



Dear Friends,

Since last I wrote the Shrine has received many visits from parish groups, many of which were marking the Jubilee of Hope inaugurated by the late Pope Francis. The first, St Augustine's, Hoddesdon, came with its parish priest Fr Julian Davies, who I remember visiting Aylesford some years back when he was studying for the priesthood—how time flies. The group visited on the memorial of St John Stone—one of the martyrs of the sixteenth century—perhaps conscious that St Augustine himself has been an inspirational figure for many through the centuries. St John Stone had been one such, having been an Augustinian friar—those who follow the Rule of St Augustine. Stone was an accomplished man, a Doctor of Theology and thereafter a professor. He was fairly well-known and Henry VIII's ministers sought his support for the King's claim to supremacy over the Church. Stone publicly condemned the claim from the pulpit and was arrested in December 1538 under the Treasons Act (1534). Held in prison for the best part of a year, he was hanged, drawn and quartered at Canterbury. His parting words were "Behold I close my apostolate in my blood, in my death I shall find life, for I die for a holy cause, the defense of the Church of God, infallible and immaculate." Truly an inspiring statement rooted in St John Stone's prayerfulness and courage.

I am only too well aware that since the last newsletter was written, a new pope has been elected. Perhaps inevitably when that happens, there will be many among us who try to find out as much as we can about the latest successor to St Peter. I think it fair to say that there was a degree of interest in both the Jesuits and Ignatian Spirituality upon the election of Pope Francis. Like St John Stone, Pope Leo XIV was himself an Augustinian friar and followed the Rule of St Augustine. This Rule, written c. 400AD, is one among a number in the Church and has been used to guide many souls to holiness. It is a mark of its popularity that it has been used by a range of different Orders over the centuries - canons regular, the Augustinians themselves, and the Dominican friars. The Rule of St Augustine is relatively short, being only a little over 3,000 words in length and divided into eight chapters. What is quite noticeable is that St Augustine mentions 'love' eleven times and mostly in connection with the relationship between the members of the community and those who are elected to exercise authority: 'Your superiors, for their part, must think



Frs Richard Copsey, Michael Cox, Julian Davies & M.V. Joy



Pope Leo XIV

themselves fortunate not because they rule in virtue of their office, but because they serve in love' (Rule, n. 46). As the friar who at one time was Prior Provincial in his native United States (1998-2001) and Prior General of the whole Augustinian Order (2001-2013), this would have particular significance for Pope Leo. Understandably, he has a preference for quoting Augustine and has done so a number of times since he became pope; perhaps the most memorable of which is the following, in which the saint acknowledges that only God can satisfy the deepest longings of the human person: 'You made us for yourself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in you' (*Confessions*, Bk I, Ch. 1).

Over the centuries many different people have lived at Aylesford and the buildings have been modified in response to changing fashions and to accommodate the different requirements of the residents. The adaptations of Sir John Banks are among the most noticeable. The lead drainpipes with their hoppers decorated with the date of installation (1677) are a fine feature invariably pointed out to visitors, as they are among the few things from the Stuart Restoration Era that survived the fire in 1930. Visitors had more to see this year when an enterprising pair of jackdaws decided to nest in one of the hoppers. Fiercely territorial and defensive of their eggs, they swooped down on anyone foolish enough to venture too close.

The annual pilgrimage of the Union of Catholic Mothers was held on 24th May. The preacher, Fr Doug Bull, who is the Spiritual Advisor for the Southwark Conference of the UCM, took as his theme the opening line of the Magnificat—Mary's hymn of praise (Luke 1:46-55). The familiar translation 'my soul magnifies the Lord...' could give the impression that Mary is somehow adding to God's glory, however, this is not the case: She is highlighting what the Lord has done and personally adding to the testimony of Israel to his mighty deeds over countless generations. In his homily Fr Doug used the magnifying glass as a useful metaphor. It can be used to focus the light and heat of the sun to burn materials. In a similar fashion, we are called upon to inflame others with zeal for the Lord and his gospel, just as surely as Mary herself did for St Elizabeth, the Apostles, and continues to do for us as members of the Church.

On the last Saturday in May we hosted the eighth National Syro-Malabar pilgrimage. The piazza in front of the shrine was awash colour with silk parasols, silver bunting and an eye-catching floral arch. The local Syro-Malabar community dedicates two days to preparing the Shrine and the grounds for the Mass and Marian procession. The estimated attendance was 3,500 people, gathered from across the UK, with eighteen priests and their bishop, Mar Joseph Srampickal.

