



Newsletter

**A PRAYING COMMUNITY
IN LONDON SERVING
GOD'S PEOPLE**

www.carmelinthecity.org.uk

Advent and Christmas edition 2017

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**December 2017:
Advent and Christmas**



Dear friends

Our December meeting took place on 2nd December, which, this year, was the day before Advent began. We had a beautiful celebration of Mass with Fr Chris Vipers to end the Church's year, looking forward to Advent and preparing for the coming of Christ. This year, the season of Advent, is very short, just three weeks. We seem to have hardly begun and already the final week is almost here with the Octave, the last 8 days of special prayers and preparation, beginning on 17th December, Gaudete Sunday. It would be good if we could all spend some time in quiet prayer away from all the bustle of Christmas preparation to ponder the scripture readings and the words of the hymn 'O come, O come, Emmanuel' verse by verse, which is the hymn especially for these 8 days of waiting and preparing.

For us as Christians, though, Christmas lasts for another 8 days after the Feast day itself, until the 1st January when we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and then continues for yet another week until Christmas Time ends after the Baptism of the Lord on 8th January. You will remember, I'm sure, that at St Joseph's, in common with the tradition in many other European countries, we keep our crib until the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, known as Candlemass, on 2nd February. This takes us, of course, to our 10th anniversary celebration on 3rd February. Do, please, make sure the date is in your diaries and, along with any Christmas cards you send, please extend an invitation to anyone you know who might like to attend. They would all be most welcome. We will have more details about this when we meet on 6th January.

Isabel told us about a recent meeting of our new National Council. We are beginning a new stage on our journey as lay Carmelites in the British Province but, as yet, we do not know all that this will entail. 10 years ago, the then National Council, were discussing the possibility of finding new ways of sharing our Carmelite spirituality alongside the traditional Third Order chapters and the idea of Spirituality Groups was born. Carmel in the City was one of the first of these and, as you know, we have continued to grow and flourish as have others across the country. It is out of the energy generated by this renewal that we now have an elected Moderator and Council for Lay Carmel in the British Province and can look forward to the future with hope.

One early change we will see is to the way in which we share news and spiritual reading. For many years this has been through subscription to Assumpta but circumstances mean that this will be different in the future. Isabel explained that a way will be found through a newsletter of sharing our own news and information. For our shared spiritual reading it is proposed that, in future, we subscribe to Carmel in the World which is published in Rome twice a year and is the magazine for the Carmelite Family, worldwide. There is more about this overleaf.

Just as Mary and Joseph had to leave Nazareth and journey to Bethlehem so, as the prophets foretold, Christ could be born there. We too, must be prepared to let go of our own ideas and expectations and go where God is taking us. As a community of friends, we can help one another to live in joyful hope in the future.

All good wishes and blessings for Christmas and the New Year,

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Dates to remember

14th December
St John of the Cross. Feast

25th December
The Nativity of the Lord. Solemnity

26th December St Stephen, Feast

27 December
St John, Apostle and Evangelist. Feast

28th December.
Holy Innocents, Feast

29th December
St. Thomas Becket, Feast

31st December
The Holy Family, Feast

1st January. Mary, Mother of God, Solemnity

Your prayers are asked for: the sick, especially Pat McManus, Jean Hunt, Julie Gallagher and Fr Wilfrid McGreal O.Carm.

For our families and communities, that Christmas may be a time of blessing, of reconciliation and healing, and sharing joy and comfort with those in any kind of need.



Details of forthcoming events

Christmas at Aylesford Priory

Saturday 16th December. Aylesford Third Order meeting. 10.30 Holy Hour, 12noon Mass, 2pm Lectio Divina Prayer and presentation.

Sunday 24th December Christmas Eve. 11.30 Carols followed by Midnight Mass

Monday 25th December Masses 8am and 10.15am

Sunday 31st December The Holy Family Masses 8am and 10.15am

Sunday 7th January Epiphany Masses 8am and 10.15am

Carmel in the City meetings

Our next meeting is on 6th January

PLEASE NOTE: Formation group meets at 10.30 for reading, discussion and liturgy preparation. All welcome.

11.30. Quiet prayer. **12.00.** Mass, followed by bring and share lunch. **13. 30.** Business meeting .**13.45.** Afternoon session. **15.00.** Lectio Divina **ending at 15.30.**

3rd February. 10th Anniversary Celebration. 12.00. Mass. Further details on 6th January.

Carmel in the World

Carmel in the World, since 2015, is published twice each year and is the magazine for the Carmelite Family. It contains information about Carmel's approach to living the Gospel and about some major figures in Carmel's 800 year history. It includes articles about Mary and the spiritual life as well as information about theological and pastoral topics. There are a variety of articles on Carmelite saints and other notable Carmelites, Lay as well as Religious. Past copies of the magazine are available in the library at St Joseph's for reference and borrowing.

Words to ponder.

A favourite image by which St John of the Cross- together with so many other mystical writers- illuminates the need for our receptivity and purity to receive God in ourselves is the image of the window, which must allow the light of the sun to pass through. In paintings of our Flemish masters this image not infrequently occurs in representations of the angel and Mary. The Holy Spirit is seen as a ray of sunlight which casts its beams through the windows. The window is the image of Mary. No creature more purely received the divine light which came into the world, no one reflected more cleanly and became more one with it than Mary. Mary is the most pure pane of glass which allowed the Light of the World to pass through to us intact.

From Mary's motherhood of God, leading idea of the mystical life. Bl. Titus Brandsma. (1931)