



Pilgrims' Newsletter

Summer
2024



Dear Friends,
Christ is Risen, Alleluia!

Our seasonal refrain reminds us of the core conviction of our faith. I think the blessing of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil is a useful source of reflection:

*Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end,
Alpha and Omega, all time belongs to him, and all ages;
to him be glory and power, through every age and for ever.*

This prayer reminds us that the Risen Christ is victorious; that he is the One through whom all things were made and are saved; and that he reigns forever. His power encompasses all things. The prayer of blessing continues:

By his holy and glorious wounds, may Christ our Lord guard and keep us.

This echoes what was said by St Peter, who recognizes that Jesus' sufferings fulfilled ancient prophecy: 'by his wounds you have been healed' (1 Peter 2:24; see Isaiah 53:5;). The prayer assures us that the fruits of Christ's Passion are not solely for our eternal redemption but also to help us in our journey of faith as Christ's disciples. The blessing of the candle concludes by asking for that divine cleansing and illumination, which enable us to be faithful Christian people:

May the light of Christ, rising in glory, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds.

Easter tide sets before us two important points of focus for our own personal reflection and our communal worship as the holy people of God. Our liturgical readings invite us to consider and celebrate the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, who rose again, so that we might live forever. Often the gospels are drawn from the Gospel according to John and present Jesus explaining to his disciples the nature of his promises. He tells them he will go and prepare a place for them (see Jn 14:1-7) but so that they do not feel like orphans while they await his return (see Jn 14:18), he assures them of two things: He will send them another Advocate, the Holy Spirit (see Jn 14:26); and will give them his peace (see Jn 14:27). However, he does not wish them to be idle whilst they await his Second Coming but tells them to give themselves to preaching his Word and follow his example of humble service (see Jn 3:1-20). These readings also draw from Jesus' teachings about his relationship with his Father - 'the Father and I are one', he says (Jn 10:30), for to see him is to see the Father (see Jn 14:8-11).



Paschal Candle,
Choir Chapel,
Aylesford



**Br Richard Green, O.Carm. ordained a deacon
by Bishop Philip Moger.
‘The Laying on of Hands’**

These themes also tie in with the First Readings of the season, which are taken from the Acts of the Apostles. In Acts, St Luke presents the history of the early Church but also through it invites the Church of today to fulfil its mission to proclaim the Good News that God has saved us through Christ. It is through our intimate sharing in God’s Spirit through baptism that we are able to commit ourselves to proclamation and service. Eastertide is therefore a time to renew our commitment to discipleship.

I received two letters recently, which were quite different in content. The first letter questioned my description of Christians as ‘co-heirs with Christ’ in the last Newsletter. I admit I was somewhat surprised that the writer was unfamiliar with this idea. In his Letter to the Romans St Paul states: ‘The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. And if we are children, then we are heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ’ (Rom 8:16–17). The term ‘co-heirs’ is an accurate translation of the Greek word *synklēronomoi*, which Paul himself uses. God wants to share with us everything he has, which is why Paul goes on to say that we are to share the suffering of Christ (*sympaschomen*), so that we may share his glory (*syndoxasthōmen*): The way of the Cross leads to heaven. Christ descended to the depths in order to raise us to the heights. The second letter was a conversion story - a personal reflection from someone whose visit to Aylesford many years ago, during a challenging time in their life, enabled them to enter the Catholic Church. Both of these letters, in their different ways, prompted me to think about Christian life as a process of call and response.



**Receiving the Book of the Gospels:
“*Believe what you read,
teach what you believe,
and practise what you teach*”**

The Easter Vigil is the centre of our Christian calendar; the liturgy is a moving celebration of our faith, rich in symbolism, and yet in some places it is not particularly well-attended. Admittedly, some people do feel daunted by the prospect of a long service that starts late at night, which is why here at Aylesford we begin at 9pm. However, I am getting ahead of myself - there are many things which happened here between Christmas and Easter! Although the Shrine is moderately quiet from January to March, we still receive visits from a number of parishes and schools. Throughout Lent the Aylesford pastoral team gave a series of talks on

aspects of the Apostles Creed, which prompted some interest. The pilgrimage season began on Palm Sunday with a large gathering of the Tamil Catholic Association. Since then we have hosted the Divine Mercy Apostolate; the Legion of Mary; and the Guild of St Stephen's annual Mass for Altar Servers. The enrolment ceremony for servers into the Guild was blessed with 800 attendees but was somewhat blighted by heavy rain. Undaunted, we managed to get everyone safely under cover. Canon Victor Darlington, Episcopal Vicar for the South-East Pastoral Area, presided at the Mass. He encouraged the servers to see themselves not just as the priest's assistants but well-placed to aid the congregation's prayerful celebration of Mass.

