



Carmelite Monastery of St. Joseph
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Christmas 2012



*Father, in the wonder of the incarnation
your eternal Word has brought to the **eyes of faith**
a new and radiant vision of your glory.
In him we see our God made visible
and so are caught up in love of the God we cannot see.*



Dear Friends,

As we look back on the year, we give thanks to God for the many blessings it has brought. We were spared any major accident or illness and to date we are all up and about, though a few are more up than about!

During the Church Unity Octave in January, we were happy to have Fr. Tony Coote Adm. with us as a guest speaker along with Rev. Ian Gallagher, Rev. Ruth Elmes and Fr. Jim Corkery SJ. The theme *“We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 15:51-58) brought home to us all the transformative power of faith in Christ.

In preparation for the Eucharistic Congress, we chose a Blessed Sacrament priest for our Lenten Retreat. Fr. Raphael O’Halloran deepened our awareness and appreciation of the Eucharist as a “well” of God’s presence, love and risen life. We always look forward to these days of deeper recollection and prayerfulness when we can “push away all the fuss and petty details that easily encumber our life and can devour our hearts” as our Carmelite Saint Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein) said. She also recommended “trying to find breathing spaces—moments when we can return to ourselves and rest in God. He is there in these moments and can give us exactly what we need. The rest of the day can take its course under the same strain and effort, but in peace. When night comes we can put the day into his hands and rest in him—and start the next day as a new life”.

Our elections in March saw Sr. Mary Brigeen re-elected as Prioress for a further triennium. To be captain of a ship is no easy task in these times of change and challenge. Please remember her and all of us in your good prayers.

Sr. Thérèse-Marie and Sr. Anne are now full community members who from the first days have won the love and esteem of us all.

Sr. Mary Fionnuala's Solemn Profession on 29th April, Good Shepherd Sunday, was an occasion of great joy and thanksgiving. Sadly, Sister's dear mother, Marie, died last August, but she was with us in spirit from our home in heaven and her loving presence was deeply felt on the great day. Our Provincial, Fr. Jim Noonan OCD, officiated with eleven priests as con-celebrants and a deacon, and the graces of the joyful celebration overflowed on all present.

Early in May our parish priest, Fr. Tony Coote Adm., requested as a preparation for the Eucharistic Congress, that a gathering be held in our chapel for all the religious women and men who serve in the parishes of Mt. Merrion and Kilmacud. Fifty religious attended the prayer service held at 3.30pm and met the nuns in the parlour afterwards over a "cuppa".

Words fail to describe the outstanding event of the Eucharistic Congress in June. Several of the nuns went to the RDS during the week and to the final Mass in Croke Park. The chosen theme "*Communion with Christ and with One Another*" was woven into the rich agenda of the Congress. It was a great call for renewal, bringing hope of a new thrust of life and courage to embrace the challenges of living the Christian call to the full with the Word of God to light up our way and light up our cobwebs! What a tremendous witness of solidarity with the Irish Church it was to see such a vast number of pilgrims from abroad who valued and cherished the work of Irish missionaries in their countries.

During the year, our Carmelite visitors from abroad included Fr. John Grennan (Rome), Fr. Joseph (New Delhi), Sr. Lucyna (Bethlehem), Sr. Claudine (Haifa), Sr. Allain (Scotland), Sr. Catherine (Nigeria), Sr. Margaret Therese (Egypt) and Sisters Mary Joseph, Mavis and Joana (Lithuania).

We enjoyed exhilarating sessions of the Olympics during our recreations in August, amazed at the near superhuman feats of the athletes. However, our hearts were moved even more by the inspiring heroism of the "Paralympians". Every one of them deserved a gold medal! If only we would exercise the same courage and "determined determination" in our spiritual contests!

The saintly Vietnamese Cardinal Francis Xavier Ngugen Van Thuan was influenced by the words of MaryKnoll Bishop James Walsh who like

himself had been sentenced to solitary confinement by the Communists: "I will not wait for things to happen [better conditions, etc...] but rather I will live in the present moment, filling it to the brim with love".

We continued our re-reading of St Teresa with the *Book of the Foundations*. On 24th August, to celebrate 450 years since she founded her first monastery of San José, Avila (1562) we were treated to an excellent homily on St Teresa by one of our O.Carm chaplains, Fr. Joe Mothersill. A free day followed, appreciated by all. Now we look forward to studying *The Interior Castle* this coming year.

We had invited Fr. Raphael O'Halloran back for the feast of St. Thérèse and he was greatly impressed by the attentiveness and devotion of the large crowds that packed our chapel and choir to overflowing. It reminded him, he said, of the 'Communion' we all experienced at the Eucharistic Congress.

As the year unfolded, our spirit of communion deepened with all our suffering brothers and sisters throughout the world, and especially those among our families and circle of friends. We are consoled too by the great Communion of Saints as many loved ones winged their way Home. We know, in faith, that they are gone no further from us than to God and God is very near.

Our October retreat given by Fr. Stephen Cummins OP coincided with the opening of the *Year of Faith* (Oct 11th). This proved to be a week of blessings in which words were not speeches but rather like kindling that feeds the fire of love.

So we go forward conscious that God's providence is not like a puppeteer, holding us and using us by strings! Instead he holds us from underneath and what happens when we stray off? His other hand catches us underneath.

Let us keep close during this Advent/Christmas season to Mary, great woman of faith, the young Jewess of humble status whom God graced and chose to be the Virgin mother of his Son. We wish you and your loved ones a blessed and happy Christmas.

*We would like to alert you to a slight addition to our postal address.
Please insert "Blackrock" after Stillorgan.*