



Be Brothers!

Britain & Ireland.

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Jesus Caritas
Fraternity
of Priests
(Deacons
welcome too!)

New series 36

June 2026

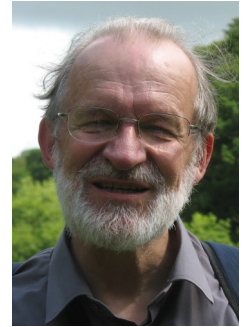


“The spirituality of the Visitation” (Used with permission)

A favourite theme of Bro. Charles, interpreted with AI by the new monthly
“Zoom” ‘International Friends of Charles de Foucauld’ (Details Rev. Leonard Tighe
<charlesdefoucauldinfo@gmail.com> (USA) or Moira Potier <moiradelamorandiere@gmail.com> (UK)

Editorial

I hurt my left knee the Saturday before Palm Sunday (long story, and that on the heels of the local “two week” heavy cold) and bore 2 sleepless nights of almost intolerable pain till my brother came to take me to A&E, where I got 2 crutches and paracetamols! As I write, I have had 3 weeks of going through the diary like a bulldozer- so much essential supply work (and its important income) cancelled, and there's more to come. I even had to say Easter Mass on my own at home; a real Passiontide!



But as they say about silver linings, it does mean I completed most of the editing of this edition of “*Be Brothers*” a month earlier than necessary and, more significantly, it did give me cause to reflect on our daily recital of Bro. Charles' “Prayer of Abandonment:” ‘*Do with me what you will; I am ready for all; I accept all; Let your will be done in me; surrender myself without reserve*’ and so on; will I truly accept these? Perhaps having to go for my timetabled operation for Glaucoma in my left eye (laying rigid for a full hour) plus a 1-1/2 hour dental appointment to fit a bridge (all attended on the crutches) rather drove home the point! (PS: No sympathy messages, please; Charles didn't get any!) +

Bob

Fraternity news

- “*Be Brothers Britain & Ireland*” -is distributed by email as a PDF file to British & Irish brothers via their Responsibles and also to British fraternities as ‘hard copy.’
- *The British ‘Regional’ Team* met by “Zoom” on 12th Nov. and physically at Selly Oak, Birmingham, over 28-29th April (seen here.) Their discussions included the January retreat (see below) and the possibility of a British “*Week of Nazareth*” in Summer 2027. On our behalf Chris Dobson will attend the European Assembly in Sligo 13-18 July. They meet next (by “Zoom”) on 29/9/26.
- *The British post-Christmas mini retreat* is over Jan.12th-14th 2027, at Brownhill convent, Gloucestershire (See pp.4-5.) Details Barnabas Page, barnabas.page@gmail.com
- *Sad to hear of British fraternities folding*– last November John Danford e.mailed that his Northampton fraternity has “*either died off or retired*” while the same month Gilmour McDermott has retired from the Plymouth fraternity where “*age, distance and travel difficulties of the remaining members (is) the problem.*”
- *The Irish annual National Retreat* takes place at “Star of the Sea Retreat Centre,” Mulaghmore, Co. Sligo, from Sunday pm. August 23rd to lunch on Thursday 27th. Please contact 087-7973432 or frniallahern@gmail.com ASAP.
- *Two brothers are acting as Irish agents for “Be Brothers,”* forwarding material for publication to the editor. Liam O’Cuiv’s and Alan Geoghegan’s details on the rear page.
- *Note that each “Be Brothers” can be viewed on the international website:* <http://www.iesuscaritas.org/en> soon after publication.
- *PRESS DATE for the November 2026 “Be Brothers” is 1st September for full articles; snippets accepted till September 15th.* Contributions from British & Irish local fraternities very welcome. +



Little Sisters of Jesus

-a first article from one of only two known Jesus Caritas brothers in Scotland- Michael O'Connell of Glasgow.

Little Sisters of Jesus

St Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916) was a man who undertook many journeys as he enjoyed the life of a wealthy young man. Travelling, first, as a soldier then as a writer he went from France, then, as he became more aware he went to the Holy Land, and finally to Africa where he settled in Algeria.

On his spiritual journey he went from having faith, to losing it, then on to embracing it. Through this growth, he freely gave of himself to others. This journey led Charles to being in a Trappist monastery for seven years. On leaving he went to Nazareth for reflection as he was looking for his vocational Nazareth.

Living this was his way to living in a small neighbourhood where all make God visible by being there for one another in the pattern of daily life. Br Charles found this by living in the Sahara Desert in Tamanrasset, Algeria among the Tourareg People. In 1916 he was killed by a bandit who wanted to take him hostage.

Whilst alive and among the people not one person joined him in his service to others. Yet, following his death there was the founding of the Little Brothers of Jesus in 1933 followed by the Little Sisters of Jesus in 1939. As it says in the gospel 'unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single grain, but if it dies it yields a rich harvest' (Jn 12:24).

The Little Sisters of Jesus were founded by Sr Magdeleine Hutin (1898-1989) in Touggart, Algeria after she had had contact with the Little Brothers. Primarily the sisters were to be a presence among the Muslim people who lived as nomads in the Sahara.

After a while a period of reflection followed where it was decided they should live among those affected by poverty in its many forms in different countries and cultures. From this, they became present in many places throughout the world.

The vocation of a Little sister is 'to be present'. They do this through encouraging, listening, sharing, and accompanying others as they journey through life. Each is a member of communities such as friends, workplace, those within the locality they live in, as well as the little sisters community itself.

Although most of the sisters may be well-educated, to earn money they will work part time in jobs among those who are in low-paid as they are a sister to all. This witness is to be 'workers among workers'.

The Little Sisters' home is a 'place of encounter' where local people can meet and talk with one another. They are based on the 'edges of society' no matter where this is as it is where the people who are viewed as being 'on the edge' are present.

Living among people enables the sisters to receive much from the witness of the local



Left to right

*Sr Claire
(whom I knew)
Sr Christianne
Sr Maryvonne*

people. The sisters are nourished in this as it assists them in being able to look at society from the perspective of those who are marginalised within it. As a little sister once said, *“They find in ordinary life a meeting place with God as Jesus did”*. As Charles de Foucauld said, *“It is only necessary to live among people, and being present to them in love”*.

In Britain there are two communities of Little Sisters. In London, in an area affected by social problems, they have lived on the 13th floor of a high-rise multi-storey for over thirty years. Here, Srs Cathy and Emiko stay and are involved with, and available to, local people.

They have also been present in Walsingham since 1969 where people go to the Shrine. Here, Srs Kathleen, Kasia, Emma and Pat offer support to pilgrims as well as having low-paid jobs in a hotel and in a supermarket.

