



Dear Pilgrim,

During Covid I missed travelling to London for the occasional art exhibition. I was interested in hearing that the great Flemish artist Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577 – 1640) worked for the Carmelites in their church in Antwerp which was his home for some years. However, his home and studio were near to the Carmelite Church, Antwerp. He could see the bell tower from his home. The Carmelites arrived in the city in 1492. There they built an impressive church with fine paintings and stained glass windows. It is not surprising that the Carmelites commissioned the local artist Rubens. Unfortunately, all his work in the church was destroyed after the French Revolution. Nor does anything remain of the church. However, two portraits of Carmelites remain. Both friars served as prior of the community in Antwerp. Both portraits are beautiful due to their simplicity. One of his most famous paintings in this country is the ceiling painting of King James I in Whitehall Banqueting House. Rubens was a popular court painter to King Charles I while he was living in London.

St. Bernadette

We are looking forward to welcoming the relics of St. Bernadette to The Friars. The visit of the relics has been described as *Lourdes coming to Britain*. Bernadette came from a poor family. Her father had lost the family mill. Eventually her family moved to one room of a disused prison. By this time, she suffered from asthma and tuberculosis. She continued to suffer poor health for the rest of her life. She eventually joined the sisters of Charity of Nevers, but died at the age of thirty-four, on 16th April 1879.

There is a strong link between the Carmelites and Lourdes. The last apparition of Our Lady took place on the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, 16th July 1858. Bernadette recalled that Our Lady looked more radiant and beautiful than ever. Due to the crowds the authorities barricaded the grotto. Therefore, the apparition took place on the opposite side of the River Gave, in meadow land. There is now a Carmelite Convent standing on the site. I like to visit it every time I stay in Lourdes as it is opposite the grotto with a splendid view. While the grotto is busy with thousands of pilgrims the Lourdes Carmel opposite remains a place of prayer and contemplation.

The highlight for Bernadette came in 1862 when the church officially accepted that the apparitions were authentic and that a church would be built near the grotto. Lourdes is about Mary and not Bernadette. Her parish priest asked when the apparitions were taking place for the name of the lady. Eventually the lady said she was “the Immaculate Conception.” Many began to believe that the apparitions were authentic as no illiterate and uneducated girl could have that knowledge. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had only been declared four years before.



Gaspar Van Rinckens O. Carm
by Sir Peter Paul Rubens.
Location: Museum Boijmans
Van Beuningen in Rotterdam



Our Lady of Lourdes



**Archbishop John Wilson at the
UCM Pilgrimage in May**


**THE FRIARS,
AYLESFORD, KENT**
**WILL BE HOSTING
THE RELICS OF
ST BERNADETTE OF LOURDES**
**MONDAY 24th OCTOBER —
FRIDAY 28th OCTOBER 2022**







For more information see our website: www.thefriars.org.uk



**Syro-Malabar Procession of
Our Lady of Mount Carmel**



**Fr Francis, Cllr. Sue Bell Mayor of
Tonbridge & Malling. The Right Rev.
Rose Hudson-Wilkin Bishop of Dover,
and Deputy Lord Lieutenant Trevor
Sturgess at the Fathers' Day Service**



**Fr. Adrian Wilde's Golden
Jubilee Celebration**

Relics

First class relics are part of the body of a saint. This may seem to be macabre or morbid. What do relics of a saint mean today? I still have a purse that my mother made. Every time I see it, I am reminded of my deceased mother. Relics of saints are a visible reminder of a holy life. Saints are ordinary people who lived extraordinary lives. The relics of saints lead us to God. They are signposts directing us to God.

Saints are children and friends of God. Therefore, they are intercessors drawing us closer to God. We may have a deeper awareness of their life and mission, and this draws us closer to the love of God. A fellow Carmelite Fr. Christopher O' Donnell wrote when the relics of St. Thérèse came to Ireland in 2001: *"Relics are not magical. True veneration of relics will involve people turning to God and allowing His love to enter their lives through the intercession of the saints."*

Water and Lourdes

During the ninth apparition Bernadette discovered a spring near the river Gave. Ever since pilgrims have washed and bathed in Lourdes water. It is seen as a sign of penance. Water is a powerful image for all Christians as it is a reminder of our baptism and that we have the gift of eternal life. The message of Lourdes is penance and prayer, so it is appropriate to bathe in the chilly water. The Gospel for the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes is the changing of the water into wine at Cana. There Mary said to the servants at the wedding feast: *"Do whatever he tells you."* (Jn.2:5) Through our prayer and reflection may we take to heart the message of Jesus.

I am the Immaculate Conception.

When Bernadette asked the lady her name, she simply said she was the Immaculate Conception. This dogma was only finally declared four years before in 1854 by Pope Pius IX but had been discussed and reflected upon by the church for hundreds of years before. I like the preface of this great feast to define the meaning of this doctrine. There we read: *For you preserved the most Blessed Virgin Mary from all stain of original sin, so that in her, endowed with the rich fullness of your grace, you might prepare a worthy Mother for your Son and signify the beginning of the Church, his beautiful Bride without spot or wrinkle.*

So, Mary was born without original sin so that she would be a fitting and worthy mother of Jesus whose birth signified the beginning of the Church. Mary is a sign of the Church in its perfection of how God would like the Church to be. As we look to Mary as an example to follow, we move from darkness to the light and become more like Mary.

St. Paul in some of his letters calls Jesus the New Adam therefore Mary is looked upon as the New Eve. In one of the Church's documents, we read: *"So it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by Mary's obedience. For what the virgin Eve bound fast by her refusal to believe, this the Virgin Mary unbound by her belief."* So, Mary by her obedience, becomes the new Eve and is an example to all followers of Jesus the New Adam.

