



Pilgrims' Newsletter

Summer 2023

Dear Friends,

Icon of Peace

Last Christmas I received a gift of a book by Archbishop Justin Welby called “*The Power of Reconciliation*”. The Archbishop mentions a simple icon of Mary and Jesus that gave hope and consolation to the people of war-torn Stalingrad in 1942.

The Archbishop describes the icon as: “*The woman circles the baby in a shawl, enveloping them both. Both faces are barely visible. Her arms and body are circling not of fear and despair but of love and faith. Were it not for the arms of the mother, the child would be exposed, vulnerable, condemned to die by weather cruelty. She puts her body between him and the world.*”

This simple icon of Mary and Jesus was pinned to a mud wall outside a dug-out but remains a powerful presence of God during the darkest moments of war and conflict. There are copies of the icon in the Cathedrals of Berlin and Coventry.

Mother of Sorrows

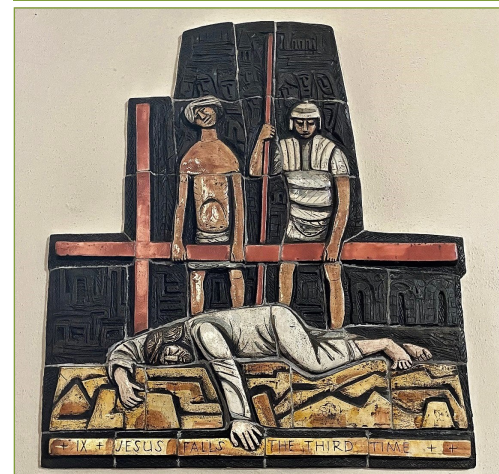
We honour Mary with many titles but perhaps one of the most poignant is that of Our Lady of Sorrows. We are reminded that Mary could not be more involved in the passion and death of Jesus as she stood at the foot of the cross. One of the most powerful pieces of Christian art is that Michelangelo’s *Pieta*. It is of Mary holding the corpse of her son Jesus whose body has just been taken down from the cross. It stands near the entrance of St. Peter’s, Rome.

It is common in Italy and elsewhere in the continent to have processions of Our Lady of Sorrows with Mary holding the corpse of her son around Good Friday. Kossowski depicts Mary holding the arm of her deceased son in the thirteenth Station of the Cross in the Relic Chapel here at Aylesford. It is his *Pieta*.

In the Gospel for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel from John we read about the mother of Jesus standing at the foot of the cross with the beloved disciple. She is the mother of all believers. Due to this simple act, she becomes the mother of the church.

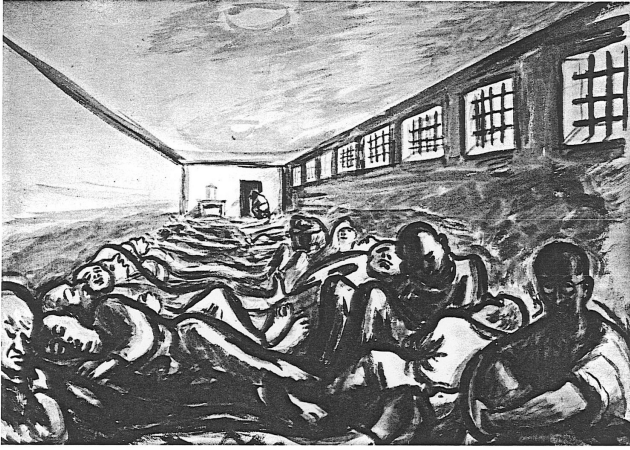


Our Lady of Stalingrad



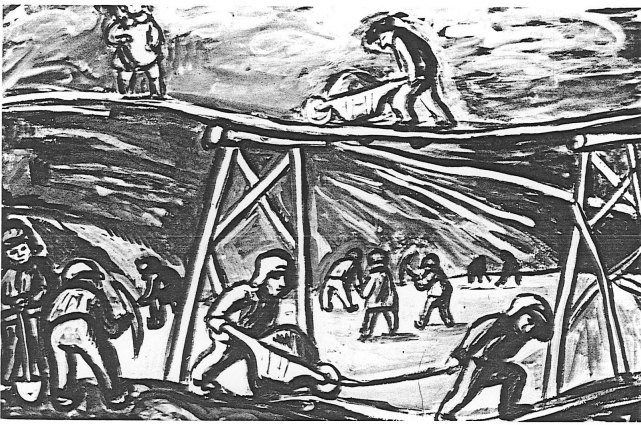
The 9th and the 13th Stations of the Cross
by Adam Kossowski





