

ASSUMPTA



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YEAR OF FAITH 2012-2013

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Editorial Board and Policy

Editorial Board: John Berry (Prior Provincial's Delegate), Veronica Errington (Third Order National Secretary), Johan Bergström-Allen (Saint Albert's Press), Anne Bunyan (Editor).

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Cover art

The front cover is an image of 'The Theotokos of Vladimir', also known as 'Our Lady of Tenderness', a famous Russian icon dating back to the 12th century and revered by Christians across the world, including some Carmelite communities.

WORD OF WELCOME FROM THE PROVINCIAL'S DELEGATE

Dear friends in Carmel,

In September an International Lay Carmelite Congress took place in Rome. The event was an opportunity for Lay Carmelites from around the world to come together to share how they live their Carmelite vocation in a spirit of fraternity. Attending the Congress were some two hundred delegates, mostly laity, but also other



members of the Carmelite Family. The theme of the Congress was entitled: *Formation for the Apostolate* and I am very pleased to inform our readers that there will be a Congress special supplement going out with the next edition of *Assumpta*. The supplement will contain a full report with pictures and more.

Leadership in Carmel

There are still a few places left on the retreat/formation weekend taking place at The Endsleigh Centre in Hull on 30th November – 2nd December 2012. This weekend is part of the Third Order preparations as we move toward the election/appointment of members to a Third Order National Council in November 2014. As such it is important that all Lay Carmelite communities are represented. If you would like to attend the weekend you will need to complete and send off the application form that appeared in the previous issue of *Assumpta*; if you can't get hold of a copy please contact the National Secretary, Veronica Errington (details on the inside back cover).

NCB membership

Membership of the National Consultative Body (NCB) is normally for a three-year term. This is to give other members of the Third Order the opportunity to serve Lay Carmel at



province level. On behalf of the Third Order I would like to take this opportunity to thank T.O.C. community leaders Anne Hayden (Aylesford), Tom Condie (Glasgow) and Walter Whitman (Sheffield) for their hard work and commitment serving on the NCB over the past few years. They will officially step down from the NCB in December when they will be replaced by three new members who are yet to be confirmed. We will publish the names of the new members on the Province website and the next issue of *Assumpta* as soon as it is confirmed.

Contemplation: the Heart of the Carmelite Charism

The Carmelite friars have a document that talks about the process and principles of formation, entitled the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanæ* (RIVC for short). You can find the *Ratio* document on the Province website: www.carmelite.org

The opening passage, in the section on contemplation, states:

Contemplation is the inner journey of Carmelites, arising out of the free initiative of God, who touches and transforms us, leading us towards unity in love with him, raising us up so that we may enjoy his gratuitous love and live in his loving presence. It is a transforming experience of the overpowering love of God. This love empties us of our limited and imperfect human ways of thinking, loving, and behaving, transforming them into divine ways, and enables us “to taste in our hearts and experience in our souls the power of the divine presence and the sweetness of heavenly glory, not only after death, but during this mortal life” [a quotation from Ribot’s *The Ten Books*]. The contemplative dimension is not merely one of the elements of our charism (prayer, fraternity and service): it is the dynamic element which unifies them all.

In the closing paragraph of the section we read: “It is important,

for all Carmelites not only to be familiar with the theory of the contemplative process and to have a constantly renewed understanding of the vows and values of Carmelite spirituality, but also to acquire and to incarnate a contemplative lifestyle and contemplative attitudes.” (Section 2B/23-28 – italics mine).

As we can gather from the *Ratio*, whatever expression of the Carmelite charism we feel called to live - be that as friars, enclosed nuns, apostolic sisters, laity, or hermits - the very heart of our way of life is contemplation. Saint John of the Cross described contemplation as “the inflowing of God's grace into a human being”. More recently Fr. Joseph Chalmers, O.Carm., has described contemplation simply as “friendship with God”.

Recently reading a book entitled *A Deeper Love – An Introduction to Centring Prayer* by Elizabeth Smith and Joseph Chalmers, O.Carm., (pp. 29-30), I liked the simple language used to describe contemplation:

Contemplation is pure gift. There is nothing we can do to earn it or make it happen. This is the point when many good Christians stop. Instinctively we may feel that this is too high for us, that contemplation is fine for monks and nuns but is not for the like of you and me. This is the tragic result of various historical problems, as a consequence of which suspicion was cast on the idea of contemplation and those who aspired to it. For the past four hundred years contemplation - unfortunately - tended to be reserved for an elite group within the Church, for the spiritual equivalent of Olympic athletes. It was not thought at all suitable for “ordinary people”. Now contemplation is more and more understood as the normal flowering of a mature Christian life, begun in Baptism, by means of which we are immersed in the life of God. We do not earn the gift of contemplation

because of our outstanding holiness. It is not the reward for a holy life. it is a necessity for a truly holy life. The acid test of holiness of course is how one lives in daily life - the constancy of one's love.

Contemplation is the gift of God and not something we can grasp hold of or conjure up by using any clever technique. It has been called "resting in God" beyond words, thoughts, and images. This is God's gift and although we cannot make this happen we can prepare ourselves to receive the gift. It is rather like wanting to catch a bus. The best way to catch this bus is to stand at the right stop. We cannot complain that our bus never comes or does not stop if we are standing somewhere else. So we can prepare ourselves to receive this gift by developing our relationship with God to an extent that we are quite comfortable with silence. In silence we learn to listen to the small voice of God.

To quote St. John of the Cross again: *The Father spoke one Word, which is his Son and this Word he always speaks in an eternal silence and in silence it must be heard by the soul.*"

In this edition of *Assumpta* we print a talk on contemplation given by the Archbishop of Canterbury to Pope Benedict and the 300-or-so bishops gathered in Rome for a special Synod at the start of the 'Year of Faith'. Contemplation - friendship with God - is at the heart of our vocation as Carmelites, and the Year of Faith gives us a great opportunity to reflect on what Karl Rahner (a theological advisor at Vatican II) said: "The Christian of the future will be a mystic [that is, a contemplative] or not at all." As Rowan Williams points out, contemplative living is deeply revolutionary. Yours in Carmel,

John Berry
Prior Provincial's Delegate to the Carmelite Third Order

EDITORIAL

Dear friends in Carmel,

As we send out the November/December edition of the *Assumpta* we hope that again you will find much to interest and encourage you. We are aiming to include articles from our members as well as from established writers. We want to continue making *Assumpta* a source of quality information about Carmelite spirituality and, at the same time, very readable and accessible to a wide audience, including perhaps those who are new to Carmel. Please therefore do send in articles and also feedback on how you find the magazine and any suggestions you may have. I would like to extend special thanks to our past, current and future contributors and to those who have kindly contacted me by letter, phone or email with encouraging messages of prayerful support since I became editor. On behalf of the Editorial Team, may I wish all our readers a very blessed and happy Advent and Christmastide.



