



Pilgrims' Newsletter

Aylesford

Winter 2019



Dear Friend,

Year of the Word

We are now in the Year of the Word that began on the Feast of St. Jerome. It is a time to celebrate and share the Word of God and for it to become one with us. In Advent the Sunday Gospels come mostly from Matthew. The Gospel was written for Jewish Christians. Jesus is seen as the fulfilment of the Hebrew scriptures. He is pictured as the New Moses. The boy Jesus going to Egypt as a refugee has echoes of the Book of Exodus. This is reinforced with the Sermon on the Mount as Matthew's readers would remember Moses receiving the Law on the mountain.

The Year of Pilgrimage and St. Thomas

Next year the Anglican community will be celebrating *'The Year of Pilgrimage' and 'Thomas 2020'*. There are several significant anniversaries in some of our great English Cathedrals. Nearby Canterbury will be marking 800 years since the translation of the relics of St Thomas Becket to a new shrine above the choir in the Cathedral. It is also 850 years since St. Thomas was martyred in the Cathedral and 900 years since his birth. There is a depiction of the death of St. Thomas in the Martyrs' Chapel in the Relic Chapel. The Martyrs' Chapel was largely paid for by our Anglican friends. In the medieval church here one of the side chapels was dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury. One of the statues by Michael Clark in the courtyard is of St. Thomas. The Pilgrims' Hall was built to accommodate pilgrims traveling to Canterbury as we are only a mile away from the Pilgrims' Way.



St Thomas by Adam Kossowski in the Martyrs' Chapel

Advent

Advent is a season of waiting with hope and expectation. The Gospel on the First Sunday reminds us that we can only be ready by staying awake (Mt. 24: 37-44). At this time of year, I always think of a boy called Robert, who I encountered when I was a nurse before my novitiate, who lived in an institute for children with special needs. As his parents lived far away, they rarely visited but they faithfully came every year a few days before Christmas. Robert spent every day looking out of the window that overlooked the main entrance, so he could see all the comings and goings. When he saw his parents accompanied by his siblings his face transformed and a beaming smile appeared. He had a happy few hours with his family but when they left, he went back to the window waiting with hope and expectation for their next visit some months later. May we wait with the same determination.

On the Second and Third Sunday of Advent we are introduced to John the Baptist. Though Advent does not have the penitential character of Lent, it is still a season of reconciliation and repentance. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord through calling all his followers to reflect upon their relationship with God and humanity (Mt.3: 1-12). How can we prepare the Way for the Lord?

On the following Sunday we hear again about John the Baptist. There are many stories in the Gospels about John the Baptist, but this passage today is my favourite. John is now in prison (Mt 11: 2-11); he is coming to the end of

his ministry and of his life, but he sends messages to ask Jesus are you the one we are waiting for or is there another? Jesus simply says to them: tell John what you see and hear. Jesus refers to another passage from the prophet Isaiah (Is. 42: 18-19) that relates to his healing apostolate. When we say a kind word or do an act of kindness, we make Christ present in the world.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent is traditionally devoted to Mary and we hear that Mary was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit (Mt 1: 18-24). As Matthew's Gospel was written for Jewish Christians, the birth of Jesus is told through the eyes of Joseph. He hears that he was a just man and God spoke to him through dreams. Matthew includes another quote from the prophet Isaiah (Is 7:14) that refers to Emmanuel, that God is with us. We celebrate God taking our flesh and blood and becoming one with us. He shares our pain and sorrow as well as our joy and laughter. Through our faithfulness to the Gospel may we make Jesus present in the world then Jesus will be truly present in the world.

Christmas

During the Christmas season the Gospels come mostly from Luke (Lk 2: 1-21). He relates that there was no room in the inn for the birth of Jesus; that the first visitors to the newly born child were shepherds. This is typical of Luke as he emphasised the poor and lowly in his Gospel. We also hear of Mary treasuring the events of the birth of Jesus in her heart.