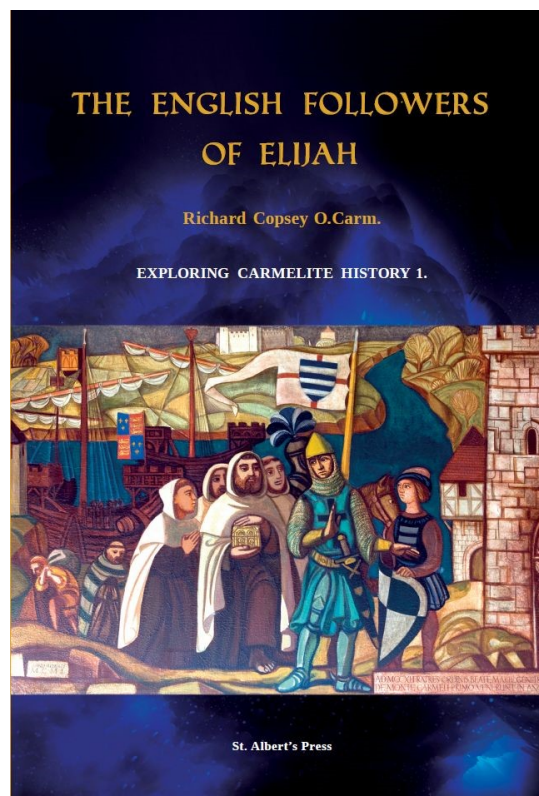
Carmelite News

It is with great joy that we announce the ordination of Br Richard Green as a deacon by the Rt Rev. Philip Moger, Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Southwark on 23rd March. Richard began his Carmelite journey in 2015, when he entered the pre-novitiate at Aylesford. After he completed his novitiate in Salamanca, Spain, he studied in Rome. Upon gradation he returned to England and studied for an M.A. at Kings College, London. He currently lives at Whitefriars, Reading but still visits Aylesford from time to time to assist on pilgrimage days and to give retreat talks.

There have been deacons in the Church from its earliest days—the role having been created in order to respond to the practical needs of widows and orphans (see Acts 6:1-6). St Paul sets out the qualities expected of deacons (see 1 Timothy 3:8-13). The deacon is ordained through prayer and the 'laying on of hands'; he exercises three functions: Proclaiming and preaching the Word of God; presiding at the sacraments of baptism and marriage, as well as conducting funerals and administering holy Communion; and performing works of charity, which is the defining feature of his ministry. He is to imitate Christ, who emptied himself in order to be the servant for all (see Matthew 20:28; Luke 12:37, 22:27; John 13:1-17, 34-35; Philippians 2:3-10). In fact, the very title 'deacon' means simply that, 'a servant'. Please keep Br Richard in your prayers.



**Fr Stephen Boyle, Guild Chaplain,
with Canon Victor Darlington**



The restored riverside wall, Aylesford

I am pleased to inform you of an interesting new publication from Fr Richard Copsey, who has been researching the history of the Carmelites in England for over four decades. His latest book, 'The English Followers of Elijah', offers pen-portraits of forty-three friars who lived in the pre-Reformation era. As Fr Richard is quick to point out - not all of these friars were saintly. Many were not well-known, even in their own day, but some of them had great talents, which they used in the service of the Church. It is hoped that through the stories of these friars, readers will gain some insight into the medieval world and Carmelite life as it was lived all those centuries ago. This new book can be purchased from the Carmelite Shrine of St Jude, from Amazon, or from other retailers.



**Fr Denis Omai Nchore, O.Carm.
of the Kenyan General Delegation**

At the beginning of May we had a visit from Fr Denis Omai Nchore, prior of the Carmelite community in Narumoru, Kenya. Denis is currently studying for an MA in Public Policy & Management at Strathmore University, Nairobi, which has a link with University College London. In mid-April Denis and his fellow students came to the UK for a course, after which he asked if he could visit our communities. It has been a great joy to have him with us at Aylesford; to learn something about life in Kenya; and about his plans to build a retreat house that will serve the people of Nairobi. Please pray for the success of this project.

Those who have visited Aylesford in the last two months will have seen that a great deal of remedial work has been undertaken: The buttresses of the 13th century Old Block guesthouse; the entrance to Reception; the Rosary Way wall; and the riverside wall have all received attention from mason who specialize in working with historic buildings. Some required careful rebuilding, others repointing with a special lime mortar. Looking back at the invoices I have paid so far, the running total is £21,324.90 and by the time the newsletter drops through your letterbox I suspect I will have received another invoice or two for more related works. So I would like to thank you most sincerely for your ongoing support, which enables Aylesford to continue to be a place of welcome and prayer. Be assured that we remember the benefactors of the Shrine in our daily prayers.

May our loving God bless you and all whom you love.

Michael Cox, O.Carm.

Prior

THE FRIARS AYLESFORD
Summer Fayre
SUNDAY 23RD JUNE 2024
11am - 4.30pm

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SUMMER STILLNESS
Monday 12th—Friday 16th August
Felicity Young OSU, Angela Black & Ged Walsh 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: £507.20 single; £477.60 shared. (the cost includes stipends for the directors)
Contact Reception to book your Retreat.

****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". Please note we can only advise you of your number if you phone us or give an email address. Due to the cost of postage, as you know, it is very high and 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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