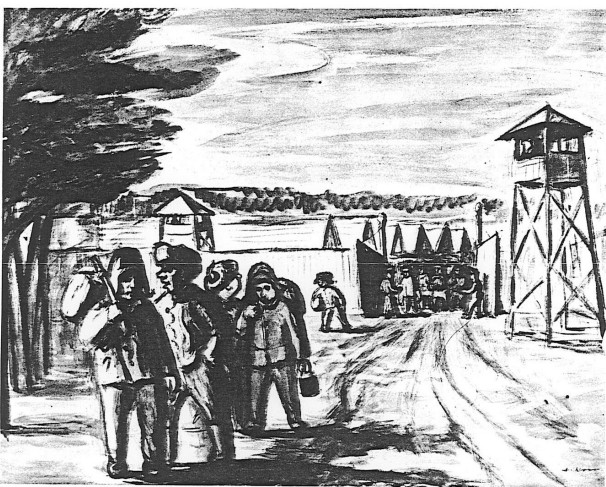
Long prison cell in Kharkov, 1940.

Artwork by Adam Kossowski



Work on the railway line.

Artwork by Adam Kossowski



Free at last. On the way to Kotlos, October, 1941.

Artwork by Adam Kossowski

The encounter that Mary had with Simeon in the temple is seen as a prediction of the passion, that a sword would pierce her heart. Some have seen this event as a second annunciation as Simeon predicts that Mary's motherhood would lead her to the pain and suffering of the cross. Her union with her child would be a communion of suffering and sorrow. She witnesses his terrible death and the rejection of his messiahship by his people.

There is the powerful hymn to the Mother of Sorrow, the Stabat Mater – “*At the cross her station keeping stood the mournful mother weeping...*” At times of suffering may Mary who stood at the foot of the cross support us in our weakness. We are not alone in the darkest moments of our lives as the sorrowful mother is with us, with her consoling presence as she was with Jesus at the foot of the cross. It is fitting that we commemorate Mary as the Queen of Martyrs.

A Polish Soldier's Journey

At Aylesford we have the fine Stations of the Cross by Adam Kossowski. I feel he has made these stations so graphic because he experienced pain and suffering in his own life.

Kossowski studied art in Poland between the two wars. First in Warsaw Polytechnic and later at Krakow Academy of Art. He undertook several notable commissions including the restoration of Krakow Castle and decorated the hall of the new Warsaw Central Train Station. He also spent time in Italy studying the mosaics which would later prepare him as a great ceramic artist.

In 1939, on his way to join the Polish army, he was arrested by invading Russian soldiers in Eastern Poland and promptly deported to Russia. There he was sent to the notorious labour camp at Gulag Archipelago, Siberia. He was put to work on building a railway line to Vorkuta. He remained there for three years. His deep Christian faith supported him, and he took hope in the words of Psalm 91. “You who live in the shelter of the Most High... will say to the Lord my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust”. He vowed that he would dedicate his life as an artist to the Church if he survived. He was eventually released in 1942 with the Polish and Russian agreement after Germany invaded Russia.

After travelling with the Polish army to the Middle East and

later to Italy, he eventually arrived in London where he worked for the remainder of the war for the Polish Ministry of Information.

After the war he was free to resume his artistic career. He joined the Catholic Guild of Artists. He was invited by the Chair, Philip Lindsay Clark, to meet Fr. Malachy, Prior of the newly restored Aylesford Priory. Adam's first commission was the series of seven paintings of the history of the Carmelites at Aylesford.

Already Fr. Malachy was thinking of Aylesford being a place of pilgrimage as he asked Kossowski to create what is now the Rosary Way. As these would be outside ceramics, Adam was reluctant as he did not have the experience but Fr. Malachy replied, "*I am sure Our Lady has sent you for that purpose.*"

Kossowski continued to work here for the next twenty years.

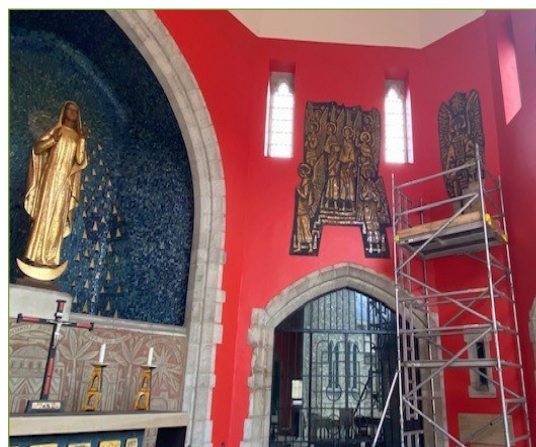
At his funeral in 1987, Fr. Edward Maguire said: "From clay and fire he forged a vision of the past, present and future to lift up and inspire countless others." His story is a living reminder that even from the darkest moments, our life can lead us to a path of light and creativity.