With gratitude and loving wishes in Carmel,

Anne Bunyan
Editor of Assumpta

A note from Johan (Assumpta Editorial Team member)

In the last edition of *Assumpta* we promised (or is that threatened?!) to include an article by me giving an overview of the Second Vatican Council. That - and some other articles - have been postponed, because we have so much excellent and equally topical material to include in this edition. Apologies for any disappointment. Thanks to the editorial board for allowing me to share some news and make an appeal towards the end of this edition. Well done to those who spotted in the last issue that the feast of St. Jude celebrations take place in October, not November as printed in error!

CONTEMPLATIVES: OPEN TO GOD'S FULLNESS



On 10 December 2012, the eve of the 'Year of Faith', the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, addressed the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican. He spoke about the central role of contemplation in helping people rediscover the beauty of the Christian faith. As Carmelites his message speaks to us deeply

because we know our vocation is to be contemplatives, people open to God's friendship as discovered through lives of prayer, community and service. Doctor Williams, an expert in Carmelite spirituality, is retiring as Archbishop at the end of this year; to thank him for his preaching of the Gospel and promotion of Carmel, we print here his truly inspiring address given at the very start of the Year of Faith.

Your Holiness, Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ – Dear Friends,

I am deeply honoured by the Holy Father's invitation to speak in this gathering: as the Psalmist says, '*Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum*' ['Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity', *Psalm 133*]. The gathering of bishops in Synod for the good of all Christ's people is one of those disciplines that sustain the health of Christ's Church. And today especially we cannot forget that great gathering of '*fratres in unum*' that was the Second Vatican Council, which did so much for the health of the Church and helped the Church to recover so much of the energy needed to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ effectively in our age. For so many of my own generation, even

beyond the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church, that Council was a sign of great promise, a sign that the Church was strong enough to ask itself some demanding questions about whether its culture and structures were adequate to the task of sharing the Gospel with the complex, often rebellious, always restless mind of the modern world.

The Council was, in so many ways, a rediscovery of evangelistic concern and passion, focused not only on the renewal of the Church's own life but on its credibility in the world. Texts such as *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* laid out a fresh and joyful vision of how the unchanging reality of Christ living in his Body on earth through the gift of the Holy Spirit might speak in new words to the society of our age and even to those of other faiths. It is not surprising that we are still, fifty years later, struggling with many of the same questions and with the implications of the Council; and I take it that this Synod's concern with the new evangelization is part of that continuing exploration of the Council's legacy.

But one of the most important aspects of the theology of the Second Vatican Council was a renewal of Christian anthropology. In place of an often strained and artificial neo-scholastic account of how grace and nature were related in the constitution of human beings, the Council built on the greatest insights of a theology that had returned to earlier and richer sources – the theology of spiritual geniuses like Henri de Lubac, who reminded us of what it meant for early and mediaeval Christianity to speak of humanity as made in God's image and of grace as perfecting and transfiguring that image so long overlaid by our habitual 'inhumanity'. In such a light, to proclaim the Gospel is to proclaim that it is at last possible to be properly human: the Catholic and Christian faith is a 'true humanism', to borrow a phrase from another genius of the

last century, Jacques Maritain.

Yet de Lubac is clear what this does not mean. We do not replace the evangelistic task by a campaign of ‘humanization’. ‘Humanize before Christianizing?’ he asks – ‘If the enterprise succeeds, Christianity will come too late: its place will be taken. And who thinks that Christianity has no humanizing value?’ So de Lubac writes in his wonderful collection of aphorisms, *Paradoxes of Faith*. It is the faith itself that shapes the work of humanizing and the humanizing enterprise will be empty without the definition of humanity given in the Second Adam. Evangelization, old or new, must be rooted in a profound confidence that we have a distinctive human destiny to show and share with the world. There are many ways of spelling this out, but in these brief remarks I want to concentrate on one aspect in particular.

To be fully human is to be recreated in the image of Christ’s humanity; and that humanity is the perfect human ‘translation’ of the relationship of the eternal Son to the eternal Father, a relationship of loving and adoring self-giving, a pouring out of life towards the Other. Thus the humanity we are growing into in the Spirit, the humanity that we seek to share with the world as the fruit of Christ’s redeeming work, is a contemplative humanity. Saint Edith Stein observed that we begin to understand theology when we see God as the ‘First Theologian’, the first to speak out the reality of divine life, because ‘all speaking about God presupposes God’s own speaking’; in an analogous way we could say that we begin to

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understand contemplation when we see God as the first contemplative, the eternal paradigm of that selfless attention to the

Other that brings not death but life to the self. All contemplating of God presupposes God's own absorbed and joyful knowing of himself and gazing upon himself in the trinitarian life.

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To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and ready to receive, with our self-generated fantasies about God and ourselves reduced to silence, we are at last at the point where we may begin to grow. And the face we need to show to our world is the face of a humanity in endless growth towards love, a humanity so delighted and engaged by the glory of what we look towards that we are prepared to embark on a journey without end to find our way more deeply into it, into the heart of the trinitarian life. Saint Paul speaks (in *2 Corinthians 3:18*) of how 'with our unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord', we are transfigured with a greater and greater radiance. That is the face we seek to show to our fellow-human beings.

And we seek this not because we are in search of some private 'religious experience' that will make us feel secure or holy. We seek it because in this self-forgetting gazing towards the light of God in Christ we learn how to look at one another and at the whole of God's creation. In the early Church, there was a clear understanding that we needed to advance from the self-understanding or self-contemplation that taught us to discipline our greedy instincts and cravings to the 'natural contemplation' that perceived and venerated the wisdom of God in the order of the world and allowed us to see created reality for what it truly was in the sight of God –

rather than what it was in terms of how we might use it or dominate it. And from there grace would lead us forward into true 'theology', the silent gazing upon God that is the goal of all our discipleship.

