



Pilgrims Newsletter



Aylesford

Winter 2017

Dear friends

At Aylesford we are fortunate to have some of the finest modern religious art in the country. In the last newsletter I told you about our new replica statue which is a copy of Michael Clark's statue of the Assumption. I thought you might like to read some of the letters that Michael Clark sent over the years. He was a man of deep faith and had a great love of Aylesford. He writes with real fondness for both his father, Philip Lindsey Clark, and Fr. Malachy.

Art of Aylesford

Philip Lindsey Clark was well known to Fr. Malachy, long before the Carmelites returned to Aylesford, as Fr Malachy had commissioned the artist to create a number of statues for the chapel of St. Mary's College, Llandeilo in Wales. Philip Lindsey Clark was a member of the Carmelite Third Order. He first came to Aylesford on the day the Carmelites returned to Aylesford in 1949 and he not only worked here but he also introduced his son Michael Clark and Adam Kossowski.

Michael Clark, in the year after his father's death, wrote to the then Prior, Fr. Alphonsus Brennan, in 1978. I would like to share this letter with you: *"The fact that this Christmas will be the first anniversary of my father's death takes my mind back to Christmas Eve 1949. Fr. Malachy decided, at the last minute of course, that the first Mass in the Cloister Chapel must be said on Christmas Eve. My father was summoned to Aylesford with a few days to spare to design an altar. The design was made within hours and the York stone Mensa slab was ordered from the stone masons in London to be produced in three days. Father remained at Aylesford supervising the preparation of the chapel and the building of the base for the altar. I had the unenviable task of hurrying the masons in London. All was complete in four days and I arrived with the Mensa in the afternoon of Christmas Eve. By 7 pm all was complete, although the cement was still wet, and the first Mass of Christmas was celebrated in the Cloister Chapel. My father always loved that little chapel; for him it was the spiritual centre of The Friars. For the next twenty years I was associated with the building anew, it was a great and exciting privilege, it was a good way to work and in so doing, support my family."*

And a later letter, written in 1989, not long before he died: *"So, it is forty years since the great day, commemorated so well by Adam Kossowski in his 'Return of the Friars'. A day I remember well. I was a young man of thirty years with six years of war behind me, just completed my Art School studies, a young growing family, and the future to face as a sculptor. I visited The Friars with my father, and was captured in the excitement of Fr. Malachy's vision for The Friars. I have much to thank God for during the last forty years, not least being the help and encouragement from Aylesford."*

Bro. John recalled that while the artist was building the Cloister Chapel altar on Christmas Eve, Fr. Malachy realised that there was no crib, so Bro. John was sent into Maidstone to buy some plaster of paris. While Michael continued to build the altar, his father Philip created the simple Holy Family. Bro John was the model for St. Joseph. Michael



Clark is remembered for his great statue of the Assumption and for the statue of St. Joseph in the chapel that bears his name. On one of his many visits to Aylesford, he recalled that he was also very proud of the small statues over the doorways in the Courtyard, as they were his first commission.

Advent

Advent is sometimes the forgotten liturgical season, overlooked as we prepare for Christmas. It is a quietly reflective season when we are reminded that we live in a space between the first coming of Jesus in Bethlehem and the second coming of Christ in power and majesty. The readings in Advent remind us that we are people who are waiting with hope and expectation. We travel in Advent with the prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary. On the first Sunday of Advent the readings look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus.



The passage we read from Isaiah on the first Sunday of Advent is: *you are our Father; we the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hand.* (Is.64. 8). This passage reminds us that we are created by God and we are beautiful in His sight. Many of you will have seen how a potter can create a pot out of a lump of clay. The potter shapes and glazes a pot and then fires it. However, the pot always remains fragile and can easily be broken. The image of God as a potter, from Isaiah, reminds me that life is like a potter shaping and decorating the clay and it finally being fired. God is with us during our lives, even the painful moments. It is through prayer we recognise His loving hand in our lives.

On the second and third Sundays of Advent we hear of John the Baptist. All four Gospels quote a passage from Isaiah and see John as the fulfilment of this passage: *“a voice that cries in the wilderness: make straight the way for the Lord.”* I have always thought that it is ironic that John is described as *“a voice in the wilderness”*, when his father lost his voice for the nine months that John was in his mother Elizabeth’s womb.



The Gospel of Luke opens with two annunciations; one to Zechariah and one to Mary. Zechariah was a learned priest who would have been aware of the Hebrews scriptures. He would have known of Sarah, Hannah and the mother of Sampson, all of whom gave birth late in life. However, Zechariah could not accept that his elderly wife Elizabeth would also be graced by God with a child in her old age. As he could not accept the message of the angel he immediately became dumb and remained so until the naming of his son John. Mary on the other hand, accepted all that was asked of her. Mary is a woman of faith. As we reflect this Advent on John being a voice in the wilderness, I wonder how we use our voice. Do we use it to build, create and heal?

