



# Pilgrims' Newsletter



## Spring 2022

Dear Friends,

Archbishop John Wilson sends every priest in the Southwark Diocese, a prayer card on the anniversary of their ordination. It is a picture of the West Window of St. George's Cathedral, Southwark. The original Pugin Cathedral was rebuilt in the 1950s after it was bombed in 1941. Part of the rebuilding of the Cathedral included this very striking West Window. It is an image of the Coronation of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven. For me it is of interest because one of the saints depicted is St. Simon Stock. The window came from the Harry Clarke Studio, Ireland. Richard King, who is responsible for the splendid windows in the Shrine of St. Jude, Faversham and in Carmelite Churches in Wales and Dublin, was a student there. Our architect, Jonathan Louth, spoke beautifully last year of his involvement in the restoration of the window in a lecture for the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and Painters of Glass.

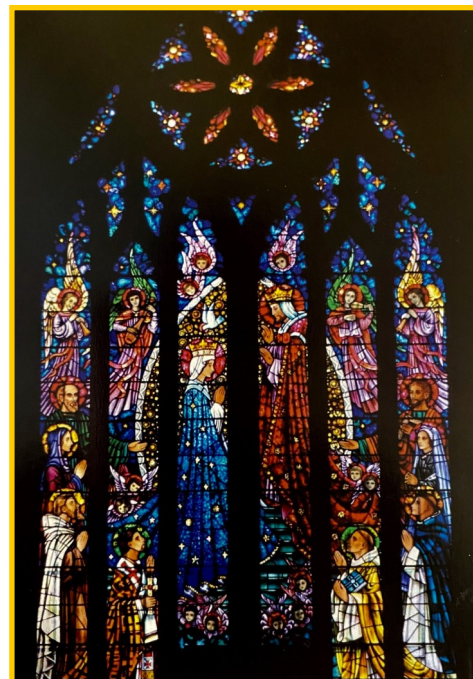
### Some Old Pictures

Last year, on the day of the Polish Scouts and Guides Pilgrimage, one of the senior Polish Girl Guides, Malgorzata Zajackowska, showed me some old black and white pictures of past Polish Pilgrimages going back to the 1950s. The following day she sent me a lot more with a letter: *"I am sending you a collection of photos from two years, probably 1955 and 1956. One is from a Polish students' pilgrimage and the other from the general Polish one. I had been coming with my father to meet up with Fr. Malachy Lynch before any of the pilgrimages started. I don't know why and what was my dad's connection with him or Aylesford. We came to Aylesford station and then walked. In those days hardly anyone had a camera, so we didn't have many photos. But I think these are quite interesting, even those from the car park with the old buses."*

### Lent – the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Luke

Most of us do not look forward to Lent as it is a time of penance and abstinence. When Ash Wednesday arrives, I long for the night we celebrate Easter, but we must have Lent and the passion before we celebrate the Easter Vigil. This year our Sunday readings for the first and second Sundays in Lent come from the Gospel of Luke. Every year we begin our Sunday readings with the account of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Luke tells us that *"Jesus was full of the Spirit"* (Lk 4: 1). A little later we read that *"Jesus was led by the spirit for forty days in the wilderness"* (Lk 4: 2). This double reference to the Holy Spirit is a reminder of the importance of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Luke.

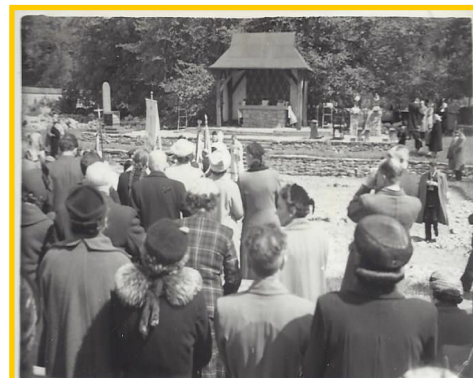
Luke shows more interest in the Spirit than any other biblical writer. The Holy Spirit is mentioned by the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation (Lk 1:35); Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit at the Visitation (Lk 1:41); a little later at the baptism of Jesus (3:21-22); twice in the temptation (4:1-2) and at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth (4:18). There Luke pictures Jesus as the spirit-filled prophet. Luke sees the Spirit as the activity and presence of God. Those who follow Jesus experience the Spirit. Like Jesus may we go into the desert



West Window of St. George's Cathedral



Car park with the old buses in the 1950s



Original Outdoor Shrine in the early 1950s





Heart of Kent Hospice - Light up a Life



Procession past the Gatehouse in the 1950s



Mass on Main Shrine in the 1950s



Sacred Heart of Jesus by Michael Clark

this Lent aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit. May we too be not afraid but rather overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit.

### The Passion of Jesus in Luke's Gospel

The Gospel of Luke has been described as the Gospel of Mercy. We see this clearly in his account of the passion. Two criminals are crucified with Jesus. One mocks Jesus but the other rebukes his fellow criminal. Then he says to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (23:42). Jesus tells him that, "*Today you will be in paradise* (23:43)." Who would we be in this scene? Would we be one of the criminals, or one of the soldiers, or one of the bystanders?