In Glasgow, the Little Sisters were present from their arrival in 1974 until their departure in 1996. They lived in Porchester Street in Garthamlock (Motherwell Diocese) which then was not the redeveloped area it is today. It was an area of multiple deprivation, people affected by addiction, gangs, unemployment etc.

In 1995, as a social worker, I was there working with young people and for whatever reason I was told ‘nuns’ lived in the house on the street where I would meet the young people. Due to my involvement in church ministry I knocked on the door and I was welcomed in by Sr Claire. She told me about her life as a little sister within the local community.

I called in a few times until one day there was another sister with her who told me they were closing the community house and moving to Walsingham. Sr Claire wanted to stay in Garthamlock but it was not to be. The Little sisters would no longer be present in Scotland; a presence which people valued. Today, people would not even know they had once been in Scotland. Maybe they will come back one day!

The Little Sisters see their vocation as ‘living the hidden life of Nazareth; the hidden life of Jesus of Nazareth’. In Nazareth Jesus lived for thirty years learning from others, making himself little as he experienced what they too experienced.

Today the Little Sisters see their charism as being ‘Contemplatives in the world’ -and the world needs this!

+



British brothers at their January 2026 mini retreat with the Bernardines at Brownshill, Gloucestershire (See page 12)

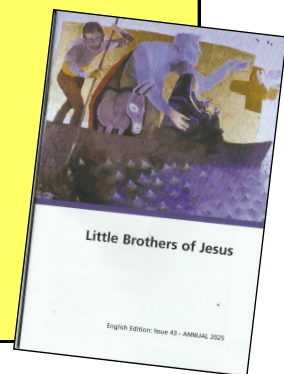
Photo gallery from the January British mini-retreat

Held for the first time at the Bernadines convent
in Brownhill, nr. Stroud, Gloucestershire



“The life of a fraternity”

Xavier Chevillard, the European rep for the Little Brothers of Jesus (based in France) has kindly provided us with a couple of reprints of the many inspirational stories featured in their 2025 magazine (see page 19.)



Jorge writes from Colombia where he lives with Rigoberto and Fernando.

Brothers of the world, receive a fraternal greeting. I believe the desire to write a diary is always present, but the difficult part is finding the time to sit in front of a keyboard to make it a reality. Today I took the day off, taking advantage of the fact that there is no urgent work in the workshop.

To place you in our present, we are three brothers: Rigoberto, Fernando, and I. Since 2006 we have been in this neighbourhood with Rigoberto. We arrived with Xavier Allart, who left us recently. Over the years we maintained a good friendship with him until now, when he contemplates in heaven what he adored on earth... In 2008 I began working in the carpentry workshop, where I still go from Monday to Friday, with Don Luis, the owner, and his brother Eduardo. The three of us make “antique furniture of the future.”

Rigoberto, after other jobs, found in 2012 the role of “Reception” at the Major Seminary, where he worked for 10 years until he managed to retire two years ago. Since 2020 and continuing to the present, Fernando has been with us, thus forming a mixed fraternity. In these years, we have accompanied several postulants until finally welcoming Melvis and Yeyso to the novitiate in 2021, who made their vows on June 7, 2022.

At this moment, Rigoberto is the Regional of the "Brothers of Jesus" and Fernando is the Coordinator of the "Brothers of the Gospel," and that is why both will attend the meeting of Regionals and the extended Council, respectively, in July. In this diary, I want to share with you some personal reflections on our vocation as Brothers of Jesus. In each Eucharist, we ask God to make us a "permanent offering," just like Jesus, our Unique Model, to be brothers. It is not so much about what the brothers "do" but about who we are. "The brothers are among men, not to become pastors or guides, but simply to be their brothers." (Constitutions 94, II).

Sometimes, in these 40 years, I have heard something like 'Jesus' brothers do nothing,' and it is true from the traditional perspective of religious life. Our Nazareth charism is the 'Gospel of friendship.' Our entire life seeks to be fraternal with everyone, with everything, and at all times, without limits of religion, ideology, gender, etc. The person who distinguishes between charisms and ministries can very well understand that we are not priests nor do we engage in direct evangelization work because that is not our charism. In our experience of fraternity, the number of people we know increases, and friendship endures, even if we have changed country or jobs. Even many friends who are 'far' from the Church for various reasons value in different ways what we believe and live as brothers, and they have told me: 'I do not share **your faith**, but I like **how you are**.'



We are members of the Church sent to

Fernando, Jorge and Rigoberto

announce the Kingdom in all places, especially in ordinary life, in the everyday, in the micro-signs of the Kingdom that are revealed to us in every human relationship and in contact with creatures in nature. We are brothers of all men and all creatures, as Saint Francis of Assisi expressed very well.



Our vocation is understood by those who recognize the difference between the Kingdom and the Church and do not confuse the Church with the Temple... People talk about “pictures of Churches” or “visiting Churches” when in reality they are “temples.” The Church is made up of all the baptized and followers of Jesus, whom we find in the two places where He wished to be present: the Eucharist and our neighbour.

In that context, I greatly enjoy the dialogue of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, especially when He says: “the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” When I was young and in the Seminary, we went during Holy Week to a town where there was a stone oratory beneath the atar that few people visited. Someone told me that once someone who spent hours in adoration passed through that place. I have always believed it was our brother Enrique, something I could never verify. But that experience led me to leave the seminary and seek a simple life of adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist.

When I met the brothers in Buenaventura (Colombia in 1979), I found in them that simple life and worship. Later, I lived alone for a year next to the Little Sisters of Jesus in Bogotá (1980) and shared with them the simple life and adoration. Then I followed the vocation of the Brothers of Jesus (1982) in Colombia, Chile, and Peru, before coming back to Colombia again in 2006.

The three brothers are retired, but we remain involved in different ways in this fraternal “permanent offering.” In my case, besides working in the workshop from Monday to Friday, I spent 10 years in an environmental movement, with meetings on Saturdays, for the “defense of water, life, and territory.” As an “Environmental Committee,” we managed to prevent an open-pit gold mine from being opened, which would have destroyed an entire agricultural area. I am no longer part of the Committee, but I stay informed about its activities.

For more than 2 years, I have been part of a group of “young people my age” called “ALL-TERRAIN,” and we hike in the mountains every Saturday, which allows us to stay fit and be in direct contact with nature. Each hike allows for both sharing and solitude, as the trails follow one after another, giving us time to contemplate and listen to the sounds of nature and sometimes take a bath in a waterfall. Anyone can join the group; whoever wants to go, can...and we are now around 20 hikers.

Like the family of Nazareth, we share we share with our neighbors their joys and hopes, but sometimes pain and suffering appear as the most palpable reality... in fact, every day we ask each other: “How are you?” because we are interested in knowing their health status,

and this happens in every encounter, and it is not uncommon for the topic of conversation to be about pain, illness, and death. I think that news programs feed on this reality, leaving aside good news or news about the good things that happen all the time and to most people... And while they talk to us about all the bad things, we believe we are informed! I feel well-informed when, thanks to reading, I learn about the advancement of knowledge or what many countries have achieved in terms of quality of life.

