



Pilgrims' Newsletter

Autumn
2024

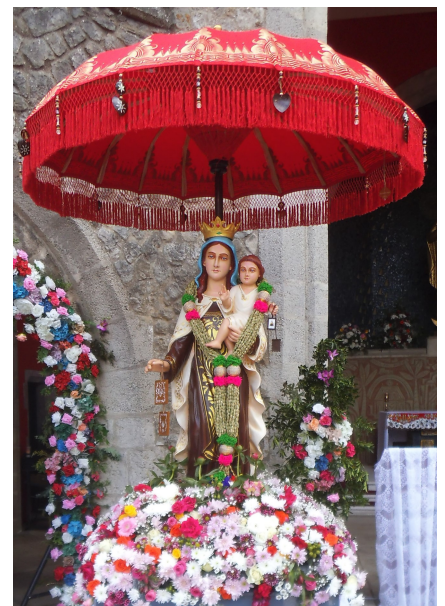


Dear Friends,

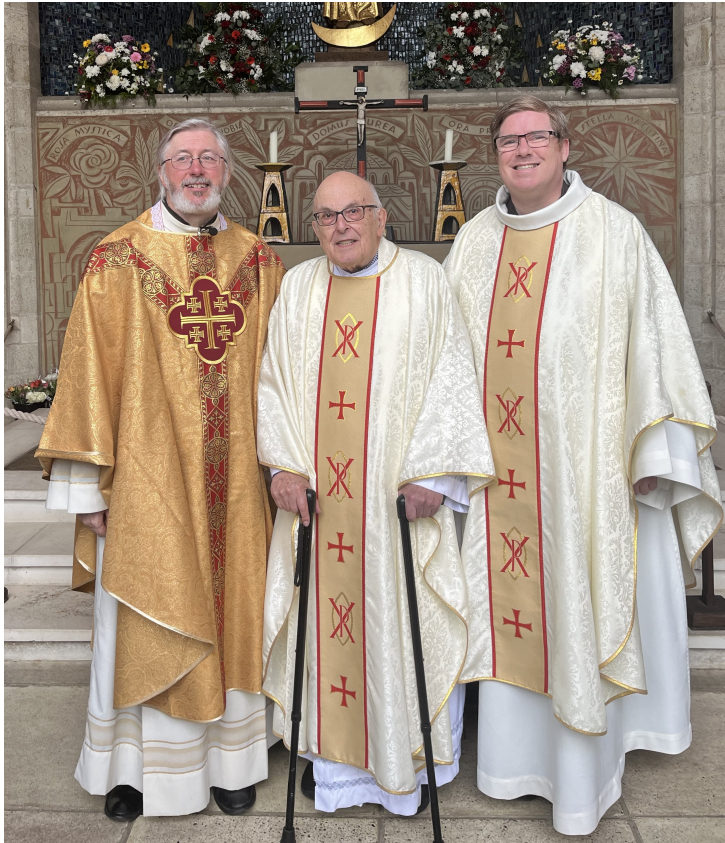
At this point in the year there is certainly a lot to look back on and for which to give thanks, as we reflect on our ministry as a place of pilgrimage. The biggest pilgrimage by far in the calendar, is the now, well-established National Syro-Malabar pilgrimage. Many of you will know that we host a Syro-Malabar Rite parish mission here at Aylesford, with Sunday Masses throughout the year. This usually attracts about 200 people. The annual pilgrimage, is a much bigger affair requiring a lot of planning, as the Syro-Malabar community spend several days decorating the shrine and the grounds in anticipation of the arrival of their bishop, Mar Joseph Srampickal. This year the number of pilgrims was in excess of 2,500 people. At a time when other groups are dwindling, often due to the high costs of coach hire, it is heartening to see.

