

Carmelite Monastery
52 Halswell Road
Christchurch 8025
New Zealand



Christmas 2019

Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

It's almost the season of Advent again and as we look back over the year, we'd like to share with you some of the happenings in our Carmel.

The year began with much joy as we celebrated Sr Marietta's Silver Jubilee of Profession on 2nd February, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, also the Day of Consecrated Life. Family and friends came from far and wide to celebrate this milestone with Sister, overflowing our Chapel into the marquee outside. Sr Marietta is usually the one organizing our celebrations, so it was lovely that this time she was on the receiving end.

Later in February Carmelite Father Ferdinand came to Christchurch again to visit our Secular Order. He left us before Ash Wednesday and we were expecting a quiet Lent. It was with shock we heard of the massacre in the Mosques – our city is used to natural disasters, but we couldn't fathom this sort of man-made disaster happening here. We went around stunned for days, struggling to grasp how anybody could do this to those gathered for prayer. We later viewed the very moving Memorial Service.

In July we welcomed our Regional Vicar Father Bernard. We appreciated his wisdom as he guided us in our Visitation and Elections. Mother Dorothea has accepted to lead us this Triennium and for this we are very grateful. Her first major official task was to attend the Association of Our Lady of the Southern Cross meeting of Carmelite Prioresses in Sydney in August, to learn about the new legislation for contemplative nuns and how best to apply it. She enjoyed meeting up with all the other Carmelite nuns gathered there. On her way home she had the blessing of visiting Dulwich Hill, the place from which our Carmel, and most other Carmels in our Region, was founded. Also in August we were happy to welcome former London gangster, John Pridmore, to our Diocese and Carmel once again. John has spent the last couple of decades preaching God's love and mercy, giving talks and Parish Missions. We first met him in 2008 after the Sydney World Youth Day. He spent 8 weeks in New Zealand this time, speaking to thousands, and visiting us several times.



Sister Marietta Agnes of Jesus



Sister Mareta of Jesus

The last day of Winter saw the arrival of Sr Faustina of Divine Mercy, a Vietnamese Carmelite Nun who is now a member of a Carmelite Monastery in Thailand. Sister will be with us for two years, learning English. We enjoy helping her and some of us are polishing up our English skills. Sister is a quick learner and has fitted in very well with us, insisting on taking a share in the cooking even though she is busy studying full time. (We enjoy the results!) We are also benefitting from her talent on the organ. The day after her arrival we began Spring with our annual Youth Mass and met the young people in the Visitors' Room. It is always a joy to see the youth and hear of their faith and their requests for prayer.

Sr Mareta became a full member of our community early this year. She first arrived to assist our Carmel in August 2011, and after years of helping us and much discernment, she decided to make Christchurch her permanent home. In late September she returned to her previous Carmel on Wallis Island to celebrate her Silver Jubilee, which occurred on 1st October (and was held later that week) and to farewell her community. What a joyful occasion that was - it seemed like the whole island turned out to celebrate with her!



Father Trinkle, Bishop Emeritus Basil Meeking, Sr Catherine of Christ & Bishop Paul Martin sm (Mother Dorothea is at the back).

Back in Christchurch on 1st October, the Feast of St Therese, Sr Catherine of Christ made her Solemn Profession of Religious Vows. She was blessed with the presence of family and friends, some coming all the way from the United States of America. Her spiritual director, Father Trinkle, who had originally suggested she think of the contemplative life, made the long trip from America accompanied by two friends. It was a day of great rejoicing for us, our first Solemn Profession in 15 years.

November was a big month for our oldest member, Sr Teresa. On the 7th she turned 90. We had arranged to surprise her with the visit of her nephew, Carmelite Father Shane Kelleher, all the way from Australia for the occasion. It was hard to keep his coming a secret, but to see her face when he walked in made it all worthwhile. We now look forward to her 100th! Father Shane took the opportunity to have some days of rest and holiday while he was in New Zealand. About the same time we were blessed to have another overseas visitor, Jesuit Father William Blazek, who gave us three days of Retreat before giving our Diocesan Priests their Retreat, while we continued with five days of silence.

We thought that our Earthquake repairs would be completed this year, but unfortunately not. A tiler fixed the gap in the cloister between our main building and novitiate building in March. A month later more tiles popped in the alcove leading to our Refectory. These were eventually repaired towards the end of the year. There's still the end of the main building to be repaired; we hope that will be completed next year. Our old hen house was demolished during the year (15 years after our last hens left us) as it had become a bit unsafe, with cattle chewing on its wiring. Speaking of which, in May Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, our steers, went to another farm for "finishing school" as it looked like it would be a lean Winter. In August Louis, Stevie and Frankie, our new calves, arrived. The three-month rest for the land did it good and the grass is now flourishing in the paddocks.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have helped us in any way this year. We pray that Our Lord will bless you and your loved ones in whatever way you most need at this time, and that from that little stable in Bethlehem, his shining star will brighten your lives and those of your families, both at Christmas and throughout 2020.

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



Sister Teresa of Jesus



"The Cattle are lowing..."