



Dear Carmelite family, relatives and friends,

It is once again time to share with you the news of our year, as we approach the joyful celebration of Christ's coming among us at Christmas. 2017 was a year of many blessings for each of us, and for our community as a whole. Unlike previous years, we have so far been spared any major earthquakes, and have appreciated this time of stability.

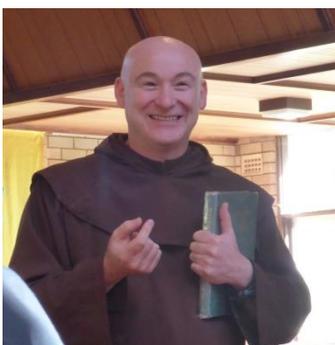


We had a rather energetic start to the year. The weather conditions and the late arrival of our current herd of cattle meant that the grass in our paddocks had become unmanageable, and so for the first time in decades we had to get it cut as hay. Fortunately the conditions were perfect and a few days in January were spent cutting, turning, baling etc, with some of the sisters and other helpers pitching in. One sister even managed to drive the ute around the paddocks while others loaded the baled hay on the back. We ended up with more than 200 bales, enough to fatten our cattle throughout the leanest winter.



Not only the paddocks but the whole monastery received attention as the earthquake repairs continued apace. The chimney which had been taken down before Christmas 2016 was replaced in June – we all really appreciated being able to light the woodburner again, as we sit around it for evening recreation during the cold winter months. The original house which forms the old part of our monastery was completely repainted outside, and most of the rooms in the main building were repaired at various times during the year. The most challenging repair as far as we were concerned was the kitchen. We had to be out of it by 7:30 each morning, so the sister cooks had to begin in the early hours to keep the community fed. They all succeeded admirably. The last major work will be the stabilizing of the refectory (monastery dining room) floor, which may be completed by Christmas.

Along with the repair work, our electrical wiring needed attention. Age had taken its toll, resulting in power outages. With the old house being more than 130 years old, and our main building celebrating its 80th birthday this year, far too much was running on each circuit, rendering things unstable and also unsafe. Three able electricians worked on this project for days. Now we have a power system we can count on, and everything is well-labeled and mapped, which will remove some of the mystery for electricians in the future. The sound system in our Chapel had also become very unreliable, failing altogether on some very important occasions. Fortunately our main electrician had much expertise in this area too, and the improved sound quality is appreciated by all. The word of God is now resounding loudly and clearly!



We had our annual retreat early this year, in March, and found Australian Cistercian Fr Michael Casey's talks very insightful. He recommended "a warm, rational and strong love for Christ, as is his love for us." Several of us had already read his books, and are pleased to know that these talks will eventually be published. In April we welcomed Fr Ramiro Casale ocd for a few days, on his way to the Formation seminar in Sydney. Father is originally from Mexico, but is currently doing his studies in Rome. While with us, he was able to cross the Southern Alps on the Transalpine Express Train, viewing the spectacular scenery, as well as give us several helpful talks.

The Feast of the Annunciation, 25th March, was an especially big day for us this year. Sister Teresa celebrated 70 years in Carmel, and Sister Marietta celebrated 25 years. God sent us all a special gift that day, with the entrance of Valentina Kelemete as a postulant. Valentina had her “live-in” with us during winter 2016, so she’d had 2 winters in our Carmel before experiencing spring. We look forward to showing her a Christchurch summer, which is lovely, though not nearly as hot as her native Samoa. Her companions in the Novitiate, Sisters Anne Teresa and Catherine renewed their temporary vows in July and August. We ask your prayers for all these sisters as they continue their discernment and formation, and for all of us as we hand on the Carmelite tradition to them.



As well as new life, we also experienced loss in 2017. Our faithful cat, Heidi, who had been an energetic rodent-catcher in our community for 16 years, died in May. The earthquakes had taken their toll on her, and she had long lost the sense of where she should and shouldn't be in the monastery, but we do miss her. We hope to replace her before the year is out. In the meantime a neighbour's enormous fluffy cat, which looks like a big walking fur coat with a couple of eyes peering out, has been extending its territory.



In May we received the official notification from the Vatican of our Carmel's aggregation to the Association of Our Lady of the Southern Cross. This is a body of Carmelite monasteries in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, who have joined together for mutual assistance in living our contemplative vocation. In October the Association had its 8th General Assembly in Sydney, and two of our Sisters represented our community. It was a great joy to gather with nuns from around our region, praying and conversing with them, so as to move into the future together. We and two other Carmels were officially welcomed into the Association, and received beautiful icons of Our Lady of the Southern Cross to remind us of her special overseeing of us all.

On June 30th Sr Mary Teresa finally became a Citizen of New Zealand. Sister joined us from Singapore in 1994, so it is a joy that she is now fully a Kiwi. A few days later we were blessed to have Mass with our 3 newly ordained priests, Fathers Graeme, Alister and Huynh. With 3 new priests ordained both this year and in 2015, we now look forward to the appointment of a new bishop to lead the flock in Christchurch Diocese.* Two other special occasions during the year were our annual Youth Mass in September and Samoan Mass in November.



Both groups filled our Chapel, and it was lovely to meet many of them in the visitors' room following the Masses. Our diocese is certainly a lively place.

Looking back at such a full year, we know that the help of so many have supported us as we continue our contemplative life in our Carmel – 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



*Ps (6th December): It was with great joy that we heard this morning of the appointment of Fr Paul Martin of the Society of Mary as the 10th Bishop of Christchurch. Please keep Bishop-Elect Paul in your prayers.