Concluded or page 17:

“Retirement time: time to restart”

Xavier Chevillard, provides another reprint of one of the many inspirational stories featured in the Little Brothers of Jesus 2025 magazine (see page 19.)

Mani, from the fraternity of Bangalore (India), shares with us here a moment from his spiritual journey. It is quite rare for a brother to open his heart like this and share his doubts and quests with us. Thank you, Mani.

Dear Brothers, 18-Feb-2025

I am writing to you from a Carmelite retreat centre in Mangalore where I have been staying for a month. There was a change of regional when Mirek visited us in December 2024 and I was free of this responsibility that I was managing for the last six years though it is not a heavy job! I requested the region to give me a break to do a long retreat. My brothers were very generous particularly Kumar who would be alone in Mylasandra as Yesudas was also in his sabbatical period till the end of March.

So I have been here for a month. Mangalore is on the West Coast between Kerala and Goa, a lazy harbour with a wide river emptying itself in the Arabian Sea. The retreat centre is on a hill overlooking the river offering a beautiful view during day and a brightly lit sky at night. I have been looking at the constellations which are visible to the naked eye: Orion, Pleiades, and so many others, including the famous T of Little Therese.

There is a reason why I chose to come here. During the last Chapter in Avila, I was impressed by the all-pervading presence of the Madre, Therese, whenever we visited the city. I also saw a statue of St. John of the Cross who is a familiar figure for me as I have read his books and poems from Toulouse onwards. During the noviciate, Benoit Labre, Br. Charles and Little Therese were the people who nourished my inner life. But I have never been interested in the writings of the Madre of Avila. So I made up my mind that I would try to become familiar with her writings. And I found that in this place the Carmelites try to encourage her spiritual tradition.

That was not the only reason. Since some time, I have been going through a time of great inner aridity. Prayer was hard, attending sacraments was becoming a burden, inner heaviness had set in with a feeling of stagnation. During my noviciate, as I had a sort of volcano within me, sitting in prayer for an hour was hard. So Yoel, my novice master had given me a structure for prayer. To divide the one hour into four quarters: first quarter for concentrating my attention on the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, second quarter for asking forgiveness, third quarter for surrender and fourth quarter for adoration of the Trinity. It worked because it gave an orientation to my one hour of adoration. But of late, I felt that this was imprisoning me in some sort of a rigid spirituality and I was longing for freedom to break out of it. But habits die hard and I also experienced the insecurity of getting into a no man's land in my prayer.

I shared this with the guide of my retreat in this centre. He is a specialist in the spirituality of St. John of the Cross and St Therese of Avila. He understood my struggle and advised to let 20

Prayer of Abandonment: Father, I abandon myself into your hands;

go of these props for prayer and enter into the “nada...nada” experience that John of the Cross advocates. Basically “to sit” and “to waste time” in front of the Bl. Sacrament, not to worry about thoughts and distractions and to ignore even sleepy moments, but to last for an hour without any calculated result. I tried to practice that and I tell you that it was not easy. I felt like St. Peter jumping into water and getting frightened on seeing the waves advancing and threatening to drown me. I clung on and felt that Jesus was holding on to me and reprimanding me “Why do you doubt, where is your faith?” And also Jesus telling Nicodemus that “whoever wants to enter the Kingdom has to be born again” and “You are a teacher in Israel and you do not know these things?”



A lot of things surfaced within me, a lot of conflicts that I had suppressed, memories buried deep and demons that had found refuge in my unconscious self. I needed a lot of healing from hurts. I felt that I was like a computer which had a lot of rubbish in my dust bin. It all needed emptying. Luckily for me, my guide was there to accompany me. I also experienced the power of the sacrament of confession and its healing effect. It was also an experience of solidarity through prayer. I thought of everyone who had been part of my life: Fraternity in particular, my brothers in India, Asia, general fraternity, all the brothers that I know, friends, family members, colleagues of the past, in fact everyone.

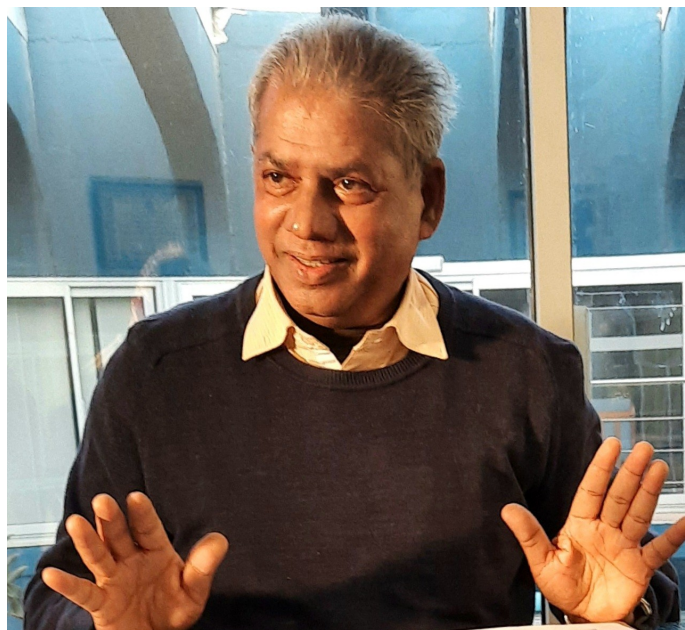
Intercession became so normal in this time of solitude. I thought of Br. Charles in Tamanrasset who must have prayed for all of us without knowing us. It had a huge healing effect in me praying, asking forgiveness and wishing forgiveness. So, I have now to enter into this new way of contemplating the remaining part of my life. I had asked God to allow me to live up to 70 years. I got it. The rest are bonus years and I want to live these years in intimacy with Jesus and also to practice fraternal love. But you know, we are poor human beings and I need to rely on the mercy of God to live these years in genuine hope, accept my failures, my bag of vulnerabilities and the necessary burden that I am for others.

I thank my brothers, particularly Kumar who accepted to be available in Mylasandra with support from Xavier and Anand.

In solidarity with all of you, all over the world,

Your brother, Mani..

