

Assumpta



CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY AND NEWS

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*“God the Holy Spirit,
who proceeds from*



*God the Father and God the Son,
come and remain in us.*

*We need you in everything. We
cannot do any good without you.*

*Come and remain in us in
order to enlighten us against the
deceits of the devil, of the world and
of ourselves; to give us strength for
holiness, for forbearance, and for
self-denial in everything that
pleases us.*

*Come and remain in us in order to
comfort us in every sorrow. It's only
through your help alone that we
can live a holy life, shun sin, and
eventually, at death, enter into
everlasting life where we praise you,
the Father and the Son”*

*St. George Preca
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Carmelite spirituality and news Vol 53 No 2



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In this issue...

Assumpta honours the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador and his links with the Carmelite charism together with one of his most inspiring homilies (*see pp. 10-23*). We also take a second look at the reflections on living together as a Carmelite community and pose questions for further reflection (*see pp. 4-9*). And Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity's exalted spiritual heritage inspires a lay Carmelite (*see pp. 26-9*).

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Shepherds of God's People

Dear Friends in Carmel

As you will be aware, we are in the midst of a special 'Year for Priests' which was declared by Pope Benedict XVI beginning on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on 19 June 2009 and concludes on 19 June 2010. To mark the closing of the year, there will be a international gathering of priests in Rome with the Holy Father on 9-11 June 2010.



St. John Vianney

When announcing the *Year for Priests* the Holy Father also declared St. John Vianney — the Curé d' Ars — the Universal Patron of Priests, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the saint's death. St. John Vianney, parish priest of Ars for 41 years, had already been the patron of Parish Priests but the Holy Father has now extended the honour to include ALL priests. In becoming a priest, John Vianney had a very difficult time and struggled greatly with all of his studies having a particularly difficult time with Latin, nevertheless, through sheer perseverance and faith and trust in God's providence he won through. John Vianney, a humble parish priest is regarded by the Church as one of its greatest figures simply because he was faithful.

Cardinal John Henry Newman

Later this year when the Holy Father visits Britain it is believed he will beatify Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) in Birmingham. John Henry Newman, as opposed to John Vianney, was and is considered a great intellect and one of the greatest writers in the Church. That said, what can these two great saints have in common? Could it be that despite their academic differences, both were great shepherds of God's people? John Vianney undoubtedly had a reputation for being a great pastor. What may not be so well known about Newman is that apart from his love of writing, he was first and foremost a priest who worked tirelessly for the poor of his parish. Fr. Newman was made a Cardinal, to the joy of the people of Birmingham by Pope Leo XIII, just over a year before his death on 12th May 1879.

On 19th August 1890, more than 15,000 people, lined the streets of Birmingham as Cardinal Newman's funeral procession took place from the Birmingham Oratory, to his burial place in a secluded little cemetery in Rednal, near Birmingham (a distance of eight miles or so). The vast majority would never have known or even read any of his writings. They came out in such numbers to show their love and appreciation for a priest who loved and cared for his flock.

Archbishop Oscar Romero

Last but certainly not least; this March we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero whose witness to Gospel values was truly remarkable. For Carmelites in particular we look forward urgently to the beatification of this man of God.

“Since his assassination on 24th March 1980, millions of Christians have recognised Romero as a modern-day martyr. His passionate preaching of God’s love for all, in season and out of season, was never compromised. Pope John Paul II prayed at Romero’s tomb, and Pope Benedict XVI has said it is his hope that the Servant of God will soon be beatified. Not only Roman Catholics but Christians of many denominations regard Romero as a patron saint-in waiting for the justice and peace movement.

Thirty years after his martyrdom, Christians around the world will be marking Oscar Romero’s witness to Christ through his life and death. Many devotees and Church leaders will gather in El Salvador for a special celebration with the new Head of State, Mauricio Funes, who has dedicated his presidency to the memory of Romero. Among the Christian leaders from Britain taking part will be the Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley, and the Bishop of Leeds, Arthur Roche. Meanwhile here in Britain there will be two major ecumenical services, as well as special Masses in more than a dozen dioceses. Some of these liturgies have been organised by CAFOD, religious orders such as the Carmelites (Romero was shot in a Carmelite chapel), and the Archbishop Romero Trust (www.romerotrust.org.uk) established in 2006 to promote awareness of Romero’s life and to support social justice initiatives in Latin America which carry forward his legacy.”

Within these pages you can read more about Romero and see what is happening around the Province to mark the anniversary of his death (The article from which i quote can be seen in its entirety at: www.romerotrust.org.uk).

Sixth National Gathering

The Sixth National Gathering of the Third Order in Britain will take place at Aylesford Priory from **Friday 6th – Sunday 8th May 2011**. Full details of the event, including costs etc, will appear in *Assumpta* soon. In the meantime, could I please urge all Third Order communities and Carmelite Spirituality Groups to make note of the dates and give the event the priority it deserves in your diaries?

Yours in Carmel,

John Berry
Provincial Delegate

Living together as a Carmelite community: four reflections (part 2)

In the previous edition of Assumpta we printed the first of four reflections on the theme of ‘Community’. Originally compiled for a meeting of Carmelite friars in Italy last autumn, they have been slightly adapted by Johan Bergström-Allen for individual or group reflection by Lay Carmelites. This issue we take a look at the topic of “Forming community that lives in faith.”



Reminder of the first reflection

The first reflection was *Carmel: a praying community that lives the Gospel according to the Carmelite charism*. It began by looking at the challenging of building community today: how do we create a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood when our sense of community can be undermined by consumerism, individualism, activism, poverty, old age, or indifference?

The text went on to consider what the *Rule of Saint Albert* says about our community life, such as praying together, eating common meals, sharing goods, working together, and discussing the welfare of the community. It was pointed out the Rule invites Carmelites to imitate the fraternity of the first Christians that we read about in *Acts of the Apostles* (2:24-27; 4:32-35). This model inspires Carmelites to form prophetic and praying communities in the midst of the people. The text then provided some questions for reflection, on your own or in a group, and concluded with some suggestions for prayer and practical commitment.

The four reflections

- Carmel: A praying community that lives the Gospel according to the Carmelite charism.
- Carmel: Forming community that lives in faith.
- Carmel: A fraternal community that lives love.
- Carmel: A prophetic community that lives in hope.

Overview of the second reflection

In this second reflection we shall consider the topic of “*Forming community that lives in faith*”. Again, we will approach this topic in five sections:

1. The “Challenge of Today”: being aware of the context we live in, and what makes our life as brothers and sisters in Carmel difficult.
2. A teaching from the Rule of Saint Albert regarding some aspects of

Carmelite community life.

3. A biblical text or a reflection starting from the Bible that can enlighten and deepen our understanding of community.

4. In-depth analysis and sharing of ideas in the community (if you are able).

5. A commitment starting from the “Challenge of Today” and a concluding prayer.

You might find it helpful to have a copy of the Rule of Saint Albert and the Bible to hand. So, let’s begin...

Carmel: Forming community that lives in faith

*“Faith must be your shield on all occasions,
and with it you will be able to quench
all the flaming missiles of the wicked one:
there can be no pleasing God without faith”*
(Rule of Saint Albert 19)

Obedience corrects and purifies the relationship with God

1. The challenge of today

The historian Fr. Emanuele Boaga, O.Carm., tells us that in less than seventy years from when the Carmelites began leaving Mount Carmel — that is, from 1238 to 1300 — the Carmelites had founded more than 150 communities all over Europe. Their way of living the charism, their particular way of life given by God, appealed to young people.

In the twentieth century in Europe there were many vocations to the religious life, and it was possible to send lots of Carmelites to Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Nowadays, in Europe vocations to religious life seem to be disappearing. Many young people look for a meaning to their life in community, but our way of living community does not seem attractive to them. A similar situation exists for many Lay Carmelite communities.

