

JM + JT



Peace of Christ!

Carmelite Monastery
52 Halswell Road
Christchurch 8025
New Zealand

“We have seen His star...”

December 2009

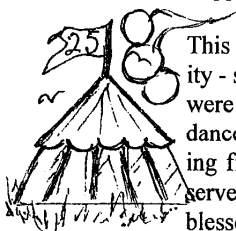
Dear Carmelite Family, relatives and friends,

Greetings to you all at this special time of the year when our thoughts go to all those whose lives we have touched in some way or whose kindness has reached out to us. We are having a Christmas Novena of Masses offered in our chapel and all your many intentions will be included. These days of Advent are like a journey as we travel with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem knowing that at the end of all our preparations we shall find “the Child lying in a manger.” The Liturgy of these days is so rich and the hymns - many of them reaching back centuries - express so well the longings of our hearts for the One who is the end of all our longings. “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel...”

This letter is an opportunity to share with you some of the events that have graced this past year, even though God’s purpose may have been somewhat obscure. The first that comes to mind is the mighty thunderstorm of January 18th. The five o’clock bell rang for evening prayer to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning. However we settled down to a quiet hour with the Lord but before long doors opening and closing, agitated whispers followed by rapid footsteps and the rattle of buckets warned all contemplatives that action was called for. As we ran upstairs water ran down to meet us: the rain was pouring in through the roof of the old building (c.1880’s) where the gables meet.. To add to the excitement, in the midst of it all the fire alarm went off and wouldn’t stop! Eventually the downpour ceased, allowing us to empty buckets and mop up the water. Thankfully we don’t have carpets so with doors and windows opened wide the floors were soon dry and thanks to “High and Dry Ltd” a brand new roof will protect us in the future.



In July we were privileged to welcome six young people who were taking part in the Galilee experience, eager to discern God’s will for their future and interested in the different paths open to them. That same month Our Lady of Mt Carmel Mass was celebrated with the Filipino choir whose music added much beauty to the liturgy. Also in July we met the Dominican Sisters who had come from Australia to take part in the “Arise” event. It was a delight to meet these young, women, so alert to God’s call to spread His word among all peoples, especially the young. It was also heartening to meet the Youth Team leaders of our parishes in retreat here, and to learn of their desire to help other young people find their place in the Church - all signs of fresh hope. Another moving moment for us was to hear Pat Barrett and his daughter Anna Marie telling us of the Divine Mercy Congress they attended in Samoa and the enthusiastic response it received. Earlier in the year we were privileged to have a visit from Archbishop Alipati of Samoa who celebrated Sunday Mass with us and brought us greetings from our Sisters in Apia. In August we had the pleasure of welcoming the Samoan High Commissioner to New Zealand, Asi James Blakelock and his charming wife, Helen. These contacts not only give much pleasure to us all, and especially our Samoan sisters, but also intensify our bonds with our daughter house in Apia, who this year celebrated their Golden Jubilee. So it was only natural that when the tsunami struck Samoa in October we should feel deeply for all those involved in that disaster. Although none of the relatives of the Sisters in Samoa or Christchurch were injured it was impossible not to be affected by the suffering of the people, only alleviated by their strong faith and the tremendous support which poured in from all sides.



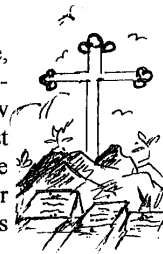
This year saw the celebration of the Silver Jubilees of Sister Dorothea and Sister Mary of the Trinity - such joyous occasions for our community as well as families and friends of both Sisters. They were real gala days as the beautiful Jubilee Masses were followed by afternoon tea and song and dance on the front lawn as the guests expressed their appreciation of our two Sisters’ lives of loving fidelity. Congratulations to those of our young friends, including some who had been altar servers in our chapel, who were married during the year. May these happy marriages be further blessed with the passage of time.

Pope Benedict's announcement in June of the Year for Priests was greeted with enthusiasm as an opportunity not only to pray for our priests but to express our gratitude for their lives of loving service to us for over 76 years. The highlight for us was the visit to our chapel of the Icon of St John Vianney, so beautifully written by Jenny Trolove. We were deeply moved when the scarlet-lined doors of the wooden case opened, and there stood the Cure of Ars, clasping his Crucifix, so humble, with his Spirit-filled eyes gazing into ours. Although the visit was brief, the memory of those blessed moments remains with us.



On 1st October we had the joy of seeing the treasured Crucifix, focal point of our monastery garden re-erected. The corpus (terra cotta figure of the Crucified) having deteriorated beyond repair, we were lamenting the fact to Father Vaughan Leslie during a chance conversation when he volunteered to investigate its restoration. This led to contacting the firm of Gibson Patterns who removed the corpus and succeeded in making a mould. The result is a beautiful fibre glass replica of the original with a soft ivory finish able to withstand decades of exposure to the elements. Our sincere thanks to Mark and Matthew—aptly named!—who so reverently reproduced this work of art. No wonder the bellbirds sang all through Spring and now the roses are a mass of blooms.

The year also had its farewells as with regret we farewelled our parish priest, Father Roger Yarte, in November as he left us to return to the Philippines. His youthful bearing and simplicity of manner combined with good humour, won him a place in our hearts, and many people have said how much they appreciated his homilies. Thank you, Father Roger for all you did for us. The past months have seen a number of our friends and relatives, including our Sister Cushla's father, leave us for heaven. As well as remembering them at Mass and during the Divine Office we pray for them especially on All Souls Day when we process down to our little cemetery and place flowers on our dear Sisters' graves and sing "Eternal Rest..."



Early November found us in retreat given by emeritus Bishop Basil Meeking whose beautiful conferences revealed to us something of "the brightness of Revelation and the darkness of Mystery." Also in November a visit from Father John Kelly of the Cistercian Abbey, Kopua, was an unexpected joy as we always feel an affinity with those leading the monastic life. All the more so as we already knew of Father John's devotion to St Therese from his Marist Messenger articles. When we touched upon this he replied: "Yes - St Therese grasped the essence of sanctity - she has something to say to everyone. And she was supremely intelligent."

During the year it was a joy to welcome our Carmelite visitors from Australia, Father Greg Homering to be followed by our own Kiwi Brother Shane Kelleher with his nephew Jack. These were times of joyful sharing for which we are always grateful. Our Secular Order too, is a great support and we rejoiced to see several members come forward to make their commitments during the past year. Congratulations to all !

Now it is time to say thank-you to our many friends, near and far, whose kindness, expressed in countless ways, enables us to live our life of prayer in serenity and joy. So many requests for prayer pour into us daily so we are well aware of your needs and never cease to admire your faith and trust in God's loving mercy. The Star of Bethlehem leads us through the uncertainties of life to where the Christ Child in the arms of His mother awaits us. We may have little to give Him, but we can give Him our hearts...

And you can be sure that He will bless you with the fullness of His peace.

With our love and prayerful greetings,

Your Sisters in Christ,
Carmelite Monastery of Christ the King
Christchurch