+



do with me what you will. Whatever you do, I thank you. I am ready for all,

My fraternity journey

Paddy Gleeson (This text was originally written in 2020)

I had been reading 'Unity Pilgrim', the life

story of Gerry Reynolds CSsR, where chapter six gives an account of his role in the beginnings of the Fraternity in Ireland. While Gerry was living at the Travellers' camp in Ballyfermot, the Little Sisters of Jesus were living there at the time. Sister Jeanne Mathilde was keen that there should be a Fraternity of Priests in Ireland. It was she who invited Fr. Don Stoker, the national responsible of the Fraternity in England to meet with Gerry which led to the beginning of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests in Ireland

[note: this is my very brief account of the beginnings, as I was anxious to somehow situate my own 'fraternity journey' within the larger story, as I first with heard of the fraternity from a conversation over lunch with a group of priests which included the late Charlie O'Malley of Tuam Diocese who mentioned this new fraternity group]

As well as Gerry Reynolds and Peter Lemass, the original group included Christy Fox MHM, Charlie O'Malley (Tuam) Noel Reynolds (Dublin) and two other priests. As well as the commitment to the daily Hour of Adoration, they agreed to meet monthly. They found that the support and friendship helped them to be faithful to the daily prayer. In August 1975 the founding group chose Gerry to represent them at a meeting of representatives of European fraternities in Turin. Don Stoker was there and also Peter Hunermann who was the International responsible at that time.

On 16 March 1976 an information meeting for priests was held at Orlaith Retreat Centre, which I attended. This meeting was addressed by Peter Hunermann the International Responsible, and the work of promoting the Fraternity ideal more widely among the priests was under way. The first 'Month of Nazareth' was held in Castellamare, the Redemptorist holiday home near Clifden in 1976.

A few months ago I came across a photograph which I had taken at 'Castellamare' the Redemptorist holiday house in Clifden where I joined the Month of Nazareth for a few days. The date on the back of the photo was July 1978. There were three Dublin priests in the photo, Eamonn Walsh and the late Brian Connolly and Paddy McCabe. Peter Lemass had heard that I was coming for a few days and kindly kept the spare bed in his room free as otherwise I would have been sleeping in an outhouse.

During the 'day in the desert' I visited the ruined schoolhouse on the nearby island, Inisnee, where my parents first met. There was a 'For Sale' sign on the site and a local man appeared to see if I was a prospective buyer. I told him my reason for being there, and my connection with the place as my mother had been a teacher, and met my father there. He then asked me "are you the priest"!

I have no exact date of when we began to meet, but I believe that this fraternity was the second one, but certainly very early. Paddy Barnard was our responsible, and Ollie Crotty, Tommy O'Keeffe, Eamonn Clarke and myself. Sadly that fraternity group which started about 1976 did not continue after Paddy Barnard died in 1990. Fortunately there was a waiting list

I accept all; let only your will be done in me and in all your creatures, I wish no more than this.

waiting for another fraternity to be founded.....(ends)

Now in Dec 2025, I am struck by how important it was for me to recall the details of such important graces, and how I grateful I am for having kept my 'retreat notes' from my early days as a priest, and how the challenge of the daily hour of prayer became possible through the friendship of my brothers.

Paddy Gleeson 31 December 2025

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“Old Age” as interpreted through the Little Sisters of Jesus in the language of the desert.

I wanted to ask the night-blooming cereus about old age but did not find her. I wanted to know the secret behind her unobtrusiveness and hiddenness. There might be a lot of that in old age! Even her flowers come at night... what hidden beauty.

*I think she might have said:
“Search diligently for the hidden beauty.”*

I asked the prickly pear, “What can you teach me about old age?” And the prickly pear said:

“With age you show your true stuff. Who’d ever guess that I and even the saguaro belong to the rose family - until spring, that is, when my ‘roses’ bloom, followed my own style of rosehips. With age you have much to give, but just differently from in your youth. Don’t compare, just give with joy and without resentment. Life seems unfair at times, a burden... ‘Why me?’ I just say, ‘Why not me?’ and decide to give freely and lovingly. Then no one can force me to give as I’ve already given myself away - freely.”

I asked the ground, “Teach me about old age.”

*And the ground said:
“It’s a holy thing to hold others up, even if you may get crushed in doing so. But I say to myself, ‘Self, be holy ground, and choose to be so joyfully and without resentment and you will be blessed with a meaningful life.”*

And I asked the wind “Teach me about old age.”

*And the wind said:
“Happy are we who believe in mysteries and that some how the original goodness of creation will prevail at the end of time, sorrow and sighing and tears will be no more, and the Spirit like the wind will hover over new wildlands, a new earth, a New Creation.”*



photo: pixabay oberholster venita

Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to you with all the love of my heart. For I

John Inglis provided the input to the British 2026 post-Christmas mini-retreat. (See pictures Pages 4-5.) Here he offers his vocation story.



About ten years ago, whilst in the parish of Effingham and Fetcham, I wrote this letter to Cardinal Cormac whom many of you will remember..

Dear Cormac,

I have felt this urge inside for a few weeks now to write to you and thank you for the trust you had in me and for Ordaining me to the Priesthood. In a couple of weeks now I will be celebrating 35 years of Priesthood with my parish here in Effingham and Fetcham. (Diocese of Arundel & Brighton.) We are having a hog roast in the back garden. My memory of my ordination at St. George's Retreat is a little hazy but I do remember that, before the blessing you said the following words: 'For those of you who gave up watching the men's finals at Wimbledon to come here and attend John's Ordination, I can tell you that John McEnroe has just beaten Bjorn Borg!' It was a wonderful day. It has also been 35 years of knowing this is what God wants of me. Yes, there have been some difficult times, sad times also, but for the most part, Joy. Joy in being an instrument in God's hands. I feel privileged. Weybridge, Eastbourne, Broadfield, Southwick and Portslade, Goring by Sea, Brighton and now here in Surrey. My grateful thanks and assurance of my prayers,

John

In his reply, he said: 'I just about remember ordaining you at St. George's Retreat but cannot remember my commenting on the Men's tennis final!'

I was born in Haslemere just over 76 years ago where I was baptised.

But Haslemere wasn't to be home for me for long. The family moved to Cricklewood in London after which I spent the next few years of my life in a little place called Bricket Wood, between Watford and St. Albans in Hertfordshire. The first memories I have of a church was Our Lady and St. Michael's in Garston, where I made my First Holy Communion. My parish priest being Father Albert Davey, a very small priest who had an enormous Irish Wolf hound as a pet, though nobody was afraid of the dog as he was a big softie. I would serve Mass on Sundays and help with Baptisms on a Sunday afternoon occasionally, I have to admit, because the families would always slip the 'cute little altar boy' a little 'something' to say 'thank you'. At the age of 15, stopped practicing my faith for quite a while, 7 year in all, being distracted by so many other things. I joined the Royal Navy as a boy of 15, and later, after leaving, crossed the Atlantic Ocean a couple of times on yachts, as crew, working briefly in the Caribbean. It was here, after a year or so I got into very bad company and drifted into taking drugs. Looking back, I was searching for happiness and love but looking in all the wrong places. It ended up with me going down some very wrong and dangerous paths, but thank God, He made me meet up with some very, very good people who believed in the goodness they could see in me, which I couldn't see in myself, and helped me begin to slowly turn my life around.

