

Carmelite Monastery
52 Halswell Road
Christchurch 8025
New Zealand



Christmas 2023

Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

As 2023 draws to a close, and we prepare to celebrate again the birth of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, we come to share with you the happenings in our Carmel since last Christmas.

On February 21st we marked the 90th anniversary of the arrival of our founding nuns from Sydney, Australia, to establish the first Carmelite monastery in New Zealand, here in Christchurch. We celebrated at our 8:30am Mass, followed by morning tea. For most of those 90 years, Sisters Teresa and Elizabeth have lived here; they too reached big milestones this year: in February, Sister Elizabeth (70 years of profession) and in October, Sister Teresa (75 years of profession). We count ourselves very blessed to have these two sisters still with us, living lives of prayer in the midst of our community. Both now reside in our Infirmary which, centrally located, is a very important part of our monastery. In a world which increasingly sets aside the sick and elderly, we proclaim the truth that they matter, and that they continue to work powerfully for the good of the world.

It was fitting this year that we would welcome three Australian Carmelite nuns, Sisters Moira, Maria and Jennifer, as our Carmel hosted, for the first time, the annual Council Meeting of the Association of Our Lady of the Southern Cross. Knowing how cold April can be in Christchurch, we sent warnings to them about the need to be prepared. However, the weather turned out surprisingly warm while they were here. On a bright, sunny day we were able to show them around our gardens and grounds. The work of the Council took most of the day, but each evening we gathered around the table to tell stories and recreate, with much laughter. It was particularly special to have them here for ANZAC day; once again Australians and New Zealanders line up to battle for peace, this time in a spiritual battle.



During the Association Council Meeting in April

Another first this year was our triennial Canonical Co-Visitation, conducted by our Regional Vicar, Father Bernard Hancock, and a Carmelite nun, Sister Jennifer, from Toronto Carmel; we appreciated their listening and encouragement, and welcomed the recommendations they made regarding formation and improvements to the buildings outside our enclosure. When we began to look at how to implement this latter (with the help of some free architectural software) we decided to undertake a major remodelling of the whole area. We entrusted this project to St Joseph, who always supplies our needs, and expected that it would be done in the next 5-10 years. However, St

Joseph was working to a different timeline, and someone contacted us at this time, who, finding out about the planned renovations, generously offered to help. We have now engaged a builder and an architect to complete this. It will mean that our outside area will be out of bounds for several months next year when the project is underway, but we think the new setup will be a big improvement and we look forward to its completion.

This year our open-plan Infirmary was renovated and transformed into a partitioned room, with both fixed and mobile walls, providing more privacy for the sisters residing there long-term. When Sr Teresa returned home, after five



weeks in hospital following a stroke, we were given up-to-date equipment to enable us to continue to look after her. We are grateful to several therapists who came to do strengthening exercises with her, so she can do what she can to live her life to the full.

Katie Fisher joined us in January as a postulant; she has settled in and will receive the Carmelite habit in February 2024. Sister Lauren began her Canonical Year of Novitiate in October. We continued to use some very helpful online resources for both community and individual formation. Lynda Stack gave us singing lessons, encouraging us to sing the Psalm at Mass on Sundays, which we are now doing. She continues to give Sr Anne organ lessons. We decided that we needed to update our first aid skills, as health emergencies seem to occur quite regularly here. To do this we devised a two-day seminar using an online first aid course. It was quite amusing trying to practise on each other, and we are rather hoping that some sisters' skills will not be needed!



Our steers Michael, Gabriel and Raphael finished their tour of duty on our paddocks and departed in May, and after a Winter rest for the land and for Sister Farmer, Bartholomew, Ezekiel and Lawrence arrived to take up residence in August. They are friendly, eating away well, but leaving enough pasturage for us to cut hay this season. One big change on our farm was brought about by the egg shortage early this year, following on from the new regulations on poultry farming. Eggs provide an important part of our meatless diet, and when it became harder to get them in sufficient supplies, and much more expensive, a decision was made to keep hens again, after almost two decades. A small custom-built hen house arrived in late September, and was placed in a fenced-in yard, with access to several acres of paddocks. Our flock of ten hens arrived on 7th October. On the 24th of that month we got our first egg, and a month later the last hen began to lay. We are delighting in watching the antics of these little creatures, and are enjoying the bright yellow-yoked eggs they are producing. (Sophie, our cat, is not convinced that they are an asset to the monastery, and keeps her distance.) Not so delightful is the forays of some of them into our vegetable garden and monastery grounds; we hope that with some encouragement they will reform their ways. The Dad's Army team from Christchurch North Parish added orchard pruning to their annual rose pruning and we are seeing the results in flourishing roses and fruit trees. We picked and bottled pears again, gathered walnuts and chestnuts, and harvested good crops of vegetables. However, this coming year we're expecting even better things, as we've sprouted many seeds in the tunnel house and planted out most of the vegetable garden.

In late November our local Parish received its new name. From our Bishop Michael's decree: "the Catholic Parish of Christchurch South is placed under the patronage of the Mother of Jesus, who desires all people to know her Son, the Prince of Peace, who offers unity and reconciliation to our World. In addition, from this day forward, this Catholic Community is to be known as **Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish.**" We entrust our world, so lacking in peace, to her care.



Looking back over the year, we know that so many have supported us to live our contemplative life – thank you to each and every one of you. You will be remembered in our prayers as we gather around the crib of the Divine Babe. We pray that our loving God will fill you and your loved ones with much peace and joy at Christmas and in the coming year.

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