



Pilgrims Newsletter

Aylesford

Spring 2018

Dear friends,

Lent

By the time you receive this newsletter Lent will be with us. It is like a spiritual spring clean. It's a time for us to reflect upon our relationship with God, our neighbour and ourselves. The Gospel for Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18) reminds us of this as we are told of the importance of prayer, almsgiving and penance.

Traditionally on the first Sunday of Lent we hear of Jesus going into the desert. This year we hear from the Gospel of Mark (1:12-15) which is rather a pithy account. We read that: "*The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness.*" He was there for forty days and was tempted by Satan. Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark does not mention details of the temptations. Just two sentences are sufficient for Mark when writing about the temptations of Jesus. The Gospel reminds us that after time in prayer in the desert for forty days Jesus then begins his public ministry in Galilee. We see in the Gospel that prayer was important in the daily life of Jesus. The message of Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry is simple: "*Repent and believe in the Good News*" (Mk.1:15). Perhaps this sums up Lent for many of us but it is also a time for us to reflect on our baptism calling. Thousands of people up and down this country will be attending what is called the 'The Rite of Election' in their local Cathedral. At this ceremony, those who have been preparing to become Catholics meet their Bishop. The ideal time for adults to be baptised or received into full communion is at Easter, although sometimes this is not possible. However, those who are preparing to be baptised or received into full communion at Easter have their names written into the Book of Elect. It is also a time for all of us to ponder and reflect during these days of Lent on what it means to be a follower of Christ today, as we prepare to renew our baptism promises at Easter. So Lent is like us going into the wilderness with Jesus. During this time may we become more like Jesus.

The Mother of Jesus at the foot of the Cross

Hans Urs Von Balthasar, one of the favourite theologians of Pope St. John Paul II, has left us a beautiful reflection on the Church. In the Gospel of Luke we see Mary is pictured as the first and most perfect of the disciples. She is the one who listens and ponders on the Word of God. Her yes at the Annunciation leads her to say a silent yes at the foot of the cross. At the cross she cannot do anything, she can only allow it to happen. She acknowledges that Jesus must die for her and for all humanity; she suffers with her son like so many mothers before and after her who suffer with their children.

Many great artists have captured the suffering of Mary at the cross. The most famous being the Pieta, by Michelangelo, in St. Peter's, Rome. Adam Kossowski created our Stations of the Cross in the Relic Chapel. In the thir-



Retreats 2018

Preparation for the Easter Season 17th March, Maggie Cascioli & Paul de Groot, O.Carm.

As Holy Week and Easter draw near, you are invited to look at how you can use the different days, prayers and your experience to approach Easter differently and deepen your relationship with God.

Easter Triduum Retreat 29th March—1st April, Bernard Hoose, David Fox, O.Carm. & Pastoral Team

A chance to reflect upon and make our own the events of Holy Week.

Cost £259.50 single, £252 senior citizen, £234 shared. Day fee £15.

Making Way for God in our Lives 21st April, Sheila Grimwood

What helps us to be aware of the presence of God in our daily lives?

Being led by the Holy Spirit 19th May, Maggie Cascioli & Trish Murphy

A day of quiet reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Glorifying God in the Garden 2nd June, Jayne Hoose & Paul de Groot, O.Carm.

A day exploring how creation can speak to us of the glory of God and our beauty as the children of God.

Spiritual Directors' Training Course in accompaniment starts October 2018.
Email: tpsdaylesford@gmail.com for more details.

Summer Fayre 24th June 2018

No sooner had Christmas finished then we had to start planning for our annual Summer Fayre. Therefore you will find enclosed with this Newsletter Draw tickets for the Grand Draw at the Summer Fayre. I know it seems very early but the next newsletter will be too late. Please return your ticket stubs to us by 19th June. Thank you for all your support.

Christmas Draw Prize winners

1st Prize: Ms A Costar, Dorset

2nd Prize: V Egan, Yorkshire

3rd Prize: Mrs Murray, Sittingbourne

teenth station we see Mary holding and caressing the dangling arm of her dead son hanging on the cross. Mary participates in the sacrifice of Jesus by letting him go back to the Father. At the foot of the cross Mary becomes the mother of all believers. Therefore, Mary is the mother of the Church and model for us all. As she bore Christ in her womb, so with faith Christ is born in our hearts.

In one sense the Church, the Bride of Christ, is Mary as God intended the Church to be in its perfection. We, as members of the Church, strive to be more like Mary in her perfection. The Church was born from the side of Jesus.

In John's Gospel we read that when Jesus had died His side was pieced with a lance; water and blood flowed from His side. This represents the sacramental life of the church. (Jn 19:34-35). So we strive to imitate Mary by saying yes, like Mary did, to whatever God asks us to do.

