

EASTER GREETINGS APRIL 2012



*'He is not here,
but is risen....'*

Luke 24:6

Dear Friends,

The winter season has definitely moved into a beautiful and very warm early spring. Although temperatures cooled somewhat over the Easter weekend we send you our warmest greetings for a very Holy and Happy Easter Season.

As promised we are aiming to write these newsletters and updates on a more regular basis. Firstly because so much does happen as the months scroll by and we never manage to share a tenth of it with you - memory loss could contribute to this :) Secondly, over the years people have asked us to share more of our spirituality with them as it develops, and we thought that this could be one of the ways to do this. So, if it is OK with you, some spiritual food will be served first each time and this will help digest the general news and events that follow.

Fr. Walter Cizek, a Jesuit priest, who spent over 20 years in Soviet prison camps and whose cause for beatification has been started, once wrote:

'Christ's life and suffering were redemptive; his 'apostolate' in the scheme of salvation was to restore the original order and harmony in all creation that had been destroyed by sin. But Christ's redemptive act did not of itself restore all things, it simply made the work of redemption possible, it began our redemption. Just as all men share in the disobedience of Adam, so all men must share in the obedience of Christ to the Father's will. Redemption will be complete only when all men share his obedience...

This simple truth, that the sole purpose of man's life on earth is to do the will of God, contains in it riches and resources enough for a lifetime... The notion that the human will, when united with the divine will, can play a part in Christ's work of redeeming all mankind is overpowering. The wonder of God's grace transforming worthless human actions into efficient means for spreading the kingdom of God here on earth astounds the mind and humbles it to the utmost, yet brings a peace and joy unknown to those who have never experienced it, inexplicable to those who will not believe.'

Yes, today we celebrate the triumph of life over death, light over darkness, virtue over sin. We sing the great **ALLELUIA! AMEN! FIAT!** for what God has done for the world in sending his Son to redeem us from our sin. Jesus did this through his obedience, learnt by suffering, even unto death on the cross. Often it is painful for us to say our own fiat especially when things do not turn out as we would wish, as we may have hoped for, as we carefully planned for. And yet it is only by always entering into and living in the Father's will, as Jesus did, that we will also experience that Pasqual

joy so distinctive of this blessed season. A joy which is the fruit of the resurrection and which leads into a life of eternal joy.

Let us pray for each other so that we will always be able to say yes, even if we have to grit our teeth and our whole human nature is rebelling against what we know to be right in any given situation. Dying to self, to our own ego, to our selfish tendencies is painful but we, like Jesus, are being called to give our life for Someone Else, for others, if we are to rise to a new life in Christ. The journey from Good Friday to Easter Sunday is not a one off but a daily event for any real growth in virtue and grace. Then we will see God's kingdom come in us and around us.

In a way that is what we experienced with the conference on charism we had organised with the Carmelites at the beginning of March. Poor bookings for a variety of reasons and last minute cancellations required the transfer of the conference, led by a speaker from Rome, to St Anselm's Institute in Cliftonville. In the end over forty participants benefited from the input given by professor German Sanchez Griese and, thanks to your prayers, it turned out to be a most successful weekend. He was so well received by all present that the Institute would like to have him back on a regular basis! Prof Griese was also enamoured by the English countryside and may well return for another stay with us to finish working on the current book he is writing.

Life in the community is always vibrant, never more so as when people come to live alongside to discern their calling. Ewa, a Polish woman living in London, spent three weeks with us having vocational accompaniment from Sr Gabi. As it happened there were two other Polish girls who wanted to know more about our community and quite spontaneously, one evening turned into our first, although short, Polish 'Come and See.' Of course, Sr Gabi was overjoyed to share the richness of our charism and history in her mother tongue.

On the note of our short but rich history, Laura – a good friend of the community - has already started work on the first book about COLW. At the time of the Walsingham 950th anniversary celebrations we had a serious offer from a publisher to write a book about our history and charism. Laura spent almost a week in March with us, hearing our personal stories and observing first hand more of our community life and apostolate. As Sr Camilla was invited to address the Catholic Women's Association in London, Laura also took the opportunity to participate in that meeting and see another aspect of our work. Also, later on in March, Theresa, Sr Gabi and Ewa went with the Brentwood Youth to the Flame event in Wembley Arena. They came back extolling how good the meeting was and enthusiastic about all that had happened.



We had a wonderful community day outing to Ware Carmel on the Feast of the Annunciation. After joining them for solemn Mass at 11am we went walking along the canals between Ware and Hertford, stretching our legs and 'bridging the gap' as you can see in the photo on the left. We also had time to bask in the glorious sunshine whilst enjoying a snack. We returned to the Carmelites in time for evening prayer, followed by a catch up in the parlour with various members of this beautiful community.

Theresa was able to share with the sisters the good news that she will be taking her first vows at the **11.30am Mass on Sunday 23rd September at Brentwood Cathedral**. They promised to pray especially for her and we ask you to do likewise. If you are able to join us on the day then make a note in your diary and let us know nearer the date if you can be there. Lorraine, our volunteer seamstress who has generously been making our habits over the years (she helped with the

original design) is already getting Theresa's scapular ready. However, she may well be moving abroad very soon and this would be a great loss to us, especially as she has become a good and dear friend of the community. So if you or any of your friends are able to help out in this area of need we would be most grateful to hear from you. Our seamstress could be based in Essex or Norfolk as with the start of our work up at Walsingham we will be commuting much more between the two counties.

As to Walsingham - it is with great joy that we can share the news that Sr Camilla has been appointed to the Shrine Council and has also started part time work in the Shrine itself. She really enjoyed her first stint up there, from Maundy Thursday until Easter Sunday, and will spend most weekends helping with the spiritual and pastoral care of pilgrims, starting first in the office until another sister arrives at the beginning of May, and eventually helping out wherever needed. Her first sense was very much one of 'arriving home' because, as many of you know, the inspiration for the name of the community was received in the Slipper Chapel. COLW is Our Lady's community and, as such, Walsingham is our spiritual homeland. Theresa accompanied her on this first trip and together they joined in welcoming around 280 young walkers from Student Cross when they arrived there on Good Friday (see below left a photo of the crosses outside the Slipper Chapel, carried by them from various parts of the country). They have convinced us to join them on one of their legs on a future occasion and we are seriously looking into this. It will be an attractive option for the walkers in community like Katherine and Jim, who hopes to join us shortly. It was especially encouraging to experience the warm welcome given to us by Fr. Alan, the shrine director, all the shrine staff and the many villagers who we have gotten to know over the years. Witnessing just how much work goes on behind the scenes to make the Triduum services run so smoothly and beautifully was particularly moving.



With the hope that we will one day have our own community house at Walsingham we have been advised to get independent charity status. We wish to say a particular **THANK YOU** to John Tolan, a local friend of ours, who saw to the first stage of this process by setting us up as a Limited Company. So COLW Limited exists! We were due to repay him his expenses when he unexpectedly said he would not allow it as it was now his Lenten gift to us! At this point we may well have to set up contracts with our friends before we ask them to do anything for us :) Anyway, his generosity is much appreciated and our thanks go out to him and to all our friends who help us so many ways. May we ask your urgent prayers for Paul, who last year bought us a much-needed seven-seater car. He has just heard that he has two brain tumors and has been given only three months to live. We are storming heaven for a miracle for him and his young family and ask you to join us in doing so.

On this note we sign off wishing you every blessing for a graced Easter Season,

With love and prayers,

Sr Camilla, Sr Gabriela, Theresa and Katherine