

Carmelite Monastery  
52 Halswell Road  
Christchurch 8025  
New Zealand



Christmas 2024

Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

Greetings from Christchurch Carmel! This Year of Prayer has passed swiftly, and we are now on the brink of the Jubilee Year 2025. As Pope Francis calls us to be “Pilgrims of Hope” in a world where hope seems scant, we look back on a year of grace and look forward to what lies ahead of us. We have much to give thanks for, but also much to pray for, as we hear of so much turmoil in our world and in the lives of so many.

We had the joy of Sr Lauren of the Cross making her First Profession as an Extern Sister on 15<sup>th</sup> October, a first for our Carmel. Bishop John Adams of Palmerston North Diocese, for whom she worked as a pastoral assistant, concelebrated the Mass, along with many other priests. Her welcoming presence for those who visit our monastery has been a great blessing, and now that she is professed, she will be sharing more of the treasures of Carmelite Spirituality with those interested. At the beginning of winter, Sr Dorothea moved downstairs to our Infirmary, making it a full house there. We continued to upgrade our medical know how, with a hands-on session on CPR (which we hope we won't need). In November, Sr Teresa broke the age record in our Carmel by turning 95.



*Sr Lauren's First Profession*

We were happy to welcome Mother Antonina in July and Sr Marie Ange in November to stay with us a few days on their way to the Association Council Meeting & Formators Meeting in Australia. In late October we were all replenished with a wonderful retreat from Marist Father Barry Malone. His inspiring recitation of poetry and his varied fund of stories were greatly appreciated. Our Carmelite Father Adalbert Imperial from Australia stayed with us in November, before giving our Secular Order their annual retreat. What providence that he could be here for the Feasts of All Carmelite Saints and All Carmelite Souls. Half of our community have lost loved ones since last Christmas, losing a brother, nephew, mother, father and grandmother. May these dear ones rest in peace.

On the farm our steers, Ezekiel, Bartholomew and Lawrence, grew well; we baled hay for them in January on what was one of the hottest days of Summer. This will come in handy, as they have lost most of one paddock (more about that later) and there are currently large mounds of dirt on the remaining paddocks. Our hens produced abundantly (though one in secret between a wall and our summer house and not found till she had amassed a nest of 21 eggs!) Another ended up with a bad leg in November. Sr Lauren placed her in a cat cage and took her to the vet, coping with the dogs at the clinic who would have liked to make a meal of her. They came home with anti-inflammatories and instructions on her convalescence. This included some time in solitary confinement, but close enough so that the rest of the brood would not turn against her when she returned to community life. It was recommended that a “buddy” share solitary with her, so each night a new conscript was chosen to provide this companionship. She has recovered well. Our cat Sophie spends a lot of time sneaking into places where she can find a bed, particularly in the Infirmary.



*Sr Dorothea holds a friend*

In January underground drains damaged in the Christchurch earthquakes were replaced. Soon after this, work was begun upgrading our Altar Bread baking office, including installing new vents, shelving and tables, and replacing the mixing machine that had passed its diamond jubilee. The result is an office which is much easier to use. Our Easter Ceremonies were well supported, and parking space was at a premium. This resulted in a decision to move an enclosure wall and turn most of one paddock into a new car park. It was used for our celebration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in July (though a bit muddy), and the foundational gravel was down by mid-October; a top layer will be applied when our major building works have been completed.



*Renovated Altar Bread Baking Office*

And now to a big decision we have made. When our founding Sisters arrived in 1933, they built a temporary wooden Chapel adjacent to the house they had bought. Their next building priority was to construct a monastery so they could accept vocations; this was completed in 1938. After World War II, more room was needed to house a growing community, so a further wing was added in 1950; then there was the foundation to Samoa in 1959 to provide for. Over these decades the “temporary” Chapel has been lengthened several times. It stood up well to the earthquakes in 2010/2011.



*Our Chapel*

We have discovered that substantial changes are needed to bring it up to current fire compliance regulations, so we have taken the decision to rebuild it, making it wider and providing suitable exits. This will also give us the opportunity to use materials that require less maintenance, thus reducing long-term costs. Our main monastery building, built of brick in 1938, has required minimal exterior maintenance over the past almost nine decades, and also stood up well to the earthquakes. A rebuild will also provide the

opportunity to add some features that will enhance its beauty, like stained glass windows, though some of these may need to be phased in some time in the future.

Our vision is that there will be a round Holy Spirit window high up in the sanctuary, shining down into the main body of the Chapel. Arched windows along the sides will tell the story of the various Carmelite Saints, as they have let God shine through them, seeking union with him in prayer. In the foyer we hope to have a window of Christ the King, our Monastery’s titular. We want our Chapel to be a place where those who come are inspired to enter into that great loving conversation with God, which is prayer.

A rebuild will come with a substantial cost, and for this reason we intend to raise funds, something we have not done for more than 65 years. We will be setting up a place on our website [www.christchurchcarmel.org.nz](http://www.christchurchcarmel.org.nz) to provide detailed information and updates of where the project is at. We are intending to launch this fundraising campaign early next year. We ask for your prayers that all will go according to God’s will.

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