

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Anon

The early hermits on Mount Carmel quickly became known as "The Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel" because their little chapel was dedicated to her. The Marian title meant a great deal to the brothers and influenced the spirit by which they tried to live the Gospel message. Many of the older religious orders pick out a special facet of Our Lord's life or teaching, which they want to emphasise and keep alive. From early in their history the Carmelites took on the role of emphasising the love that Jesus has for his mother, and they have tried to keep that love alive and active in the world. In doing so, they are true to the simplicity of the Gospel where we find that because Jesus loved her, he listened to the implicit prayer of Mary at Cana and again, because he loved her, almost his last words on earth were words of love and concern for her. Mary loved and ministered to Jesus while he was on earth. She is also the mother of the Body of Christ, which is the Church; since we are the Church, she is our mother. As our mother she intercedes for us, showing the same love and concern for the Church as she did for Jesus.

At the Annunciation, this ordinary young Jewish girl is confronted with her extraordinary vocation. After her prudent concern has been laid to rest, she responds with tremendous faith, hope and love. Faith enabled her to live each day with its worries and fears without doubting the providence of God. Hope filled her with supreme confidence that the promises of God would be fulfilled even when she stood at the foot of the cross. Love possessed her so completely that she was full of grace, full of love and this impelled her to give a loving service to others, to her cousin Elizabeth and to the couple at their wedding in Cana.

For Carmelites, therefore, Mary is the mother who continues to love and care. She is the model of unobtrusive, gentle, loving service to others. In a very special way she is also the model of quiet, intimate prayer for she pondered all things in her heart and she persevered in prayer with the disciples.

The fact that Carmelites are a world-wide community with Mary for their mother has given the Order its distinctive family spirit. Visitors who come to stay in Carmelite houses for a few days expecting to meet austere, remote "monks" are surprised to find very ordinary, approachable men, living a fairly ordinary family life with its joys and sorrows and sometimes its family tensions which have to be resolved in a spirit of Christian love. The Church sees the wearing of the brown scapular as an outward sign that the person wearing it wants to try and live the Gospel message taking Mary as mother and model and being united with others as members of the family of Carmel. The desire to love Mary as Jesus loved her, the desire to take her as the model Christian and the desire to live a simple, sincere, unselfish family life are factors which play a very significant part in the life of a Carmelite.