Called by Name

One of the common themes of the accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel is that Jesus is not instantly recognised even by His close disciples. My favourite Easter story is in the Gospel of John (Jn. 20:1-18). There we read of the encounter between Jesus and Mary of Magdala. At first she thinks the Resurrected Jesus is the gardener. It is not until He calls her by her name that she recognises Jesus for who He is. She makes her great act of faith calling **Jesus "Rabbuni" which means teacher. This story reminds me that we are all special in the sight of God, as are our names.** The first thing that happens at our baptism is that we are named by our parents. We are all called by name just as Mary Magdala was.

St. Simon Stock

When I think of St. Simon Stock I also think of the Scapular devotion. So many people associate Aylesford with this devotion. During the summer months it is common to have individual requests for enrolments of the Scapular as well as **after some of our pilgrimages. It is a happy coincidence that St. Simon's feast day takes place during the Easter season as the Scapular devotion is seen as a deepening of our baptism commitment. By putting on Our Lady's mantle we are following in her footsteps.** She was the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus. In Carmelite spirituality we call Mary Sister. She is that older sister in the faith who leads us along our pilgrimage of faith to encounter her son Jesus. There is a beautiful stained glass window in the Carmelite Chapel in Terenure, Dublin, of Mary as Queen and Sister. As Sister she gathers humanity and leads us along the right path to meet her son Jesus.

A Little History

I like history and I was interested that last year saw the 350 years anniversary of the Dutch invasion of nearby Chatham Dockyard, known as the Battle of the Medway. One of the members of the Hewitt family, who lived at The Friars prior to the Carmelites returning, mentioned on a visit here a few years ago that there were some cannon balls that used to be lying around The Friars. Apparently there is a tradition in the Hewitt family that the cannon balls came from a Dutch warship during the 1667 invasion. It is thought that some of the Dutch warships sailed up the Medway as far as The Friars.

The North Barn was built by Sir John Banks during the 1660's, at the time of the Second Anglo-Dutch War. Sir John took full advantage of the war and sold wheat, grain and timber to Chatham Dockyard. At the opening of the North

Barn, after its restoration in 2005, there was a hope that a building that had its origins due to war and conflict would become a place of welcome and hospitality. The Dutch sub-prior at the time, Fr. Piet Wijngaard, added do not forget to mention it was the Dutch who won that war!!!

All Night Vigils

A few years ago the community decided that due to our reduced numbers we would not continue to do the All Night Vigils. They involve at least two members of the community. A number of you were disappointed and have written to ask if we could restore them. At a recent community meeting it was agreed we would do one this year on Saturday 28th July. We will see if they are meeting a need. If the Vigil is popular we may do more in 2019. Please tell your friends. I know a number of you want to come here for the Vigils to pray to **God in the peace and quiet of the Night. I think of St. John of the Cross's great poem 'The Dark Night'. St John wrote: "O guiding night! O night more lovely than the dawn!"**

Our Lady Provides

I thought you might enjoy this letter I received recently: *"I would like to share a wonderful childhood memory. One weekend my father had wanted to show me how the cloisters and its special chapel were beginning to be rebuilt. We walked in at the door of the Prior's Hall and through into the cloisters. My father told me to tiptoe and be quiet as ahead he could see was Fr. Malachy with a tall lady in a very smart dress and fur wrap - to me, a small child, she looked very 'posh'. Fr Malachy and the lady were standing with a cement mixer between them on very rough ground and to my utter amazement I heard the words "...but you could always buy the cement mixer for us." A straight request to a very 'posh' lady – two new experiences all in one go – which I have never forgotten."*

The Cloister Chapel was painted just before Christmas. The chapel was closed for over a month as some of the medieval walls had to be treated for dampness. More lights have been installed as it was also rather dark. It is now a bright and welcoming place. I know it is the favourite chapel for so many of our pilgrims.