We Remember

November is the month that we remember those who have died. All of us have experienced the death of someone we love. Due to Covid it has been more difficult to gather as friends and family. Last summer I met

with my family to remember my cousin who had died the year before at the beginning of the pandemic. It is important that we gather to celebrate, remember and tell their stories.

We say our farewell to those who have died in the light of the resurrection. Love and suffering are never far apart. We have the figure of Christ to inspire us who was beaten and broken on the cross. As we look upon those we love we too reflect upon the cross of Jesus. The pain of the cross does not have the last word, but the light of the resurrected Jesus gives us hope. In the month of November, we remember those we love who have died; it is a time of pain and suffering but as we ponder upon the cross, we are led to the glory and joy of the empty tomb.

News

It is good that the pilgrimages have returned. Archbishop John Wilson came for the U.C.M pilgrimage. As it was the feast of the Visitation the Archbishop was able to wear our blue vestments that are worn here on feast days of Our Lady.

Bishop Joseph Srampickal came for the National Syro-Malabar Pilgrimage. Their local community have Mass here most Sundays. When their "mission" was established, they were using Ditton Community Centre. Now for the last two years they have had Mass in St. Joseph's Chapel and have chosen to be rededicated to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

For two weeks we were pleased to welcome the English School of Mongolia. While in this country they did a number of performances. Before they left, they entertained the local community with Mongolian opera, ballet and excerpts from Oklahoma. We will remember their joy and enthusiasm for a long time.

There was an ecumenical service remembering deceased fathers led by the Rt. Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover. The service took place in St. Joseph's Chapel. Bishop Rose spoke of St. Joseph being the protector and provider to the Holy Family; their journey led them to be refugees in Egypt. Bishop Rose spoke movingly about refugees in Dover and around Kent.

Our Summer Fayre at the end of June was a great success. It was a lovely family day. The highlight was a falconry display though one of the falcons *Willow* enjoyed his newfound freedom and stayed on the shrine roof but eventually returned after the displays had finished. We were pleased to welcome both our local Mayor Cllr. Sue Bell, the Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling, also the Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr. Derek Mortimer.



K & H Falconry Display entertaining at the Summer Fayre



The regilding of the Statue of Our Lady is nearly complete



ESM performance in the Relic Chapel



The English School of Mongolia who stayed with us during the summer

It has been good to see so many pilgrimages returning. One of the biggest events on the shrine this summer was the 'One Mind One Heart' event organised by the Southwark Education Commission and Missio's children's branch – Mission Together. The nine hundred children who attended were encouraged to celebrate their place within God's global Church family and to pray for their brothers and sisters close to home and far away. It was lovely hearing so many children coming together in the shrine singing with joy and praise.

To prepare for the great feast day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel members of the community with our other communities joined us for a gentle retreat on Carmelite spirituality led by our Prior General, Fr. Míceál O'Neill.

This year our celebration of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel saw the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Adrian Wilde. He was ordained fifty years to the day on the Shrine. He wore the same blue vestment that he had worn at this ordination. The next day we welcomed our many friends who are part of the family of Carmel. Members of the Third Order made their professions and renewed their commitments.

Restoration of the Shrine and Other Projects

The restoration of the Shrine continues. St. Anne's Chapel was closed for two months while professional art conservators did their magic. The artwork was patiently cleaned of the rain damage and the sgraffito was skilfully restored. At the time of writing restoration of the chapel is near completion. We can see the original vibrant colours for the first time in years. The soft greens used by Kossowski symbolise "*the green freshness of Spring of Faith.*"

Work is nearly complete on the restoration of the statue of Our Lady of the Assumption by Michael Clark. It has dominated the Shrine since it was erected on 8th September 1960. The original wood agba, an African hard wood, is splitting. Once this has been dealt with the original gold leaf will be restored.

Later this year we hope to restore some of the ceramics along the Rosary Way including a major project on the Scapular Shrine. It has also been drawn to my attention that once work has been completed on the Shrine, we will need to replace the steam boiler in the new block. Estimates so far are up to £100,000. We know we can count on your generosity and support for both the restoration of the Shrine and for the new boiler.

Please be assured of the prayers of the Carmelite community for you and every one you love. Your prayers and support are very much appreciated by us all. We would not be here if it were not for your support and presence.

Francis Kemsley O.Carm.

Prior

The Friars Summer Draw Winners 2022

1st Prize: M. Bheenick

2nd Prize: M Hill-Paul

3rd Prize: G Sheppard

Congratulations and thank you for your support.

Forthcoming Retreats

LITTLE FLOWER

Friday 30th Sept—Sun 2nd Oct

Francis Kemsley O.Carm

A reflection of the love and mercy of God through the writings of St Therese

Cost: £205.00 single; £185.00 shared.

GRIEF AND LOSS

Friday 7th—Sunday 9th October

Elizabeth Partridge &

Francis Kemsley O.Carm

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

Cost: £ 205.00 single; £185.00 shared.

ADVENT RETREAT

Friday 2nd—Sunday 4th December

Angela Black &

Francis Kemsley O.Carm

Reflecting upon Mary during the season of Advent.

Cost: £205.00 single; £185.00 shared.

If you would like any more information please call Reception 01622 717272.

The Friars Christmas Fayre 2022

Saturday 26th & Sunday

27th November

10am—4pm with Mass at

4:15pm each day

Come and join us for Craft & Gift Stalls, Polar Express Land Train, BBQ, Mulled Wine & Mince Pies plus much more..

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