Trinity Sunday this year fell on the 26th May. Although no pilgrimage was held that day, it was nonetheless a day of prayer, praise and thanksgiving, as we celebrated Fr Chris Baker's sixtieth anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Since his retirement as parish priest of St Michael's, Chatham, Fr Chris has been a regular at our Sunday Masses. Although now affected by some mobility issues, he remains deeply committed to his ministry. We give thanks for that continuing dedication and wish him *ad multos annos* — *to many years!*

The Knights of Saint Columba, Southwark (Province 12) held their annual pilgrimage on Sunday the 30th June, which was the transferred Solemnity of SS Peter and Paul. It is the usual occasion at which new members undergo the investiture ceremony. The Area Bishop, Rt Rev. Paul Hendricks, presided. The Knights are a regular feature of the pilgrimage season at Aylesford, as they provide stewards for many of the other groups that visit. It is a ministry to which its members have been faithful for decades.



View of the Syro-Malabar Pilgrimage from the shrine roof and the new processional statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel



**L. to R. Fr Michael Cox, Fr Chris Baker, Fr Ged Walsh,
Trinity Sunday, Aylesford**



**Br Bismael Nogueira de Alencar, O.Carm.
Pernambuco Province, Brazil**

On 28th July we were delighted to host the annual All London Caribbean pilgrimage. It was a special gathering this year as it celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Caribbean Chaplaincy. The presiding celebrant was the Rt Rev. Philip Moger, Auxiliary Bishop in Southwark. Some of you may know from 2020 to 2023, Bishop Philip was the rector of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, Norfolk., so he has some useful insights into ministering in a popular pilgrimage centre.

Carmelite News

Those with very long memories will remember Fr Adrian Wilde, O.Carm. who was the bursar here in the early 1970s. I first met Adrian in 1990 at Hazlewood Castle, where he was prior. For the last thirty years he has ministered in the United States. We were delighted to host him for a brief visit, as he came to see friends and family.

We had another visitor from the USA of a quite different character, which reminded me that just as Aylesford is an interesting place to visit, so too there are many interesting people who enter its hallowed grounds. At ninety-two Monsignor John J. Bevins is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut. He was educated by the Carmelites in its school in Middletown, NY, and was a navy chaplain for twenty-three years, serving in the Vietnam War. Mgr Bevins has had a life-long devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and finally made a dream come true by visiting Aylesford with a small group of fellow devotees from his parish. Another pilgrim with a Carmelite connection who visited this summer was Mr Mark Murphy, the lay Principal of Whitefriars College, Melbourne. The school was founded by the Australian Carmelites in 1961 and dedicated to Our Lady under the motto *Almae in fide Parentis* (in the Care of a Loving Mother).

At the beginning of May we had a visit from Br Bismael Nogueira de Alencar, a member of the Pernambuco Province, which is located in the northeast of Brazil. He is currently studying for the priesthood at St Patrick's, Maynooth. His gentle presence was very much appreciated.

We had a brief visit of four-day from Fr Aldrine Muchenje, O.Carm., a Zimbabwean friar and a member of the Irish Province. Aldrine has been living in Dublin, where he was just finished an MA in business management. He was out each day, ensuring that he did not miss his opportunity to see London during his stay. A big football fan, one of his trips was to see Chelsea's football stadium at Stamford Bridge. He is due return home to Zimbabwe where he take on the role of prior of St Joseph's, Hatfield, in Archdiocese of Harare. The parish given into the care of the Irish Carmelites in 1958. Since then it has expanded and now has two Mass centres: St Patrick's, Epworth, and St Pius, Manyame. The parish cares for about 3,000 people. We wish Aldy well for his new ministry. We also had a visit from his confrere, Fr Rangarirai Mutanga, O.Carm. Ranga has just completed a Licentiate in Spirituality at the Gregorian University, Rome. He will remain in Rome for the coming academic year but will study at the Teresianum, where he will undertake courses to aid him in his new role as a formator.

On Sunday 14th July we celebrated our annual pilgrimage in honour of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It is an occasion which attracts many different members of the Carmelite Family. It is the day when, traditionally, members of the Third Order renew their promises. We had the pleasure of welcoming two new members into the Third Order and also celebrating the First Professions of Rosemary Patchai (Leigh-on-Sea Chapter) and Julia Newton (Brighton & Hove Chapter). There was a quite different celebration on Saturday 20th July. This is the date for the liturgical commemoration of the Prophet Elijah. In our calendar it is marked as a solemnity and can therefore be a surprise to first-time visitors to the shrine, who may not know much about Carmelite devotion. A group that certainly did know about the importance of Elijah was the Guild of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, who were staying for a few days and joined us for Mass. Founded in Zimbabwe, the UK membership continues to grow. After Mass the members of the Guild renewed their promises to God and Our Lady and there was some very impressive singing in Shona.

