

W I N T E R 2 0 1 2

# COLW NEWS



Dear Friends,

We hope you have all had a good start to the New Year. When we sent you our last newsletter, we were anticipating the arrival of Jim from Denver in the States. Some of you may remember that he spent six weeks with us in the autumn of 2010, discerning (like several other men) a possible vocation to the men's side of COLW. Well he arrived safely and it wasn't long before he got stuck in with more painting at Abbotswick. We all enjoyed having him around for those three weeks, especially when he joined the community for our first Christmas up at Walsingham ...

Thanks to the great kindness and generosity of Mother Teresa and her community of sisters at the Anglican Shrine, we were able to stay in their guesthouse, St Margaret's cottage. It was an ideal place for the five of us. It was beautiful and homely yet still provided the space we needed. For us, Christmas was filled with visits to and from our many friends in Walsingham; special times of prayer in the Slipper chapel; having fun together as a community and enjoying delicious celebratory meals - thanks to the culinary skills of Sr Gabi, Katherine and Fr Chris, who drove up to Walsingham after he had said his morning Masses on Christmas day. Don't worry though, as true religious, we didn't forget to balance out the fun with a bit of penance! -



...Following Jim's suggestion, Sr Camilla, Theresa and Jim walked the holy mile, up from the Slipper Chapel, bare foot. It wasn't too bad; after initially finding their feet were 'freezing!', they found the resulting numbness that developed was quite helpful!

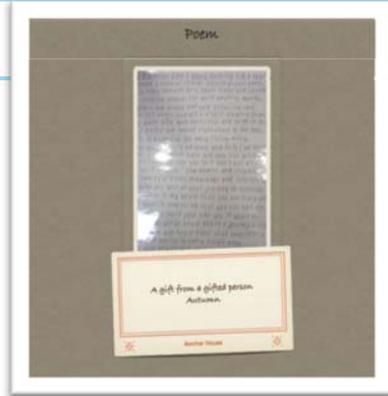
Theresa was very excited on Christmas day itself because her family's Christmas present to the community was a sledge. As you can see from the photos, we had fun ☺ trying it out ...

The best Christmas present of all was the wonderfully warm welcome we received from Fr Alan Williams, the director of the R.C. shrine. He invited a member of COLW to work at the shrine to offer pastoral support to pilgrims. After Easter, Sr Camilla will start working in Walsingham

As some of you may know, New Year is sometimes a period when COLW members can go home to visit their families. However, things were a little different for us this year; Sr Gabi, of course, had recently seen her family when they came over for her final vows in September - and Poland is a bit far for her to visit again for a few days! Theresa is now well into her canonical year and so doesn't go home during this time. So in the end it was only Katherine who went home, to Southend. She enjoyed catching up with all her friends and family and telling them how well she's settling in here with her lovely COLW sisters! ☺

Meanwhile, Sr Gabi and Theresa joined Sr Camilla for New Year at her sisters' house in London. While based in London, it gave the opportunity for Sr Gabi and Theresa to attend much of the Youth 2000 New Year Retreat in Balham. Both were really pleased to be able to catch up with friends from Youth 2000, some of whom they hadn't seen for a few years. It was also a valuable time to spend with the young people, sharing the faith and accompanying them.

Theresa woke up on New Year's Day to find a mouse on the bed! She managed not to scream the house down, calmly wondering if perhaps Jesus sent the little mouse (which was quite cute really) to wake her up in time for prayers. ☺



**This poem was written by a young woman, Autumn, from Anchor House after her visit to Abbotswick in September. She wrote it for Sr Gabi who was preparing for final vows at the time and we are privileged to be able to share it with you here below.**



*A transition from a young duckling into a swan.  
Almost a natural change occurring just gone.  
Big steps through very small leaps and bounds.  
A Victorian ground, the most amazing sound.  
Spiders and wasps and pure nutring care!  
Yet this sister has not a single growning fear.  
She walks with such conviction and talks in tone.  
God fearing and honest right down to the bone.  
This is a blessing for every living being.  
Your work is truly amazing and this I am seeing.  
You live without hate and you live without pain!  
With the true love you hold you have a lot to gain.  
A nun is someone I admire and respect.  
It takes patience, knowledge and intellect.  
I wish you well on your journey to success.  
I believe in my heart that you are truly blessed.  
An angel is something that you can not see.  
But if you could just like you it would be.  
Your words wil be heard and the journey begins.  
The joy in your heart shows what happiness brings.  
You are special in every single way.  
For your health and good fortune I will pray.*

We're developing our friendship with Anchor House, the charity which provides life-skills, training and housing for homeless people. We visited them on our foundation day and witnessed the good work they do, and later as supported them by our presence at their fundraising concert on Burns' night. These are just one of the many important works that we as a contemplative community hold daily in prayer.