In this perspective, contemplation is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom – freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them. To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.

In his autobiography Thomas Merton describes an experience not long after he had entered the monastery where he was to spend the rest of his life (*Elected Silence*, p. 303). He had contracted flu, and was confined to the infirmary for a few days, and, he says, he felt a 'secret joy' at the opportunity this gave him for prayer – and 'to do everything that I want to do, without having to run all over the place answering bells.' He is forced to recognise that this attitude reveals that 'All my bad habits ... had sneaked into the monastery with me and had received the religious vesture along with me: spiritual gluttony, spiritual sensuality, spiritual pride.' In other words, he is trying to live the Christian life with the emotional equipment of someone still deeply wedded to the search for individual satisfaction. It is a powerful warning: we have to be ever careful in our evangelisation not simply to persuade people to

apply to God and the life of the spirit all the longings for drama, excitement and self-congratulation that we so often indulge in our daily lives. It was expressed even more forcefully some decades ago by the American scholar of religion, Jacob Needleman, in a controversial and challenging book called *Lost Christianity: the words of the Gospel*, he says, are addressed to human beings who 'do not yet exist'. That is to say, responding in a life-giving way to what the Gospel requires of us means a transforming of our whole self, our feelings and thoughts and imaginings. To be converted to the faith does not mean simply acquiring a new set of beliefs, but becoming a new person, a person in communion with God and others through Jesus Christ.

Contemplation is an intrinsic element in this transforming process. To learn to look to God without regard to my own instant satisfaction, to learn to scrutinise and to relativise the cravings and fantasies that arise in me – this is to allow God to be God, and thus to allow the prayer of Christ, God's own relation to God, to come alive in me. Invoking the Holy Spirit is a matter of asking the third person of the Trinity to enter my spirit and bring the clarity I need to see where I am in slavery to cravings and fantasies and to give me patience and stillness as God's light and love penetrate my inner life. Only as this begins to happen will I be delivered from treating the gifts of God as yet another set of things I may acquire to make me happy, or to dominate other people. And as this process unfolds, I become more free - to borrow a phrase of Saint Augustine (*Confessions* IV.7)

- to 'love human beings in a human way', to love them not for what they may promise me, to love them not as if they were there to

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provide me with lasting safety and comfort, but as fragile fellow-creatures held in the love of God. I discover (as we noted earlier) how to see other persons and things for what they are in relation to God, not to me. And it is here that true justice as well as true love has its roots.

The human face that Christians want to show to the world is a face marked by such justice and love, and thus a face formed by contemplation, by the disciplines of silence and the detaching of the self from the objects that enslave it and the unexamined instincts that can deceive it. If evangelisation is a matter of showing the world the ‘unveiled’ human face that reflects the face of the Son turned towards the Father, it must carry with it a serious commitment to promoting and nurturing such prayer and practice. It should not need saying that this is not at all to argue that ‘internal’ transformation is more important than action for justice; rather, it is to insist that the clarity and energy we need for doing justice requires us to make space for the truth, for God’s reality to come through. Otherwise our search for justice or for peace becomes another exercise of human will, undermined by human self-deception. The two callings are inseparable, the calling to ‘prayer and righteous action’, as the Protestant martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, writing from his prison cell in 1944. True prayer purifies the motive, true justice is the necessary work of sharing and liberating in others the humanity we have discovered in our contemplative encounter.

Those who know little and care less about the institutions and hierarchies of the Church these days are often attracted and challenged by lives that exhibit something of this. It is the new and renewed religious communities that most effectively reach out to those who have never known belief or who have

abandoned it as empty and stale. When the Christian history of our age is written - especially, though not only, as regards Europe and North America - we shall see how central and vital was the witness of places like Taizé or Bose, but also of more traditional communities that have become focal points for the exploration of a humanity broader and deeper than social habit encourages. And the great spiritual networks - Sant' Egidio, the Focolare, Comunione e Liberazione - these too show the same phenomenon; they make space for a profounder human vision because in their various ways all of them offer a discipline of personal and common life that is about letting the reality of Jesus come alive in us.

And, as these examples show, the attraction and challenge we are talking about can generate commitments and enthusiasms across historic confessional lines. We have become used to talking about the imperative importance of 'spiritual ecumenism' these days; but this must not be a matter of somehow opposing the spiritual and the institutional, nor replacing specific commitments with a general sense of Christian fellow-feeling. If we have a robust and rich account of what the word 'spiritual' itself means, grounded in scriptural insights like those in the passages from *2 Corinthians* that we

noted earlier, we shall understand spiritual ecumenism as the shared search to nourish and sustain disciplines of contemplation in the hope of unveiling the face of the new humanity. And the more we keep apart

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from each other as Christians of different confessions, the less convincing that face will seem. I mentioned the Focolare movement a moment ago: you will recall that the basic imperative in the spirituality of Chiara Lubich was ‘to make yourself one’ – one with the crucified and abandoned Christ, one through him with the Father, one with all those called to this unity and so one with the deepest needs of the world. ‘Those who live unity ... live by allowing themselves to penetrate always more into God. They grow always closer to God ... and the closer they get to him, the closer they get to the hearts of their brothers and sisters’ (Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings*, p. 37). The contemplative habit strips away an unthinking superiority towards other baptised believers and the assumption that I have nothing to learn from them. Insofar as the habit of contemplation helps us approach all experience as gift, we shall always be asking what it is that the brother or sister has to share with us – even the brother or sister who is in one way or another separated from us or from what we suppose to be the fullness of communion. ‘*Quam bonum et quam jucundum ...*’

In practice, this might suggest that wherever initiatives are being taken to reach out in new ways to a lapsed Christian or post-Christian public, there should be serious work done on how such outreach can be grounded in some ecumenically shared contemplative practice. In addition to the striking way in which Taizé has developed an international liturgical

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‘culture’ accessible to a great variety of people, a network like the World Community for Christian Meditation, with its strong Benedictine roots and affiliations, has opened up

fresh possibilities here. What is more, this community has worked hard at making contemplative practice accessible to children and young people, and this needs the strongest possible encouragement. Having seen at first hand - in Anglican schools in Britain - how warmly young children can respond to the invitation offered by meditation in this tradition, I believe its potential for introducing young people to the depths of our faith to be very great indeed. And for those who have drifted away from the regular practice of sacramental faith, the rhythms and practices of Taizé or the WCCM are often a way back to this sacramental heart and hearth.

