“Membership of the Carmelite Third Order is a way of life, to be embraced and expressed holistically within the universal call to holiness, the baptismal vocation, the liturgical life of the Church, and the contemplative charism of the Order.”

From Statute 2.1 of the Carmelite Third Order (Secular) of the British Province
In this issue...

Assumpta gets a change of editor this issue, as we say goodbye and many thanks to Walter Whitman for all his hard work in editing Assumpta these past three years (see p3). We’ve taken this opportunity to introduce a few changes to the style and format of Assumpta — and hope that these will not cause any offence.

This issue focuses on the broad theme of community, which is at the heart of the Carmelite charism (see pp.4-9).
Dear Friends in Carmel

A happy New Year to you all,
As I write this letter, I am reflecting over
the past decade and find it difficult to
believe ten years have past already since
the beginning of this millennium!

So much has happened during this
period of time, some things for the bet-
ter, others sadly for the worse! However,
despite all the division we see in our
world, strangely enough, there also
exists an ever growing awareness among
the world’s nations of the oneness of
humanity and our inter-
dependence on one another.

We see from our living
rooms the gross denial of
human rights taking place
around the world and to a
lesser degree in our own
country too! However, amid
all the chaos, conflict, frus-
tration and struggle, human-
ity yearns to find meaning and true
freedom in life.

Signs of the times
What do we make of it all? Can we read
the signs of the times? Can we see the
signs of hope?

Can we see the signs of renewal in
God’s Church and the world or do
we prefer to believe the notion, preva-
 lent even among a sizable number of
Christians I might add, that the Church
and the world are doomed to disaster?

As Carmelites and Christians, we
believe that amidst all of the mess
humanity creates for itself, God is very
much at work creating all things new!
(Rev 21:5).

As St. Paul's reminds us in Romans 8:
We know that the whole creation has
been groaning as in the pains of child-
birth right up to the present time. Not
only so, but we ourselves, who have the
first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly
as we wait eagerly for our adoption as
God’s children, the redemption of our
bodies. For in this hope we were saved.
But hope that is seen is no hope at all.
Who hopes for what he already has? But
if we hope for what we do not yet have,
we wait for it patiently.
(Romans 8:22-25)

Children of hope
So St. Paul encourages us to
be children of hope, whose
lives are a living witness
to the hope in our hearts.
For it is for this we labour
and strive, because we have
fixed our hope on the living God, who is
the Saviour of all humankind. (1 Timothy
4:10)

It is this gift of hope that motivates and
gives people of faith the energy to wit-
ness to God’s love in a world hungering
and yearning for love?

Is it not God’s world we have been
entrusted to care for and by His Grace
help to transform? To co-operate with
God’s plan of salvation and transfor-
mation of the world we must ourselves be
open to being transformed…

As Father Jim De Laurier (O.Carm.)
says: “God is constantly calling us to
renewal and transformation. We are
living in a time of great change and upheaval. We all have our ups and downs, our good times and bad times, our challenges and our problems.

In reality, all of these experiences are a call from God to challenge us and enable us to renew our lives.

Like the first Carmelites our vocation is about a life-time search for God through prayer, our communal relationships and our service and care for each other in the spirit of Elijah and Mary.”

As St. Paul says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)

John Berry
Provincial Delegate

Thanks, Walter...

This month we say goodbye to Walter Whitman in his role as editor of Assumpta.

Walter, who also serves the Third Order locally as leader of the Sheffield TOC community and nationally on the National Consultative Body (NCB), is retiring after nearly three years with Assumpta.

I would like, on behalf of the Third Order, to thank Walter sincerely for his unceasing commitment in the various roles he occupies within the Third Order. In his time with Assumpta, Walter has worked hard to build on the excellent work done by his predecessor Fr. Brendan Grady O.Carm. to ensure that Assumpta remains a good quality magazine for its readers.

Walter’s health difficulties have taken their toll on him over the past 18 months or so, and he now feels the time is right to hand over the reins of Assumpta to a successor.

In this respect, Nick Black, who is a member of the Third Order and attends the Carmel in the City, Carmelite Spirituality Group in London, is taking over the voluntary role of editorship of Assumpta. Nick is, in his professional life, both an editor and a journalist.

I’m sure you will join me in wishing Nick all the very best for the future and God’s blessings. He takes up this new and challenging voluntary post in time to create this restyled Jan/Feb issue of Assumpta.

Feasts
Throughout January and February, we celebrate some of the most important Christological Feasts in the liturgical calendar. The theme of Christ’s epiphany (3 Jan), inaugurating the divine mission of Jesus on earth, reaches its fulfilment in the feast of the Baptism of the Lord (10 Jan). The Baptism of Jesus would appear to bring to an end to the Christmas season, but the Christmas season really comes to a close with the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (2 Feb). As always, I hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of Assumpta.

John Berry
Based on the Constitutions...

The theme of the 2009 Council of Provinces was Embracing his Gospel: The Carmelite Community in Faith, Hope and Charity. These words have their roots in our Carmelite Rule of Saint Albert and find their formulation in two chapters of the 1995 Constitutions of the Carmelite Order:

§ 2 Living in allegiance to Jesus Christ, and embracing his Gospel as the supreme norm of our lives, by the power of his Spirit who distributes his gifts to each according to his will, we seek to live together in mutual service of one another and of all people. In this way, we co-operate in God’s plan to gather all men and women into one Holy People.

