life is a little quieter. It gives time for certain places to have a lick of paint or for a broken chair to be repaired or whatever there has been no time to do during the busiest periods.

Seasons



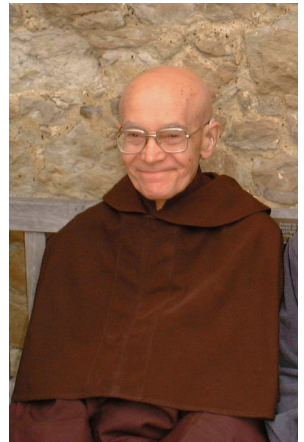
Each season has its own beauty. While I prefer the weather to be warm, I can appreciate the changes. Some weather looks better from inside the house while a walk on a beautiful autumn or winter day can reinvigorate you. The first signs of springtime always bring hope and the summer sunshine gives the energy to see us through the dark days of winter.

Every young Carmelite who comes to Aylesford to do his first year of novitiate learns that we have a lot of leaves here. You could spend your life sweeping up leaves and still they fall. It seems to be a never-ending job to keep the paths relatively tidy. All novices are very glad when spring and summer come around because it means no more leaves to brush up. We usually manage to find other jobs to keep them busy.



Fr. Cyril Baxter

It is not only the seasons that change. This community has also seen some changes recently. In the last newsletter, Fr. Brendan told you about Fr. David Waite who died on 6th June. He was the second in the community as Fr. Tony Pelan had died one month earlier. A lot of people believe that deaths come in threes and so we duly had our third in the community. Fr. Cyril Baxter died on 17th September. He was almost 85 years of age and hailed from Bradford in the north of England. Ten years ago he moved from our community in York down to Aylesford in order to spend his last months in a place that meant so much to him. The expected few months expanded into years and he became an important member of the community. Though in his latter years he was able to do increasingly less and less he always remained an example of prayer. He would pray for the rest of the community, just like St. Thérèse, the Little Flower, who would offer her every step for a missionary. No doubt he is praying for us now.



Changes

Another happier change is that we have welcomed a new member of community. Br. Tony O'Donnell has come to us from Llanelli. He hails from Co. Tipperary but has spent the last few years in Wales. We are delighted to have Br. Tony here where he will work in the sacristy and be available to meet the pilgrims. However we have gained one man and lost two more! Br. Neil has gone to Faversham. He worked here in the reception office and in our conference centre. Fr. Kevin has gone off to be the prior in our community in Walworth, in the south-east of London. Fr. Francis, whom you will remember was prior here a few years ago, will remain as parish priest in Walworth.

The age range of the community goes from 20 to 85. Br. Michael is the grandfather of the community. He has been at Aylesford for 55 years and is very well known to different generations of pilgrims.

Brothers Tiago and Torsten finished their year of



novitiate here in Aylesford. Tiago returned to his native Portugal to continue his studies in theology while Torsten made his first profession of vows in Germany and will study theology there. We have four new novices to enliven up the place. Jacek is from Poland, Roy from England, Severin is from Germany and Kurt is from Malta.

Prayer

A simple new venture seems to have caught the imagination of many of our pilgrims and visitors. We now have a prayer net in St. Joseph's Chapel. The idea is that you write your prayer on the little pieces of paper shaped like fish and stick it in the net so that other visitors can pray with you and for your intention. Of course we still have our petition boxes for private prayers. The fish has been a symbol of Christianity almost since the beginning. Several of the disciples whom Jesus called to follow him were fishermen. After the resurrection, according to John's Gospel, we have the powerful scene where the Risen Jesus is making breakfast on the shore while the disciples are out fishing. They had caught nothing and so he told them where to cast their net. They caught 153 big fish. At the time people thought that there were 153 different species of fish. Now we know there are very many more but when the Gospel was written it was intended to signify that everybody was called to enter God's Kingdom. We try to be open to everyone here and we hope that people of all faiths and none find a welcome in this place. If you can come here, why not put your own petition up on the net or into one of the boxes? You are welcome to send in your petition also.



Stories

There are all sorts of wonderful stories in the Bible and when I get a chance, I love to write about them to share some of their riches with other people. I have just finished writing a book which hopefully will come out in time for Lent next year. It is called: *Truly The Son Of God*. It is the Stations of the Cross with a difference, following the Passion of Jesus according to St. Mark's Gospel and I try to apply each station to our own lives today. Another book, for Advent and Christmas, is *Let It Be*, a reflection on all the parts of the New Testament which touch on the figure of Our Lady. Of course the Annunciation and the birth



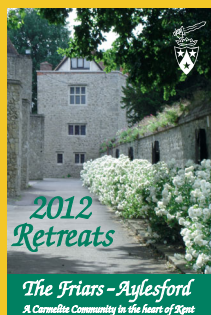
of Jesus are very important readings to understand the importance of Our Lady for us. If you are really into the Bible, you might be interested in *The Sound of Silence*, which is a reflection on the Prophet Elijah. In all these books I try to see how the Bible can help us have a deeper relationship with God.