With help from Douglas, who really is responsible for my 'coming back to life', I had managed to get a job as a truck driver, driving a lorry from Brighton to London each day and had a little bed-sitter in Hove, not far from the Sacred Heart church. One night, I looked up at the ceiling and said: 'God, if you exist, prove it! I will give you six months. During which time I will:

1. Go back to church after having been away for 7 years.

love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands, without re-

2. *Go to the Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation.*
3. *Start to read the bible.*
4. *Start to pray on a regular basis, and*
5. *Live a good life.*

Now this last one was the easiest as I was so withdrawn from people I hardly went out at all except to visit my best friend, Douglas, as I mentioned earlier, one of the key people in my life. Also, I used to make cheese and onion sandwiches for my lunch which kept everybody away.

Really, I was asking God two things: One, if he existed and two, if he really cared about me.

So, following my promise, off I went down to the Sacred Heart church where Canon John O'Connor and Fr. Liam O'Connor and Father Cyril Webber were living. Canon John invited me into his dining room and when I had finished telling him how long I had been away from the church and my desire to 'start up' again, he said words I have never forgotten. *'John, after such a long time there might be some things you might find difficult to being up this time, don't worry. Just say what you can. I will give you absolution, God's complete forgiveness and then, as soon as you can in the future and you don't feel afraid to do so, say the remainder.'* He made it so easy for me.

On my way home, one night a few months later, I had parked my lorry and stepped into the Sacred Heart church to say some prayers, which I did every day on the way home from work, when something very strange happened. I can't actually tell you what it was except to say that **Time stood still**. I don't know for how long, but, when I came out of that church, I was completely certain of two things, That God existed and that he loved me dearly, and do you know, that has never left me.

When I came back to the church after those seven years I fell head over heels in love with God and was just so thankful for my being able to discover just how much he loved me and cared for me and wanted the best for me, that I promised to give my life to serving him the best way I could. This resulted in my joining the monastic community at St. Hugh's Charterhouse, or 'Parkminster' as it is more widely known for one year of my life.

I joined the monastery on Easter Tuesday, and spent 12 months coming closer to God. I can remember the three main books that influenced me: The Bible, The Hidden Face by Eda Gores, on the life of St. Therese of Lisieux, and Father John Paul de Caussade's, Abandonment to Divine Providence. I loved everything about the life except for one thing: **Fasting**. There was only one meal a day and that came around mid-day. On Friday it was only Bread and water, and I began to dread that day. No food from Thursday lunch time until Saturday lunch time apart from bread and water!

I was there for a year before I realised that God was not calling me to be a monk. I went to see my parish priest, Fr Bernard Thom, and told him what had happened in that I had left the monastery and was not sure what to do next. At the time I could not see a future for myself in doing anything but serving God. What I really wanted was a way to serve God in the way He wanted, but I was uncertain as to how that was. Father Bernard asked me whether I had considered being a priest? I did not answer straight away and he went on to say that by being a secular priest, serving in the diocese, I would be helping other people on their journey to God whilst helping myself too! I asked what that would involve and he said it would mean me going along to the Seminary where they train priests, studying for five or so years.

I was not easy about this as I did not think I would survive. I explained that I had left school at the age of 15 and did not think I would be able to do all the studies. I did not realise this

serve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father. (*Brother Charles.*)

then, but when I said this I was in fact 'leaving God out of the equation.' Father Bernard's reply was: *'Go for it, and, if you hit a brick wall then you will know it was not for you, but you won't know unless you give it a try, will you?'*

I went to see Father Barry Wymes, the priest in charge of vocations to the priesthood at the time and he asked me to go and write an essay with all the reasons why I wanted to be a priest.

Bishop Michael Bowen was the Bishop of the diocese then, and I was invited up to see him at the seminary in the summer of 1975, and, whilst walking around the grounds asked me whether I would like to come and join the seminary family at St. John's near Guildford in the Fall. I was over the moon. And I can tell you that those five years passed so quickly. I managed to get through all the studies, with a little help, though I really should say a lot of help, and, during the summer of 1980, was ordained Deacon, along with five others, by Bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. I spent six months with Fr Tim Rice, John Healy and Ken Freeman in the old church at Woking before being ordained Priest on the 4th July 1981 at St. George's Retreat, Burgess Hill.

My first posting was as assistant priest in the parish of Weybridge, and it was here I discovered a hobby which turned out to be the most exciting one I have ever had. Windsurfing! My next parish was Eastbourne, for the next four years, with Father Barry Wymes as my parish priest. As the parish was by the sea it had many other benefits for me too. I windsurfed for ten years in all.

Following that, I had my first posting on my own, as parish priest of the ecumenical parish of Christ the King in Broadfield Crawley, and chaplain to St. Wilfrid's school, for four years. From there to Southwick and Portslade, where I was also chaplain to the 6th form at Cardinal Newman school in Brighton. On then to Goring by Sea for eight years. (STILL BY THE SEA!)

From there to Brighton, St. Joseph's for six years, then to Effingham and Fetcham in Surrey for six years and finally here to Banstead, where I have been for the two and a half years, half of that in Covid!

I will finish now with my letter to my bishop.

Dear Bishop Richard,

I am writing to say that 'the time has come' for me to step down from that wonderful position of Parish Priest here in Banstead and move on to 'gentler fields.'

I am therefore offering you my retirement in a year's time as I will then be 75 years old. The joys and privileges of priesthood that I have experienced over the years put into shadow, any difficulties there have been. I have loved my life as an active priest and consider myself fortunate to be in the Diocese and Brighton. I am very grateful to you for the help you have given me since you were appointed to our diocese. I have given some thought to the future and would be very willing to 'supply' whenever needed and when I am free.

I am writing now so that you will have time to think about the next priest for Banstead.

God bless you always

Yours sincerely,

John

+

Among e.mails received by the editor

From: Jesus Caritas Ireland <responsablejcireland@gmail.com>

Sent: 29 November 2025

Subject: Re: "Be Brothers:"

Hello Dear Brother Bob,

Greetings from Ireland and sincere thanks for doing all that great work of putting the "Be Brothers" magazine together. I think you are getting better at it with every issue.

Lots of interesting reading and inspiration.

Wishing you Happy Feast Day of Brother Saint Charles and a Joyful and Hope-filled Advent.

And a Blessed Christmas (when it arrives)!

Thanks again Bob.

Fraternally in Christ Jesus,

Joe Deegan,

(Irish Regional Responsible.)

From: Jesus Caritas Ireland <responsablejcireland@gmail.com>

Sent: 14 January 2026

Subject: Mullaghmore Retreat August 23 - 27

Dear brothers,

Greetings for the new year and I hope 2026 will bring quiet joy to you on your journey in priestly ministry.

