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Dear Friends

Advent is fast approaching and we would like to share our usual yearly news with you. We have been busy these last weeks doing a bit of tidying and cleaning in preparation for Christmas and the quiet time of Advent as we await the birth of our Saviour.

As we approached Advent last year, we had the good news that Sr Teresita had been awarded her Irish citizenship and she was to be conferred on 2nd December in Killarney. Great was her excitement that she would see Kerry and it took a three-day journey to head south. The day itself and a day either side for travel. Sr Teresa happily accompanied her and they set out after Mass on Sunday. Next day they joined the three thousand people being conferred with Irish Citizenship, from all walks of life, from all over the world and all happy to be Irish. We met several other Religious who were conferred on the same day. Next day there were three thousand more people. Unfortunately, there are not many daylight hours in December so viewing the County was limited. On the way home we broke the journey in Barack Obama Plaza and great was the excitement of our new citizen when she discovered the Moo Parlour and had to taste all the flavours!!

On arriving home we were greeted by Papal bunting, Irish and Peruvian flags and balloons galore and the party started! More excitement when she received her first voting card this year and was first out on the day to cast her vote having first made extensive enquiries as to the candidates' suitability!!

Our spiritual preparation for Christmas involved each sister preparing in her heart some part of a baby layette, e.g. booties, cardigan, bonnet with each piece symbolising a virtue to be practiced very specially as a gift for the baby Jesus. The Community animator is very creative as you will see further! We had our usual prayers and little liturgies that we have come to love during Advent.

Just as the day was approaching our big cooker sighed its last breath and we were informed by the gas company the last day for ordering a new one for Christmas was two days away. We

had to order from the website as we didn't have time to visit their showrooms. The beauty arrived and was installed a few days before Christmas and we were all set..... until on Christmas morning we came down to see a very unhappy cook who couldn't get the thing to light. The turkey had to be stuffed into the small oven and all was well and we enjoyed our Christmas dinner even though the issue of the darling oven didn't go away!!! Such is life.

We welcomed in the New Year with a beautiful para liturgy organised again by our animator.

And so, the year began. Bishop Willie Walsh celebrated Mass with us on 3rd of January which was coincidentally Sr Breda's anniversary. They always had a great chat about the hurling. As he left, he told us it might be the last time we would see him as his health had not been good of recent times. We never expected that we would hear of his sudden death on 21st February, so soon after his visit. We attended his funeral Mass via zoom and we trust he is enjoying the glories of Heaven. He was truly a pastoral bishop.

Our beloved Pope Francis was the next to fly to his reward and while we were all saddened by his loss we were inspired by his dying in his boots.

After the period of mourning and continuing our prayers for a worthy successor we anxiously awaited the white smoke. One sister was on the alert to call the sisters. As soon as the alert was raised all made haste to the television. We waited and waited and the curtains parted and the microphones set up and the new Holy Father was announced. It took a minute or two for the news to sink in and then what excitement. The first Peruvian Pope!!!! Our newly conferred Irish citizen didn't forget her roots and she danced with joy. A special celebration supper was called for and again on the day of inauguration.

As part of our preparations for Easter we had a para liturgy on Holy Thursday around a table set as for the Last Supper and had the ritual of the washing of the feet. On Good Friday we made the stations of the cross based on the writings of St Teresa. Sr Teresita sang the Exultet at the Vigil on Holy Saturday night, a first for her and done so well. Kerrie came and played the organ and enhanced the singing. We are very grateful to her for all she does for our liturgy during the year with her lovely voice and her flute on occasion.

At Pentecost we each received a little envelope with a fruit of the Spirit inside. A different one for each. We are to pay special attention to that one until next Pentecost.

On 16th May we joined other Contemplative Sisters in Ballyvaloo Retreat Centre for the annual gathering and we had input from Fr John Harris O.P. Being the Year of Hope the theme was Contemplatives as Pilgrims of Hope.

We had a wonderful day in Avila Carmelite Spirituality Centre when all our Carmelite Sisters who were able to travel assembled to meet with Fr Miguel General of our Order. He was to travel to Ireland but a health issue meant he met us on Zoom instead. The Sisters at home could follow the Zoom and of course the sisters in Avila loved meeting each other again. Next day was the 100th anniversary of the Canonisation of St Therese which saw some of us back in Avila for celebration Mass and dinner. Thanks to the great generosity of our Carmelite Fathers and Brothers. There was a wonderful display in the meeting rooms of all things Theresian which had been gathered over the years by the Theresian Trust and notably by Christine and Maurice Frost.

We have also enjoyed the visits of some of our Carmelite sisters for longer or shorter stays during the year. Sr Rita Marie from Nazareth Carmel who had been with us since last year for health reasons had to leave a bit earlier than expected as she needed to be home to renew her visa to allow her to continue her stay in Israel.

