



Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

As the year of 2014 draws rapidly to a close, and the beautiful seasons of Advent and Christmas approach, we come once again to share with you our news. After having a death of a sister each year for the previous 3 years, 2014 proved to be a busy year with new life and many other blessings for our Carmel.

February 21st was a very auspicious day for our community. As usual, we celebrated the anniversary of our foundation, the day 81 years ago when our foundation sisters from Sydney first stepped foot in Christchurch. After Mass, we were delighted to welcome Catherine Smith, who joined us as a postulant. Catherine hails from Dunedin, but had spent most of the previous 8 years in USA. On that same day, two sisters from Saigon Carmel in Vietnam received their visas to come to join us.

With all these new arrivals, it was time that some of our earthquake repairs be made, especially to our novitiate wing, which had a large fearsome-looking split where it had joined the main wing in pre-earthquake days. On March 21st we began to clear the wing – the library moved to one end of the dining room, as did the Altar Bread office. Everything else was moved to the recreation room – enormous cupboards and things which hadn't been moved for decades. We have become very adept at relocating over the past 4 years, so managed with the makeshift conditions... Also in late March, the garage which had been lifted onto our site in 2013 was concreted in place and we were able to clear out the Nazareth Hermitage and other rooms, and return them to their rightful uses. The earthquake repairs proceeded quickly and we moved back into the beautifully repaired and painted novitiate wing in early May. The next stage of repair work is now well underway, with the exterior walls of our Chapel and extern buildings being sanded and painted.

On 25th April a new stage in our community's life began as we welcomed Sr Maria Immaculata and Sr Marie Angéline from Saigon Carmel. They had travelled from their homeland in the company of our friend Monsignor Brendan Daly. What a contrast they must have found between the climates of Vietnam and New Zealand! A sister quickly made them habits of brown polar fleece, and topped with white polar fleece veils they looked like brown and white sheep. They worked diligently for several months at Wilkinson's Language School to assist their English language skills and inculturation into New Zealand, and graduated with flying colours. We enjoyed helping them with their homework at evening recreation, marvelling at the story aides. We were all challenged in our own comprehension of English when faced with such questions as: "What is Murphy's Law?" and "How do you know when to use the present simple/ past perfect continuous...?"



Sr Mareta, who has been so generously helping us from Wallis Carmel for 3 years was granted Permanent Residence this year, and soon after became a New Zealand Citizen. A very moving citizenship ceremony was held in our Chapel on 3rd October, with friends Selma Scott officiating and Patricia Luamanu as a witness. Sister officially became "a kiwi". She is looking forward to spending a few weeks in Wallis with her community and returning to us in February.

In late May our 3 steers, after feasting for 18 months on luscious grass, finally reached their full size. Getting these huge animals into the cattle pen proved more difficult, in spite of much prayer, than any previous year. So for the first time we were only able to get them into the cattle yard, and had to hope the truck driver would assist them into the pen and on board the truck. But unfortunately Cosmos or Damien (we were not sure which in the ensuing debacle) decided to make a last minute escape – leapt the cattle yard fence and was tearing madly around the

paddocks, nuns in pursuit. After much effort the escapee was recaptured and went to join the others. Over the winter months we let the paddocks grow. There was such growth that the grass was almost higher than we were, and we were very happy to greet the replacements which arrived in November. They were duly (and democratically) named: Charlie, Khunh (Vietnamese), Shalom and Harry.

Some Spring visitors which eventually wore out their welcome were a Mother Duck and her brood of ducklings. Initially they were cute, but as the ducklings grew they became demanding, standing at the glass cloister doors at breakfast time, leaving a dreadful mess on the tiled cloister and the monastery smelling like a pond. Getting them out of the enclosure became imperative, but all our brilliant attempts at capture failed miserably. Finally someone had the brainwave of enticing them with a loaf of bread through the paddocks and out the cloister gates, where the bread was handed over to two ladies who lured them around the monastery walls and down to the river. They were last seen swimming happily away. (In the last week another brood have arrived...)

On the Feast of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Sr Maria Immaculata renewed her temporary vows during Mass. Three weeks later, on the Feast of the Transfiguration, Sr Catherine received the Carmelite Habit during a private ceremony after Morning Prayer, and became Sr Catherine of Christ. Friends from all over the country and from as far as the USA joined us for a Mass of Thanksgiving, and were able to greet her in the visitors' room.



2014 must have been the year for Carmelite friars. In August we were pleased to welcome our new Provincial Superior, Fr Michael McGoldrick, who spent a delightful couple of days with us sharing news of the Province. In October it was the turn of the Secretary for the Nuns in Rome, Fr Rafal Wilkowski, who was visiting the Region with our Father General, Fr Saverio Cannistra, to make a quick overnight trip to our Carmel. Following this, two of our Sisters travelled to Sydney for a rare, invaluable meeting with Fr Saverio and other Sisters in our region. As the icing on the cake, our new Regional Superior, Fr Greg Homeming gave us, and the Secular Order, our annual retreat in November, sharing his deep insights on the prayer of Jesus.



A very welcome addition to our monastery this year was the arrival in November of a beautiful sculpture of Our Lady, created almost 50 years ago by artist Peter Noonan and generously gifted to us. He wanted it to go to a good home, and in a sense she has returned to her home, as she took up residence in our Nazareth Hermitage. Peter and his brother, Fr John Noonan, along with 4 removal men, carefully transported her to our monastery; then all joined in a deeply moving prayer and blessing celebration to welcome her.

As the liturgical year came to a close we celebrated the Feast of Christ the King (our monastery's titular feast) with the coming together of the two parishes in our area, which will merge to form one parish next year. It was a joy to welcome parishioners, who came for a time of Exposition, procession in our external grounds, and concluded with Benediction given by our Bishop Barry Jones, followed by afternoon tea. The new name of our Parish was announced by our Parish Priest, Fr John Craddock: *Sancta Maria*, after Holy Mary of course, but also the name of the schooner on which the first Catholic Bishop and Marist priests came to our Diocese more than 150 years ago.

As this year draws to a close we look forward to the year 2015 dedicated to Consecrated Life, which also marks 500 years since St Teresa's birth. It promises to be a year of celebration and renewal for us all.

But the greatest celebration is for the One who came as a Child so long ago to fill our hearts with the peace and joy of "God with us!" May He bless and reward you for your kindness to us shown in so many ways during the past year. Be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones in the New Year, and thank you for your prayers for us.

Your loving Carmelite Sisters