



Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

Advent has begun and we once again prepare our hearts and our lives to make more room for the coming of Love Incarnate. This has been a really momentous year for us and we would like to share news of it with you.

We began 2015 with our Chapel being closed for a week for earthquake repairs. The entire building was repainted inside and out. What a transformation! With the Novitiate wing repaired in 2014, that leaves just the two main buildings, which hopefully will have their turn in 2016. The Chapel was reopened in time to welcome the group from the Thomas Merton Chapter, who came to pray with us on 31<sup>st</sup> January, as part of their pilgrimage celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Merton's birth.

During this year we celebrated some very important occasions ó the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St Teresa, and the Year of Consecrated Life. Our main celebration for the former was a series of talks on *The Journey Within* held in June. Carmelite Father Greg Burke came from Australia to give talks, joining Carmelite Secular Order member Professor Ben Gibbs, who drove down from Nelson. For four nights people gathered to listen to these inspiring speakers and meet with them afterwards. Some of the Sisters iced and decorated a large birthday cake to celebrate this occasion, fortunately not attempting to get the candles numerically right. Further celebrations, with beautiful Masses and festivities in our community, were held on the actual day of the 500<sup>th</sup> birthday, 28<sup>th</sup> March, and on her Feast Day, 15<sup>th</sup> October, when the Year officially finished. Three days later, on 18<sup>th</sup> October, there was once again rejoicing as we gave thanks for the Canonization of the parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux, Louis and Zélie Martin. We are currently reading Zélie's letters and finding them delightful.



On March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Annunciation, the Consecrated Men and Women of the Diocese gathered at our Chapel for a Mass celebrated by our Bishop Barry Jones, followed by afternoon tea. It was very moving to renew our vows together during the Mass. It was a joy to meet them afterwards in our visitors' room ó so many Religious from different congregations. Also connected with the Year, we welcomed Sisters from New Zealand's only home-grown religious congregation, the Sisters of Compassion, who came to speak in September on the Beatification Process for their foundress, Suzanne Aubert. It is hoped that one day she may be New Zealand's first canonized Saint. On 21<sup>st</sup> November, the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, we officially closed the Year in our diocese with another combined Mass and a luncheon.

At the end of June we were delighted when Deacons Do, Thanh and Tien came to serve at Mass, having been ordained the previous day. We remember when they arrived in July 2008, freezing cold and struggling with English, to begin their new life in New Zealand. They and their fellow seminarians from Vietnam have become true friends to us over those seven years, regularly coming to update us on their progress. It was a feeling of great pride for us to



hear them preach and to greet them and their friends afterwards. We look forward to their ordination to the priesthood in early December.



When they arrived, little did we know that by the time they had finished their journey to the priesthood we would have two sisters from Vietnam in our own community. Sisters Maria Immaculata and Marie Angéline returned to Vietnam in September, after a year and a half with us, to prepare for their Solemn Profession. The following month, at the invitation of Mother Teresita, the Prioress of Saigon Carmel, our

Mother Dorothea and Sister Cushla travelled to Vietnam to take part in the beautiful Profession ceremony, and to share in the life of their community. It was an amazing week there, and we were really sad to say goodbye. We look forward to New Year's Eve, when the two sisters will return to us, this time adorned in black veils.

This year we had some renovations done on the farm – removing fences and old sheds, and improving the cattle ramp area (to make it escape proof). At the same time the demolition men removed our old glasshouse (which was missing too much glass to be very effective) and put in a tunnel house. This latter has been a great hit, and is producing all manner of vegetables, including lettuces and cucumbers, and even strawberries. (In the past we never could outwit the birds, who ate them before they ever reached our table.) Things not usually grown in this part of the country are in there too, and our Samoan Sisters look forward to harvesting some taro leaves in due time.



One of our steers, Harry, caused a bit of disruption this year – first he got ‘lumpy jaw’, requiring us to become amateur vets, and learn some injecting skills (‘confidence is key’ according to the petite female vet who showed us how it was done). This took a bit of getting used to, with much trial and error, including three of us down on our hands and knees hunting for the needle (not in a nice clean haystack, but in quite the opposite!). He was good for most of the rest of the year, until we went on retreat in November. Then he decided to put his head where it wasn't supposed to be, and four of us were out in the paddock with bolt cutters at 6 o'clock one morning, trying to release him from a wire fence (put up precisely to protect some infant trees from his jaws), all the while trying to preserve the recollection of a retreat.

Several years ago our statue of St Joseph, which had stood in our outside grounds for many decades, was stolen during the night. His niche remained empty for quite a while until a friend offered a replacement. She had found this statue while out driving one night – standing in the middle of the road, with a beer can in his hand. He needed some renovations, so after some surgery by Doctor Marietta, he took up his post in the empty niche. Not wanting him to go to the same fate, our own St Joseph, Bud Grose, bolted him well into the wall. But sadly the statue deteriorated, and no longer really represented that valiant man of the Gospel, actually looking more like he'd been through a war. Back came Bud and unbolted him, and we began to search for yet another replacement. We eventually found a factory in America that makes fibreglass statues, and put in our order, thanks to the generosity of Patricia Luamanu. After crossing the seas in a crate, St Joseph arrived here on 25<sup>th</sup> November, a month before Christmas. The following evening we received a visitor from the top of the world, Carmelite Bishop Anders Arborelius of Sweden, in Christchurch giving our diocesan priests their retreat. Bishop Arborelius graciously agreed to bless St Joseph for us. We hope that this time not only will St Joseph look after our monastery, he will look after himself as well.



We remember in our prayers all those many friends who are carrying the burden of sickness, especially our Bishop Barry Jones, and those who have died this year. A long-time friend of our monastery, Oscar Pawson, died on his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Feast of All Carmelite Saints – what a beautiful day to begin and end one's journey.

This month we begin the Year of Mercy inaugurated by Pope Francis. We hope that all will heed his call to become *merciful like the Father* during this time, especially as we continue to hear of the merciless violence being unleashed around the world. We pray that you and your loved ones will be filled with the love and peace of the Prince of Peace during the coming Christmas season. And may He bless and reward you for all the kindness you have shown to us in so many ways during the past year, and especially at this time.

Your loving Carmelite Sisters