The death of Jesus is very dramatic with the sun being eclipsed and the temple veil splitting. Jesus dies with the words of Ps. 31, "*Into your hands I commend my spirit.*" The captain of the guard who is a witness to the passion makes a great act of faith with his exclamation, "*Truly this was a just man.*" May we too come this year to the passion of Jesus with the eyes of faith.

### The Resurrection

The Gospels do not record the actual resurrection of Jesus as it was beyond words. Instead, we have accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb. For all four Gospels the resurrection is the pinnacle of their account of the life and ministry of Jesus. All the Gospels agree that the first witnesses to the empty tomb were women though their names differ in the Gospels. They all, however, agree that Mary Magdalene was one of the witnesses. In John's Gospel Mary is the first to encounter the resurrected Jesus.

In the different accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, he is not at first recognised by his disciples, but he invites them to eat with him and touch his wounds. On the second Sunday of Easter, we have the Gospel from John, about doubting Thomas. This story reminds us that even one of the disciples who had witnessed the preaching and miracles of Jesus could not at first accept and believe in the resurrection. When Thomas met the resurrected Jesus he confesses, "*My Lord and my God*" (Jn. 20: 28). Jesus has left us with the blessing, "*Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe*" (Jn.20:29). After reading the Gospel accounts of the passion, death, and resurrection we are encouraged to make the acclamation of Thomas ours, "*My Lord and my God.*"

### Pentecost

During the Easter season we hear from the second Book of Luke, namely the Acts of the Apostles. This Book has been described as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of the promise of the Father to the followers of Jesus. At the Ascension Jesus promised the Holy Spirit as his parting gift to his disciples (1k 24:29). The Spirit came upon the disciples in the upper room (Acts 2: 1-4). They experience the Spirit with wind, fire, and the gift of tongues. The humble and timid disciples that we saw in the Gospels are transformed by the Holy Spirit. For Luke the empowerment of the Spirit is for mission. The key moment in the ministry of Jesus is his resurrection but for his followers it was the coming and experience of the Holy Spirit that commissions them for mission. We too received the Holy Spirit at our baptism and at our confirmation. Therefore, we proclaim Christ in our lives and that is our mission.

### Mary and the Holy Spirit

We are familiar with the depiction of the Holy Spirit coming down upon Mary and the disciples. There was, however, a much larger group of people including family members, disciples and the women who discovered the empty tomb. Together they could tell the complete story of Jesus from his conception, his childhood, his public ministry, his passion, his death, and his resurrection.



The late Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens described Mary as being “*the first Charismatic, the first to be fully Christian.*” Later the Cardinal wrote, “*She was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation; at Pentecost she was overshadowed as the first representative of the church in a very special way.*” At Pentecost one of the prayers of the Mass describes Mary as “*a pattern of prayer*”. Mary accepted the Holy Spirit at Nazareth and waited with hope and expectation for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon disciples in the Upper Room. Mary is a silent witness at the heart of the praying church waiting with hope for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Mary is a sign of the church in its perfection. She is a reminder of how God would like the church to be. When we see a holy person, it is Christ living in them and through their holiness we see the face of God. May we like Mary allow God to be God in our lives. Then the beauty of God will shine in our hearts.

### Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Gospel this year for the Sacred Heart also comes from Luke. It is not the passion but rather one of the three famous parables about those who are lost. In the parable the lost sheep is being sought after by the shepherd who cares and loves all his sheep. However, he leaves the flock of sheep to find the one who is lost. The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu in one of his homilies said that the lost sheep may well have been an old and haggard sheep, but the shepherd felt compassion for it. This is a powerful image of the love and mercy of God that is so appropriate for our reflection on the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

### Titus Brandsma

At the end of November, we heard that Bl. Titus Brandsma will soon be declared a saint by Pope Francis. Titus Brandsma was a Dutch Carmelite who was a professor of philosophy and rector of Nijmegen University. He was appointed by the Dutch bishops to coordinate the response of the Catholic Press to Nazi propaganda but was arrested and sent to Dachau where he was killed by a lethal injection in 1942.

He visited Ireland in the 1930s to improve his English on his way to a lecture tour in America. When I was a student in Ireland about thirty years ago there were a few older Carmelites who remembered him. One was an altar server in Whitefriars, Dublin the other was a novice in Kinsale. Both remembered him not only for his prayerfulness but for his humour and that he liked to smoke cigars. There is a beautiful image of him in ceramic in the Carmelite Saints Chapel by Adam Kossowski.

### News

On the Feast of St. Teresa, Archbishop John Wilson came for a day with the religious of the diocese. The Archbishop spoke about the need to prepare for the Synod in Rome in 2023.