In Asia, Africa and Latin America vocations to religious life are increasing, but even within this context fraternal life is a big challenge. The laicizing process and increasing social disparity seem to suggest that religious life – or a community based on faith – is an unreal and unrealisable dream. It does not appeal.

- *Exchange ideas about this issue. What do you think? Do you agree?*
- *Why do you think that our Carmelite communities – lay or religious – might not be sending an attractive appeal that could fascinate the youth of today?*

- *What could change in the way we are organised and in our institutional structures?*

2. What the Rule of Saint Albert affirms about the Community of faith

The Context of our Origins

The first requirement of the Rule of Saint Albert is not about prayer, or about the prayerful reading of the Bible, nor does it deal with the Sacraments; rather, it deals with the choice of a Prior, to whom each of the others must promise obedience, and also chastity and the renunciation of ownership. Why is the choice of the Prior, or community leader, so important that it should be the first requirement of our Rule?

At that time of the thirteenth century, the superior in large monasteries was an Abbot. An abbot was elected to be the superior for life (*ad vitam* as they called it). Sometimes, he was appointed by the bishop. Among the Carmelites, the superior was not an abbot, nor was he appointed by the bishop, but he was and still is a Prior, that is, one chosen among the Carmelites, elected by all of us, not for ever, but only for a few years. The Rule clearly states that communities should be led by *'one of yourselves, who is to be chosen for the office by common consent'* (Rule 4).

The institution of the prior changed the style of relationship between people inside the community. It introduced a democratic element in the organisation of community life, and prevented the superior from feeling that his power was something due to him personally. The one who is elected for three or six years knows that he or she is *'one of yourselves chosen by common consent'* (Rule 4) and that after a few years, he or she will be a subject again, equal to the others.

The Text of the Rule

In the Rule of Saint Albert, the prior has the following characteristics:

1. *He is elected by all the others or by the majority of the brothers and he receives their obedience (Rule 4 and 23).*
2. *Together with the brothers he decides where to stay (Rule 5).*
3. *Together with the brothers he makes sure that each brother has his own cell (Rule 6).*
4. *He authorizes any exchanges of dwelling place (Rule 8).*
5. *He receives visitors at the entrance of the dwelling place to direct and guide them (Rule 9).*
6. *He appoints one brother to take care of distributing the goods according to the needs of the brethren (Rule 12).*

What catches our attention is that the prior is almost never alone when he exercises his authority, but he always does it together with other brothers (he is elected unanimously or by the majority, he decides together with the

brothers). It is a participatory way of exercising authority that involves all the members of the community and creates a sense of co-responsibility. For the Carmelites, the exercise of authority promotes community life and not the reinforcement of authority itself.

Obedience, promised to the Prior as the representative of Christ (Rule 23) and of the Community, refers to each brother's commitment to 'live in allegiance to Jesus Christ' (Rule 2), following the orientation indicated in the Rule. This implies that a Carmelite has to live the ideal of the Rule in the community. In this way, the community becomes a forming community, a natural space for the initial and permanent formation of all its members.

Obedience does not mean that the person has to lose or waive his (or her) will; on the contrary, it means that we have to activate our will at the maximum level, until it totally complies with God's will. In this way, the Carmelite imitates Jesus, who affirmed: *'I do nothing of my own accord. What I say is what the Father has taught me. I always do what pleases him.'* (John 8:28-29).

*This
implies that a
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3. Pondering Scripture: 'Living in allegiance to Jesus Christ',

Imitating Jesus' obedience to the Father Meditating on Scripture can help us better understand how we can practice obedience, doing the will of God.

Doing the will of the Father and completing his work was the centre of Jesus' life. It was his *daily food* (John 4:34). We read in the Letter to the Hebrews that *'On coming into the world, Christ said: "Here I am, I am coming to do your will, God"'*. (Hebrews 10:5-7). On leaving the world Christ said: *'It is fulfilled!'* (John 19:30). Jesus fought to be faithful to the Father. He had to pray a lot to be able to win (Hebrews 5:7; Luke 22:41-46). But he won. *'He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.'* (Philippians 2:8).

Jesus specified: *'By myself I can do nothing; I can judge only as I am told to judge'* (John 5:30). Where and how did Jesus listen to what the Father wanted him to do? Jesus discovered the will of the Father in the Sacred Scriptures (Luke 4:18). There he found the answer against temptations that tried to divert him from the path of the Father (Luke 4:4, 8, 12). He found the will of the Father in the people and in their state of mind. When Jesus heard the answer of the Canaanite woman, he changed his mind and said: *'Woman, you have great faith! Let your desire be granted.'* (Matthew 15:28). He found the will of the Father in prayer (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1). In the Garden of Olives, he prayed and faced a fight. The angel came and helped him to see

it through. Jesus sweated blood, but he found peace in the total handover of himself to the Father (Luke 22:43-44). He won by his praying. The communion between Jesus and the Father, resulting from such a total obedience, was so perfect that they identified with one another. When we obey someone, we do not speak for ourselves, but on behalf of the one we obey.

Obedience made Jesus become totally transparent. Through obedience he emptied himself and let the Father take care of everything. For this reason, everything Jesus fulfilled was by revelation of the Father: *'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'* (John 14:9; cf. 10:30; 17:10; 12:45). This loyalty to the Father was the well from which Jesus drank: *'I do nothing of my own accord. What I say is what the Father has taught me.'* (John 8:28). First of all, the Good News that Jesus announced was not a doctrine to be learned by heart, nor a discipline to be imposed, or a culture to be exported, or a new idea to be taught, but it was and still is, first of all, the face of the Father to be revealed to the people, especially to the poor, through a radical obedience to him!

The obedience of Jesus was not a mere observation of discipline, but it was a prophetic obedience. Through his obedience, the voice of Jesus was the voice of the Father. For his obedience to the Father Jesus contravened human traditions and criticized them.

Obedience only makes sense when it represents a revelation of the Father! Jesus left a considerable testimony in this sense when he said: *'I shall not talk to you much longer, because the prince of this world is on his way. He has no power over me, but the world must recognise that I love the Father and that I act just as the Father commanded. Come now, let us go.'* (John 14:30-31). He stood up and went to the Garden of Olives, where he was arrested. Jesus' passion started there and it finished with his death on the cross. The answer of the Father to the obedience of Jesus was his resurrection (Hebrews 4:7; Philippians 2:9).

4. In-depth analysis and sharing of ideas

We began this reflection by looking at the challenges facing Carmelite community life today, and the decline in vocations, particularly to the religious life, considering what might have to change if we are to attract younger people to Carmel.

We then looked at what the Rule of Saint Albert has to say about Carmelite community life, particularly the role of the prior. This led on to a pondering of Scripture, especially the way in which Jesus was totally obedient to his Father.

Now let's spend some time reflecting upon this material and our own experiences, insights and reactions. You can do this on your own, as well as with your Carmelite community.

Questions to ask yourself

First, spend a moment in silence. Be aware that you are in God's presence.

The following questions might help you analyse and reflect on this material in more depth and to share your thoughts and feelings:

- How do you live this ideal of brother/sisterhood that obeys, as witnessed in the life of Jesus and proposed by our *Rule of Saint Albert*?
- How does our community live out and make manifest the relationship between the prior (leader) and the members of the community as envisaged by the Rule of Saint Albert?
- We often speak of our desire to know and discern what God is asking of us as members of the Carmelite Family today. How does the situation of the people amongst whom we live inform how we obey God's call? How does God call to us through those around us and their reality, and how does our service of them show that we listen to God and obey?