As you read this email please open your diary and fill in the dates for the annual (Irish) National Retreat for Jesus Caritas which takes place at the Star of the Sea Retreat Centre, Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo commencing on the afternoon of Sunday August 23rd and concluding at lunchtime Thursday August 27th.

Please contact me directly at 087-7973432 or frniallahern@gmail.com as soon as possible.

Looking forward to hearing from you and please encourage any of your brother priests to join you for this special time of grace and prayer.

Beannachtaí,

Niall Ahern

E.mails continued overleaf

E.mails continued from overleaf

From: Jesus Caritas Ireland <responsablejcireland@gmail.com>
Sent: 04 April 2026 18:55
To: undisclosed recipients
Subject: Greetings for Holy Week and Easter!

Dear Brothers,

I trust this few lines finds you well and feeling something of the new surge of life that comes with Springtime, even if the weather hasn't matched the season.

The journey through Holy Week can bring a strange mix of joy, at having come to the end of another time of Lent; confused turmoil, as we journey with Jesus through rejection, suffering and death; and uplifting hope as we celebrate the glory of Christ's Resurrection.

Perhaps, like me, you are feeling thankful at having First Confessions and Confirmation over and done with for another year!

If you haven't done so already please contact Niall directly at 087-7973432 or frniallahern@gmail.com if you wish to join us for the annual National Retreat for Jesus Caritas Fraternity in Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo commencing on the afternoon of Sunday August 23rd and concluding at lunchtime Thursday August 27th.

The Irish Fraternity are hosting the Jesus Caritas European Assembly this year and it will take place from 13th to 18th July in Mullaghmore. We are looking at the possibility of Irish brothers joining the brother delegates from around Europe for a gathering in Knock on one of the days and we will be in touch with details if and when that takes shape. Meanwhile please pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Brother Charles de Foucauld the assembly will run smoothly and be successful for all involved.

One final matter is regarding finance. To keep the wheels turning, may I request that, if you are a member of Jesus Caritas Ireland, please contribute the annual subscription of €50 by EFT to our account. The details are as follows;

Name of Account; Jesus Caritas Fraternity

IBAN; IE16AIBK933104178720000 BIC: AIBKIE2D

Alternatively, if you don't use on-line banking you could send a cheque to Fr. James McDonagh, Station Road, Ballymote, Co. Sligo.

Wishing you abundant graces and blessings of Faith, Hope, Peace & Love this Holy Week and Easter.

Fraternally in the Risen Lord,

Joe Deegan.

(Irish Regional Responsible.)

Note in a longer e.mail (17/1/26) from John Inglis re- the British retreat at Brownhill Bernardines, Gloucestershire, in January:

Just before I left, one of the sisters said to me how privileged she was to be in our presence as we were such a prayerful group of priests. That is something about the Jesus Caritas groups that is noticeable.

+

A further synopsis of the Summer 2025 retreat of the British fraternities

*With Little Sr. Kathy McKee on Ls Magdeleine, the order's
founder. Provided by Michael Healy (Clifton fraternity.)*

Born 1898 and, losing her brothers in WWI and her sisters to Spanish 'flu, she was affected, She reads Brother Charles aged 23 and when at 38 she gains osteo-arthritis, her doctor recommends she leaves the damp of Nantes; so she goes to Algeria. She meets a Fr. Leclerc who is energised by Br. Charles and she starts supporting the poor. She has a dream in which Our Lady offers her the infant Jesus, whose own arms are stretched out. All her life she henceforth carries the infant in her heart. At El Golea she meets Fr. Voillaume, who has started the Little Brothers and in due course she presents the Pope with a constitution for the Little Sisters. Their spirit is to go to the very poorest of the poor and bring Jesus in their hearts to them by living the life of the poor. It is an updating of Br. Charles' ideals, for a post-WWI world (eg. none of his colonialism, but treating all completely equally.) A tension between Brother Charles' contemplative ideal and living the life of the poor. She buys a Renault camper van and takes sisters to Eastern Europe with the Blessed Sacrament, so gaining many vocations. Eventually they even enter Communist Russia, through some subterfuge! She finally dies of a broken hip in 1989, age 99! She is buried in an underground mausoleum at the sisters' HQ at Tre Fontaine, Rome. +

Concluding the Little Brothers' article from page 7:

Among us, both Rigoberto in the neighbourhood and Fernando in a church group are close to people who suffer and try to make life more bearable for these people and their caregivers. Our prayer of intercession is full of names and cases that we place in the hands of the Father every day. And every Monday, in our community prayer, we focus on praying for Migrants from all over the world.

Pope Francis pointed out how little adoration is valued and wanted to promote it. Federico, our friend from Prado, used to say that to adore is to find Jesus directly, love-love, and that only in this way can we recognize Him in fraternal love. We only recognize Him in others if we know Him within ourselves. Jesus, whom I contemplate in the Eucharist and in the Gospels every morning in our chapel, is the one I later recognize in daily life where He waits for me so that I may love Him: "I was hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, in prison... and you visited me" (Matthew 25).

I believe I have been able to share with you what dwells in my heart and something of what we live as a fraternity in this Nazareth of Ibagué. . For those who know me, I am still dedicated to my origami hobby, making figures that bring joy to children and to the inner child of those for whom that is my birthday gift. It costs little, but it is worth a lot. To anyone who asks me what a paper figure is good for, I answer... for the same purpose as a flower!

Fraternally, your brother *Jorge Arturo*. +

Long out of print but reprinted by the British Regional Team is Little Brother Ian Latham's