What people of all ages recognise in these practices is the possibility, quite simply, of living more humanly – living with less frantic acquisitiveness, living with space for stillness, living in the expectation of learning, and most of all, living with an awareness that there is a solid and durable joy to be discovered in the disciplines of self-forgetfulness that is quite different from the gratification of this or that impulse of the moment. Unless our evangelisation can open the door to all this, it will run the risk of trying to sustain faith on the basis of an un-transformed set of human habits – with the all too familiar result that the Church comes to look unhappily like so many purely human institutions, anxious, busy, competitive and controlling. In a very important sense, a true enterprise of evangelisation will always be a re-evangelisation of ourselves as Christians also, a rediscovery of why our faith is different, transfiguring – a recovery of our own new humanity.

And of course it happens most effectively when we are not planning or struggling for it. To turn to de Lubac once again, 'He who will best answer the needs of his time will be someone who will not have first sought to answer them' (*op.*

“... wherever initiatives are being taken to reach out in new ways to a lapsed Christian or post-Christian public, there should be serious work done on how such outreach can be grounded in some ecumenically shared contemplative practice ...”

cit. pp. 111-12); and ‘The man who seeks sincerity, instead of seeking truth in self-forgetfulness, is like the man who seeks to be detached instead of laying himself open in love’ (p. 114). The enemy of all proclamation of the Gospel is self-consciousness, and, by definition, we cannot

overcome this by being more self-conscious. We have to return to Saint Paul and ask, ‘Where are we looking?’ Do we look anxiously to the problems of our day, the varieties of unfaithfulness or of threat to faith and morals, the weakness of the institution? Or are we seeking to look to Jesus, to the unveiled face of God’s image in the light of which we see the image further reflected in ourselves and our neighbours?

That simply reminds us that evangelisation is always an overflow of something else – the disciple’s journey to maturity in Christ, a journey not organised by the ambitious ego but the result of the prompting and drawing of the Spirit in us. In our considerations of how we are once again to make the Gospel of Christ compellingly attractive to men and women of our age, I hope we never lose sight of what makes it compelling to ourselves, to each one of us in our diverse ministries. So I wish you joy in these discussions – not simply clarity or effectiveness in planning, but joy in the promise of the vision of Christ’s face, and in the foreshadowings of that fulfilment in the joy of communion with each other here and now.

Another bishop reflects on contemplative living

Bishop Terence Drainey of Middlesbrough will speak on Saint John of the Cross to York CSG on 17 November. All are welcome.

‘WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE CHURCH?’

FINAL TESTIMONY OF CARDINAL MARTINI



Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini was a highly distinguished Bible scholar who served many years as Archbishop of Milan. He died on 31st August at the age of 85 after living with Parkinson's Disease. Two weeks earlier Cardinal Martini gave a final interview to fellow Jesuit Father George Sporschill and an Italian friend who told media outlets that the much-loved

Church leader read and approved the text, intending it as a sort of 'spiritual testament' to be published after his death. Truly a bishop inspired by the Second Vatican Council, in this 'Year of Faith' his final act of witness to Christ has much for Carmelites and other Christians to ponder. The following is a translation of the interview published in Italian by the newspaper Corriere della Sera.

How do you see the situation of the church?

The church is tired, in the Europe of well-being and in America. Our culture has become old, our churches and our religious houses are big and empty, the bureaucratic apparatus of the church grows, our rites and our dress are pompous. Do these things, however, express what we are today? ... Well-being weighs on us. We find ourselves like the rich young man who went away sad when Jesus called him to be his disciple. I know that we can't let everything go easily. At least, we can seek people who are free and closest to their neighbour, like Archbishop Romero and the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador. Where are the heroes among us who can inspire us? By no means do we have to limit them by the boundaries of the institution.

Who can help the church today?

Father Karl Rahner often used the image of the embers hidden under the ash. I see in the church today so much ash under the embers that often I'm hit with a sense of impotence. How can we liberate the embers from the ash, to reinvigorate the fires of love? For the first thing, we have to seek out these embers. Where are the individuals full of generosity, like the Good Samaritan? Who have faith like the Roman centurion? Who are enthusiastic like John the Baptist? Who dare the new, like Paul? Who are faithful like Mary Magdalene? I advise the Pope and the bishops to seek out twelve people outside the lines for administrative positions, people who are close to the poorest, who are surrounded by young people, and who try new things. We need to be with people who burn in such a way that the Spirit can spread itself everywhere.

What tools do you recommend against the exhaustion of the church?

I recommend three very strong ones. The first is conversion: the church must recognize its errors and follow a radical path of change, beginning with the Pope and the bishops. The paedophilia scandals compel us to take up a path of conversion. Questions about sexuality, and all the themes involving the body, are an example. These are important to everyone, however, sometimes perhaps too important. We have to ask ourselves if people still listen to the advice of the church on sexual matters. Is the church still an authoritative reference in this field, or simply a caricature in the media?

The second is the Word of God. Vatican II gave the Bible back to Catholics. Only those who perceive this Word in their heart can be part of those who will help achieve renewal of the church, and who will know how to respond to personal questions with the right choice. The Word of God is simple,

and seeks out as its companion a heart that listens ... Neither the clergy nor ecclesiastical law can substitute for the inner life of the human person. All the external rules, the laws, the dogmas, are there to clarify this internal voice and for the discernment of spirits.

Who are the sacraments for? These are the third tool of healing. The sacraments are not an instrument of discipline, but a help for people in their journey and in the weaknesses of their life. Are we carrying the sacraments to the people who need new strength? I think of all the divorced and remarried couples as extended families. They need special protection. The church upholds the indissolubility of matrimony. It's a grace when a marriage and a family succeed ...

The attitude we hold towards extended families determines the ability of the church to be close to their children. A woman, for instance, is abandoned by her husband and finds a new companion, who takes care of her and her three children. This second love succeeds. If this family is discriminated against, not only is the mother cut out [from the church] but also her children. If the parents feel like they're outside the church, and don't feel its support, the church will lose the future generation.