Commitment and prayer

We've reflected on Carmel as a community that lives in faith, that is formed in a particular way set out by the *Rule of Saint Albert*, and which manifests our obedience to God's will. The Carmelite notion of community is a reality to strive for and now is the time to consider making some form of practical commitment to help build up the Carmelite community, as well as praying for a deeper sense of shared brotherhood and sisterhood. Here are some suggestions (you might have others):

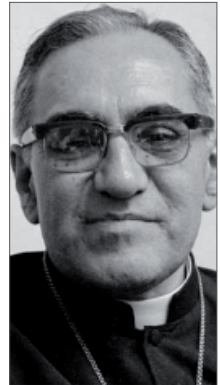
- Go back to the first section on "*The Challenge of Today*". Formulate a commitment – either individually or as a community – that is practical, possible, and achievable.
- Offer some spontaneous prayers to God.
- Reflect (perhaps as a form of *Lectio Divina*) on Psalm 40 (39) '*Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*'
- In the next reflection we shall consider the topic of "*Carmel: fraternal community that lives in love*".

ROMERO

A martyr with a Carmelite heart

Monsignor Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, was martyred on 24th March 1980 for his prophetic defence of God's 'little ones'. Oscar Romero – whose cause for beatification is being considered by the Holy See – was inspired by Carmelite spirituality, and he in turn has become an inspiration for many Carmelites around the world today.

Below we print some extracts from a reflection entitled "Seasons of the Heart" written by one of the Priors Provincial in North America, Fr. John Welch, O.Carm. Seasons of the Heart has become widely read as a contemporary exposition of Carmelite spirituality. At several points in his text, Fr. John uses Oscar Romero as an example of how Carmelite spirituality can be lived out today...

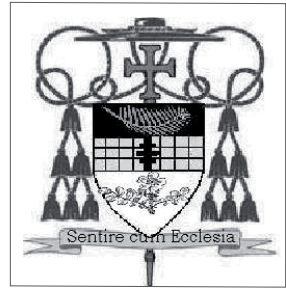


Romero's Duty

What do the men and women in our Carmelite parishes, our retreat houses, in counselling want? Everything! Count on it, and minister to it. And we say to ourselves and them, that the hunger within us is so deep and powerful that, acknowledged or not, only God is sufficient food. When Jesus preached the present and coming Reign of God he was speaking precisely to the deep desires, the holy longing in the hearts of his listeners.

Archbishop Oscar Romero was killed while celebrating Eucharist in a Carmelite chapel. Romero's conversion from a rather traditional, professional cleric with a sincere but otherworldly piety, to an outspoken courageous shepherd of his people, came because he saw the longing in the faces of his people. As he celebrated the funerals of those killed by the powerful, and read off the names of the disappeared, he found it was his duty more and more to give voice to these voiceless ones, to express their oppressed longings - to embody in his courageous presence the holy longing of the Salvadoran people. To assist people in hearing and voicing their deepest longing is part of Carmel's continuing ministry. The first Carmelites estab-

lished conditions in their small valley which would bring order to their multiple desires. Each inhabited a cell and the cells surrounded a chapel, in which they daily remembered God's desire for them. Teresa of Avila founded enclosed communities within which the women could open themselves to the full force of their desires in affectionate friendship with the Lord and one another. She encouraged them to follow the lure of their depths as their fragmented desires found healing and reorientation. Both she and Thérèse believed firmly that if God has given us such longings God will ultimately fulfil them. We are not a useless passion.



*Romero's coat of arms as
Archbishop.*

Another face of Christ

A continual listening for the approach of God, in the middle of all the words and structures we have constructed, is a prophetic task for Carmel. Which God are we to follow? The gods of our addictions? The gods of ideologies and limited theologies? The gods of oppressive economic and political systems? The gods of all the "isms" of our time? Or is our God the God who transforms, heals, liberates, enlivens?

Archbishop Oscar Romero was a traditional, careful, studious cleric. He was a good man, reserved, pious, prayerful. But his conversion came when he saw another face of Christ, a face somewhat different from the Christ of his piety and prayer, a face somewhat different from his theology, a face different from the Christ familiar to the hierarchy of El Salvador. It was the face of Christ in the face of the people of El Salvador; it was the face of Christ truly incarnated in history and finding its outlines in the struggles of his people. Romero said, "We learn to see the face of Christ - the face of Christ that also is the face of a suffering human being, the face of the crucified, the face of the poor, the face of a saint, and the face of every person and we love each one with the criteria with which we will be judged: *"I was hungry and you gave me to eat"*. The idols of our times are not just personal loves and possessions, but are especially the idols of power, prestige, control, and dominance which leave most of humankind looking in at the banquet of life."

Romero commented: "The poor person is the one who has been converted to God and puts all his faith in him, and the rich person is one who has not been converted to God and puts his confidence in idols: money, power, material things Our work should be directed toward converting ourselves and all people to this authentic meaning of poverty."

Many of our Carmelite provinces have participated in confronting the idols of our times through liberation movements in many areas of the world, including the Philippines, Latin America, North America, Africa, Indonesia,

and eastern Europe. Today, the inequities between north and south often point to idols of “isms” which keep a majority of the world in an emarginated condition.

Engagement with the Lord in history

One of the recent developments in the understanding of the Carmelite charism has been the re-locating of contemplation among our priorities. We had always spoken about prayer, community, and ministry as the three corners of our charism. Contemplation was seen as a higher or deeper form of prayer and, at times in our history, ministry and contemplation appeared to be in competition. However, here is a description of contemplation found in the Carmelite Order's *Ratio* document on formation:

A progressive and continual transformation in Christ worked in us by the Spirit, by which God attracts us toward Himself by means of an interior process which leads from a dispersed periphery of life to the more interior cell of our being, where He dwells and unites us to Himself.

We are understanding now that contemplation is an activity which grounds and links prayer, community, and ministry. The door is prayer, but God's love is offered us in various ways in those realities of our lives and one can enter into this contemplative openness to God, in other words live a life of authentic faith, hope, and love, through any of those three avenues. They are not pitted one against another, but they are windows to the transcendent reality at the depth of our lives and offer contact with that Mystery.

It is important to stress this perspective because Carmel has had 800 years of ministry in response to the Church and God's people, and, God-willing, will have many more centuries of unselfish service. And none of it is inimical to a contemplative life. Many a Carmelite has been transformed into a more loving person through engagement with God's people in various ministries.

Archbishop Romero was transformed and converted by God's love not only in the solitude of his prayer, but in his engagement with the Lord in history, in the messy efforts of the people to find their place at the banquet of life. Contemplation should be the deepest source of compassion for our world.

Our contemplative living, our openness to God's love coming toward us in good times and bad is the gift we can give to others. What happened in the lives of Carmel's saints, what is happening in the lives of Carmelites today, is happening in everyone's life. We witness best by keeping a focus on who we are: a contemplative fraternity living in the midst of the people.

The life of Oscar Romero

Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez (1917–1980) became the fourth Archbishop of San Salvador. He was assassinated on March 24, 1980.

As an archbishop who witnessed ongoing violations of human rights, Romero initiated and gave his status to a group which spoke out on behalf of the poor and the victims of the Salvadoran civil war. Before his appointment, Romero was known to be dutiful, pious, and scholarly.

In many ways Romero was closely associated with Liberation Theology and openly condemned both Marxism and Capitalism.

Romero was killed by a shot to the heart on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass at a small chapel located in a hospital called La Divina Providencia, one day after a sermon where he had called on Salvadoran soldiers, as Christians, to obey God's higher order and to stop carrying out the government's repression and violations of basic human rights.

According to an audio-recording of the Mass, Romero was shot while holding up the Eucharistic gifts. When he was shot, his blood spilled over the altar.

This provoked an international outcry for reform in El Salvador. In 1997, a cause for beatification and canonization into sainthood was opened for Romero, and Pope John Paul II bestowed upon him the title of *Servant of God*. The process continues.