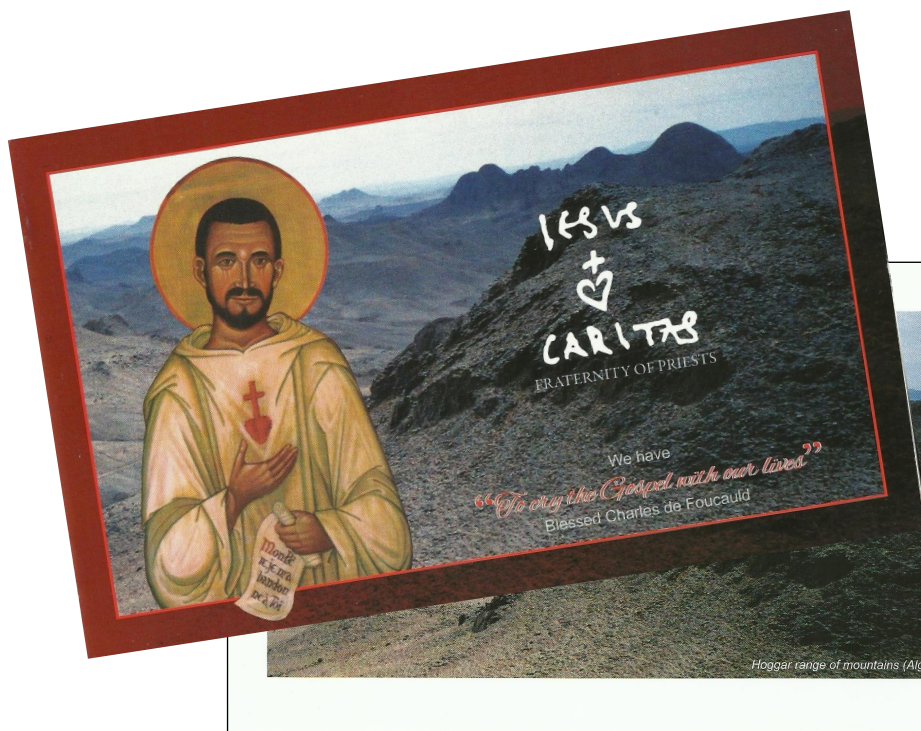
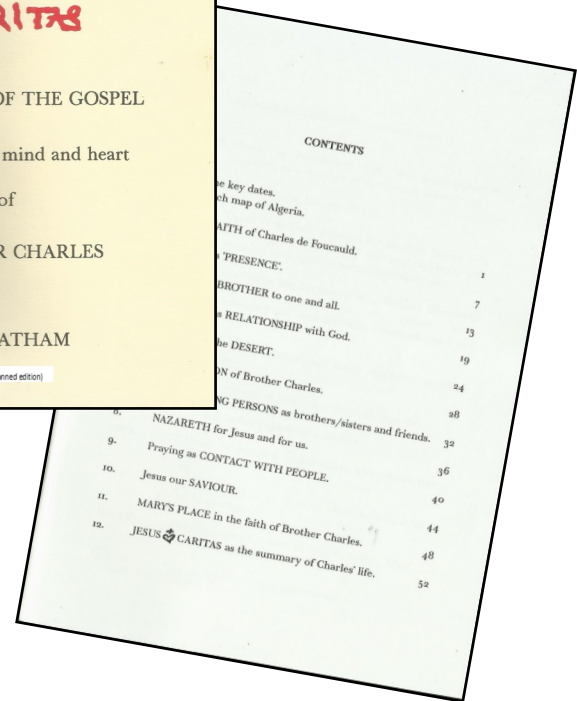
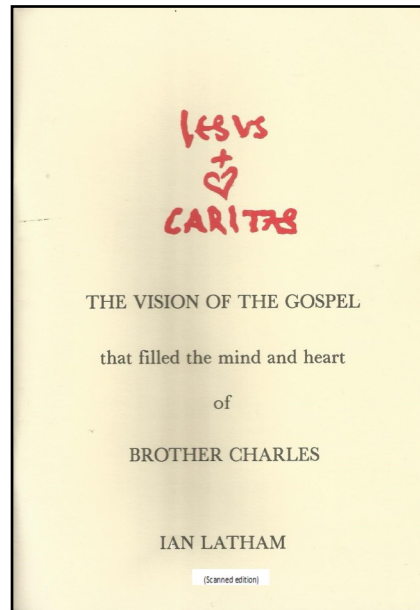
“The Vision of the Gospel that filled the Mind and Heart of Brother Charles.”

It provides a very useful summary of Br. Charles' teaching, in conveniently short dedicated chapters.

Offered free of charge, copies can be requested from Stephen Squires via frstevesquires@aol.com or Barnabas Page on barnabas.page@gmail.com

It can be used as a study tool in fraternity meetings.

Scanned from an original copy; 54 pages in A5 portrait format, on 160gsm. paper. 12 chapters, preceded by a timeline for Br. Charles and a simple map of Algeria. +

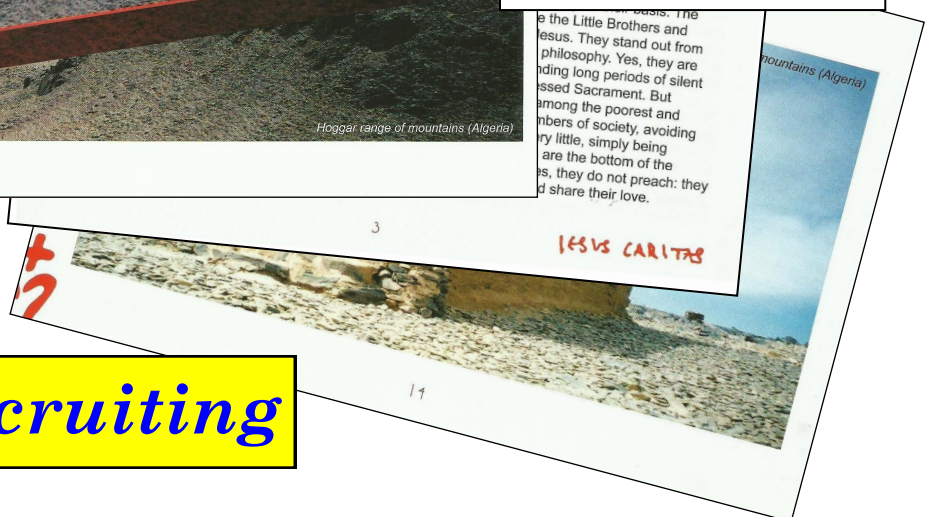


Reprinted for a second time is the late Fr. Tony Philpot's excellent description of the origins and ethos of Jesus Caritas.

24 pp., full colour, art paper, A5 landscape format.

Copies are available free from both the British and Irish Regional Responsibles (contact details on the rear cover of every "Be Brothers.") +

... the Little Brothers and Jesus. They stand out from philosophy. Yes, they are living long periods of silent Sacred Sacrament. But among the poorest and humblest of society, avoiding any little, simply being at the bottom of the world, they do not preach: they only share their love.

