



Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

Once again it is time to look back over our past year as we prepare for the celebration of Our Lord's coming at Christmas. Just when there seemed to be light at the end of the tunnel with the pandemic abating, we were saddened by the invasion of Ukraine. Since February a picture of the icon of Our Lady of Kyiv, along with a map of Ukraine and photos of our Carmelite Friars and Nuns from Ukraine, have featured in our Choir, with candles burning to accompany our prayers.



For our community, 2022 has been a year of both dying and new life. As the New Year dawned, we continued to await with Sister Mary Teresa the Lord's coming. The initial prognosis in August 2021 was of hours, days or weeks, but we were blessed to have Sister with us for almost 9 months. The Nurse Maude District Nurses were very helpful, providing an electronic bed, hoist and other equipment, along with regular visits. All our celebrations during this time centred around our Infirmary, so Sister Mary Teresa could continue to participate to the full in community life. We looked forward to Easter; however, things didn't go as expected. On Wednesday of Holy Week one of the priests of our Marist community tested positive for Covid, and so their whole community had to self-isolate. We ended up watching the ceremonies for the Easter Triduum online; it was a blessing to at least be virtually part of the vibrant liturgies at our Pro-Cathedral.



*Sister Mary Teresa of St Augustine*

On 4<sup>th</sup> May the pandemic finally reached our community. Two of us tested positive that day and began to self-isolate, and the following few days saw a total of 9 out of 11 of us with Covid. We pretty much shut down the monastery and focused on providing for the needs of the sick. Mass was online again, and meals were sourced from outside. Sister Mary Teresa tested positive on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and in her weakened condition, deteriorated quickly. She died on the 11<sup>th</sup> with all of us gathered around her bed. As we were still isolating, we had a private Requiem Mass on the 13<sup>th</sup>, attended only by our Parish Priest, Father Peter Head, two funeral directors and a cameraman, all dressed in PPE. We livestreamed the Mass and burial, so for the first time viewers were able to see the procession to our private cemetery. May she rest in peace. The rest of us recovered well and it looked like our Infirmary would then be empty for a time...

However, during Mass on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in July, Sister Elizabeth lost consciousness and was taken to hospital. Her health continued to be up and down in the weeks following, so she moved permanently into our Infirmary, under the care of Sister Anne. Our cat Sophie has established herself there once more as assistant infirmarian. Sister Elizabeth has always been afraid of animals, so we try to keep them apart, though Sophie repeatedly attempts to break boundaries. At the moment the truce is holding.... We were delighted on the first day of Spring to finally hear that Sister Anne was granted New Zealand residence.

On 29<sup>th</sup> September, the Feast of the Archangels, Sister Dorothea fell and broke her hip. After three weeks in hospital, she returned to us, and is now in our



*The chief and assistant infirmarians celebrating Sister Anne's Residence*



*Bishop Michael Gielen & Sister Lauren of the Cross*

Infirmary. Sophie was so excited at the prospect of Sister Dorothea coming home from hospital that she deposited a bird and a rat under her bed in preparation for the big day. Fortunately, we discovered them before Sister returned. On our many trips to hospital, Sister Anne kept an eagle eye out for possible improvements for our Infirmary. In late November work was begun installing a kitchenette there, and there are future plans to set up mobile walls to provide more privacy.

On the Solemnity of St Teresa of Jesus, Sister Lauren was transformed into Sister Lauren of the Cross, receiving the Habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in a private ceremony after Morning Prayer. She then joined family and friends to celebrate Mass, presided over by Bishop Michael and several priests. She now begins her two-year Novitiate. As an Extern Sister she has been transporting us to many medical appointments and doing other messages which cannot be done online, as well as greeting those who come to the monastery. Please keep her and the other women discerning vocations to our Carmel in your prayers.

Other memorable moments during the year included Sister Teresa celebrating 75 years in Carmel on 25<sup>th</sup> March, the appointment of Bishop Michael Gielen to our Diocese in May, and Sisters Marietta and Faustina celebrating big "0" birthdays in June and November. In October, Carmelite Father Rafal Wilkowski, stationed at our General

House in Rome, came for a brief visit. He left on 14<sup>th</sup> October, visiting Sister Dorothea in hospital on the way to the airport. Along with those joys was the sorrow of farewelling Sister Elizabeth's older sister, Mary, who went home to the Lord on 24<sup>th</sup> September, after a long and fruitful life. She had been visiting her little sister in Carmel for more than 71 years, and now will be interceding for her from Heaven. Her Rosary Vigil was held in our Chapel.

During the year we participated in courses from the Carmelite College in Rome, the Teresianum, via Zoom. The time difference meant some early rising, but it was worth it; we managed beginning at 5:15am and then 4:15am but when it came to 3:15am we had met our match and watched the classes later. We also discovered the Liturgical Institute online courses and did a course on the Liturgy of the Hours and another on Beauty in the Liturgy; it's a blessing that we can share in high quality courses from so far away.



*Fr Rafal and most of our Community*

In November, for the first time in three years we were able to have a live community retreat. With Marist Father Carl Telford we looked back in gratitude at all the mercies the Lord has given us, and forward in hope to whatever He has planned for us in the future.

We thank all those who have assisted us in living our contemplative life this year. You have helped us bale hay for our cattle, weeded our unruly gardens, pruned our roses, fed us when we had Covid and at other demanding times, shared your financial and legal advice with us and provided in many other ways so we could continue our life of prayer. Our Lord knows what you have done and will reward you. May He bless you abundantly this Christmas and through the New Year, with the peace and joy that only He can give.

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