Before communion, we pray: 'Lord, I am not worthy ...' We know we're not worthy ... Love is a grace. Love is a gift. The question of whether the divorced can receive Communion ought to be turned around. How can the church reach people who have complicated family situations, bringing them help with the power of the sacraments?

What do you do personally?

The church is 200 years behind the times. Why doesn't it stir? Are we afraid? Is it fear rather than courage? In any event, the faith is the foundation of the church. Faith, trust, courage. I'm

old and sick, and I depend on the help of others. Good people around me make me feel their love. This love is stronger than the sentiment of distrust that I feel every now and then with regard to the church in Europe. Only love defeats exhaustion. God is love. Now I have a question for you: What can you do for the church?



Cardinal Martini laid to rest

After more than 200,000 people had filed past his body, lying in state in Milan Cathedral, on 3rd September Cardinal Martini was buried at the foot of the Altar of the Cross of St Charles Borromeo. The ceremony was the Church and City of Milan's final farewell to their pastor. At the end of the funeral Mass Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop emeritus, expressed the sentiments of all: "We loved you, we love you, we now join in your song of praise. Continue to intercede for us all."

The legacy of the 2009 visit of St. Thérèse's relics

Fr. Ian Kelly will reflect on this with Manchester CSG on 17 November at the Chaplaincy where the relics came. All welcome.

Carmel - God's Garden

John Wilson, leader of the Lay Carmelite Community in Newcastle, shares with us a meditation based on the fact that 'Carmel' is a Hebrew word meaning the garden, vineyard or orchard of God.



Grounds of Thicket Priory Carmelite Monastery near York

My soul is the part of God's garden which he has assigned to me to care for:

- the plants are my talents, given to me to grow and develop
- the garden tools are my intellect and imagination, given to tend the garden.

I keep my garden in order by avoiding deliberate sin and regularly receiving the Sacraments. I make time each day to talk in prayer to God, the great Gardener, making a point of listening carefully to what he says so as to follow his instructions. He has provided me with a very useful reference book which is always available: the Holy Bible.

Time is spent in the garden willingly and happily. I come to realise that I am closer to God and more in touch with reality

there than I am in any other place in this busy, noisy world. Gradually, as my garden is cared for, it begins to produce spiritual fruit, flowers and vegetables in abundance which I can share with others - for I do not tend the garden just for myself but rather for the benefit of others.

As I work I must be on my guard against the possible pests which would prevent me from fully developing my spiritual allotment: such as the blight of temptations to pride and selfishness and worldly distractions taking me away from the work in hand.

Family, social time, work and leisure activities - do these commitments really have to reduce the amount of time I have for holy horticulture? It is possible to undertake these while at the same time remembering my purpose is always to do God's work in the world, even during the most ordinary activities.

For God is continually in my soul and, wherever I am, whatever I am doing, whether at home, at work or at the gym, I can be aware of the gifts I am receiving in each moment from the presence of God.

As Saint James says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of Light, in whom there is no change or shadow of a change. By his own will he gave us life through the Word of Truth."

East Kent Carmelite Spirituality Group

An update from the convenor, Suzanne Phillips

East Kent (formerly Canterbury) Carmelite Spirituality Group is now in its second year and what a blessed year it has been. Our new meeting venue at Faversham and the support from Fr. Piet and the friar community have enhanced our gatherings

and drawn people from as far as Tunbridge Wells! We have been privileged to welcome many inspirational speakers who have helped us to grow in our understanding of the Carmelite charism. Through community events, sharing our personal journeys, participating in Carmelite devotions, attending the 'Life of Christ' event together in Surrey, listening to talks on the saints, and practising *Lectio Divina*, we have, through it all, developed great friendships as an ecumenical community.

The development of our Formation Group has also been an inspiration, working our way through the modules in *Climbing the Mountain*. As we have all travelled deeper spiritually, it was with resultant joy that 2 of our members discerned a call to make a more formal commitment. We were blessed to receive Susan Smith from the Faversham Community as a Member, supported by John Berry, the Provincial's Delegate, at our meeting on 9 June. Then on 8 September, Our Lady's Birthday, our community had the double blessing of receiving Stacey Rand as an Associate Member at Minster Abbey.

Please do pray that as we journey together in the family of Carmel we will - as *The Rule for the Third Order* puts it - learn to 'appear before Christ empty-handed, placing all our love in Christ Jesus' (§12) through our life together in community.



Reception of (left) Susan White and (right) Stacey Rand of East Kent C.S.G.

Silence: My Experience



Sylvia Lucas gave the following talk at the 'Day for the Carmelite Family' held at Aylesford Priory for the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in July. Sylvia, who celebrates her silver jubilee of profession as a member of the Third Order this November, is convenor of 'Carmel in the City' Carmelite Spirituality Group in London.

I was asked to speak about my experience of silence and what it means to me. It would have been easier for me to talk about what I know or have read which have helped me to understand some of this experience and especially to give me the language I need to express this, for instance in St. John of Cross's beautiful poetry and sayings, or Fr. Joseph Chalmers' book on Elijah, *The Sound of Silence*. However, I have been asked to speak about my own experience and so this is my focus.

I have always had a busy life with my large family and work in education and for the Church. Even though I retired from teaching several years ago I am blessed with continuing good health and energy and you may see me as I am busy with things Carmelite - with 'Carmel in the City', the Carmelite Spirituality Group in London for instance, or with other Third Order business either nationally or internationally, or again volunteering at Aylesford. In addition to this, I still do other work, some paid and some on a voluntary basis, for the Church and community organisations, and on top of this my large family of 6 sons keeps growing with 6 grandchildren so far.

So how do I find the time to spend in silence?

For me that is putting the cart before horse, as the saying goes. For it is in the silence that it all begins. My times of silence and

stillness are my most precious possession and even though there are occasions when I have to let them go, I return to them as quickly as I can.

For as long as I can remember, even back into my early childhood, I have woken early, and the stillness of the early morning always seems like a precious gift. Sometimes I may be conscious of it as a time of prayer and words from Scripture will come to me, but more usually it is simply a sense of being alive and awareness of a new day beginning.

Recently I began reading the book *Love Unknown* by Ruth Burrows, the Carmelite nun, which started with her paraphrase of Psalm 96: 'Sing to God a song that you have never sung before'.

