



Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

As we begin Advent, and ponder the year that has been and the situation our world is now in, we can sing wholeheartedly: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel!” and hope that all people will come to see their need for a Saviour.

Our year began at Midnight on New Year’s Eve/Day, with our usual vigil of prayer for the year ahead. In the morning Emeritus Bishop Basil Meeking celebrated our first Mass of the Year, as he had done for decades, and visited us afterwards. After he left, we proceeded to our New Year’s Day picnic at our outside “Carith” area. The sun was obscured by smoke that had come over the sea from the Australian bushfires – the whole atmosphere was surreal, and rather eerie. We wondered what 2020 would bring.

In late January Mother Antonina from Samoa Carmel arrived for health treatment. A few days after her departure in February, Mother Teresa and Sister Pauline arrived from Tonga Carmel. Covid-19 had not reached New Zealand at that time, and they were the only ones on their flight wearing masks. However, the first case was reported on the day of their arrival. During Mother Teresa’s knee surgery on 23rd March the announcement was made that New Zealand was going into lockdown, and all elective surgery was immediately cancelled. God’s timing was, as always, perfect! Had her surgery been scheduled even a few hours later, it would have been postponed. However, their expected 2 month stay turned into 5 months, as restrictions prevented a return to Tonga.

March brought Carmelite Father Ferdinand de la Cruz to our shores again and we were blessed to have him stay with us for a week, and provide input to our Carmelite Secular Order and to ourselves. The unprecedented “Alert Level 4 lockdown” began on 25th March, bringing all comings and goings to a standstill for more than a month.

Many will think that Carmelites are pretty good at lockdown, and that is true. The days were not greatly different for us (though somewhat quieter without the doorbell ringing) except for what is central to our lives: the Mass. Like many others, we had the daily Mass livestreamed from our Cathedral. We were grateful to be able to participate in this way, but rejoiced when once again we could have Mass “in person”.



Lockdown brought with it lessons about being prepared – we had plenty of extra flour as our Altar Bread production had come to a halt, but we discovered very quickly that expired yeast doesn’t raise bread!

We were very grateful to generous friends who lined up at the supermarket to ensure we didn’t miss out, until we were eventually able to shop online again. And what thoughtfulness to include some bags of Easter Eggs along with the loaves of bread!



Restrictions didn’t prevent us celebrating Sister Mary Teresa’s Diamond Jubilee of Profession on 5th June and Sister Elizabeth’s 90th birthday on 13th July (joining our other Sister Teresa as a nonagenarian). How blessed we are with the witness of these older sisters who have lived serenely through many challenges.



Our community Retreat had been scheduled for early in 2020, but was cancelled once borders closed, so we looked into having other input. Throughout the year we made use of the excellent formation material available online, and benefited from courses on Scripture, Theology and Spirituality. Surely St Teresa would have been delighted to have these “learned men (and women)” beamed right into her monastery! Towards the end of the year we had a marvellous retreat with online talks from Dr Edward Sri, on *Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother* and *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*. We highly recommend these wonderful talks.

We farewelled many dear ones in 2020. Mother Dorothea's mother, Yvonne Wilkes, died in May, in her late 90's. Restrictions allowed for a small gathering at her funeral in our Chapel. The following month Emeritus Bishop Basil Meeking, aged 90, went to the Lord. We were blessed to have his body with us for more than 24 hours before he went to the Pro-Cathedral for his Requiem Mass. Several others were also farewelled from our Chapel, ranging from a baby only days old, to a man tragically drowned while fishing, to those who had weathered many decades of life. May they rest in peace. Fortunately, a dear friend who caught Covid-19 recovered after some time in hospital.

Sister Faustina returned to her Carmel in Thailand in January to renew her Visa, and arrived back here before Covid-19. Restrictions meant that she was unable to return to Polytechnic to study English, but an even better solution was found in the form of a tutor. Alasdair came 3 days a week and provided for her English needs and those of another couple of sisters (and also provided for our vegetable garden!). We transformed our Chapter Room into a school room, and temporarily renamed it *The Carmelite University*.



It was a good year for growth around our monastery. Our cattle continued to increase in size, but still the grass in the paddocks reached such a height that we had to have hay cut. The 3 sisters who weren't here when we last did this in 2017 were able to experience the fun of seeing it baled, and helping to bring the bales up to the shed. The vegetable gardens benefited from lockdown and the halting of some of our other works, and now every sister under 65 has a plot, each named and watched over by a Patron Saint, and a crop to contribute to the monastery table. A team of retired men arrived in August and generously spent a

day pruning our roses; now we are enjoying the fruits of their work with the flourishing of new season roses to beautify our surroundings and provide for our Chapel.

A decade after our big earthquake all our repairs were finally finished. While assessing the last area to fix, it was discovered that our bell tower needed restoration work, so had to be craned down, repaired and put back up. We hope it will now withstand any future seismic activity.

We continue to thank God for calling men and women to serve him. Our two temporarily professed sisters renewed their vows during the year; Sister Anne Teresa was accepted to make Solemn Profession in 2021. Father Tang Phan, after many Covid-related postponements, was ordained in October and celebrated Mass here; Father Roger Gilbride fssp came and gave us his first blessing; and we have had the joy of having Marist Deacon Ben d'Souza in our Parish as he prepares for his ordination on 28th November. There is much work for these ardent men and women to do to bring others to Christ.

Most of you would have shared our sadness and disappointment at the choice many of our fellow New Zealanders made in October to allow euthanasia. We thank all those who worked so hard to help people choose life. We will continue to pray that minds and hearts will be changed, and that there will come a day when every human life is valued, and the sick and vulnerable are surrounded with love and true compassion. For those of you who work caring for the sick, or supporting life in any way, we encourage you to stay courageous, and be assured of our prayers, sacrifices and support.



We take this opportunity to thank those who have helped us in any way this year. We were unable to have our annual Our Lady of Mount Carmel Mass in July to thank you in person, but know that we are very grateful for all you do for us. May God bless you abundantly during these times of great uncertainty and much suffering. As we gather around the Crib this Christmas we will ask the One who gives us Life to fill you with his Love.

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