



Pilgrims' Newsletter

Aylesford



Autumn 2023

Dear friends,

This year sees the one-hundred-and-fifty-year anniversary of the birth of St. Thérèse. She is one of the most popular saints of the modern age because her spirituality of the love and mercy of God, that became known as the *Little Way*, speaks to so many people.

St. Thérèse and the Scriptures

Thérèse had a great love of the scriptures which was noted by St. John Paul II when he declared her a Doctor of the Church. He said, *'the primary source of her spiritual experience and her teaching is the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments.'*

In the Carmelite Rule we read: *'Each of you is to stay in his own cell or nearby, pondering the Lord's last day and night and keeping watch at his prayers unless attending to some other duty.'* So, St. Thérèse came from a spiritual tradition that looked upon her cell or room as a mini desert where she was alone with God. Her most precious possession was her Bible. Though she had no Biblical commentary, her insights are quite profound. She used the scriptures to answer questions such as her desire to serve God. In St. Paul she read: *'Yet strive after the better gifts.'* (1 Cor 12:13). After reading this she wrote that she finally had rest.

At the time of St. Thérèse some of the Carmelites had the habit of opening the scriptures at random for guidance. In the *Story of the Soul*, she wrote about invoking Our Lady: *"I begged her to guide my hand that it traces no line displeasing to her. Then opening the Holy Gospels my eyes fell on these words: 'And going up a mountain he called to him men of his own choosing and they came to him' (Mk 3:13). This is the mystery of my vocation, my whole life, and especially the mystery of the privileges Jesus showered on my soul".* Though this is not the literal sense of this short passage of scripture it had a profound effect on her and inspired her vocation. It was an inspiration to her for the rest of her life. However, this approach to scripture requires discernment, prayer, and reflection upon what was being asked of her through a particular text of scripture. Christopher O'Donnell O. Carm., in his book called *Thérèse and Prayer*, writes: *"The Spirit speaks to her in and through the text, so that the inspired Word becomes a word to her inner being"*.

She also had the habit of repeating a phrase that had given her comfort and support. She wrote about her second communion: *"My tears flowed again with an ineffable sweetness, and I repeated to myself these words of St. Paul: 'It is no longer I that live, it is Jesus who lives in me!'"*



St. Thérèse stained glass window at Terenure College, Dublin by Frances Biggs



Fr Ged & Br Matt at World Youth Day, Portugal



Ceramic of St Nuno Alvarez in the Carmelite Saints Chapel in the Relic Chapel by Adam Kossowski

This is a common way of praying with the scriptures. By repeating a phrase, it allows the word to be imprinted in one's mind and heart. There are similarities with Lectio Divina.

Another important passage of scripture for her was, *'love one another as I have loved you'* (Jn.13:34). She reflected upon the love that Jesus had for his disciples and upon her calling of becoming love in the heart of the Church. She would lead others to discover the love that Jesus had for all his followers. She saw that the Lord was drawing us all to love Him and one another.

St. Thérèse in Stained Glass

When I was living in Ireland, the Irish Carmelites commissioned several stained-glass windows of the Carmelite Saints at Terenure College, Dublin, by Frances Biggs. I have always liked the one of St. Thérèse clad in Carmelite colours with her hair unshorn. The white stars represent her telling her Father that her name would be written in heaven. You can see the Eucharistic host because the Eucharist was so important for her. The red cross reminds us of her suffering joining with Christ. The little ball at the bottom portrays her saying that she would make herself into a ball for the Infant Jesus to play with. The roses are her most famous symbol as she saw her vocation in heaven as one of showering roses down from heaven for all in need of the love and mercy of God.

St. Nuno of Portugal

This year the World Youth Day took place in Portugal. Fr. Ged led a small group of young pilgrims there. One of the saints of Portugal is the Carmelite St. Nuno Álvares Pereira (1360-1431). He was from a noble family and a great warrior who was appointed the Constable of Portugal. He led Portuguese independence from the Kingdom of Castile in 1385. He then retired after the death of his wife becoming a Carmelite brother. The man of war became a man of prayer. He was canonized in 2009.



Archbishop John Wilson at the UCM Pilgrimage in May

News

All the usual pilgrimages have taken place this summer. It is good to see so many pilgrims returning, singing with joy at the Shrine. We saw in a matter of a few weeks Bishop Paul Hendricks three times for the Divine Mercy Day, and the Altar Servers and Legion of Mary Pilgrimages.

For the first time the U.C.M. Pilgrimage, which is traditionally on a Tuesday, was held on a Saturday to accommodate working mothers. As usual Archbishop John Wilson led the day. He was joined by our new Auxiliary Bishop, Philip Moger. The Knights of St. Columba brought the relics of the Scottish saints St. Andrew, St. Columba and St. Margaret here and the day was led by Bishop Patrick Lynch, S.S.C.C.



Bishop Patrick Lynch with the Relics of the Scottish Saints at the KSC pilgrimage

The service for deceased fathers this year was led by the Bishop of Tonbridge, Rt. Rev. Simon Burton-Jones. We also welcomed the new Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling, Cllr. James Lark. It was

fitting that the commemoration took place in St. Joseph's Chapel, as St Joseph was the foster father of Jesus.

We welcomed overnight here seventy walking pilgrims from St. Martin-in-the-Fields. They walked from London to Canterbury raising much needed funds for the homeless.