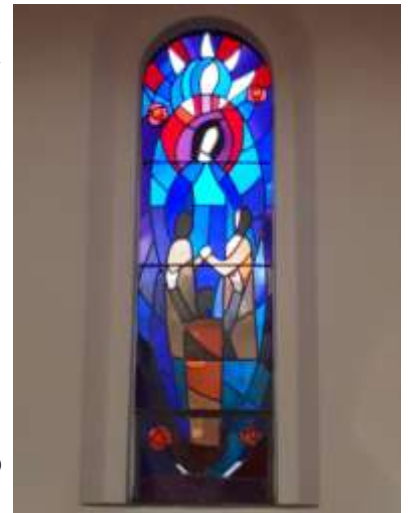
This year a number of maintenance jobs are planned, including refurbishing the **Gentlemen's toilets and a new boiler in the Old Block. Thank you also to all of you who sent a donation for new blue vestments. They have now been ordered and hopefully they will be here in good time for our celebration of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in July.**

News

All sorts of people stay here; some for religious purposes, others for peace and some for a rest. Recently we had over night the first year students from the Westminster Diocesan Seminary, Allen Hall. At Christmas we were joined by our student, Richard Green, who is now studying philosophy in Rome. You may remember he was professed here in September 2016. Please pray for all those who are reflecting or discerning their vocation. The Carmelites set the 16th of every month as a day of prayer for vocations to the religious life and the priesthood.

In the middle of November two young female black swans arrived from Leeds Castle to replace our last black swan that died last year. The two new swans are only six months old but are already very much at home on the pond. A member of the community has named them Tess and Flos.

Our Christmas Fayre was a great success. It took place over two days at the end of November in the grounds and buildings. The ice skating proved popular again as was Father Christmas. Our volunteers created a **'Father Christmas' Parlour** in the Small Refectory in what was once the medieval kitchens. The Christmas Fayre was a popular family day and raised much needed funds for maintenance here.



Stained glass window, Terenure College, by Frances Biggs.



Allen Hall students with Fr Francis on the Main Shrine



Our new swans being released onto the pond.



Fr Christmas and his helpers at the Christmas Fayre.

A practical way in which you can help support The Friars is by joining our 100+ Club . Everyone who joins, at £12 a year, is issued a number which enters the monthly draw. The draw takes place on the second Sunday of each month after the 10.15 am Mass and the winning number receives a prize of £50, except for December when the prize is £100. Extra numbers can be added for another £12 a year. If you would like to renew your subscription or join the 100 + Club for the first time, please send in your name and address and your cheque for £12 made out to The Friars to the Newsletter Office. Thank you.

Early December saw the Light Up A Life service arranged by the Heart of Kent Hospice. The service took place on the main shrine and was led by our friend the Bishop of Rochester, Rt. Rev James Langstaff. I am amazed how many hundreds of people braved the cold, December weather.

The following Friday saw our annual Advent Service with St. Peter's Aylesford. The Friars' choir were joined by the choir of St. Peter's. The two choirs have a good relationship and come together a few times during the year. The following Friday saw the Carols by Candle Light concert. The chapel was full for the concert with Christmas music provided by the Medway Towns Concert Brass Band.

As usual, the Relic Chapel was full for the Midnight Mass. Our choir sung all the familiar and loved carols. The two masses the next day were well attended as well. There were a number of pilgrims and visitors during the Christmas holiday. I was surprised so many people came to Mass on New Year's Day despite the heavy rain we endured that day.

2018

This year sees a number of significant anniversaries, including the centenary of the birth of the well know author, Muriel Spark. She spent two years living here and at our other nearby community at Allington Castle in the 1950s. Apparently one of her early books is based upon her stay here. She frequently returned to visit the community.

This year also sees the Eucharistic pilgrimage and Congress, in Liverpool, in September. Cardinal Vincent wrote recently, *"We seek to rejuvenate Eucharistic adoration in our parishes as the source of strength for our lives and for our mission, that of making present the love and compassion of Jesus in our society."* Pope Francis has reminded us of the importance of visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He wrote: *"I want to encourage everyone to visit—if possible, every day— especially amid life's difficulties, the Blessed Sacrament of the infinite love of Christ and His mercy, preserved in our churches, to speak filially with Him, to listen to Him in silence, and to peacefully entrust yourself to Him."*

Please be aware of the daily prayers of the Carmelite Community here at Aylesford for you and all who are dear to you.

May God's blessing be with you all.

Francis Kemley. O.Carm.

Prior



Easter Lily Dedications

As we do every year, the chapels at Aylesford will be adorned with lilies throughout the Easter season. If you would like to dedicate an Easter lily for yourself, a friend, a relative or a loved one who has died, please fill in the name of the person for whom each lily is dedicated on the Intentions Leaflet . You may also like to send an Easter Lily card to let someone know you are thinking of them . The suggested donation for each lily is £4. All dedications will be displayed in the Relic Chapel during the Easter season and any extra monies raised will go towards various costs at The Friars such as flower displays .

Data Protection

New legislation is coming in May this year. We have looked up the requirements and believe that we are fully compliant. We would like to reassure all our friends that we do not and never have shared your data in any way. If you wish to stop receiving this newsletter at any time do email or call our Newsletter Office (see below) and Clare or Kelly will arrange that for you as soon as possible.

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