These words hit home to me so hard that I never finished the rest of the book but kept going back to them. They put into words precisely this early morning experience for which I couldn't find my own words: the amazing sense of newness, of creation - of something that has never existed before - of God being present in our world and creating it anew everyday and in every moment; and, sometimes terrifyingly real, of God in me, or perhaps more precisely, me in God.

Soon I become aware of the world waking up, of the sounds of the city coming to life. In earlier days it was the sound of my 6 young boys waking up, but nowadays I have other young people living above me and families next door on both sides so there is plenty of life close around me and the day ahead opens up for me. The early, exterior silence has now gone but I feel that I have taken some of this into myself and can take into the day that lies ahead. I begin to imagine myself into the events that are in my diary, people I will meet, trains and buses to catch, meetings to attend, schools to visit as well as all the domestic matters to attend to, shopping, cooking, cleaning ...

When I was a teacher I think that I was at my best with children who were unable to learn because they had behavioural problems and were unable to concentrate. I knew that it was important to begin each day anew with them. They, and I, were not the same people we were yesterday, so there was no blame for any failure or for what might have gone wrong, we just started again, and again, and again.

The same principle holds good even now as I go into situations where so often people are at odds with one another. Deep down I believe that people sincerely want to build good relationships but we don't get it right for all sorts of reasons.

However, it is in the silence that we discover the truth about ourselves, learn what we can change about ourselves and how we might be with others peacefully.

This is why I need my times of silence; especially the early morning, so I may live in the hope of seeing more clearly today, not making the same mistakes I made yesterday; listening more carefully to the other person - being aware of what they are saying with their bodies and faces - which often say a lot more than the words used - then looking into their eyes and finding God within them.

I am reluctant to use religious language as I often feel that it can remove me from the messiness of life. God in Jesus is alive in our world: in those with whom I live and work and in creation, and he has given me the responsibility to share this Good News with others. I believe this and it is what the Incarnation and the Resurrection mean for me, but these are intellectual concepts and if they stay in my head they will never reach my heart and enter the reality of my life.

Sometimes, words from Scripture will be part of the silence. Sometimes I reflect on words that have caught my attention or I

am preparing a liturgy. More often words will come from somewhere in my memory.

My earliest experience of this goes back to being a very small child in the house of my grandmother, a very stern, devout chapel-goer, still very Victorian in her ways. Unknowingly, she gave me a direction in life and taught me to pray with Scripture.

Whilst living in her house I had to stay in my room in the mornings until I was called. This was war-time in the countryside, so no radio, television or electric lights were available and looking at a book was not always possible on dark mornings.

On the wall at the end of my bed was a beautifully decorated Victorian bible text, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God' with a picture of a small figure climbing a mountain, the summit lost in the clouds. Even today, when all else fails and my mind seems in a mess those words, still my favourite passage of Scripture, and the picture come back to me.

I sometimes think that my love of silence goes back to those days in the countryside where I would wander enjoying the fields, trees, birds and all the wildlife I found there and where I could sit still in a tree or hedgerow and simply gaze at the world around me.

As I grew up things changed and I was no longer allowed to 'waste time'. Waking early was still ok but I had to be responsible for younger children, learn to be useful around the house, get a job and earn some money. But the silence still drew me and I began to re-find it in old country churches. Later, I discovered Catholic churches and had a sense of a special presence there, and saw other people come in to be still and to pray. Later still I found Aylesford, finding all these



experiences together: the early morning stillness, places to sit, walk or enjoy nature in silence, the chapels and quiet places.

I also knew that God does not meet us in the silence just for our own benefit but so that we might bring the Good News of his Kingdom to our world, especially to those most in need. So even our search for the Kingdom of God is for others.

This neediness then is the other face of silence. My childhood was far from idyllic as it was set against the background of the Second World War. Living on the east coast meant experiencing some of the worst of the bombing and I still have some very disturbing memories from that time.

It is in the silence that my deepest fears and worst nightmares still surface and I experience 'the terror of the night' as the Psalmist says. This can be a place of great emptiness and pain. Yet it is then, when I feel as if I am hitting rock bottom, that I know how much I need God in my life. No matter how awful our experience is, it is nothing compared to what Jesus experienced for us. This is not a time of comforting, beautiful prayer but becomes a desperate cry for help. Knowing that 'the Lord hears the cry of the poor' is the only comfort but is not one that is felt, but rather is only said in trust.

Yet these dark times in the silence are very important. Whilst certainly not to be looked for they are not to be avoided either. Because it is in these moments of emptiness and pain that I learn how much I need God to be with me as I look outside at the pain in the world around me and would rather, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, cross the road and look the other way.

For sometimes the needs of the poor in our world can seem overwhelming and it is easy to feel hopeless in the face of our own weakness and want to turn away. But, like Our Lady at the foot of the cross in St. John's Gospel account, in the silence I

discover that I must learn to let God be God, for me and in me. This is the only real task I have, nothing else matters, and despite the difficulties and my failure, I need to begin anew every day.

Many, like myself, will have memories of the visit of St Thérèse's relics to Britain three years ago. There were wonderful celebrations, but what moved me profoundly was the depth of the silence as people queued and filed past the relics or simply sat in silence with her for hours. Some friends of mine, the Sisters of Ware Carmel, produced a little book for the visit and, to finish, I will let them speak for me:

Acutely conscious as we are of our utter insignificance and weakness we can be overwhelmed at times by the apparent hopelessness of our own situation and that of our poor, suffering world. Thérèse is telling us that it is precisely this insignificance and weakness that God is seeking, so as to transform it in his redeeming love. We desperately want to be in control, to organise our life, our world, our neighbour. Thérèse let God be God for her and in her. She is telling us to do the same: let go and surrender to God's love and allow him to recreate each of us and our world in the image of Jesus. Only God can solve the world's problems. Admittedly we have to do our part. It is imperative that we do all in our power to relieve the misery and hardship of our brothers and sisters; imperative that we labour and lobby for the repeal of unjust laws; that we seek always to be instruments of peace, but in the last resort, only God can change hearts.'

Hands Opened To Let Go: A Sisterly Study of St. Thérèse of Lisieux
(Ware Carmel, 2009)

Praying Together as a Carmelite Family

A reminder that 14th November is the Feast of All Carmelite Saints.