We have had three centenaries of St Therese. 150 years since her birth in 1873, 100 years since her beatification in 1923 and 100 years since her canonization in 1925. We have had a three-year programme of study of her writings to celebrate these great events. This programme was prepared by the Friars of the Order. We have come to know her better and to appreciate her real greatness as a saint and more importantly as a human being and a fellow Carmelite. Our community animator led us through this programme and provided “visual aids” all along the way and set out the homework! Doing the homework and sharing it with each other was both challenging and rewarding and was a source of upbuilding and spiritual enrichment for the Community. We are now entering a year of celebration of St John of the Cross. 300 years since his canonisation on 27th December 1726 and 100 years since he was made a doctor of the Church on 24th August, 1926.

On 8th September we celebrated the feast day of Sr Maria our Prioress. Our animator dreamt up some entertainment. We had the story of the unhappy raven who thought he had a hard life being black and not very attractive. After visiting some

colourful birds, he realised he had the best life possible. We were all assigned the role of one of the birds and dressed accordingly. Getting around with feathers and wings is not as simple as one might think!

Our annual retreat began the next day and Fr Richard Hendrick OFM Cap. brought us back to reality and to living a true monastic life.

The Marist Fathers continue to serve us faithfully and when we were asked to speak at their Triduum for St Therese in their parish in Donore Avenue we felt we could not refuse. Our animator Sr Teresita who had done such work on St Therese was the obvious choice. She gladly took up the challenge and spoke for the three nights and shared her insights on St Therese which were greatly appreciated by our Marist Fathers and all present. The Marist Fathers were having their general Chapter in Rome at the time and they elected Fr Declan Marmion as their new Master General. We will miss his words of wisdom as he was one of our Chaplains. We accompany him with our prayers and ask God's blessing on his work for the order.

Our organ had a key out of order and when David Jeffers came to fix it, he noted the age of the poor organ. He said we would have further trouble and gave us a very fine offer of an upgrade. We accepted the offer and the result has been wonderful. The tone of the organ much surpasses that of the old and has added another dimension to the liturgy.

Recently we made the sad decision to part with our now unused altar bread equipment. It was very large and taking up a lot of space which we could use otherwise. We now have our holistic centre where we previously baked altar breads, an occupation which was always very therapeutic. Some very kind benefactors donated various pieces of gym equipment which they were no longer using, from which we are benefiting to the full.

As we begin Advent we are faced with leaks in the roof. We have been informed that the felt under the slates in at least one part of the building is perished and needs replacing which also includes slates. The monastery is now considered old after only fifty years!

We have been told by some of our friends that the best part of our newsletter is about our pets and that is the first part of the

letter they read but we have left them to the end this time!
All are well you will be glad to hear. We had a visiting cat for a few weeks after Christmas who liked it here and decided to stay but the dame in residence was not too happy. He was quite a gentleman and was self-sufficient and helping to keep the place clean and earning his keep. A couple of people who had met him had him checked for a microchip and said he didn't have one. Someone expressed a wish to adopt him and as our puss wasn't in favour of his staying, we agreed. The lady asked his name and as we didn't know we called him Pusskins. She didn't agree and said he was more of a Sylvester. So, Sylvester Pusskins went off to his new family as we thought. The lady wasn't sure it would work out for her and she was assured he could come back. He was such a genial gentleman, self-sufficient and pleasant that one sister felt he really should be called Sylvester Pusskins Esq. A few days later the lady who adopted him rang to say that she took him to the vet who found he was microchipped and his family were looking for him. They live in Stillorgan. The big question was... his name... In his real home he is known as Jockser!! He will always be welcome to visit and he will have his full title.

Our own puss Abby has a minder and a cat mum. Her minder was off to a course and as the evenings are dark her cat mum was not allowed out to put her to bed so the young one among us was delegated the task. Well of course Abbey saw her chance for a bit of mischief and play and led the young one a merry dance running up trees and under bushes instead of going to bed. The young one returned to the house without success to find cat mum waiting and worried was puss in bed. A little white lie was necessary to put mum at ease and allow her to her bed in peace while the young one went out again and finally succeeded in the task. The minder was told of all the lost sleep on her return!!

Some of us don't hear the doorbell so Súile our dog has taken on the task of letting us know there is somebody at the door and is on the welcoming committee. If you have visited you surely have met her. All she wants is someone to cuddle her all day. Our donkeys Seolta and Glen are well and happy. They have all the fields to themselves this weather since the cattle went home in October. They are very adept at picking up whether you have come to give them a cuddle or to take them from the field and their reaction is very different on both occasions. If they get the message you are there to take them away to leaner pastures, they kick their heels in the air and are off. Otherwise, they love a cuddle and a hug. Our buzzards are well too and are seen feeding regularly. The bluetits dominate

the bird feeder and the robins mark their territory. The other birds get in there too.

We take this opportunity to thank you all most sincerely for your love, care and generosity over the past year. It has all been greatly appreciated. Our deepest sympathies and prayers are with our friends who have suffered loss and bereavement during the year. Know that we carry you in our prayers. May Christmas be a time of blessing and peace and may 2026 bring peace and harmony to our world.

God bless

From all of us.

He is coming...

Down the long ages of despair
He comes as Hope.
Down the rough road of doubt
He comes as Faith.

Down the broken byways
of the human heart
He comes as Love. ...



Sit in sacred stillness...
Breathe the deep breath of
blessing.

(Brother Richard Hendrick OFM Cap. ('On the Edge of Waiting'))

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