Romero is considered by some the unofficial patron saint of

the Americas and El Salvador and is often referred to as "*San Romero*" by Catholics in El Salvador.

Outside of Catholicism, Romero is honored by other religious denominations of Christendom, including the Church of England through the Calendar in *Common Worship*.

Romero is one of the ten 20th century martyrs who are depicted in statues above the Great West Door of Westminster Abbey in London (see *picture, back cover*).

Romero noted in his diary on February 4, 1943: "*In recent days the Lord has inspired in me a great desire for holiness.... I have been thinking of how far a soul can ascend if it lets itself be possessed entirely by God.*"

Romero was ordained a Catholic priest in Rome, in 1942. He remained in Italy to obtain a doctoral degree in theology which specialized in ascetical theology.

Part of his life also involved imprisonment. In 1943 before finishing, Romero was summoned back to San Salvador from Fascist Italy by the bishop at age 27. En route home he and his companion made stops in Spain and Cuba, but they were detained by Cuban police for having come from Benito Mussolini's Italy and placed in an internment camp. After several months in prison the two transferred to a hospital. From the hospital they were released from Cuban custody and allowed back home, where they sailed for Mexico and then back home to El Salvador.

Romero reflections inspired by Carmel

In his writings and homilies, Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador sometimes referred to the Carmelite tradition – its saints and devotions – so deeply rooted in Spanish-speaking peoples.

Below are some of the Monsignor's reflections inspired by Carmelite themes, translated by Irene B. Hodgson in "Through the Year with Oscar Romero – Daily Meditations" (D.L.T., 2006).

The name of Christian

Saint Teresa already said it, we are already confused as to what title we have to give to prelates: whether to call them "your excellence" or "your eminence". By now we don't understand this, many times it seems ludicrous: Your excellence, your excellence! How much more beautiful is the simple name of Christian! (p. 75)

Resisting – like Elijah – the Baals of our day

The Baals were the gods of fertility. The harvests were attributed to them, the rains, the sun. And the prophet (Hosea) cried out throughout his book: it is not the baals, it is not the idols that give Israel bread, it is the true God. Be converted away from your idolatry! The voice of the prophet seems current when new baals in our day want to be adored instead of the only one who loves us and demands our love. Idols, baals of our day, are: idolatry of power, of wealth, of luxury, of sex. (p. 86)

A liberating devotion to Our Lady

If tomorrow, feast day of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, the crowds run to her image and wear scapulars, don't forget that Mary is, above all, a prophetic messenger of Christ and that in her song of the Magnificat she remembered the poor and the hungry. She also said that God would ask for an accounting from the proud and the haughty, from the rich people of the world and warned that he would turn them away empty if they were not converted to the poverty of God...

Great devotion to the Virgin, but, it is brothers and sisters, a liberating devotion, a devotion that enables us to learn from Mary the freedom with which she spoke. A devotion to the Virgin that makes us feel ourselves face to face with God, not to implant our way of thinking or our false prudence, but rather so that we can know how to put ourselves on the line for Christ, when, because of the injustice of the world, he is nailed to the cross. When everyone else flees, she remains there near him. (p. 109)

Homily on Our Lady of Mount Carmel

On 16th July 1977, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Archbishop Oscar Romero preached a homily at 'El Carmen', the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in Santa Tecla in El Salvador. The readings at Mass were Zachariah 2:14-17 and Luke 2:15b-19.

We print here his homily, in which he speaks about the implications of true devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Though there is little historical basis for the so-called 'Scapular Vision' story as Monsignor Romero describes it, the Archbishop shows how we can still take an important truth from the tradition; that Mary, Our Lady, cares for the salvation of the persecuted and the persecutor. The Church of 'El Carmen' has been in the care of the Jesuit Order since 1916. Romero's words about the Jesuits' heroic witness proved true; many were killed during the persecution of the Church in El Salvador during the 1970s and 80s. Their memory, and that of Archbishop Romero, is preserved in the 'Room of the Martyrs' at the University of Central America in San Salvador. Amongst the exhibits is Oscar Romero's own Carmelite brown scapular, stained with the blood he shed when assassinated whilst celebrating Mass.

This place, like so many other popular places of the Republic that have the name Carmel, are gifts from God that enable us, the pastors of El Salvador, to find a direct support and a confirmation of our work and our preaching. Indeed, all of this is blessed by nothing less than the good hands of the Virgin Mary.

There is no more attractive preacher in our midst than the Virgin of Carmel. Here we see that the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is filled with laity. Yet as I reflect on this I can also see that there are other parishes and towns where the priests are unable to satisfy the spiritual anxiety of the souls search-



'El Carmen' in Santa Tecla, El Salvador

ing for God. It is good to remember the words of Pope Paul VI, who spoke to the administrators of the Marian Shrines. He said that these shrines make visible the invisible power that guides this Church of God. Therefore, at this hour, when the Church renews herself through persecution, how wonderful it is to find herself under the gaze of the Virgin – the approving gaze, the encouraging and consoling gaze. Our presence here in this Carmelite Shrine ought to awaken in us what the Virgin desires for her Church in 1977.

My sisters and brothers, I imagine that the devotion that has brought each one of you here to honour the Virgin of Mount Carmel bears some of the same anxiety and hope that led Simon Stock, the superior of the Carmelites, to raise his eyes toward heaven and ask the Virgin for a sign of protection for his Congregation that was being persecuted at the time.

Through Simon Stock and the scapular we go back to the almost legendary origins of this devotion. The tradition reminds us that some pious men – men of the Old Testament who had no knowledge of Mary or Christ – placed their trust in the promises of the Old Testament and sensed the tenderness and power related to the Redeemer. They loved her without knowing her and were her first devotees.

Thus the origins of the Congregation known as the Order of Carmel are rooted in this ancient experience on Mount Carmel. This congregation flourished but was persecuted. So one day, Simon Stock, as he watched his Congregation being persecuted, asked the Virgin for protection. Tradition tells us that the Virgin came down from heaven with the scapular in her hands and told Simon: *“This is the sign of protection that I bring you. All those who die carrying this scapular will not see the flames of hell.”*

This protection of the Virgin made people feel so powerful that even now, centuries removed from that original experience and even in places where there are no Carmelites, this holy scapular is still seen as a sign of Mary’s protection and a sign that continues to call people and make them feel that they are the beloved children of the Virgin Mary.

Therefore my sisters and brothers, at this time in 1977, let us all recognize that this is also a time when the Church is being persecuted: priests assassinated and expelled and tortured; soldiers coming through the aisles of the churches where these priests are working. Yes, let us remember these sad events. But I also want to tell you that it is a time when the Carmelites, together with all Catholics who think with the Church, lift up their eyes to the Virgin and ask her for a sign of her protection. Therefore in this church, filled with so many devout people, the prayer of supplication and protection becomes most concrete.

During this Eucharistic celebration in honour of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, I ask for protection for the Church of El Salvador and for peace

*The
Scapular...
A sign that
continues to
call people*

throughout the country. I make this prayer more concrete and I pray in a special way for the Jesuit community that at this time has been threatened with death. The serenity of these men of God moves us. We now understand the meaning of the Jesuit formation in the *School of the Spiritual Exercises* where they ask Christ for humiliations, the cross and sacrifice. When these realities become present in their lives they are not surprised; they have asked for them and desired them. Indeed, the Jesuit is an “other” Christ who awaits ingratitude rather than goodness and approval from the world.

My sisters and stand that the Jesuits are a and that at this time, when tested and tried, they [the marvellous example of to the Church’s mission. They do this even at the cost of death. Therefore with all our hearts, we ask the Virgin of Carmel for a sign of protection for these soldiers of Christ and his Church. Then, the Virgin responds, offering her scapular and renewing her promise. I wish to interpret this promise in my message this morning. The Virgin offers us a promise of salvation. But this is not a salvation that occurs only after death. It is a salvation that demands work here in history and among the worldly realities. This salvation also demands interior renewal, for the Kingdom of God begins on this earth, in our own hearts.