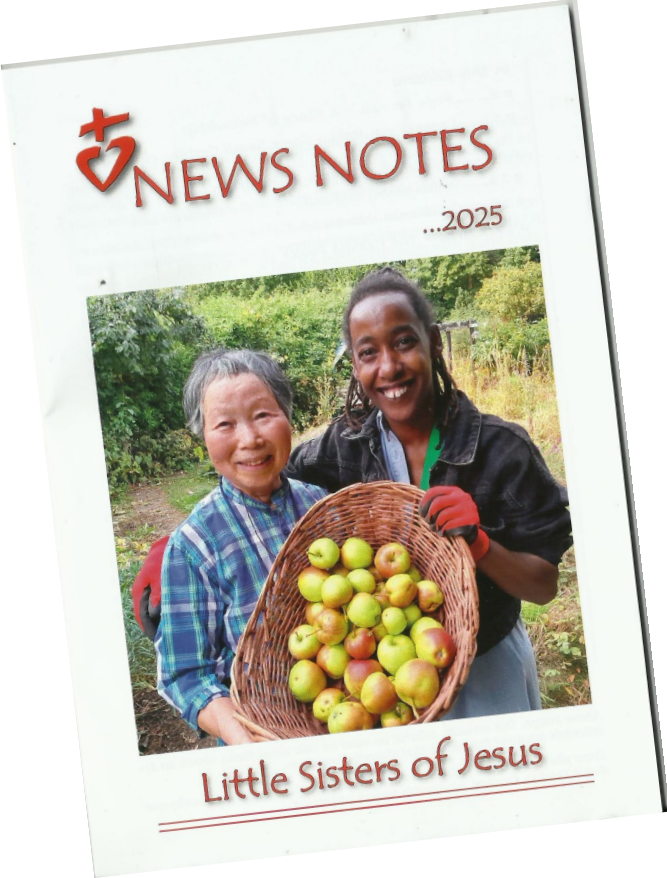
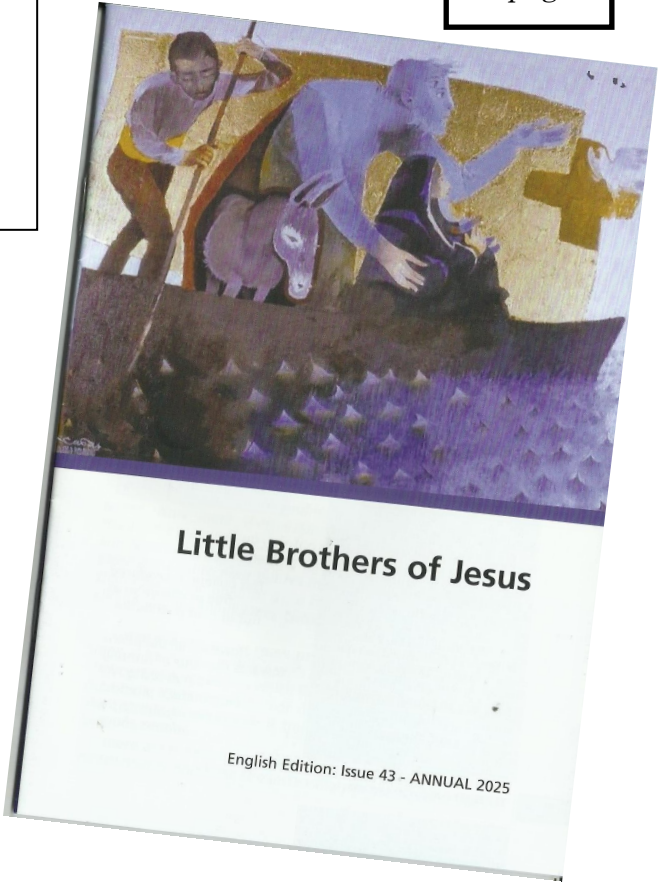


For your recruiting

Publications received

The Little Brothers magazine and the Little Sisters' "News Notes" are now received and passed on electronically to all British fraternities (and any others who ask the "Be Bros." editor.) Much inspirational reading therein! (NB: current "News Notes" not available electronically due to containing copyright photos.) +

See page 8



Treasurers' appeal:

Pleaser remember that our individual annual contributions become due each 1st January; see details for making payment on the lower rear page.



These not only cover "Be Brothers," but assist in the running of the Regional Teams' work, with a proportion going to the European Team and on to the International Team, and through them some helps fraternities struggling in impoverished lands. Our contributions assist in holding the whole worldwide Jesus Caritas organisation in fraternity. If there is any problem in paying, note that offerings of any amount are appreciated. +

We publish June and November editions of "Be Brothers Britain & Ireland" each year. **In Ireland changes to the distribution (by e.mail) should go to Joe Deegan as below, and in Britain to Bob Rainbow. Editorial material should also be sent, typed and preferably by email, to the Editor at:**

Fr. Bob Rainbow

Tel: 01766 514515.

Email: ra-r@hotmail.co.uk

"Ty'r Efail," Penmorfa,
Porthmadog, Gwynedd.
LL49 9RT. Great Britain.



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British Regional Responsible:

Fr. Chris Dobson Tel: 07754592899

Email: Chris.Dobson@abdiocese.org.uk

The Old Stables, Rookery Farm, Hacheston
Woodbridge. IP13 0DJ. (GB.)

Chris's Team: Peter Stodart, Peter
Coxe, Barnabas Page, John Nolan,
Jonathan Cotton, Stephen Squires
& Bob Rainbow.



British Regional Treasurer: John Nolan

Tel: 07400 399000.

Email: johnfpnolan@gmail.com

5 Cheltondale,
Harwood Grove,
Solihull,
West Midlands. B90 4AR. (GB.)



**Requested subscriptions are Britain £30,
Ireland 50E per person, each Jan. 1st.**

After local needs, these assist international Responsibles' meetings with any substantial surplus going to fraternities in developing countries. The British subs. also covers the printing and posting of "Be Brothers Britain & Ireland" in Britain (solely by e.mail in Ireland.) Subs. should be sent, payable to: "**Jesus Caritas Fraternity,**"

to the appropriate Treasurer as above; otherwise direct to the relevant bank:

BRITAIN, Nat. West Bank: 60-19-14 a/c: 34455906 BIC: NWBKGB2L

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IRELAND: IBAN: IE16 AIBK 9331 0417 8720 00 (BOC: AIBKIE2D) +

New International Responsible:
Carlos Roberto DOS SANTOS

Tel: +55 1499698 4661 Email

pecarlosroberto@gmail.com

Rua Padre Felipe Leddet
Quadra 7,

lote 33 Setor Sao Vincente
76600.000 GOIAS GO Brasil

Carlos' team:

Roberto (Tino) FERRARI
(Argentina), Mark MERTES (USA),

Boris SCHLÜSSEL (Switzerland),

& Louis Edmond ESSEYI A GNADAM
(Cameroon).

International news (available in English:)

<http://www.iesuscaritas.org/en>



Irish Regional Responsible:

Fr. Joe Deegan Tel: 086 3853045

Email: responsablejcireland@gmail.com

St. Brigid's Parish, Clara, Co. Offaly,
Ireland.

Joe's Team: James
McDonagh (treasurer)

Fergal Cunnane
(secretary) & Niall Ahern
(retreats organiser)



Contacts for Irish editorial material:

Liam O'Cuiv liamocuive@yahoo.com

Alan Geoghegan narayana@gmail.com

Irish Regional Treasurer:

Fr. James McDonagh

Tel: 087-4104073

Email [jmcdonagh@](mailto:jmcdonagh@achonrydiocese.org)

achonrydiocese.org

Station Rd., Ballymote,
Co. Sligo, Ireland.

