



# ***Pilgrims' Newsletter*** ***Aylesford***

## ***Winter 2022***



Dear Pilgrims,

When I look back upon events this autumn they will be dominated by thoughts of queues. Queues for the relics of St. Bernadette that were here last week and in the country for the two-month tour that has been described as “*Lourdes coming to Britain*”. But also, the half million who queued to pay their respects to our late Queen in Westminster Hall and Edinburgh Cathedral.

### **Queen Elizabeth II**

I thought it was appropriate that a woman of great faith should die on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady. Much has been written of her service and dedication. We had a simple service here on the day of her funeral and Fr. Michael led the beautiful singing of “*God save the King.*”

### **The Relics of St. Bernadette**

The visit of the relics of St Bernadette was a memorable occasion that will remain in our hearts for many years to come. During the five days that they were here we were joined by large crowds every day. There was an evening Mass every day. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday these were followed by a torchlight procession around the Rosary Way singing hymns to Our Lady and praying the Rosary. The Mass on Tuesday was presided by Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, Apostolic Nuncio to Britain. On Wednesday, our local bishop, Bishop Paul Hendricks presided. We owe a great debt to our many volunteers who gave up so much of their time to support our pilgrims. The Society of Our Lady of Lourdes was here all week providing a helpful presence as was the Westminster Diocese for the Deaf. BBC Southeast was here on Tuesday and produced a beautiful report on the first full day. We have received a number of letters since as people found the visit of the relics a profound and moving occasion.

### **News**

At the beginning of July, we welcomed Carlito Da Silva, a Carmelite from East Timor, he came to the province to improve his English. He has moved to our new Community in Reading where there is a



**Fr Francis with St Bernadette's Relics**



**Torchlight Procession during the St Bernadette's Relics Tour**



**Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti with Pilgrims at the Torchlight Procession**



**Fr Ged at Mass welcoming the  
Relics of St Bernadette**



**Members of the Community with  
Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti  
Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain**



**Matt Janvier's First Profession with  
Fr Brendan, Prior Provincial**



**Carmelite Community at First Profession**

good Language School. At the same time we said goodbye to both Fr. Brendan Grady and Bro. Tony O'Donnell who are now members of the Community in Reading. It will be a centre of Carmelite Formation where students will have the opportunity to study either in Oxford or London.

September 3<sup>rd</sup> saw the first profession of Matt Janvier. Matt has just completed his one year novitiate in Salamanca. You may remember he spent a year here doing his pre-novitiate. As well as being a primary school teacher he is remarkable Icon writer. It was good to welcome his family from Sheffield and his many friends. He is now studying in Blackfriars, Oxford, living in Reading.

Work on the regilding and restoration of the statue of Our Lady was completed just before the visit of the relics of St Bernadette. The statue looked as bright and gleaming as it did sixty years ago when it was first erected. The Pilgrimage of the Sick took place on 14<sup>th</sup> August. We were able to have the Sacrament of the Sick this year for the first time in three years. Despite the extremely hot weather it was good to welcome so many people here. The day was led by Bishop Tom Burns SM. All the regular pilgrimages have returned: Divine Mercy, Caribbean, Tamils, Kerala, Polish, Goan, Filipino, Polish Scouts and Guides. The Little Flower Pilgrimage as usual was led by our Prior General Fr Miceál O'Neill who came over from Rome.

This autumn Archbishop John Wilson visited us on two occasions. The first was during the middle of September for the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership where over one thousand pupils came for Mass. A few weeks later he came to spend the day with the permanent Deacons and their wives.

Work at present is being undertaken on a new boiler in the New Block. Our many guests should be nice and warm this winter.

### **A Recent Letter**

Recently I received a letter from Brenda Harris who wrote of her visits to The Friars when she was a student in 1953. She wrote: "*I very much miss my frequent visits to Aylesford. They began in 1953 when I was at Maria Assumpta Training College in Kensington Square and Mother Isabel organised a coach trip. We were thrilled to meet Fr. Malachy and to learn all the history. I enclose a postcard purchased on that day.*" I am amazed that people still remember their visits to Aylesford with such fondness so many years later.

### **Advent and St. John Baptist**

Soon it will be Advent. This liturgical season has been described as a joyful time to prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus. When we go to the crib we are going in spirit to Bethlehem. The baby we encounter in all its innocence is God taking on our flesh, blood, hopes and dreams.

Before we go to the crib, we have Advent. One of the powerful figures of this season is St. John the Baptist. We hear of him on the



Second and Third Sundays of Advent. 2022 is the year, Matthew. So, on the Second Sunday we go to the third chapter of Matthew (1-12). In this chapter Matthew introduces John the Baptism to us.