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brothers, let us under- living part of the Church their ministry is being Jesuits] are giving us a serenity and commitment

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The Virgin offers us the promise of salvation

Yes, in the first place I say that the scapular of the Virgin of Mount Carmel is a sign of our hoped for salvation, a hope that everyone has in the depths of their soul and heart and life. Those who die bearing this scapular will be freed from and will not experience the fires of hell. This is a promise of salvation. I do not want to deceive people and tell you something that is not true, that is, something that is not supported within each one of us. The Virgin’s promise is intended to awaken in us an eschatological sense, namely, a hope in the “here-after.” Thus we work on this earth with our whole soul and heart set on heaven, knowing that no one can feel permanently at home on earth. Rather we are a Pilgrim People walking toward eternity. The realities of this earth will pass, but the eternal realities remain. Is this not transcendence!

The Virgin, like Christ, offers us a transcendental message

This gives a mark of uniqueness to the Church, a mark that no other liberation movement can lay claim to. Marxists and other liberation movements of the earth do not think of God or hope for heaven. Thus they are quite different from the Church. Though the Church also speaks of liberation and demands a more just social order, she does not place her hope in an earthly paradise. The

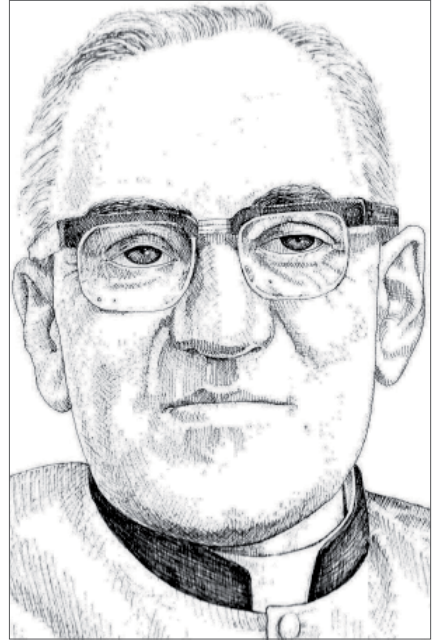
Church wants a better world but knows that perfection will not be achieved here in history but only in the “here-after,” in that place where the Virgin came from. We are destined for heaven where our Mother awaits us, destined for that place where the scapular had its origins – a bond that ties us to eternity. No one places this scapular on themselves thinking about just an earthly paradise. Rather this scapular is worn precisely because we are thinking of eternal salvation, thinking that when we die, we will be saved. This is good. Let us continue to cultivate this idea and not lose sight of it. This, then, is the first message of the Virgin – a message about spirituality.

When the Holy Father gathered together the opinions of the bishops that were expressed in the 1974 Synod of Bishops, he wrote his famous exhortation on evangelization in the actual world. The Pope stated that as he listened to the bishops’ voices he heard the cries of those immersed in misery throughout the world (*cf. Evangelii Nuntiandi* §30). Thus the Pope and the bishops speak of freeing the world from this misery. But the Pope joined the bishops in insisting on the fact that the primary orientation of Christian liberation is spiritual, heavenly and eternal. Thus those who work for earthly liberation must never forget this hope for the eternal.

My sisters and brothers, this morning we reaffirm our hope in this heaven that the Virgin’s scapular speaks about so eloquently. Let us carry this scapular and reflect on that eternity where we will be asked to render an account of our work on earth.

The Virgin offers us a salvation that demands work here in history

In the second place, and this is often not understood by many people and yet it is most necessary to understand because it is also part of the Virgin’s message, namely, the Virgin offers us a salvation that demands work here on earth. I believe that from our youngest days, all of you, like me, embraced and were thankful for the Virgin’s promised privilege, that Saturday privilege that states that those who die carrying the scapular will experience the Virgin releasing them from Purgatory (if by chance they have gone here) on the Saturday following their death. This is not a dogma of faith and so there is no obligation to believe this and one does not sin if one denies this. Those, however, who love



the Virgin know that she, in communion with God, is able to do anything and theologically, that is, according to the Church's principles and criteria, this is certainly possible.

Furthermore, what is the meaning of a plenary indulgence that the Church is able to grant and grants so often? A plenary indulgence is the full pardon of sin and debt attached to sin. Thus people who die after gaining a plenary indulgence will not experience Purgatory. They will not have to wait for the following Saturday. The moment they die, their sins and the debt of sin are forgiven and they enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Purgatory exists to purify us of the debt of sin that we have not paid here on earth. But if an indulgence is applied by the Church, who is the administrator of Christ's redemption, to a soul on its journey to eternity, then those people have gained heaven immediately. A plenary indulgence supposes the forgiveness of sins and the repentance of those who have detached themselves from all the effects of sin. A plenary indulgence cannot be obtained by those who still bear within their hearts the effects of sin nor are they worthy of heaven because this is an offence to God and nothing stained

Heaven. Those who gain their hearts detached from those bonds that tie them have repented of their sins from all disordered passions. If one has a desire to gain this indulgence then one will obtain a reality that is greater than the Saturday privilege. The Virgin will fulfil the desire of these people and they will be separated from all evil.

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can enter the Kingdom of a plenary indulgence have sin and separated from all to sinful realities. They and separated themselves sins. If one has a desire one will obtain a reality that lege. The Virgin will fulfil the

But from childhood we also learned something else and I wish to highlight this here this morning: all of this is not a question of the Virgin saving us without ourselves having to make an effort here on earth to obtain this salvation. Speaking of the Saturday privilege it is said that everyone must guard chastity according to their state of life. Here when I refer to chastity, I speak of all those earthly realities, all that is mortal, and all that God commands and counsels us to do. Thus, if the scapular is a message of eternity, an eschatological message, a message about the "here-after", it is also a message of the "here and now."

The scapular is a message about the demands of this world and the fulfilment of our responsibilities in this world. This is precisely the focus of our Church today. When the Church demands a more just society, a better distribution of wealth and a political system that is more respectful of human rights, the Church is not meddling in politics nor is she becoming Marxist-communist. The Church is telling people the same thing as the message of the scapular: only those people will be saved who know how to use the things of earth with the heart of God. Since there are many unjust people and many abuses of human dignity, since there are many injustices committed against the poor and the poor

also commit injustices against the rich, there are also many sinful situations.

Thus the bishops gathered in Medellin under the authority of the Pope, stated that in Latin America there is a situation of sin, a situation of injustice that has become a permanent reality (*cf. Medellin Documents, Peace §1*). It is necessary that Christians work to transform this situation of sin. The Christian cannot tolerate the enemy of God, namely, sin – cannot tolerate its reign in the world. The Christian must seek to marginalize sin and establish the Kingdom of God. To struggle for this reality is not communist or meddling in politics. It is simply responding to the Gospel that demands that humankind and Christians commit themselves more fully to history. A person who believes in the Virgin of Mount Carmel and carries the scapular believing “Since the Virgin promised to save me, I do not have to work here on earth”, such a person will not be saved. Yes, a promise is made to those who carry this scapular, but how many sinners trusted in this promise, and yet at the hour of their death when they went to take out the scapular, died without having the scapular on them.

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message of the
Scapular cannot
be different from
the Gospel*

Obligation to work for

The [Second Vatican]

do not work in faithful fulfilment of the Law of God in the area of guiding the use of temporal things offend God. They are also committing an offense against their neighbour. Such people are lazy and do nothing for their neighbour and are jeopardizing their own salvation. They open themselves to condemnation because that could have done some good and did not do it.