The Archdiocese of Southwark chose the 7th June, which this year was the Vigil of Pentecost, as the centre-piece event of the 2025 Jubilee. In fact, it was a threefold jubilee. Not only was it a way for the Archdiocese to celebrate the Jubilee of Hope but also to mark 175th anniversary of the establishment of the Southwark



The two enterprising Jackdaws



Syro-Malabar Pilgrimage Rosary Procession

Diocese by Pope Pius IX in September 1850, but it also marked the 60th anniversary of Southwark becoming a Metropolitan Archdiocese, and the appointment of Archbishop Cyril Cowderoy as the first Archbishop in May 1965. Approximately 3,500 people gathered for a day of prayer, reflection and celebration with Archbishop John Wilson. The following day we welcomed a more modest crowd for the Italian pilgrimage. The pilgrimage organizer Mr Vincenzo Giannotta is well-known to Aylesford, having brought groups from London for decades. Three weeks later the Knights of Saint Columba, Southwark (Province 12) held their annual pilgrimage and Investiture ceremony on the Solemnity of SS Peter and Paul. Canon Victor Darlington, the Episcopal Vicar for the South East Area, presided.

Carmelite News

On 23rd June we welcomed Br Paul Niralakanta Nayak, O.Carm. to stay with us for a month. Paul is from the General Delegation of St Thérèse and St Albert, Kerala and is currently studying theology in St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth. He has been with our Irish brethren for a few years along with half a dozen other young Carmelites, most of whom are from Brazil. Please pray for all our Carmelite students. We also had brief visits in July from Fr Mike Joyce, O.Carm., the vocations director for the Pure Heart of Mary Province, USA, and Fr Jimmy Nyangadi, O.Carm., a Zimbabwean friar currently working in Dublin. Visits from friars from other provinces reminds us that Carmel is a global family. The highlight of the year was the ordination of Fr Richard Green, O.Carm. by Bishop Paul Hendricks. Richard was joined by friars from across the UK as well as by family and friends. We were delighted that the Irish Provincial, Fr Simon Nolan, O.Carm., was able to be with us on that day. Please pray for Richard as he begins his new ministry as part of our community in the Newcastle suburbs.

On Sunday 13th 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 also had the pleasure of welcoming Rose-Marie Hedley into the Third Order (Brighton & Hove Chapter) and also celebrating the First Professions of Tracey Stickland (Brighton & Hove Chapter) and Catherine Harris (Leigh-on-Sea Chapter), and the Final Profession of John Thérèse Barton (Leigh-on-Sea Chapter). There are deep and long-lasting ties between the Third Order and the friars but we are mindful that there are many other people who also self-identify as 'Carmelite'; sometimes these are individuals with a devotion to Our lady of Mount Carmel or the Carmelite saints—often they wear the brown scapular. There are also groups with a very clear structure and set of aims. One such group held a retreat here on the weekend of 18th-20th July. The Guild of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was founded in Zimbabwe by the Carmelite bishop, Rt Rev. Donal Lamont, in 1954. The Guild has a small but committed membership in the UK.



Friars gather with the newly ordained Fr Richard Green



Carmelites celebrate the patronal feast

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. Among the many attractions this year we had a stunt show from 'Dangerous Steve'. I joked with our Estates Manager, Mr Steve Hayden, that in contrast to the performer, he was "Health & Safety Steve". 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. I am pleased to announce that, after expenses, the fayre raised £18,479.33; this is up on previous years (£16,468.48 in 2024 and £15,413.72 in 2023). It is very welcome news as our overheads are likely to increase rather than decrease in the coming year.

I take this opportunity to remind and reassure all our supporters that each day the Carmelite community prays for all who have visited the shrine and those who have commended themselves to our prayers. 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



**"Dangerous Steve"
Stunt Show**

SUMMER DRAW WINNERS 2025

1st Prize £500 R. Vickerstaff 2nd Prize £250 Sr. Frances Hayes 3rd Prize £125 R. Sawyer

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 to our volunteers Mike and Judy Collins who run the Draw.

This year's winners were:

August 2024	E. Seath	Feb 2025	P. Gallagher
Sept 2024	H. Zallo	March 2025	V. Housenloy
Oct 2024	D. Grace	April 2025	B. Lawlor
Nov 2024	E. Allies	May 2025	A. Pass
Dec 2024	A. Cripps	June 2025	S. Ganer
Jan 2025	J. Weatherly	July 2025	D. Goodbody

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

GRIEF AND LOSS RETREAT

Friday 10th—Sunday 12th October

Barbara Salamonczyk, Liz Taylor
& Fr. Ged Walsh O. Carm.

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

Cost: £260.00 single; £230.00 shared.

For more information please call Reception 01622 717272.



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