In early November we welcomed members of the Third Order who came for their Ninth National Gathering and for their elections. The same weekend Archbishop John came for a day with the Deacons of the Diocese. He was assisted by three new Deacons who were ordained the night before in the Cathedral. During the mass three candidates received the *ministry of reader* which is part of the journey to become Deacons.

After our Provincial Chapter there were some changes to our Community. Sadly, we said goodbye to Bro. Paul de Groot who has been appointed the Shrine Chaplain at St. Jude Shrine, Faversham. We welcomed about the same time Fr. Brendan Grady who was elected the Provincial at the chapter. Some of you will remember him when he was the Prior here until 2014. Bro. Tony O'Donnell has also moved from Faversham. Many of you will remember him as he has spent many years here in the past as part of the Community.



Titus Brandsma who is to become a Saint later this year



Archbishop John Wilson with the new Deacons of the Diocese



Fr. Francis with Cllr. Sue Bell, Deputy Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling and Father Christmas. Taken by James Ireland, Photographer at the Christmas Fayre

We had our first Christmas Fayre here in two years. Despite the weather it was a great success. It was lovely seeing the faces of the young children after they had visited Father Christmas' Grotto. Thank you to all our staff and helpers for their support and generosity.

The following week saw the Ecumenical Advent Service with St. Peter's Church, Aylesford. Our choir here at Aylesford enjoy singing alongside the choir of St. Peter's. The service consists of Scripture and Advent Carols reflecting on prophets, John the Baptist, and Mary who all had a role in the Advent Story. Two days later we had the Light Up a Life Service with the local Hospice, the Heart of Kent. I am always amazed to see several hundred people sitting outside on a winter's afternoon. The service was led by a good friend of The Friars, the Dean of Rochester Cathedral, the Very Rev. Philip Hesketh. The following Friday saw the Christmas Carol Service with the Medway Brass Band. It was a joyful evening appreciated by all who came.

It was a pleasant surprise to see so many people who came for Mass on both Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day. For the second year we did not have a midnight mass due to Covid. We must ensure that the chapel is well ventilated with both the doors and windows open so it can be rather cold. Though it would be cold on a December evening it would be even colder at midnight, so we had the First Mass of Christmas at 5pm. It is hoped that during this time of pandemic The Friars will be a safe and prayerful place for all our pilgrims and visitors. As usual there was a good crowd for Mass on New Year's Day. This year the weather was unusually warm for early January.

The second stage of the restoration of the Shrine has now begun. This involves more work on the chapel roofs and drainage. We can clearly see the difference in the Shrine where work has been completed. Though we have received a Government Grant we still have to provide £80,000. We would not be able to do this work without your generosity and support. This year sees the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Fr Malachy who spoke of "courage to build anew". I am hoping that in the spring the Shrine will be painted as it is sixteen years since it was last decorated. The Shrine and side tribunes are looking rather dilapidated and sad. We need to raise about £30,000 to finance this project and I am appealing for your support. The restoration of the Shrine is essential in providing a safe and prayerful oasis for all who come here for whatever reason.

Please be assured of the prayers of the Carmelite Community here at Aylesford. We remember all our pilgrims and friends twice daily in our prayers.

May God bless you and all you love.

*Francis Kemsley. O. Carm.*

Prior



Ongoing roof repairs to the chapels

### Retreats at The Friars

#### GRIEF AND LOSS RETREAT

**Friday 18th—Sunday 20th March**

*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.

#### EASTER TRIDUUM RETREAT

**Thursday 14th —Sunday 17th April**

*Maggie Cascioli & Richard Green O Carm*

The retreat will be a prayerful reflection on the passion and resurrection of Jesus through the scriptures and the Liturgy.

Cost: £290.00 single; £265.00 shared.

*For more information or to book please call 01622 717272.*

### Easter Lily Dedications

As we do every year, the chapels at Aylesford will be adorned with lilies throughout the Easter season. Many of our friends like to dedicate one of the lilies for themselves, a friend, a relative or a loved one who has died. The names of all the lily dedications are recorded and displayed in a book in the Carmelite Saints Chapel during the Easter season.



If you would like to do this, please fill in the name of the person for whom each lily is dedicated on the Intentions Leaflet. The suggested donation for each lily is £4. The lilies will be refreshed regularly and extra monies raised from the dedications will go towards various chapel costs at The Friars such as flower displays at other services.



**The Friars**  
**Christmas Draw Winners 2021**

*Congratulations to*

1st Prize £500 - C. Lloyd

2nd Prize £250 - Ms E Predergast

3rd Prize—£125 - E. Simpson

*Thank you for all of your kind support*

#### Summer Draw:

The Summer Draw is taking place on the 26th June this year.

We have enclosed draw tickets with this Spring Newsletter. Please support The Friars if you can.



The Friars, AYLESFORD, Kent ME20 7BX Tel: 01622 717272  
email: [newsletter@thefriars.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@thefriars.org.uk) web: [www.thefriars.org.uk](http://www.thefriars.org.uk)

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