FORMING ONE GLOBAL CARMELITE FAMILY

Johan Bergström-Allen, convenor of Carmelite Spirituality Groups in northern England, and Projects & Publications Worker for the British Province of Carmelites, shares with us some news of a forthcoming journey, and asks for your spiritual and financial help.

I'm very grateful to John Berry and my fellow *Assumpta* editorial board members for the opportunity to share with you some news of an exciting forthcoming trip that I'm making, and to ask for your support.

Regular readers of *Assumpta* will know that in his introductions over recent years, John has highlighted the strong relationship between our British Province and the Province of Australia and Timor Leste (East Timor). Encouraged by the development of Lay Carmel in Britain, the Lay Carmelites 'down under' have been undergoing their own process of renewal. Like us, they have identified the three major areas needing development to be: (1) formation, (2) organisation, and (3) communication.

For us in Britain the renewal of Lay Carmel was encouraged by National Gatherings of the Third Order. Australian Lay Carmelites have a much larger geographic spread than we do, but they have decided that they too want to hold a National Gathering. Because of my involvement with Lay Carmel, including compiling our formation resource *Climbing the Mountain*, the Australians have kindly invited me to facilitate their National Gathering in mid-November, and to visit a number of communities of Carmelite laity and religious across south-eastern Australia. I will report on my trip in a future edition of *Assumpta*, and on the Province website. It's a privilege to be invited to support our Carmelite Family across the globe, and a tribute to all Lay Carmelites in Britain who have inspired others with their commitment to Carmel.



Johan (top left) with delegates from the Province of Australia & Timor Leste at the recent International Lay Carmelite Congress in Rome.

I have two requests to make of you.

The first is to ask you to pray for the Australian National Gathering taking place at a retreat centre in Mittagong between 16th and 18th November. Please also pray for me as I travel to various different Carmelite communities; I fly to Australia on 5th November, and by the time I return home to Britain on the 28th I will have spoken to about 20 different groups.

The second request I have is to ask for your sponsorship. At Easter next year I will be going to Lourdes with *HCPT - The Pilgrimage Trust*, which gives sick and disabled children a holiday-pilgrimage of a lifetime. I want to raise some money for the group I'm travelling with, and I thought a good way to do this is to have a 24-hour sponsored silence on 29th November. I reckon that after 3 weeks of talking in Australia my voice will need a rest and people's ears will need a rest from my voice! If you would like to donate you can send a cheque (made payable to *HCPT - The Pilgrimage Trust*) to my address on the inside back cover of this *Assumpta*. Even better, you can donate online with a credit or debit card by visiting:

www.justgiving.com/JohanBergstromAllen

Thank you very much for your support!

CARMEL IN THE CITY FOCUSES ON THE YEAR OF FAITH

'*Carmel in the City*' Carmelite Spirituality Group (CSG) meets in the heart of London's financial district at St. Joseph's Church in Lamb's Passage off Bunhill Row. Established in 2008, *Carmel in the City* has developed into a very dynamic community that helps members relate their Christian faith to everyday life.

Carmel in the City has organised a special programme of events for the 'Year of Faith', inviting Carmelite laity and religious, and the general public, to re-member the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council in a series of reflections on the Council's key documents and themes.

The line-up of speakers is very impressive, with Carmelites reflecting alongside a member of The House of Lords, a Queen's Counsel, a lecturer from The University of Oxford, and senior figures in major national charities.

St. Joseph's Church, where *Carmel in the City* meets, has strong ecumenical relations with the neighbouring churches, and on 3rd November the community will be addressed by the Superintendent Minister of nearby Wesley's Chapel and former President of The Methodist Conference, Lord Leslie Griffiths.

All are welcome to join this community as it explores the treasures of Carmel. For details contact Sylvia Lucas by calling 07889 436165, or visiting www.carmelite.org/citc

REFLECTING ON MARY, WOMAN OF MOST PURE HEART

One of the Carmelite Order's ancient titles for Our Lady is 'Woman of Most Pure Heart'. The significance of this will be explored by Irish Carmelite friar Fr. Chris O'Donnell at the meetings of the Carmelite Spirituality Groups in York on 8th December and at Leeds the following day. All are welcome. For information contact Johan (details on inside back cover).

MEMBER & PROVINCE NEWS

Centenary Congratulations!

to Mary Hicks of Warwick Street Chapter in London who will be 100 years old on 26th December!

Election News

On 5th September 2012 Anna D'Souza was elected leader of the Warwick Street Chapter in London, with Nora Hunt as First Councillor and Mary Malloy as Second Councillor. We pray God's blessing on their time of servant leadership.

May They Rest In Peace

Josephine Poole	Glasgow	13th August
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First Professions in the Carmelite Third Order Secular

Margaret (Maggie) Clark	Margate	10th October
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Jubilees of Profession - Congratulations!

Silver (25)	Sylvia Lucas	Carmel in the City	21st November
30	Sylvia White-Henot		

Prayers for the Sick

Please add to your prayers this month the following:

Joe Swann (Leigh on Sea); Martha Tully (Brighton and Hove); Michael Ainsworth, William Wallace, Edward Marshall (Sheffield); Thea Gregson (Distance); Daphne Wilkinson, Magda Stanuilus (Warwick Street); Marjorie Davis, Alex Somerville, Pamela Ptak (Margate); Caroline Shotton, Maureen Crawford, Billy Douglas, Lauretta Nixon, Jim Reid (Newcastle); Anne Jennings, Kathleen Reynolds (Birmingham); Anne Connole (Coventry); Joan Hart (Aylesford); Kathleen Torkington (Bedlington); Fr. Michael Cronin (Guildford); Betty Brown, Therese Labrosse, Elizabeth York, Margaret Murphy, Clare Poulton (Reading); Mary Kelly, Cathy Slater, Mary Chisholm (Glasgow); John Kelly (East Kent); Mary Whittaker (Leicester).