The Bible blesses those who could have done evil and did not do it and says they will be saved. At the same time those who could have done good and did not do it are condemned. They had wealth in their hands and could have made their sisters and brothers happy but because of selfishness they did not do it. They had power in their hands and could have changed the course of the nation and made it more happy, more just, and more peaceful and did not do it. They had ability and responsibility and did not know how to take advantage of the opportunity to use these gifts and so they will be held accountable at the time of the final judgment and at the time of their own judgment.

The message of the scapular that the Virgin communicates to us cannot be a message that is different from the Gospel of Christ. The Virgin cannot say something that is distinct from the Church’s doctrine, because she is a member of the Church. In fact she is the Mother of the Church and is intolerant of anyone who preaches or acts contrary to the Church.

My dear sisters and brothers, today when Our Lady of Mount Carmel responds to our prayers for protection, she gives us the scapular in the same way that she presented the scapular to Simon Stock. This scapular is sign of salvation and the Council explains to us the meaning of salvation.

that which is good

Council tells us that those who

Evolution of the Church's Tradition

My sisters and brothers, in certain traditional circles, people do not want to hear about this concept of salvation, for like all the other realities of tradition, this concept has evolved. The tradition is the same that Christ gave to his apostles. That cannot change. But the needs of the people evolve and the times evolve. So when Jesus speaks of salvation, it must be understood as the Church of 1977 understands it. For this Church is inspired and assisted by the Holy Spirit.

More than eight centuries ago, when the Virgin presented us with the scapular as a sign of salvation, the Virgin understood this word in the way that the Church at that time explained salvation. Now, however, salvation, according to the actual and authentic teaching of the Church that is inspired by the Holy Spirit, tells us that it is not enough to speak of "salvation of the soul". Notice how many people say: I only want to save my soul and the rest I can do as I please. But we cannot save just our souls. The whole person receives salvation: soul and body and heart and intelligence and will. We are saved as individuals and as members of a society. Thus it is this society that must also be saved.

Pope Pius XII said that the world must be saved from its savagery in order to make it human and then make the human, divine. In other words, all the customs that are not in accord with the Gospel have to be eliminated if we want to save the human person. Men and women must be saved, but not just their souls at the hour of their death. It is the person, living in time and history that must be saved. We have to provide young people and children with an environment and a society and those conditions where they can develop the vocation that God has given them.

Yes, we must create those conditions that will not keep them marginalised because they are poor; conditions that will not keep them out of the university because they are poor. We must also create an environment and situations where men and women, created in the image of God, are able to shine forth in the world as the image of God and participate in the shaping of the common good of the country and share in those goods that have been created for the use of everyone. This is the doctrine of salvation.

If the Virgin were to speak with Simon Stock in 1277 and were to present him the scapular, she would say: this scapular is the sign of protec-



tion – a sign of the doctrine of God, a sign of the integral vocation of men and women, a sign of salvation for the whole person, a sign of salvation in this life. Those who carry this scapular have to be persons who live this salvation here on earth; they have to feel satisfied and capable of developing their human abilities for the good of others.

Change of Attitude

My sisters and brothers, I ask you to try to understand the solemnity of these times in which the Church renews herself. There are people who do not understand this renewal nor our preaching as I have tried to express it today. They distort our words and say we are meddling in politics or becoming a communist church. From this distortion comes persecution and repression of the Church and her priests. As long as this language of salvation is not understood we will always be in this position of being misunderstood by those who do not want to understand the Church.

I pray this morning will give security to fill this church and the Carmelite Order. I greet with great enthusiasm those communities that follow the Virgin of Mount Carmel and who tell you to receive the way that Simon Stock understood in 1977.

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want to greet
with great enthusiasm
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that follow the
Virgin
of Mount
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ing that the Virgin of Carmel her faithful followers who so many other churches of At this time I want to enthusiasm those communities that follow the Virgin of Mount Carmel and who tell you to receive the way that Simon Stock understood in 1977.

In this way each Carmelite can become a true follower of the Gospel and this is most necessary for the Church that is the redeemer of women and men today. Let us also pray together that the Virgin of Carmel and her scapular inspire with grace those who do not understand this mystery. May they be converted and know that we do not hate them but love them. May they know that we do not want to lose them just because they do not collaborate in the construction of a more just temporal order.

We pray that the Virgin might call those who are able to transform society, because they have in their hands the power to make this change actual. We pray also for those who persecute the Church, paid by interests that want to maintain this situation that cannot be maintained. May all those who are opposed to the Kingdom of Christ, a kingdom of justice and peace and love, recognize that God is also calling them.

May they know that there is a place for everyone in the Kingdom,



even those who persecute her, and like Saul, may they be converted into true apostles of the Gospel. At this time when we celebrate the feast of the patroness and Mother of all Carmelites, we are very much aware that the Virgin has such a large heart that she not only embraces those here present who have been converted, but perhaps with even greater love and forgiveness, she embraces those who are opposed to the Church, those who offend the Church, and those who riddle her with bullets.

Our Mother knows, like all mothers know, that the most disgraceful and perverse sons are those closest to her heart. She wants them to be converted and become brothers with all those whom she loves. She wants them to be with her in heaven.

Together with the Virgin, for she is also a creature, a woman of our race, let us unite ourselves in spirit to her [the Virgin] and offer to God the sacrifice that is the culmination of all our work: the love, devotion, concerns, and anxieties of all the people represented by you who are present here this morning. How many tears! How many sorrows! But placed on the altar and in the hands of the Virgin, through the Eucharistic mystery they will be changed into the sacrifice of Christ.

We know that Mary is great because she brought Jesus into the world – from her womb into our hearts. The redemption of the world is rooted in her and now as we celebrate this Eucharist during a time of solemn anguish and hope, we pray that the celebration in this beautiful church will bring many blessings to people throughout the country. Amen.

OSCAR ROMERO

30th anniversary of his martyrdom

On 24th March 1980 Oscar Romero, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Salvador in Central America, was shot whilst celebrating the Eucharist, assassinated by a government-backed militia because of his Gospel-inspired defence of human rights and his speaking out on behalf of the poor.



ECUMENICAL SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION AT YORK MINSTER

11.00am-12.30pm on Saturday 20th March 2010

President: His Eminence Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Archbishop of Edinburgh

Preacher: Most Rev. Dr. John Sentamu, Archbishop of York

All are welcome, free of charge - no tickets required

'INTRODUCING OSCAR ROMERO'

Presentations by Julian Filochowski - Chair, Archbishop Romero Trust

in York on Saturday 6th March, 10.15am-1.00pm

hosted by York Carmelite Spirituality Group

at St. Paul's Church, Heslington, York

www.carmelite.org/yorkcsg

in Leeds on Sunday 7th March, 11.30am-3.00pm

hosted by Leeds Carmelite Spirituality Group

at St. Theresa's Church, Crossgates, Leeds

www.carmelite.org/leeds

Everyone welcome, no booking required; there is no charge but please come with a picnic lunch to share. A Roman Catholic celebration of the Eucharist will take place in each venue before each meeting (9.30am group Mass in Heslington, 10.00am parish Mass in Crossgates).

For further information please call 01904 428490

Events sponsored by

www.carmelite.org www.romerotrust.org.uk www.cafod.org.uk

Romero: key ecumenical celebrations in Britain

- On March 20th, the Saturday preceding the anniversary, there will be a Romero Service in York Minster at 11.00am led by two Romero Trust Patrons - the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, will preach and Cardinal Keith O' Brien will offer prayers in the sanctuary.

- On March 28th, Palm Sunday, there will be a special Evening Service in Westminster Abbey at 6.30pm at which the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, will preach, joined by fellow-Patron, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Archbishop Vincent Nichols and the Superintendent Minister of Wesley's Chapel, Revd the Lord Leslie Griffiths.