A journalist has written a new book about Britain's holiest places and both Faversham, the Carmelite shrine of St. Jude, and Aylesford, feature in it. The author ranks them as among the very top sites in the country. Both are certainly very popular places to visit. Here at Aylesford people have many reasons to visit. Some come to say a prayer in one of our chapels, or on an organised pilgrimage; others come for a conference or even just to feed the ducks. Most visitors speak of a sense of peace that seems to envelop them as soon as they arrive. Some appreciate the religious nature of the place while others just love the beauty of the buildings or the grounds. Aylesford has often been described as “a prayer in stone” and the community each day keeps up the constant rhythm of praise to God. Your intentions are always included in our community prayer.

Everybody is being squeezed for money with price rises the norm. The new translation of the Mass has meant some expense for us as we need to have several altar missals to cover some of the chapels here as we regularly have different groups at the same time. The missals will be in full use from the first Sunday of Advent and each book costs £230. Fortunately some generous people have offered to pay for these and of course the community is very grateful. We pray for our benefactors daily because without them we could not continue our ministry here at Aylesford. The age of the buildings means that something is always going wrong somewhere. Even the main shrine is showing signs of needing repair. Any time repairs are attempted on buildings such as we have here the cost can be very significant. Please remember our ministry at Aylesford in your prayer so that we can continue to respond to the needs of the many people who come here.

Retreat Leaflet & Pilgrimage Diary

Along with this newsletter you should have received the Retreat Leaflet for 2012. If for any reason you haven't got a copy do contact us on 01622 717272 or email: enquiry@thefriars.org.uk and we will send you one. Hopefully, you may be able to join us for one of the day retreats or come and spend a few days here for a weekend retreat or short break. The Pilgrimage Diary for 2012 will be coming to you with the next newsletter in the New Year.





Peace Garden

Much work has been done on the Peace Garden which is taking shape very nicely. It runs from the Gatehouse to the entrance of The Friars. The first plants were put in at the end of October and many of the peace tiles were laid. Each tile bears the word “peace” in a different language. When pilgrims and visitors come they will be able to admire the plants or say a prayer or simply sit and experience the peace. The idea is that in every season there will be some growth in this garden to give inspiration to all who come to this place of tranquillity in the heart of Kent.



Advent

Christmas will be upon us before we know it. Many people would prefer to drop Christ from Christmas and just focus on the material side of the season. However for us Jesus Christ is always at the centre. Therefore, in order to be ready to celebrate the birth of Christ in a fitting way, the whole Church spends the four weeks of Advent preparing spiritually for the feast. We hear some very consoling words from the Prophet Isaiah during the season of Advent. He prays: *“Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down.”* That is exactly what God did when Jesus was born. In him, heaven and earth are joined. He is truly human and at the same time he is God in our midst. God is not far away but very close. The Gospel of Mark, which we will use in our Sunday readings this

coming year, reminds us during Advent of our duty to stay awake because we do not know when the Lord is coming. We are to prepare a way for the Lord first of all in our own hearts, then in the lives of other people. If we live our faith in Jesus Christ in a serene way, in spite of the difficulties we may have to face, perhaps we may help others be aware of the presence of God. In this Carmelite community at Aylesford we pray that this Advent may be a very fruitful time for you.

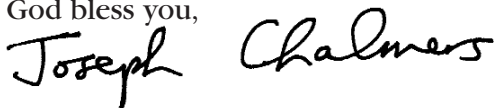
Fr. Brendan is very good at ending the newsletter with a good joke. All I can come up with is one from last year's Christmas cracker:

Father Christmas lost his umbrella but he didn't get wet! Why not?

Because it wasn't raining!

Wherever you are, may you know the peace of Christ this Christmas. Please pray for the community here and know that we remember all our benefactors and friends each day.

God bless you,



Joseph Chalmers O.Carm.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

This year at our Christmas Fayre weekend on Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th November we have invited a very special guest – Bjorn the Polar Bear. He is a life-sized animatronic, interactive bear (see the picture on the back page) who will perform three times each day and the children will learn a little about him and have the chance for a cuddle and photograph. We will also have craft stalls, face painting, children's make-a-gift and, of course, they can visit Santa and receive a gift. There'll be warming mulled wine and mince pies and the Tearoom will be open for snacks or lunch. The choir will sing us some carols to get us in the Christmas spirit. We would love to welcome you along so make a note in your diaries and if you can't join us don't forget to send your Christmas Draw ticket counterfoils and any money you have raised back to us by the 23rd November. The Draw will take place at the end of the Christmas Fayre weekend and you could win up to £500. Good luck...

The Friars, AYLESFORD, Kent ME20 7BX Tel: 01622 717272 Fax: 01622 715575

Web: www.thefriars.org.uk Email: newsletter@thefriars.org.uk

A Registered Charity - Registered Charity No. 1061342

Printed by A.G.A. Printers & Sons - Telephone (01795) 533295

The Friars, Aylesford

ME20 7BX www.thefriars.org.uk

**Festive
fun for
all the
family**

**Meet Bjorn the
Polar Bear**

Get a gift from Santa

Make a Christmas gift

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Saturday 26 - Sunday 27 November

10am - 4.30pm

Adults £3, Children £1