Camilla led a three-day silent retreat for Theresa and Katherine, for which they stayed with our much-valued COLW friend, Sr Veronica, at St John's convent in Reading. They all enjoyed the chance to pray and relax, away from the commitments of running Abbotswick. It was a first silent retreat for Katherine; she managed very well! Theresa saw some more mice – fortunately, not in the house this time but outside during her countryside walks.

As part of her noviciate, Theresa is learning about the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. To complement what she has already been learning in community, she also attended a course at St Anslem's Institute in Margate. The course, for which Theresa was accompanied by Sr Camilla, was on 'The Heart of the Vows'. They were both encouraged by the talks which emphasized the essentials i.e. the role of contemplative prayer in opening us up to recognize and experience the presence of God. As we allow Christ, through prayer, to transform our hearts, we can discern more clearly how to live the vows – and how to live our lives.

We have been happy that Fr Matt BlakeOCD, our chaplain, has been able to visit us both before and after Christmas. He has been giving us some input about issues surrounding being a founding group, drawing on the experience of St Teresa of Avila.

Sr Gabi and Theresa have teamed up a couple of times already this year in outreach to young people: They attended a lunchtime workshop at a school in London to speak to the students about religious life. They also went to Hoddeston and led a session for the confirmation group about vocation and religious life. Theresa's tactic of firing questions every ten or fifteen minutes about the topics covered – with the chance to win sweets - worked wonders for their concentration spans! So they were very attentive and the talks were well received. We closed the session with a special time of Eucharistic Adoration. We pray that those young people continue to draw closer to Jesus every day

In our efforts to read 'the signs of the times' and reach out to young people, we are increasing our involvement in the digital/media arena.



We are now on Twitter: (The\_COLW)



Facebook group: Friends of The Community of Our Lady of Walsingham

Please follow us, join up and spread the word to others too...

We feel very blessed at this time to be receiving substantial help in re-vamping the COLW website. Matt Conrad, the son of Paul (one of our volunteers at Abbotswick) has kindly spent hours redoing it as a gift to the community, so we are immensely indebted to him – as we are to Peter Wognum who had designed the first two sites for us and similarly updated them free of charge over the years. So please keep an eye on [www.walsinghamcommunity.org](http://www.walsinghamcommunity.org) which will shortly look quite different. We hope to make it more interactive as we go along. We are so grateful to all our friends and benefactors, who help us in so many ways. We pray for all of them and for you, knowing that God repays such generosity a hundred-fold.

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we have organized a conference entitled 'Knowing, Living and Transmitting a Charism' led by German Sanchez Griese, vice president of the Regina Apostolorum University in Rome. It will be held this weekend, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> March, so please pray for the success of this conference that it may enliven all those who attend with an ever deeper love of their vocation.

We have just entered into the season of Lent. It is a good time to make different resolutions in order to come closer to the Lord. Pope Benedict XVI's message for Lent this year, from which we quote below, leaves us with more food for thought and inspiration for action. In this message he expands on St Paul's words ' Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works' Heb 10:24.

*'These words of the Letter to the Hebrews (10:24) urge us to reflect on the universal call to holiness, the continuing journey of the spiritual life as we aspire to the greater spiritual gifts and to an ever more sublime and fruitful charity (cf. 1 Cor 12:31-13:13). Being concerned for one another should spur us to an increasingly effective love which, "like the light of dawn, its brightness growing to the fullness of day" (Prov 4:18), makes us live each day as an anticipation of the eternal day awaiting us in God. The time granted us in this life is precious for discerning and performing good works in the love of God.'*

Wishing you all the best for a grace-filled Lent and a happy and holy Easter,

*Sr Camilla, Sr Gabriela, Theresa and Katherine.*