The National Secretary writes

Hopefully your community is drawing up a programme of events for 2013. If so, please let me have details for inclusion in *Assumpta* and the Province website; my contact details are on the inside back cover. Do also keep me informed about news concerning members, as well as special notices for inclusion. Thank you! *An advance notice*: just a reminder that the Third Order Annual Contribution will be asked for in the New Year (details to follow). God bless you and yours,

Veronica

CALENDAR OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Please confirm details with local communities and the Calendar of Events on the Province website: www.carmelite.org/calendar

Community	Day & Time	Dec.	Jan.
Aylesford The Friars, Aylesford, Kent, ME20 7BX www.carmelite.org/aylesfordtoc	3rd Saturday 10.30am	15	20
Bedlington St. Bede's Church, Bedlington www.carmelite.org/bedlington	3rd Sunday 2pm	16	20
Biggleswade (Carmel in Bedfordshire) St. Peter's Church, Biggleswade www.carmelite.org/bedfordshire	4th Wednesday 6.30pm (NEW TIME)	—	23
Birmingham St. Chad's Cathedral, Queensway www.carmelite.org/birmingham	1st Saturday 1pm	1	5
Blackhall CSG St. Joseph's Church, Blackhall, Nr. Hartlepool www.carmelite.org/blackhall	Varies	none	none
Brighton & Hove St. Anne's Convent, 3 Lansdown Road, Hove www.carmelite.org/brightonhove	4th Saturday 1.45pm	22	26
Cardiff St. Peter's Church Presbytery, Roath www.carmelite.org/cardiff	1st Friday 7pm	7	4
Cleator Moor & Frizington St. Joseph's, Frizington www.carmelite.org/cleator	1st Saturday 10.30am	1	5
Coventry St. Thomas More, Watercall Ave., Styvechale www.carmelite.org/coventry	1st Sunday 3.30pm	2	6
East Kent CSG Whitefriars, Faversham www.carmelite.org/eastkent	2nd Saturday 9.30am	8	12
Glasgow Ogilvia Centre, Rose Street www.carmelite.org/glasgow	1st Saturday 1.15pm	1	5
Guildford St. Joseph's, 12 Eastgate Gardens www.carmelite.org/guildford	2nd Saturday 9.50am	8	12

Leeds CSG St. Theresa's Church, Cross Gates www.carmelite.org/leeds	Dates vary Sunday 11.30am	9	***
Leicester St. Mary's, Countesthorpe Rd., South Wigston www.carmelite.org/leicester	Dates vary Saturday 1pm	8 (10.30-15.30)	12
Leigh-on-Sea Our Lady of Lourdes www.carmelite.org/leigh	4th Saturday 2.30pm (2pm quiet prayer/rosary)	15	26
London: Carmel in the City CSG St. Joseph's, Bunhill Row www.carmelite.org/citc	1st Saturday 11.30am	8 NB change from usual date	5
London: Warwick Street Chapter Our Lady of the Assumption, Warwick Street www.carmelite.org/londonwarwickstreet	1st Wednesday 5.30pm	5	2
Manchester CSG Avila House, 335-9 Oxford Road www.carmelite.org/manchester	Dates vary Saturday 10am	15	***
Margate St. Anne's, Devonshire Gardens, Cliftonville www.carmelite.org/margate	2nd Wednesday 1.45pm	12	9
Mawdesley CSG 30 New Street, Mawdesley, Lancs., L40 2QP www.carmelite.org/mawdesley	Dates vary Thursday 7.40pm	—	17
Newcastle Corpus Christi, Kelvin Grove, Gateshead www.carmelite.org/newcastle	3rd Saturday 1.30pm	15	19
Reading St. Joseph's, Berkshire Drive, Tilehurst www.carmelite.org/reading	3rd Saturday 11am	15	19
Sheffield Mother of God Church, Abbeydale Road www.carmelite.org/sheffield	2nd Saturday 1pm	8	12
York CSG 110 Lawrence Street, York, YO10 3EB www.carmelite.org/yorkcsg	Dates vary Saturday 9.30am	8 @ More House	***

*** *The Carmelite Spirituality Groups in the North (York, Leeds & Manchester) are currently compiling their programmes for 2013. For the January meeting dates please visit their appropriate websites, or contact the National Secretary (details on the inside back cover).*

FORTHCOMING ...

15 November - Commemoration of All Carmelite Souls

This is a particularly good time to remember in individual and community prayer deceased members of the Carmelite Family

10 December - Carmelite NGO Day of Prayer & Action

A time to reflect and act on Human Rights Day. Check the Province website for resources: www.carmelite.org/calendar

The 2013 Carmelite Liturgical Ordo (guide to feasts, etc.) will be included with the Jan./Feb. *Assumpta*, or can be found on the Province website from December: www.carmelite.org/prayer



2013 Carmelite Family Calendar

AN IDEAL CHRISTMAS GIFT MARKING THE YEAR OF FAITH

Buying the calendar supports the development of the Carmelite Family. Order from Saint Albert's Press Distribution (details on the page opposite). £4.50 including postage in the U.K. Cheques payable to *Carmelite Friars*.

Useful Carmelite Websites

British Province	www.carmelite.org
Lay Carmel	www.laycarmel.org
Calendar of Events	www.carmelite.org/calendar
Carmelite News	www.carmelite.org/news
Carmelite Communities	www.carmelite.org/communities
Aylesford Priory	www.thefriars.org.uk
Aylesford Priory Blog	www.aylesfordpriory.blogspot.co.uk
Carmelite Curia	www.ocarm.org
Carmelite Street Youth Blog	www.carmelitesuk.blogspot.co.uk
Carmelite Institute (CIBI)	www.cibi.ie
Carmelite videos on YouTube	www.youtube.com/gbcarmelite

Useful Carmelite Contacts

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Third Order National Secretary

Mrs. Veronica M. Errington, 30 New Street, Mawdesley, Lancashire,

L40 2QP Tel: 01704 821642 Email: natsec@laycarmel.org

Third Order National Consultative Body (NCB)

Sine Cameron-Mowat, Thomas Condie, Anne Hayden, Walter B. Whitman (until December 2012).

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New Beginnings

The robin tweets, and shakes the leaves
of a red berry bush.

A frog, which sits on a gravel path,
takes his first homeward leap,
in no rush.

The hum of the busy worker bees,
and the smell of the freshly cut grass all seem
to echo His voice, which I heard in the silence,
not simply solitude, but a hope-filled reverence.

It said "Begin again..."

In my love, find your freedom."

Brother David Twohig, O.Carm., is a friar of the Irish Province of Carmelites. He wrote this poem whilst on retreat this autumn at the beautiful ancient Irish monastic site of Glendalough (pictured above).