We will remember the Summer Fayre this year for the extremely hot weather. As usual it was a lovely family day, and our visitors were entertained by a BMX Stunt Show and other performers. We are grateful to all those who helped and supported the event to ensure it was a successful and enjoyable day.

On the first Sunday in July, we had a day of celebration for the gifts of those with disabilities who are also called creative communicators. It was a delightful day with many activities in the afternoon concluding with Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul Hendricks. The day recalled St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) as she wrote about the importance of the human person.

Edith Stein was born into a German Jewish family; she became a Catholic upon reading the autobiography of St. Teresa of Jesus. A noted philosopher, she studied under Edmund Husserl. In 1934, she joined the Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Cologne. She took the religious name of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. She was sent to the Carmel in Echt, Netherlands, for safety in 1938. In 1942, she was arrested by the Nazis and taken to Auschwitz where she died in a gas chamber. She was canonized in 1997. She is one of the Patrons of Europe.

The following week saw a three-day conference about Edith Stein which focussed upon her reflections on the dignity of the human person. For her, Jesus was the creative healer who gives value to all. Those who respond to God will receive truth. For her, the human person is a free and spiritual being. The conference was organised by Cristina Gangemi who has worked in the world of pastoral care and disability. She sees Edith as a figure of inspiration for those who minister with those with disability.

July also saw the usual celebration of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel with the Third Order, some of whom made their profession during the Mass, which was celebrated by our Prior Provincial, Fr. Brendan Grady. Later in the month we had the Caribbean Pilgrimage which was marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Windrush generation.

August saw several pilgrimages but the most notable one was the Pilgrimage of the Sick when Aylesford becomes a little Lourdes. We had the Sacrament of the Sick during the Mass with a Lourdes style blessing of the sick in the afternoon. The day was led by Archbishop Kevin McDonald.

It was with joy that we heard that among the twenty-one new Cardinals created by Pope Francis one of them was Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti. When he was the Apostolic Nuncio of Britain, he came to The Friars when the relics of St. Bernadette were



Fr Francis with Cllr James Lark, Mayor of T&MBC & Mrs Jill Lark at the Summer Fayre



Statue of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross by Geoff Lucas



Cardinal Elect Claudio Gugerotti during the St Bernadette Relics celebrations, October 2022

here. Soon after his visit he was recalled to Rome as the Prefect of Dicastery of Eastern Churches.

Building work continues here at The Friars. New window frames have been installed into Lodge Farmhouse. Work on the roof of the St. John's hut has just finished. The original roof was early Victorian. It has lasted well. Steve Hayden, our Estates Manager, mentioned that the roof was insulated with horsehair. We are hoping to begin restoration of the ceramics on the Rosary Way including repairs to the Scapular Vision Shrine soon. A new project is the creation of an artisan village in what was once the old pottery buildings near the Conference Centre. It will become a centre for local arts and crafts. Thank you for your support as we would not be able to do this work without your support and generosity. We are always happy to welcome more friends to The Friars so if you know of anyone who might be interested in receiving our Newsletter, please share our details with them or they can get in touch with us to be added to our mailing list (newsletter@thefriars.org.uk).

Farewell

This is my last newsletter to you. I have served my time as Prior. Altogether I have served nine years as Prior. It has been a joy writing the newsletter to you about the life and ministry of Aylesford. Thank you to all of you for your support and love. I have enjoyed receiving your letters telling your stories about Aylesford and the Carmelites.

Fr. Michael Cox has now been appointed the Prior. Those of you in the Third Order will know him and will have read his spiritual gems that he writes as Spiritual Director to the Third Order. I know you will enjoy his letter and you will continue to give the same support to The Friars.

My God bless you, your families and everyone you love.

Francis Kemsley. O. Carm.



St John Ambulance hut, roof repairs

Forthcoming Retreats

GRIEF AND LOSS RETREAT

Friday 6th—Sunday 8th October

Elizabeth Partridge, Liz Taylor &
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: £230.00 single; £210.00 shared.

ADVENT RETREAT

Friday 8th—Sunday 10th December

Maggie Cascioli & Annemarie
Egan L.S.U.

Come Emmanuel ...reflecting on the journey to Bethlehem.

Cost: £230.00 single; £210.00 shared.

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

The Friars Summer Draw Winners 2023

*1st Prize - E. Lennon - London
2nd Prize - Mrs Bermingham - West Drayton
3rd Prize - Diane - Kent*

Congratulations and thank you
for your support.

FRIARS MONTHLY DRAW

A big thank you to all who support The Friars with the Monthly Draw (formerly 100+ Club) which raises just over £2,000 a year.

A big thank you too to Mike and Judy Collins who volunteer and run the Draw.

This year's winners were:

August 2022	Mrs A Hayden	Feb 2023	Ms M Kingman
Sept 2022	Ms M Carroll	March 2023	Ms M Reader
Oct 2022	Mrs A Hayden	April 2023	Mr M Wegg
Nov 2022	Mr A Radford	May 2023	GJ Penfold
Dec 2022	Mrs D Copland	June 2023	Mr R Dyson
Jan 2023	Mrs V Housenloy	July 2023	Mr J Housenloy

The prize is £50 each month with a special £100 in December. And renewals are paid each August. Please kindly supply your email address where possible to help with our postage costs.



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