

Carmelite Monastery
52 Halswell Road
Christchurch 8025
New Zealand



Christmas 2025

Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

Greetings from Christchurch Carmel! As the Jubilee Year of Hope comes to its end, we would like to share some of its blessings with you. This year we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the canonization of St Thérèse, she who said "We can never have too much confidence in the good God... As we hope in Him so shall we receive." On May 17th, the actual anniversary, our Extern Sister Lauren led a retreat day on the Saint, which was much appreciated by those attending. On October 1st, St Thérèse's Feast Day, a rose bush named "Scent by an Angel" was blessed and planted in her honour. The next Jubilee Year in 2033, celebrating 2,000 years since Christ's Resurrection, will also be our monastery's Centenary year.



*Sr Mareta planting the St Thérèse
Centenary Rose in our Preau
(Inset: blooming in November!)*

Living in New Zealand, we don't often get to see our Carmelite friars, but on July 30th our Carmelite brother, Father Aloysius Rego, flew down to Christchurch for a few hours from Auckland, where he had been conducting a retreat, to preside over our triennial elections. The following month, our Carmelite Father General, Father Miguel Márquez Calle, visited Australia. It was wonderful to participate in our first online regional meeting of Carmelite nuns through Zoom, with Father Miguel onsite in Brisbane answering our questions. Though he is Spanish, he managed a very good rendition of the Kiwi pronunciation of "Fish and Chips" (after having enjoyed the meal itself)!



*Sr Cushla with Fr Miguel, our Father
General*

Sisters Teresa, Elizabeth and Dorothea, though residing in our infirmary, remain lively members of our community. We are grateful for the equipment



Sr Teresa celebrates her 96th Birthday

and products supplied to us that help us continue to care for them in our monastery. Sister Teresa celebrated her 96th birthday in November, and Sister Elizabeth turned 95 in July. All three joined us late at night watching the funeral of Pope Francis, and the beginning of the conclave and the inauguration of the papacy of Pope Leo XIV. A memorable moment was witnessing live as Pope Leo appeared on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica for the first time. We had been fervently praying, and each sister had a list of Cardinals to specially ask the Holy Spirit to guide. (Sister Dorothea was praying for Cardinal Robert Prevost.) Just over a week after the conclave, Father Barry brought a fellow Marist, Peruvian Father Miguel Angel, to Mass and to meet us; he had just that morning been appointed a bishop, the first bishop appointment by Pope Leo! It certainly is a small world.

October brought the return of the Carmelite Youth Mass at the request of the young people. This had been an annual occurrence before the Covid pandemic. About 100 young people participated in the Mass, and met us afterwards in small groups. Some of them were the children of the youth who had participated in our youth Masses when they were young. We were touched by their questions and their obvious thirst to grow in their spiritual lives.

In March, Carlo and Mosese, our new steers, arrived. The former was named after our millennial St Carlo Acutis, the latter after the new Archbishop of Samoa (who visited us a few months later and was amused by his namesake). Our new flock of hens arrived in September and within weeks they'd begun their work supplying us with fresh eggs. Our cat, Sophie, continues to dominate the infirmary and prowl around the monastery as if she were in charge.

2025 was a year that called for much patience on the part of those who came to visit our monastery. Our road has been undergoing extensive remodelling with underground pipe replacement, with the result that our entrance is often surrounded by barricades. As part of the road upgrade, in January we permanently lost the right-hand turn into our property, which means that travellers from most of Christchurch now have to drive a considerable distance past our monastery, turn around and come back. The sharp left-hand turn was always going to prove a challenge for large trucks, such as the cattle trucks that transport our steers. We decided to widen our gates to improve access. The workmen digging the trench for the new sliding gate proved very versatile, as one day they had to carry Sr Elizabeth in a wheelchair over a gulf of newly poured concrete so she could get to a medical appointment!



We shared with you in last year's newsletter about our decision to rebuild our Chapel. We shared the concept design in a YouTube video on 5th February, and since then, our rebuild fund has been growing, with the very generous donations of many people from far and wide. The more detailed architectural and engineering plans have been ongoing throughout the year and as we write this, we are nearing the announcement of the fundraising goal. Chris Cooke, the TV producer who made the Sunday documentary which aired back in 2016, came for the day on 16th October

and filmed our fundraising video. Every sister appears in it, and it gives a slice of life in our monastery on that day. We'll soon have the video on our website, where you can also find out more about our chapel fundraiser and contribute if you would like to: <https://christchurchcarmel.org.nz/chapel-rebuild.html>



Filming the fundraiser video. Clockwise from top left: Sr Anne, Sr Faustina, Sr Marietta, Srs Elizabeth and Dorothea, Sr Catherine, Sr Lauren.

Several friends of our Carmel went home to the Lord this year, along with Sr Mareta's dear mother, Liva, who died unexpectedly in Samoa in July. May these dear ones rest in peace.

As this year draws to a close, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported us in our contemplative journey, without which our lives of prayer wouldn't be possible. 2026 will be a special "sanjuanist" year for us Carmelites, when we celebrate 300 years since St John of the Cross was canonized, and 100 years since he was declared a Doctor of the Church. This same man who wrote *The Dark Night*, one Christmas grasped the statue of the Infant Jesus in his arms and began to dance with joy. We wish the same joy and deep peace to you and all you love this Christmastime and assure you of our prayers for the year ahead. May God bless you abundantly!

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