



Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

The beautiful season of Advent is almost upon us again, and it is time to share with all our friends the news of another year in our Carmel.

It was a sad beginning to 2018 with two untimely deaths in January – newly-ordained Diocesan priest Father Graeme Blackburn in a tragic motorcycle accident, and Sister Katherine of Samoa Carmel from cancer, both in their 30's. Father Graeme had celebrated Mass in our Chapel a few days after his Ordination in July 2017 and his photo was in our last newsletter. Sister Katherine had spent a few weeks in our Carmel in 2015 while in New Zealand for medical treatment. They are both deeply missed, but we trust that they will be interceding for us in Heaven. The following month Wallis Carmel farewelled Sister Mary Joseph Perkins, who after a long and valiant Carmelite life went home to her beloved Lord. She was a foundation Sister in two Island Carmels, Samoa (1959) and Wallis (2003). As Sister was originally from Christchurch and had entered Carmel here, we had a requiem Mass for Sister Mary Joseph in our Chapel for her family and friends.



Sister Mary Joseph ocd



Bishop Paul Martin sm

It looked like it was going to be a year of departures, with our chaplain, Marist Father Paul Williamson, also leaving us in January (for Auckland, not Heaven), after many years of faithful service. However, we were happy to welcome his replacement in this role, his confrere Father Barry Malone. The Marists have had a special place in the life of Carmel in our Region – they were a great support to the first Carmelite nuns in Australia in 1885, and it was a Marist priest who suggested to Bishop Brodie to invite the Carmelite Nuns to Christchurch Diocese. On 3rd March Marist Father Paul Martin was ordained Bishop of Christchurch. We celebrated the day with a festive meal, and were able to view the ceremony soon after it took place. We had a visiting Carmelite priest staying with us at the time, Father Ferdinand, and he represented us at the Ordination Mass.

In 2018 we had visits from several other Carmelites as well. In January we welcomed Sister Ana, on her way home to Wallis Carmel after being present at the opening of the monastery in Tonga, her native country. Mother Antonina of Samoa Carmel came in March for medical tests, and we were very happy to have her here for our Easter celebrations. Mother Antonina even helped us sing the Psalms at the Easter Vigil. In September two more of our Carmelite priests, Father Shane, the nephew of our Sister Teresa, and Father Bernard, our Regional Superior, visited from Australia. We had a short but delightful visit in November from Sister Bernadette, originally from Saigon Carmel in Vietnam, who is part of the Auckland Community for three years. We appreciate these contacts with our fellow Carmelites, especially at this time in the Church's life when we are being asked to work more closely together to strengthen the contemplative life.



Fr Bernard Hancock ocd with our Novitiate

This year our Earthquake repairs edged towards completion. The Refectory was finished in March – we were exiled from it, and eating in the kitchen for several weeks, but were very happy to be back there for the silence of Holy Week. Towards the end of the year, we welcomed the return of the Scripture quotes above our cell doors. They had been painted over when the upstairs hallway was repaired two years ago. The only repair work now outstanding, 8 years on since the earthquake, is the outside of one end of the main building. It is on the second floor, so will need scaffolding, always a substantial job. Our 133-year-old bathroom was replaced in September, making its facilities much more accessible. Then in November our badly leaking Novitiate roof was repaired.



We are always grateful for the skill of the tradesmen who work on our property, and we got a taste ourselves of how much hard work it is. A load of concrete was delivered to us, and there was nobody to do the job but the lady concrete truck driver and us. The boxing had been laid out earlier, and all we had to do was transport the many barrows of concrete from the truck into it. The work was exhausting, but we now have the satisfaction of having made something so solid ourselves and appreciate more experientially the labourious work involved in maintaining our monastery.

One mid-Winter Sunday, while trying to catch some sunshine at Recreation, the idea came up of making an area outside we could sit in and also use for picnics, one which would be more accessible to our less mobile sisters. We put our thinking caps on and came up with a plan which is now being executed. This time we decided to get experts to do the job (our concrete laying days are definitely over) and we hope it will be completed before the Christmas season begins.

On the Novitiate front, Sisters Anne Teresa and Catherine renewed their temporary vows in July and August. The following month we had a youth Mass in our Chapel. Bishop Paul Martin was the principal celebrant. It was, as always, lovely to meet him and all the young people in our Visitors' Room afterwards. On the Feast of St Teresa, 15th October, Sister Teresa celebrated 70 years of religious profession. Sister is the first member of our community to reach that milestone. Sister Teresa continues to paint candles for the Catholic Shop, and is also our main organist. There is no retirement in Carmel!



In our newsletter last year we mentioned that we were still awaiting a new cat to replace our former one who died last May. A kitten named Sophie arrived from the Cat's Protection League on 14th December 2017, the Feast of St John of the Cross, having been born on the Feast of St Thérèse. With that name and those special dates, we felt sure that she was made for Carmel. Sophie settled in very quickly and endeared herself to all the inhabitants of the monastery, excepting the rats and mice. There are a few bad habits we are hoping she will eventually lose, like turning up in all the wrong places, but we have learnt to overlook a lot. She disappeared for three days in May – we hope that was the beginning and end of her roaming beyond the enclosure.

Our new steers arrived in March and we named them Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They have feasted day and night ever since, on lush grass, hay and any fallen chestnuts that they can beat us to.



As we come to the end of another year, we thank all of you who have assisted us in any way to live our contemplative life. We pray that the Prince of Peace will fill each of you and your loved ones with the gifts that only He can bring. May this Christmas be a truly joyful season for you and may you have a grace-filled coming year.



Your loving sisters at the Carmel of Christ the King, Christchurch, New Zealand