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Carmelite Monastery
52 Halswell Road
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New Zealand

December 2013



Peace of Christ!

Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

Another year has almost passed into eternity, the beautiful season of Advent is about to begin, and we have seen the close of the Year of Faith. It is with joy that we again come to tell you the news of our year.

When Pope Benedict stated in *Porta Fidei* that “*Religious communities ...are to find a way, during this Year, to make a public profession of the Credo*”, little did we imagine that this would literally be the case for us. Our Bishop Barry desired that our Diocese would conclude the Year of Faith with a combined Mass on the Feast of Christ the King. It was to be held at the Canterbury Arena, a large indoor stadium not far from us. This was of course an important day for our monastery of Christ the King. On this beautiful November day, with the permission of our Regional Superior, five of us ventured forth to celebrate Mass along with our Bishop, Priests and more than 8,000 others. It was truly a magnificent occasion, one we will never forget. To be with thousands, voices lifted in praise of our King, and together professing our faith was very moving indeed. As the Mass came to an end with a majestic “*Now Thank We All Our God*”, everyone burst into spontaneous applause.



There were many other smaller scale celebrations during the year. Sr Elizabeth of the Trinity celebrated her Diamond Jubilee of Religious Profession in early February. Later in the month we joyfully remembered the day 80 years ago when 7 Sisters from Sydney arrived in Christchurch to begin Carmel in this new land. During the year our Secular Order had several celebrations as Lyn, Maureen and Rosalie made further commitments in this vibrant community. More and more people are interested in the treasures of Carmel, attested to by the large turnout for a Retreat Day in Carmelite Spirituality led by Monica Lee in late November. Another retreat highlight in November was the visit of Joy Cowley with this year's large group of South Island Road Retreatants. On pilgrimage to sacred sites, it is a joy for us to meet with those who are enthusiastically searching for a deeper knowledge of God in the historical and contemporary Church, and to share our stories and our faith together.

The life of faith came to an end in vision for some very close to us. Sr Mary of St John, who had gone on the foundation to Samoa in 1959, died in the Carmel there in July. We had a Requiem Mass for her in our chapel so her family and friends could pray for and remember this dear and valiant sister. Two months later the Lord called for our Sr Mary of the Angels. Sister had suffered a stroke in 2007, and moved to Nazareth House in 2009 when she required extra nursing care. The February 2011 earthquake saw her evacuated to Nelson. When she returned to Christchurch in May of that year, she moved to Villa Gardens, not far from us, and would come home in a wheelchair taxi each Sunday. During her time in nursing care, she was a great witness, and struck those who met her with her courage in adversity and her beautiful smile. After a brief illness, she died in hospital on 18th September, with Mother Dorothea at her side. She is dearly missed. 2013 was also a year that saw several of our brothers go home to God: Kevin McEntyre (brother of Sr Mary of St John) in October, and Michael Perkins (brother of Sr Mary Joseph of Wallis Carmel) and Brendan Chia (our Sr Mary Teresa's brother) in November. Kevin's Requiem and Michael's Rosary Vigil were held in our chapel, while Brendan was farewelled from his homeland of Singapore.

Some have wondered how our cattle have been getting on. We are happy to report a quieter year. The three have become quite docile, and fortunately are now more interested in eating grass than in jumping fences. We recently had some evenings out digging up thistles in the paddocks. The steers watched with much interest as clad in protective clothing and thistleproof gloves, and armed with a various assortment of cutting and digging instruments, we attacked the unwelcome greenery. We thought it only a pity that instead of just watching, we couldn't convince them to eat down the thistles themselves! We were also blessed with help from the Christchurch Knights of the Southern Cross who, true to name, gave several hours of generous manpower to tackle this thorny problem for us.

The earthquake repair work to our monastery buildings is still in the future. However, the biggest repair job, the mammoth task of strengthening our extensive enclosure wall, was completed in April. We were relieved that this could happen and the wall did not need to be replaced. The work was tested later in the year when fierce winds caused much damage around Canterbury, bringing down branches, roof tiles and part of some internal fences within our enclosure; but the walls stood firm.

During the year we were offered a very large statue of the Pieta, almost 100 years old. The idea was to house it somewhere in the monastery, but when the removal company turned up, we realized that there was no way the statue would fit anywhere inside. It was decided to convert one of our trellis summerhouses into a shrine. The wisteria was trimmed back, a platform built inside, woodwork painted a lovely mauve colour, and then a clear plastic roof was added. When all was complete, on 13th October, we processed to the shrine and inaugurated its life. Since then it has become a favoured spot for times of prayer, and also a pleasant shelter when we have our community recreations outside.



Another large arrival was "The Garage". We were in need of extra storage space, so as to clear some rooms around the monastery. Coincidentally, we were offered an unwanted garage sitting on a piece of land which needed to be



cleared for part of the rebuilding work in the city. The trouble was how to relocate it, especially as it was wider than our gates. Enter Titan Cranes. The garage was trucked from the site, then with immense skill it was picked up by the crane, carried aloft through 4 sets of gates, then placed in the paddock (all viewed by an appreciative Carmelite audience). It still awaits setting in concrete, hopefully early next year, but we have already begun to make use of it.

We thank each and every one for all you have done to help and support us in our life of prayer in so many ways this year. This past month we have been especially remembering all those suffering from the terrible natural disasters in the Philippines. Also there are so many who are requesting our prayers in times of sickness and suffering. We have just begun our annual retreat with Monsignor Brian Bransfield from America who also led our priests for their retreat this year. With his deep scriptural and spiritual insights, it is a fitting preparation as we look to the Christmas Crib and are reminded, in the words of Bishop Barry at the Christ the King Mass, that *"He is the eternal Son who took human flesh from Mary, precisely so that he might enter our world and our history. The purpose of his coming was to enter into our experience of suffering and evil and death, and to transform them by love."* We pray that this transformation may come to pass in the lives of all. May you be filled with the blessings of His coming, at Christmas and always.

Your loving sisters in Christ,

The Carmelite Sisters