He preaches in the solitude and silence of the wilderness. His message is simple: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.”* Matthew sees Jesus as the fulfilment of the prophet Isaiah: *“A voice cries in the wilderness.”* This is an important passage of scripture for us to understand John, as it is one of the few passages that is quoted in all four Gospels. It is ironic that for the nine months John was in his mother’s womb his father was voiceless. His father regained his voice when John was given *his* name by his father, following the instructions of the angel at the Annunciation of his birth.

The message of John is to repent. This Advent let us go into our wilderness to reflect on our relationships with God, our neighbour and ourselves.

On the Third Sunday of Advent, we hear a story about John the Baptist in Matthew’s Gospel. John is now in prison; his days are numbered but he has some doubts about Jesus. John had introduced Jesus to the people as the Messiah, but little is happening. The reply John receives from Jesus were quotes from the prophet Isaiah regarding the reign of the Messiah. Jesus tells messengers from John: *“Go and tell John what you hear and see, the blind receives their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me” (Mt.11: 4-6).* The reign of God was coming to birth but not necessarily the way John had expected but as a man of faith, steeped in the scriptures he would fully understand the reply.

As we ponder and reflect upon the scriptures this Advent may God speak to us through the Word of God and may we see the face of God in the image of the infant Jesus in the Crib. We too by our faith and love can build up the Kingdom of God. Sustained by the Eucharistic and the Word of God we can listen to those words of Isaiah. The Kingdom of God is not built upon blood and violence but upon healing and love. By our lives may we reveal the love and healing of the Kingdom.

### The Immaculate Conception

This year the celebration of the Immaculate Conception will have special poignancy after the visit of the relics of St. Bernadette to Aylesford.

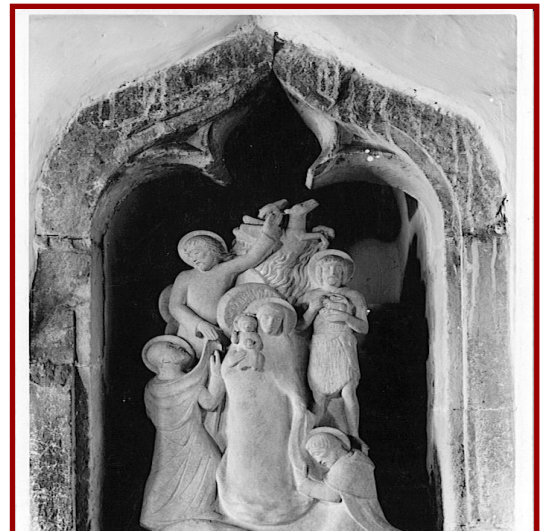
The highlight for Bernadette came in 1862 when the church officially accepted that the apparitions were authentic and that a church would be built near the grotto. Lourdes is about Mary and not Bernadette. Her parish priest asked when the apparitions were taking place for the name of the lady. Eventually the lady said she



Kent Catholic Schools’ Partnership



Archbishop John Wilson with the Deacons of Southwark Diocese



The Friars Postcard (1953 ) Statue of Elijah the Prophet of Mount Carmel by Philip Lindsey Clark (in the Prior’s Hall)



Fr. Míceál and Pilgrims at the Little Flower Pilgrimage

was “the Immaculate Conception.” Many began to believe that the apparitions were authentic as “no illiterate uneducated girl” could have that knowledge. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had only been 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.

When we see Mary in the Crib this year beside the baby Jesus, we see a woman of courage and faith who treasured the events of life in her heart. May we who see her beauty and strength be inspired to follow in her footsteps. When we ponder upon our life, perhaps we need to remember that for Mary the cross is not too far from the Crib. However, her faith led her to become the pattern of prayer for the early church as they were waiting with hope and expectation for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for your love and support of our ministry here at Aylesford. Please be aware of the prayers of the Carmelite Community here for all you love and all who are dear to you.

May the peace and love of God reign in your hearts this Christmas.

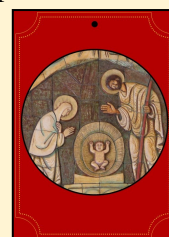
*Francis Kemley. O. Carm.*  
Prior.



Christmas Prayer Tree in the  
Choir Chapel

### *The Friars Christmas Prayer Tree*

If you would like a decoration placed on our Christmas Prayer tree, please write the name(s) of your loved one(s) or special intention on the back of the enclosed decoration and return it to The Friars with a donation. The Prayer Tree will be on display in the Choir Chapel and your loved one(s) will be especially prayed for by the Carmelite Community throughout the Christmas season.



### *The Book of Friends*

*The Book of Friends is a special book currently displayed in the Carmelite Saints Chapel. For a minimum donation of £75 you may commemorate a loved one. It can be for a happy event such as a birthday or a wedding anniversary, as well as an anniversary of a death. You will be able to see your entry each year on the appropriate date. All those entered in the books will be remembered at special Masses to be offered each year in May and November. For further information or an entry form please write to the Prior’s PA or email [cabbotson@thefriars.org.uk](mailto:cabbotson@thefriars.org.uk).*



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