As we celebrate Christmas with our families and friends it is good that we also ponder with Mary the poverty of the first Christmas; perhaps this is why some of us are more comfortable with Matthew's Gospel as he tells us of the majestic magi visiting the manger. But he does go on to tell us that the Holy Family became refugees in Egypt due to the imperial ambitions of King Herod.

General Chapter

I was away in Rome for three weeks with Fr. Kevin Alban and Fr. Brendan Grady. We represented the British Province at the General Chapter of Carmelites. The General Chapter takes place every 6 years. As well as electing a new Prior General and General Council, we reflected upon how the Carmelites can serve the Church in the modern world. It is an international gathering of Carmelites from all five continents.

For many of us the highlight of the General Chapter was the private audience with Pope Francis who spoke to us about fidelity and contemplation. On that day, we saw St. Peter's in all its beauty in glorious sunshine.

Among the General Councillors elected was the Irish Provincial, Fr. Richard Byrne, who is now the General Councillor for Europe. He did a short part of his novitiate here at Aylesford. The new Councillor General for Asia is Fr. Robert Putussery who spent ten years in the Province studying in one of the London houses.

Another Irish Prior General



Fr. Miceál with Pope Francis

We elected Miceál O'Niell as the new Prior General. He is from Ireland. Many of you will remember him when he visited Aylesford as one of the General Councillors in the 80s and 90s. He then returned to Ireland and served at his old school, Terenure College, as the Prior and later as Prior of Kinsale. He then returned from Rome as the Prior of our international College. He is the third Irish Prior General. All three have visited Aylesford. Some of you may remember Fr. Kilian Lynch who was the younger brother of Fr. Malachy, like him he was born in Co. Wicklow. After his studies in Rome he ministered in



Fr. Brendan, Fr. Kevin and Fr. Francis



Carmelites with Pope Francis

America and became the Provincial of the New York Province during the Second World War. In 1947 he was elected the Prior General. Fr. Kilian was a man of great vision. He was the Prior General at a time when the Carmelites were recovering from the war years. He encouraged the purchase of The Friars in 1949. After serving twelve years as Prior General he served as Prior of Aylesford for six years from 1959 to 1965 and he later became the regional superior of the English and Welsh Carmelites. While he was Prior the shrine was completed and decorated with some of the fine religious art that you can now see here.

The first Irish General was Fr. Elias Magennis who was Prior General from 1919 to 1931. He was from Co. Mayo. During his tenure as General he worked for the reestablishment of Carmel in England. This took place with the establishment of the parish in Faversham, 1926. A few years later he visited Faversham and The Friars while it was still a country house. Fr. Malachy wrote about this visit in one his Newsletters: *“There was a Girl Guide Jamboree going on when they arrived and the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time was a guest. The Copley Hewitts were then tenants and Mrs. Copley Hewitt gave a great welcome to the Prior General. Despite the other distinguished visitors on that occasion she clung to him eagerly and they got on very well together. He had the gift of bringing people to life where he went. It didn’t make any difference where he was or whether he was talking to and an archbishop or to a beggar. He spent the last years of his life climbing stairs to the poor living in tenements and was greatly revered (Whitefriars Street, Dublin).”*

News

Many of you will remember Mrs Peggy Marks who was the Senior Receptionist here. Peggy has retired recently, serving more than 30 years at The Friars. Her smiling face will be missed in the reception office and we are grateful for her many years of loyal service.

Archbishop John Wilson came for his first pilgrimage on Saturday 14th September, for the centenary of the Knights of St. Columba. It was a lovely sunny day. A few days later he was here again for the Day for Religious. It is always an enjoyable day to see so many fellow religious who serve the Diocese in so many ways.



Archbishop John Wilson & Ken Martenstyn KSC

We celebrated the Harvest on the first Sunday of October. After the Mass we went down to the conference centre for a harvest meal. It was delightful that this year we were joined by our new vicar from St Peter’s and St Paul’s Church in Aylesford, the Rev Ruth Peet. On that day we raised money for CAFOD.



