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Advent 2019

Greetings to everyone as Advent again heralds the coming of the Son of God into our lives. Advent is that quiet gentle time of year that encourages us to take time out to deepen our relationship with God. The Liturgy encourages, challenges and consoles us that our God is coming to save. God doesn't want to frighten us so he comes as a tiny helpless baby to show how much He loves us. Advent is a precious time as we await His coming in joy. It is also a busy time with the shops and the television ads encouraging us to spend ever greater amounts of money! We keep all in our prayers as we know that for some this is anything but a joyful season. For some the danger of death is ever present as there are now more martyrs for the faith than ever in the world. A recent report estimates that fifty five people die every day worldwide for the faith. Several of our friends have been and still are seriously ill, most of the community and very many of our friends have lost loved ones during the year and so many are suffering the pain of everyday life to a greater or lesser degree. We ask God to touch us all and bring joy out of the sorrow and pain of everyday life.

We would like to thank very sincerely all our friends and benefactors for their help and support during the year. It means so much to us to have such good friends.

During Advent last year we were alerted to a problem with the waste water system. Exploratory cameras showed that the roots of trees had made their way inside the pipes and we thought that the problem was localised. Further investigation revealed that the problem was more complex and extensive. As the year progressed remedial works went on for several months and we were very relieved when it all came to an end.

We had a beautiful Lenten reflection on the 3rd Sunday of Lent. Kerrie O' Connor (flautist and soloist) and her friends Mary Louise O'Donnell (harpist) and Naomi Dunleavy O'Shea (violinist) brought us on a scriptural and musical journey through lent, passion and resurrection. Many of our friends joined us for this and all appreciated it very much. It was a real spiritual uplift. Kerrie continues to enhance our liturgy with her singing and playing of the organ. She will be with us for Christmas night Mass and carols.

During the year Sisters attended courses. John Feehan made us aware of the beauty of creation in the very tiniest flowers and what we sometimes call weeds! through his lectures and a hands on experience of looking through the microscope. He took us through Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si (on care for the earth) and his passion for the earth and all created things was catching. He took us on a field trip warning us before we went out to be attentive to all around us. Indeed attention was a word he used often. See even the tiniest things as God's creation and worthy of our respect. We were all intent on hearing his every word and paying lots of attention to the tiniest flower when out from under the bushes hopped a frog. John thought the frog never expected to see such a motley crew and must have been relieved to have the bushes to hop back into again. All this took place in the beautiful surroundings of Ballyvaloo.

Fr Rafal Wilkowski led us through the new document Cor Orans which has come from Rome and contains new guidelines for life as enclosed religious. Fr Rafal is part of our Carmelite General Council team with responsibility for the Carmelite Sisters affairs. He is very generous with his time and support. Emmaus retreat centre hosted us for this course.

We were invited to Gort Muire where the two General Councils O. Carm and O.C.D. were meeting. We had a wonderful solemn evening prayer and afterwards tea and a chat with all the priests, brothers and sisters of Carmel.

Our retreat this year was directed by Fr Gerard Mc Carthy S.V.D. He led us through St John's gospel and challenged us to give the 100% that the men filling the jars at Cana did.

Paraic Maher came one evening and talked about his book on the betrothal of Our Lady and St Joseph. He enhanced his lecture with slides. He has done a lot of research and was very informative.

On 11th July we had great joy in welcoming Sr Teresita as a full member of our Community. Sr Teresita hails from Peru, was on mission to Nazareth Carmel in the Holy Land and came to Ireland to learn English. She spent two years in Knock Carmel and thanks to their excellent tuition she is now fluent. In 2018 while our Sisters were with us from Haifa and Jerusalem she visited for a week and over the next few months discerned that God was now calling her to Roebuck. She came again in the spring of this year to help that discernment. She returned to Knock on Easter Monday and made the final preparations. We are very grateful to the Community at Nazareth for releasing her, she was a loved and cherished Sister. Their loss is our gain.

Our animal friends keep us busy as usual. The donkeys Seolta and Glen or Glendalough to give him his full title have settled in fully and know their way around the place. Our dog Jessie who was nearing seventeen just wore out and we had to say goodbye to her. We have now enhanced our security system with two barkers. Ono is a pointer cross and Súile is a collie/pom + cross. They are very lively and keeping us on our toes! Tuppence and Abbey our cats are not too happy with the new arrivals and are keeping their distance. They have the advantage that they can scale high walls and if things get too exciting here they hop over the wall to St Kilian's where there is a corner that is sometimes inhabited by an odd mouse or something bigger.

We had many visitors during the year, among them were our neighbours the pupils and teachers from St Kilian's school. They had been reading about medieval monasteries in their German history class and were interested in how life is lived in a monastery today. We also had the third year boys and teachers from St Vincent's school in Glasnevin who were on a

trip to the Mosque next door as part of their world religions studies. They were interested in our life of prayer and had lots of questions.

All in all it has been a busy year and we look forward to some quiet time in Advent.

We wish you a very blessed Christmas and New Year. Please be assured of our prayers for you and yours throughout the coming year.