Little Flower Society

Some of you will be aware of a charity run by the General Counsel of the Carmelites called the Little Flower Society dedicated to St. Thérèse. Its purpose was to raise funds for the Carmelite Missions but, for various reasons, the Trustees had come to a painful but necessary decision to close the operations of the Society as of 31st December 2022. The charity has suggested to donors that they now support the work of Aylesford and St. Jude, Faversham. In March, we began a monthly Mass for all those who wish to pray for the intercession of St. Thérèse. The Carmelite Community here at Aylesford regularly gives donations to our Provincial Council who support our Carmelite missions. The Carmelite Community will remember in our prayers all who support the ministry of the Little Flower and our many other friends.

News

As you know, the restoration of the Shrine is coming to an end. One of the last jobs that was completed was a repair to the Archangel Michael on the Main Shrine. This was undertaken by our resident potters, Billy, and Alan. The original ceramic has been repaired with great skill and is as good as new. There are some more repairs to the original ceramics required along the



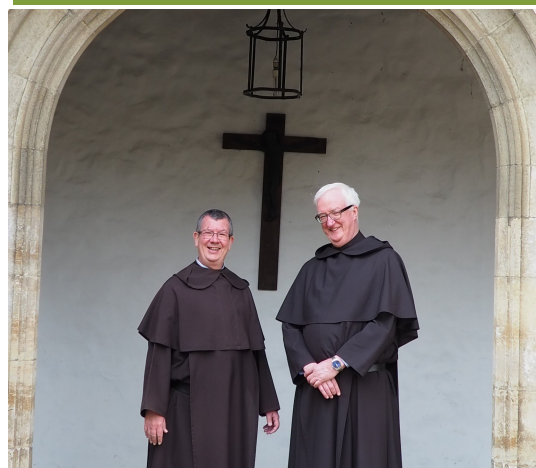
Repairs to the Archangel Michael ceramic on the Main Shrine



Fr. Michael Cox blessing the Icon of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and the Carmelite Saints



Fr. Míceál O'Neill with Rosie Bradshaw and the Travelling Pilgrims' Icon



Fr. Brendan Grady, Prior Provincial and Fr. Míceál O'Neill, Prior General

Rosary Way that hopefully will take place this year. We would not be able to undertake this work without your support. If you would like to make a donation specifically for restoration of the Shrine, then please kindly mark your donation as “restoration” so it is clear what you would like your donation to be used for.

We had a truly blessed Easter, and it was good to see so many people here for the ceremonies. We washed the feet on Maundy Thursday, processed the Cross on Good Friday and began our Easter Vigil in darkness with the blessing of the fire and the Easter Candle. The Relic Chapel was full for the Easter Sunday Masses.

Just after Easter we had the second part of our Chapter. We gather every three years to reflect on our ministry and service. We were joined by our Prior General, Fr. Míceál O'Neill, and our Councillor General for Europe, Fr. Richard Byrne. We have elected our leadership team for the next three years. Fr Brendan Grady will continue as Prior Provincial for another three years. There may be some changes here in the next few months. During the Chapter, Fr Michael Cox, National Chaplain to the Third Order, blessed a 'Travelling Pilgrims' Icon of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and the Carmelite Saints. It was written by Rosie Bradshaw, the National Moderator of the Carmelite Third Order. At the end of the Chapter, Rosie was blessed by Fr. Míceál, the Prior General; she intends to visit different Third Order Chapters and speak about Carmelite spirituality.

Our Summer Fayre takes place on Sunday 25th June. If you can come along and enjoy the fun it would be good to see you. Mass will be at 5pm.

Thank you for your support and generosity. Please be assured of the daily prayers of the Carmelite Community. May our loving God bless you and all you love.

Francis Kemsley. O. Carm.
Prior.



The Cross in the sunshine at the Good Friday Mass



Upcoming Retreat - SUMMER SILENCE

Monday 14th—Friday 18th August

Felicity Young OSM & Francis Kemsley O.Carm

A time to listen to the voice of God in silence. This is a personally guided retreat which involves a daily meeting with a director who has experience in spiritual accompaniment. Cost: £440.00 single; £400.00 shared. Contact Reception to book your Retreat. 01622 717272

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Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate.

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. We have included a form with the intention leaflet enclosed if you are able to help. Thank you.

****Support The Friars** Monthly Draw (100+ Club)**

New members are welcome to join at any time and this is a fun way to help raise much needed funds for The Friars. Each number costs just £12. The draw takes place on the second Sunday of each month after the 10.15am Mass and the winning number receives a prize of £50, with a special prize of £100 in December. Renewals are due in August. To renew your subscription or to join the Monthly Draw, please send your Name, Address, Contact Number and where possible your Email Address, along with a cheque made payable to “The Friars”. The cost of postage, as you know, is very high and to try to save costs we are contacting as many people as possible by email. Your details will never be used for any other purpose. Thank you for your support.



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