



Dear Friends

Come let us adore Him who is Christ the Lord. As we enter Advent to prepare for His coming at Christmas we are painfully aware of so much pain in the world, caused by war and violence and indeed natural disasters caused by humankind's inhumanity to each other. The suffering in Ukraine and Russia and elsewhere drags on and we are especially aware of the trouble in the Middle East through our friendship with the Carmels there. Our fervent prayer is for an end to the violence and the restoration of peace. Peace is what the Angels sang on Christmas night and how our world longs for that peace.

Since our last newsletter we have lost our dear Sister Breda. She had been in frail health and just before Christmas she suddenly got a lot weaker. In the days following Christmas day we realised that she didn't have much longer with us. We were very blessed that our doctors were so attentive to her and called in the home care team who were wonderful. She died very peacefully in her own bed on the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> January. Our Christmas was spent watching with her as she awaited the Lord's final call.

In July we had our elections for a new Prioress and Sr Maria graciously and generously accepted. We are all very grateful to her.

We have had a busy year and marked all the seasons as they came. We joined our Carmelite Fathers in Oxford via Zoom for many talks. They provide wonderful lectures and opportunities for deepening our faith and Carmelite life. The talks are available for everyone and as the site says provide food for the soul. [www.carmelite.uk.net/oxford-priory](http://www.carmelite.uk.net/oxford-priory)  
In Advent Fr Liam Finnerty opened up the Prophets for us heralding the coming of the Lord.  
In February, his presentation on St Teresa's commentary on

the Our Father was so enriching.

Bishop Greg Homing gave the Lenten talks on St Therese and we are looking forward to this years presentations for Advent. There were several other talks available and we dipped into them on occasion.

Advent begins the Church's new year and the tone of the liturgy changes to expectant waiting and is very beautiful. We have our own little prayer services around the Advent wreath which we all cherish and is a very special part of the Christmas season for all of us. Sr Teresita has a wonderful creative gift and has enhanced our liturgy and our studies over the past year. We had a beautiful prayer service for new year and since we resumed our studies on St Therese she has animated and surprised us with her gifts. Study has become a joy as she is so creative with the "homework"!

In April Mount Merrion Church hosted the annual celebration of Religious Life in Dublin Diocese. Four of us attended and it was a beautiful and joyous celebration enhanced by the Dublin Diocesan Choir.

In May Sr Teresa was invited to the ordination of Bishop Donal Roche and the installation of Bishop Paul Dempsey as Auxillary Bishops of Dublin. What a wonderful celebration of faith it was. The atmosphere was so uplifting and the liturgy so rich. May the Lord be with them always.

The annual Contemplative Gathering was held this year in Mount St Anne's retreat centre in Portarlinton and the speaker was Dr Jessie Rogers on the theme Finding and Following God's Footsteps. Srs Maria and Teresita attended and found it very enriching. We listened to the tapes later! Our younger Sisters in Community – our Living Flames group – had their annual meeting in Dunardagh in September. It was a lively meeting by all accounts and Fr Vincent O'Hara shared his wisdom and insights on St Therese with the group. On the way home several of the Living Flames came to Roebuck for dinner and what a lively couple of hours that was!!

Fr Donagh O'Shea O.P. directed our annual retreat. Over the eight days his contemplative approach awakened in us the wonder and beauty of God as revealed in nature.

Our Association General Assembly took place in Dunardagh

in October and was a time of grace for all of us.

We had many Carmelite visitors this year. Among them were Sr Hannah from the Netherlands. She is the only novice there and joins our Living Flames on Zoom for some talks and was invited to join them in Dunardagh in September. She stayed for a couple of days before and after with us and it was interesting to hear about Carmelite life in the Netherlands and about her own journey to Carmel.

Sr Rita Marie is with us for a sabbatical from Nazareth Carmel and is a native of Hong Kong.

We have live news of the Carmels in the Holy Land and the impact of the war. We keep them in our daily prayers.

Sr Anna New Ross Carmel joined us while she was attending the Emerald language school and both their presences has enriched our Community living.

We've had several other Sisters join us for longer or shorter stays during the year.

Sr Teresita has been awarded Irish citizenship and is excited to have been invited to the ceremony in Killarney in December.

The year was not without its challenges, one memorable one being a day we were standing saying grace before dinner when a Sister noticed through the glass panel in the link door that there was a head moving in the kitchen! Panic as she thought it must be a burglar and the Prioress was dispatched pronto, to sacrifice herself on behalf of the Community!!! The "head" turned out to be a Big birthday balloon which had cast its moorings and was sailing along on the airwaves!! Prioress saved for another day!

Súile, Abby, Seolta and Glen want to be remembered too. It is true they keep us well entertained. We lost little Tuppence in the Summer. She was unwell one evening and a trip to the vet next day revealed that her chest cavity was full of fluid and cancer cells. Too late for medical intervention and we had to say a very quick goodbye. She was such a pleasant little puss and a great companion for Abby who missed her very much. Abby herself had a trip to the vet shortly after Tuppence demise which revealed that she had a cat bite on her tail. It may not seem a cat bite could be serious but our puss took some time to recover from the infection. While we do not know which puss caused such a pain we do know that Abby has not welcomed the latest cat on the block. Luca has come to live at the lodge and is quite a

handsome chap with lots of attitude. He thinks he is king of the palace while Abby insists she is the matriarch around here! There were lots of growls and snarls from the queen and some serious hissing from the king each time they met. Since the bite incident they seem to have come to some sort of agreement to share the space amicably!

Seolta continues his attempts at escape and at one point the minder had enough and invested in an electric fence. That has certainly worked and the threat of a quick shock has kept him at

bay. However one night during the fire works he found a patch not covered by the fence and squeezed out and came calling at the minders window. Luckily it was a dry night as the minder had to get up out of bed and head to the garden to rescue Glen who was stressed at being separated from his companion. Having released him the minder went back to bed and left them free range for the night!! Seolta has a way of looking at you and with his winter curls he looks so cute that what can you do only give him a cuddle. They are two lucky donkeys. Our wildlife continue to thrive and we had an abundance of butterflies, bees and other critters this summer. The stream continues to attract the white egret Bui and Harry and Henrietta the herons have learned from him how to negotiate the electric fence. Land on the bank and dip in under and into the water. One keeps guard on the bank while feeding there and other feeds in the water. George and Ella our buzzards are still with us and the bird table attracts a wide variety of small birds.

We take this opportunity to wish all our families and friends a very blessed Christmas and New Year. We are very aware that so many of our friends are ill and we carry them in our prayer. There have been several deaths among our friends this year and we pray they are with the Lord and we remember especially their families in our prayers at this time.

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