- The anniversary day – Wednesday March 24th. There will be a special Mass in Edinburgh Cathedral at 7.00pm at which Cardinal Keith O'Brien will preside.

- In London, Archbishop Vincent Nichols will celebrate and preach at a Romero Mass in Westminster Cathedral at 5.30pm on the anniversary evening.

- Additionally Southwark are planning a celebratory mass in St George's Cathedral at 12.30pm lunchtime.

- There will also be a special mass at 7.00pm in St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham. It will be celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop William Kenney, standing in for Archbishop Bernard Longley who will himself, under CAFOD's auspices, be marking the anniversary in Romero's own Cathedral in San Salvador along with Bishop Arthur Roche of Leeds.

- East Anglia has organised a Romero Week in the diocese and there will be an anniversary Mass on March 24th at 7.30pm in St John's Cathedral in Norwich celebrated by Bishop Michael Evans.

- Brentwood Cathedral too will have a special Romero anniversary mass at 7.00pm on March 24th followed by a talk on Romero.

- Salford Diocesan Faith and Justice Commission has organised a special Mass at Saint Peter & Paul Church, Pendleton at 7.30pm on the 24th.

- In Portsmouth Diocese there will be a Romero Mass at 7.30pm on March 24th at St James and St William parish in Reading.

Around the anniversary

- Hexham and Newcastle's Justice and Peace Commission together with the diocesan CAFOD Office have arranged a special mass on the Vigil, Tuesday 23rd March, at St Joseph's, Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne. Fr Jim O'Keefe will preside and preach.

- Much earlier, on Sunday 14th February, Bishop Michael Campbell celebrated a special Diocesan Mass at Lancaster Cathedral at 10.30am to honour Archbishop Romero.

- Liverpool's Justice and Peace team, who have organised a Romero memorial Mass every year since the martyrdom in 1980, plan to have the 2010 celebration on Sunday March 7th at St Mary's Lowe House, St Helens. More details later.

- On Sunday 21st March at 3.30pm there will Choral Evensong at Norwich Cathedral (Anglican) followed by short talks by Bishop Graham James and Bishop Michael Evans on Archbishop Romero.

- On Saturday 27th March there will be a study day in Norwich led by Bishop Michael Evans.

Inspiration from Blessed Elizabeth

*Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity (1880-1906) is now recognised as one of the Carmelite Order's greatest treasures, but she was unknown until after a brief and hidden life spent as a nun at the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Dijon, France. Her life was tragically cut short by the rare endocrine disorder Addison's disease — which was then untreatable. But her legacy is an extraordinary one. Blessed Elizabeth left a wonderful example of saintliness in her writings, sayings, and the way she lived her life. Assumpta editor **Nick Black** describes how her legacy has been an inspiration in his own faith journey.*

I first “met” Blessed Elizabeth in a dream, some years ago, before I really knew who she was. In this dream, she was middle-aged — something she never reached in her earthly life — and ran what seemed to be a guest house at some sort of famous but unnamed pilgrimage site. She quite calmly offered the pilgrimage group I was with refreshments, but everyone else quickly left — so that is how it came to pass that Blessed Elizabeth sat down to share a companionable cup of tea and a long chat. What truths she actually talked about, I cannot remember, but I woke up feeling refreshed and joyful. The dream proved to be a catalyst for a personal investigation of the Carmelite charism.



Neighbouring destiny

Being a homely proprietor of a guest house is an odd image for a saint who in her actual life took extraordinary pains to be self-effacing and hidden from the outside world — and whose reputation is of an exalted mystic. But her early years suggested a very different life from the one she eventually chose, or chose her. A lively, wilful child, Elizabeth, born Élisabeth Catez, was indulged but also stifled by an adoring mother, especially after her father — an Army Captain — died when she was just seven years old. As destiny would have it, the Catez house was just 200 metres away from the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Dijon which she eventually joined. The young Elizabeth had an exceptional musical talent and her looks and

vivacity drew proposals of marriage from a coterie of admirers. She also had, by her own admission, a terrible temper. Yet all the elements that made up this very human character of a pretty, spoiled girl were transformed by Elizabeth with a steely determination. She decided while still a teenager to live a life consecrated to God. And this is what she managed to achieve.

After much travail she finally obtained her tearful mother's permission to join the Carmelite Order in 1901. Just five years later, Elizabeth was dead, at the age of 26 years old. St Therese of Lisieux was a contemporary, although both never met.

These are the bare facts of Blessed Elizabeth's life. But her whole-hearted dedication to God had an entirely hidden side, revealed in her writings and the few sayings that have survived. Elizabeth is now recognised for her extraordinary grasp of the Truth that is the Trinity, a profound theological mystery that some of the greatest minds in the Church have grappled to understand. She was blessed with many interior graces and mystic experiences that brought her deep insights into her faith.



Elizabeth aged 13 years old.

Relevance

The lessons of such an exalted mystic might seem, on first sight, too complex to apply to our life in Lay Carmel, especially compared with the practical spiritual path of St Therese's "*Little Way*". But I find Elizabeth's inspiring life holds deep relevance to the kind of "examined" contemplative life that the Carmelite charism offers.

One fact to bear in mind is that Elizabeth actually lived the majority of her short life in the world. Her deepest theological insights may have come to her after her Profession. But the illumination followed years of patient effort and challenging trials as she devoted her will-power to self-mastery. In the years of trial before she finally was successful in joining her enclosed Order, Elizabeth patiently refined her personality, gradually emptying herself as an offering to the Lord. This heroic task was no easy one as she worked to eradicate stubborn faults such as her tendency to angry outbursts.

This spiritual flowering occurred in the polite, comfortable environment of a French middle-class home — a world of social visits, dances, recitals, and family obligations. Such a comfortable environment can become too cloying and stifle religious vocation, but Elizabeth somehow found a way to live in the world but not of it — and not to compromise her own sense of values.

Elizabeth demonstrates that in Carmel we seem to be called often to march to a “different drum” from that which beats in today’s busy secular society. And sometimes you need to be really attentive to hear this drumbeat above the noise of our modern world. Elizabeth heard that different drum, and such was her immense love for God that she willingly worked hard to march to it. Part of her life outside the Convent saw an open attempt to live the Gospel message. Elizabeth visited the sick and sang in the church choir. She taught religion to children who worked in factories. As she said at the time, “I find Him everywhere while doing the washing as well as while praying.” This is an example that I find very worthy of emulation, echoing the famous insights of Brother Lawrence in *The Practice of the Presence of God*.

The exalted insights of her final years were accompanied by much suffering as her disease took its course. Through it all, Elizabeth kept faithful to her vocation. The famous prayer reproduced on p29 gives us the very essence of her spirituality. “*Adorn me with yourself; identify my soul with all the movements of your soul, submerge me, overwhelm. me substitute yourself in me that my life may become but a reflection of your life. Come into me as Adorer, Redeemer and Saviour.*” What a magnificent prayer of self abandonment!

Elizabeth was beatified by Pope John Paul II on November 25, 1984. Her memorial day is November 8.

Blessed Elizabeth: some sayings

“You must get rid of the word ‘discouragement’ from your dictionary of love. The more you experience your own weakness, the more difficult it is for you to keep yourself in the Lord’s presence — especially when it seems as if he isn’t there — the more you ought to rejoice because then you are giving to Him. And isn’t it better to give than to receive when it concerns someone you love?”

“God loves you so much and he wants you so much to be his own. This is the path you must follow. We need to draw on the strength that comes from prayer and that meditation which brings us to a deep relationship with God. This is all I can do in my little cell, which is a true paradise,”

“in the light of eternity one sees things as they really are. How empty everything is if not done for God and with God! I beg you to mark everything with the seal of love! Nothing else endures.”

“There are plenty of little sacrifices in Carmel, but they become very light when one’s heart is full of love.”