I would like to share part of an old Gaelic poem called *‘The first miracle of Christ’*:

*Then Joseph said to Mary,
And he full of heavy contrition,
“it is carrying Him thou art,
The King of glory and of grace.
Blessed art thou, Mary,
Among the women of all lands.
Blessed art thou Mary,
Among the women of all lands.*



Christmas

One of the delights of Christmas is seeing the joy of children visiting our crib in St. Anne's Chapel. The crib simply tells the story of Christmas but it is no fairy story as it is one of light and darkness. A few days after Christmas we mark the feast of the Holy Innocents, the young innocent children who were murdered by King Herod seeking the young child Jesus. The holy family became refugees.

Perhaps the Christmas story is reflected in our lives as well. There may well be pain and suffering but hopefully there is some hope and joy as well. Edith Stein reflected upon this in *The Mystery of Christmas*. **She wrote:** *“Let us go to Bethlehem and King Herod who wants to kill the Lord of life. In the presence of the Child in the manger, the spirits line up to take sides. He is the King of kings and Lord of life and death. He utters his ‘follow me’ and whoever is not for him is against him. He also speaks for us and invites us to choose between light and darkness.”*

The child in the manger invites us to walk in the light that he came to bring; every newly born child in the eyes of their parents is a child of beauty. May this Christmas be a time for us to share the wonder and beauty of the child Jesus born in Bethlehem.

Recent Events

For over thirty years the Justice and Peace Group have gathered here to commemorate the dropping of the atom bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This year we were joined by Taishi Kato, a young Shinto priest who is undertaking a postgraduate course at SOAS, London. During the service he led a prayer for peace in his native language.

The Sunday before the Assumption saw the Sick Pilgrimage with the Sacrament of the Sick. There were about six hundred that day but only Fr Michael and myself here to anoint. It was a case that never have so many been anointed by so few!!! Hopefully next year there may be more friars.

One week in the middle of August, due to the enthusiasm and determination of Jayne Hoose, we had a Gardening Week, when volun-

Forthcoming Retreats & Events

Light Up A Life

Sunday 3rd December Heart of Kent Hospice Candlelit procession and Service. 4.30pm

Ecumenical Advent Service

Friday 8th December 8pm Choir Chapel
Carols by Candlelight with the Medway Brass Band

Friday 15th December 7.15pm. Entry £4.00 adults, children free

The Mindful Path to Christ Part 1

17th February 2018, Peter Tyler
We shall hear input on the nature of Christian contemplation, what distinguishes it from types of mindfulness currently in use, and how this relates to the Carmelite tradition.

Lent Talks Being a People of Prayer

20th Feb What is prayer? Jayne Hoose

27th Feb How do we pray today as individuals? Michael Cox, O.Carm.

6th March How do we pray today as Church? Kevin Alban, O.Carm.

13th March Why do I find it difficult to pray? Maggie Cascioli & Paul de Groot, O.Carm.

20th March Is prayer just words? Bernard Hoose

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



The second floor of the West Barn has been transformed into a Christmas Shop with a difference. There is a large display of Nativity sets of different shapes, styles and sizes along with many figures of the Holy Family. It is so difficult to find traditional Nativity sets in the shops these days so we decided to stock a good selection ourselves. If you are nearby do come and have a look.



teers came in to assist with different garden projects. Already there are garden volunteers coming in on a Thursday and a Saturday, who tend the Peace Garden and other areas of The Friars. Over forty five volunteers came for all or part of the week. The grounds have never looked so manicured and fresh. The pond, including the island, have **not escaped attention**. One Saturday seemed like an episode of *“Three Men in a Boat”*. That day the island was invaded so that the duck houses could be repaired and the island weeded. Fortunately, no one fell into the pond though earlier there had been some mishaps when our volunteers had been weeding the pond wall. The hard work and dedication of our volunteers is very much appreciated.

At the beginning of September we heard of the death of Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor. He came to Aylesford both as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton and later as Archbishop of Westminster. Whenever he met Carmelites he often asked about Aylesford. On his first visit to the Shrine the recessional hymn was *“Our God reigns.”* The previous time he had sung that hymn the rain came down. He wondered if we were tempting providence.

Novenas

You will see that as well as the Christmas Novena there are two others; one to Our Lady of Lourdes and the other to St. Joseph. Lourdes is an important place of healing and pilgrimage for so many. However, not many know that the last apparition took place on the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, 16th July, 1858. However, as the grotto was closed off due to the number of pilgrims, Our Lady appeared on the other side of the river Gave. There now stands the Lourdes Carmel which looks out straight across to the grotto. It is still one of the quietest and one of the most peaceful places in the whole of Lourdes

St. Joseph is the protector of the Carmelite Order. St. Teresa of Jesus dedicated her first reformed Carmel to St. Joseph. At Aylesford we have an impressive statue of the saint by Michael Clark. The ceramics of Adam Kossowski, behind the statue, remind us that Joseph is the Protector of the Universal Church. As he looked after the child Jesus, he is now the protector of the Mystical Body of Jesus, the Church.

The Carmelite community here at Aylesford wish you and your families a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Francis Kennedy. O. Carm.

Prior



The new Southwark Catholic Youth Service team.



Members of the Gardening group tackling the weeds on the bank of the pond.



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