Celebrating the end of the 70th Anniversary Mass at the Scapular Shrine, Rosary Way

On 31st October we celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the return of the Carmelites to Aylesford. We were pleased that we were joined by both Archbishop John Wilson and Archbishop Peter Smith. Archbishop John said in his homily: *“Fr Elias Lynch once wrote: ‘History is a mighty thing. It is good for men to stand where their fathers stood before them and to look back over four hundred years of English life and to be able to say: ‘Here is where we left off’. And we might add ‘and here, each day, is where we begin again.’”*

At the end of the anniversary Mass, the *Fediliter Servienti Diocesan Award* was presented to Mr Ken Smith by Archbishop John. Ken has been Director of Operations for the Knights of St Columba and Co-ordinator with the Knights organising stewards for our pilgrimages and events for more than 20 years. We are eternally grateful for his dedicated service and also to the Knights who regularly volunteer at Aylesford.



Ken Smith KSC

Restoration

We have just completed painting the Relic Chapel. The repairs to the chapel roofs and guttering continue. Currently the library roofs are being worked on and the lead that was

stolen from the Gatehouse is being replaced. We would in no way be able to carry out this restoration work without the kind support of our readers and friends and also from the legacies and bequests we receive. May we ask you to please remember us in your Will if you are able? If you would like advice on the correct wording and charity number/s to use please kindly contact my PA, Clare Abbotson 01622 717272 or email her cabbotson@thefriars.org.uk. Thank you so much for your support. Those who leave us a legacy of over £2,000 are entered into our *Book of Remembrance* which is kept in St Anne's Chapel and all those inscribed in the Book are remembered in 2 special masses said each year in May and November.

We Remember Them



Fr Wilfrid McGreal

While we were away at the General Chapter, on 23rd September, we received the news that Fr. Wilfrid McGreal had died. Many of you will remember him as he was the Prior of Aylesford from 1997 to 2005. He also served as the Prior Provincial of the British Province for six years. He was an honouree Ecumenical Canon at Rochester Cathedral. We remember him for his many books and his radio work which included "Pause for Thought" on the Terry Wogan Show.

On 16th October Fr. Denis Lynch died. He was a member of the community in the 1970s and 1980s. He served as the Sub-Prior here and for three years as Prior until 1990. He gave many retreats and was the chaplain to the Aylesford Third Order Chapter. He served as the chaplain to Maidstone Prison for twenty-two years and is remembered as a dedicated pastor.

The following day we heard of the death of Archbishop Michael Bowen. He was our Bishop for 26 years. He served as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton for six years and as Archbishop of Southwark for 26 years. He is remembered as implementing many of the changes required by Vatican II. He was a frequent pilgrim to Aylesford and was a good friend to the Carmelites.

May you and all your family and friends experience the peace and joy of Christmas. Please be assured of the prayers of the community.

Francis Kemsley. O.Carm.

Forthcoming Events & Retreats

Light up a Life
Sunday 1st December
Heart of Kent Hospice Candlelit procession and service. 4:30pm.

Ecumenical Advent Service
Friday 6th December
8pm at St Peter & St Paul's Church Aylesford.

Advent Retreat
6th-8th December

Fr. Francis Kemsley O.Carm
This retreat reflects upon the Prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary; all in their different ways prepared the way for the Lord. The retreat starts with a joint ecumenical service. Cost: £177 single, £171 senior citizen, £160 shared. Day fee £15

Carols by Candlelight
Friday 13th December
7:15pm, Relic Chapel with the Medway Towns Brass Band.

From Grief in Loss to Hope in Christ
Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd March
Elizabeth Partridge and 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. Prices tbc.

Easter Triduum
Thursday 9th-Sunday 12th April
Francis Kemsley O.Carm & Maggie Cascioli
An opportunity to reflect upon, participate in and make our own the events of Holy Week. Prices tbc.



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