“If you ask me the secret of happiness I would say it is not to take account of one’s self, to deny oneself always. You see, pride is self-love, so the love of God must become so strong in us that self-love simply withers away.”

“Make a little cell in your heart for Jesus of the Agony. Take refuge there.”

Blessed Elizabeth's prayer

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, let me entirely forget myself that I may abide in you, still and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity; let nothing disturb my peace nor separate me from you, O my unchanging God, but that each moment may take me further into the depths of your mystery! Pacify my soul! Make it your heaven, your beloved home and place of your repose; let me never leave you there alone, but may I be ever attentive, ever alert in my faith, ever adoring and all given up to your creative action.

O my beloved Christ, crucified for love, would that I might be for you a spouse of your heart! I would anoint you with glory, I would love you - even unto death! Yet I sense my frailty and ask you to adorn me with yourself; identify my soul with all the movements of your soul, submerge me, overwhelm me, substitute yourself in me that my life may become but a reflection of your life. Come into me as Adorer, Redeemer and Saviour.

O Eternal Word, Word of my God, would that I might spend my life listening to you, would that I might be fully receptive to learn all from you; in all darkness, all loneliness, all weakness, may I ever keep my eyes fixed on you and abide under your great light; O my Beloved Star, fascinate me so that I may never be able to leave your radiance.

O Consuming Fire, Spirit of Love, come down upon me and make me as it were an incarnation of the Word. May I be another humanity in which He lives out once more His mystery. And you, Father, bend down to your poor little creature, cover her with Your shadow and see in her only the Well-Beloved in whom You were well pleased.

O my 'Three', my All, my Beatitude, infinite Solitude, Immensity in whom I lose myself, I give myself to you as a prey to be consumed; enclose yourself in me that I may be absorbed in you so as to contemplate in your light the abyss of your Splendour!

Blessed Elizabeth wrote this famous prayer on the Feast of Our Lady's Presentation in the Temple, 21 November 1904. It is really a prayer for the gift of prayer and was answered when she discovered her new name "Praise of Glory". Her one ambition was to pass this torch onto others.



Calendar

Meetings
and dates
for your
diary



Community

Aylesford The Friars

Bedlington St Bede's Church

Birmingham St Chad's

Blackhall CSG St Joseph's Church

Brighton and Hove St Anne's Convent

Cardiff St Peter's Presbytery

Cleator Moor St Joseph's, Frizington

Coventry* St Thomas More Church

*also 41 Landor Rd in Apr

Glasgow Ogilvie Centre, Rose St.

Guildford St Joseph's, Eastgate Gdns

Leeds CSG St Theresa's, Station Rd

Leicester Corpus Christi Carmelites

Leigh-on-Sea Our Lady of Lourdes

London Carmel in the City St Joseph's

London Warwick St

Manchester St Catherine of Siena

Margate St Anne's Church Hall

Mawdesley CSG 30 New Street

Newcastle Corpus Christi, Gateshead

Reading St Joseph's, Tilehurst

Sheffield Mother of God, Abbeydale Rd

Stevenage CSG St Hilda's

York CSG 110 Lawrence St

Day & Time

Saturday 10.30am

Sunday 2.00pm

Saturday 1.00pm

Various

Saturday 1.45pm

Friday 7.00pm

Saturday 10.30am

Sat/Sun 3.30pm

Saturday 1.15pm

Saturday 9.40am

Sunday 11.30am

Saturday 2.00pm

Saturday 2.45pm

Saturday 11.30am

Wed 5.30pm

Sunday 2.45pm

Wed 2.00pm

Thursday 7.30pm

Saturday 1.30pm

Saturday 11.00am

Saturday 1.00pm

Thursday 6.30pm

Saturday 9.30am

March

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April

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Member news

Prayers for the sick

Please add to your prayers this month the following:

Susan Flatman	Birmingham
Marjorie Davis	Margate
Alex D'Souza	Aylesford
Ron Bryan	York
Jennifer Moorcroft	Stevenage
Agnes Maguire	Warwick St
Claire Neal	Brighton
Robin Vane	Birmingham
Pat Waterhouse	Newcastle
Michael Ainsworth	Sheffield
Daphne Wilkinson	Warwick St
Patrick Culleton	Stevenage
Paul Maguire	Glasgow
Madeleine Scott	Birmingham
Margaret Williams	Birmingham

Prayers for the departed

Let us remember all those who have died, especially:

Rosemary Bowey	Bedlington
January 2010	
Marie Gillies	Glasgow
January 20th 2010	
Eileen Linton	Birmingham
January 2010	
Muriel Phillips	Norwich
December 24th 2009	
Joseph De Souza	Warwick St
January 2010	

First Profession

Congratulations to:
Mary McLoughlin
 February 5th 2010
 Cardiff

Retreats & Courses

Midlands Carmelite Retreat

A retreat for all Lay Carmelite and friends led by Fr David Waite
 15-17 October, 2010

at Hawkstone Hall, Marchamley,
 Shrewsbury SY4 5LG

For more details please contact:

Miss Maria Pedro

14 Chilton Court

Park Approach

Erdington

Birmingham B23 7XY

Tel. No. 0121 350 8544

Warwick Street Half-Day Retreat:

To be held at St Vincent's Centre,
 Carlisle Place and will be led by Fr
 Joseph Chalmers on March 27th from
 2-5 PM.

Please contact *Maureen Beck* for further
 details on *0207 834 9684*

Future requests

Please would you be kind enough to send all notices of dates, events, anniversaries of profession, announcements concerning receptions and professions, retreats, and prayers for the sick or departed and anything else of that nature, to **Veronica Errington**, the National Secretary from now on: *natsec@laycarmel.org*

British Carmelite websites

Province website: www.carmelite.org

Lay Carmel: www.laycarmel.org

Aylesford: www.thefriars.org.uk

Faversham: www.stjudeshrine.org.uk

Reminder: 2010 subscriptions & contributions



This is a reminder to all that the annual contribution is now due. It would be really helpful if these could be paid before the end of March.

The annual contribution remains £25 and this includes the price of *Assumpta*. Your money goes towards the expenses of producing the magazine and also helps with all the many other costs involved in maintaining the Third Order, which is still heavily subsidised by the friars.

The annual contribution is payable by any received or professed member of the Order. Non-members are able to subscribe to *Assumpta* for the sum of £15 per annum.

For those living abroad, the cost of *Assumpta* is £25 for those in Europe, and £30 for the rest of the world. Members abroad are able to pay by bank transfer, and should email for details.

Cheques are all payable to 'Carmelite Charitable Trust' and should be sent to the National Secretary (address on p. 1)

Many thanks, from Veronica

We need your faith stories!

*One of the key foundation stones of the Carmelite Order is, as we have read in this issue, Community. And one of the most wonderful resources that we have for mutual encouragement, "the welfare of the group and the salvation of souls" (Rule 15) in the Third Order, is probably the one that in you may well have overlooked: **the story of your own journey in the Catholic faith and the Third Order.***



*So many members of the Third Order have been loyal and steadfast members for two decades or more, and this means we have a truly wonderful collective resource as well as a living shared vocal history of how the Third Order has survived and flourished in this post-Vatican II era. Here comes the plea: can **you** share your story?*

*The easy part is that you will not have to write anything down. Nick Black, the new *Assumpta* editor, would be honoured to interview members who are willing to tell him their faith stories for subsequent publication in *Assumpta*. Please consider whether you would like to help. Contact assumpta@laycarmel.org, or ring Nick at 07906545129 (day) or 0208 516 9007 (evenings).*



The pictures from this issue come from various sources. The front picture of Archbishop Romero is from a large-sized mural. Romero's statue on the inside back cover (*above*) can be found at Westminster Abbey, London. The back cover is an Icon of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at the Carmelite Centre in the parish of Calle Real, El Salvador.