It was during the week of Our Lady and St Elijah that the British Province of Carmelites gathered here for the annual assembly. Often such meetings focus on the election of our leadership team or other decisions necessary for the life and mission of the Order. This year we had a time of reflection together on the importance of our inner life, our community life, and our commitment to the care of creation.

The summer fayre is the biggest fundraising event of the year and has proved a popular event., drawing to the priory people from across all walks of life. It always surprises us that many of those who come from the local area say that it is their first visit, even though they have lived in the area for many years. We are very grateful to our staff and volunteers, who give up so much of their time to make the fayre a memorable occasion for all our visitors.



A few of our faithful and hardworking volunteers, without whom we could not run the Summer Fayre

The priory relies heavily on its supporters in order to continue to address the many maintenance projects that comes with having such a large complex of old, listed buildings. Just when I think we are making headway another problem looms into the foreground. The Pilgrims' Hall is one of the oldest structures at Aylesford - with parts dating back to the 1260s. I remember some years ago new buttresses being built to reinforce the courtyard wall. The latest problem we face is the riverside roof, which sadly is seeing serious signs of deterioration and so its distinctive peg-tiles will need to be replaced. Understandably, along with maintenance we also face the ongoing challenge of preserving the unique character of the priory, whilst ensuring that it can adapt to serve the needs of modern pilgrims. We hope that in the coming year we can raise £50,000 to cover the costs of our restoration programme, as well as improvements to the guesthouse.

I meet with Mrs Kelly Dawes, the Newsletter Administrator, on a regular basis to discuss a whole range of matters related to our fundraising. For many people Kelly is their main source of contact with the priory and her kind, positive, and professional manner is appreciated by all who either telephone, write, or email. Recently, we have changed our candle supplier, as we sought to respond to the specific needs of pilgrims. We have found that many people come here simply to light a candle to remember a dear departed loved one and we are pleased that we are now in a position to make available votive lights which provide prayers for the repose of the souls of the departed. I take this opportunity to remind and reassure all our pilgrims that each day the Carmelite community prayers for all who have visited the shrine and those who have commended themselves to our prayers. On your behalf, I would also like to offer sincere thanks to Kelly for her ministry as Newsletter Administrator. I would also like to thank you most sincerely for your ongoing support, which enables Aylesford to continue to be a place of welcome and prayer for all our visitors.

May God, who is ever-faithful and true, bless you and all whom you love.

Michael Cox, O.Carm.

Prior



THE FRIARS, AYLESFORD

GRIEF in LOSS HOPE

Weekend in CHRIST

Friday 4th - Sunday 6th October 2024

GUIDED BY: LIZ TAYLOR, BARBARA SALAMONCZYK & GED WALSH O.CARM

For anyone who has experienced bereavement, whether recently or some time ago. We grieve, remember, hope and give thanks for our loved ones in the light of the Resurrection of Jesus.

COST: £260.00 SINGLE; £230.00 SHARED.

FOR MORE INFO AND BOOKINGS CONTACT:
Tel: 01622 717272 Email: reception@thefriars.org.uk



THE FRIARS, AYLESFORD

ADVENT RETREAT

Friday 6th—Sunday 8th December
Angela Black & Ged Walsh, O.Carm.

A time for prayer and reflection
at the start of the season of Advent.

COST: £260.00 SINGLE; £230.00 SHARED.

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Remember a Loved One at The Friars in the Book of Friends

This book gives our friends the opportunity to have their families and friends, or themselves, commemorated here at the Shrine of Our Lady. For a minimum donation of £75 an entry will be made in the book. Happy events such as a birthday or wedding anniversary as well as an anniversary of a death may be recorded. The book is currently on display in the Relic Chapel, and you will be able to see your entry each year on the appropriate date. All those entered in the book will be remembered at special Masses to be offered each year in May and November. For further information or to request an entry please contact the Prior's PA, Clare Abbotson at cabbotson@thefriars.org.uk or phone 01622 717272.



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