§ 32 All of our activities outside the house [friar community] shall be closely related to our life within the house, and shall form with it a seamless whole. It is the very purpose of houses of apostolic Brotherhood to be present among the people: to be open and closely joined with them, stimulating a critical reflection on their human needs. In this way, our communities will be authentic expressions of faith, hope and charity, and will become places conducive to full human development.
The four reflections: Introduction

Fraternity or ‘community’ is the core of Christian life - the starting point and the finishing point. It is the fruit coming from the root that is constituted by the experience of God as Father. Community life is the blood running through the veins of our Carmelite Rule of Saint Albert. Community makes the Interior Man (2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16), and the New Man (Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 3:10) grow inside us. Living as brothers and sisters in a community helps us to “live in allegiance to Jesus Christ” (Rule 2), in the prophetic and praying fraternity of Carmel.

Over the course of these four reflections on community that will be printed in Assumpta, we can only look at a few aspects of Carmelite fraternity, but many more too could be closely investigated.

Further studies
Anyone interested in looking at how community is presented in the Carmelite Rule could read further in the studies of the following Carmelites: Carlo Cicconetti, Kees Waaijman, Carlos Mesters, Bruno Secondin, Emanuele Boaga, Otger Steggink, Jo Tigcheler.

Four reflections cannot sufficiently describe the richness of Carmelite community. So, the text offered below, and over the coming months, is only a friendly invitation to help each Carmelite individual and community to deepen and expand their fraternal life.

May the sharing that comes from these reflections show and irradiate the richness of brotherhood and sisterhood lived in our communities in Asia, Australia, Oceania, Africa, America and Europe.

May the experience of diversity increase within us the will to be united in a common path: prophetic and praying communities in the midst of God’s people.

Over the coming months, we shall look at four reflections (see box above). As we look at each of these topics, we shall consider the following:

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.

The first reflection
“Carmel: a praying community that lives the Gospel according to the Carmelite charism”

“I am not a person. I am a fragment of a person. The person is the community. The more I live in the community, the more I become a person.”
(An anonymous peasant philosopher)

The challenge of today
Fraternal life – living as a community of brothers and sisters – is our major challenge today. How can we create a communion among different people?

In some parts of today’s world, neo-liberal consumerism pervades everything. It invades even the religious life, the wider Carmelite family, and threatens the very root of fraternal living.

In some circumstances, individualism destroys our sense of being sisters and brothers of one another. In other cases, it is activism and excessive work. In some cases, it is extreme poverty. In other cases, it is the indifference of those who have already “made themselves comfortable”, or it is old age without expectations.

This leads to two key questions:
Here in our community, what is the greatest difficulty to live fraternal life as Lay Carmelite brothers and sisters in a good way?
What are we doing practically to be fraternal communities?

What the Rule says about our community life:

The Context of our Origins
From the earliest days of the Order, Carmelites have been mendicants, that is, begging brothers. One of the novel things about the mendicant lifestyle was that it was a fraternal – brotherly – lifestyle, which was lived in small communities or brotherhoods in the midst of the people.

In the Middle Ages mendicant friars brought the revelation of the Good News of God’s love to the “little ones”, to the poor. The Franciscans emphasised the value of poverty. The Dominicans insisted on preaching sound Christian doctrine. The Mercedarian brothers promoted the liberation of prisoners.

Each mendicant group, according to their charism – their particular gift from God – did their best to do a specific service for the people of God. The particular service that Carmelite fraternities tried to offer the people was prayer: contemplatione aliis tradere (to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation). The Carmelites formed prophetic and praying communities in the midst of the people.

The Text of our Rule
In several ways the Rule of Saint Albert encourages a communal sense of being brothers and sisters:
• The root of community is the celebration of the Eucharist as an offering of ourselves to others (Rule 14).
• Saying the Divine Office together helps build the fraternal feeling of being united in the presence of God the Father (Rule 11).
• Taking meals together (Rule 7).
• Sharing the goods of the community (Rule 12).
• Working together for what is required to promote community life (Rule 20).

According to the Rule, the Carmelite community has to be a brotherhood that fights (Rule 8-19), works (Rule 20) and lets the strength of God’s silence emerge (Rule 21). Such a strength can emerge through personal prayer (Rule 10); through communal prayer (Rule 11); through the choice for the poor (Rule 12-13); through daily Mass (Rule 14), and through a weekly review of how the community is and the loving correction of each other’s faults (Rule 15).

Community, lived in such a way, becomes a preaching of the Good News of God to everybody, especially towards the poor.

Building community – a sense of being sisters and brothers – is not another task to be added to our other commitments. It is, instead, an attitude of how we live that has to permeate everything.

For us Carmelites, community is as important as “pondering the Lord’s law day and night” (Rule 10). Just as God is a constant presence in our life, so the brother or sister has to be a constant presence. The exercise of fraternity comes from the experience of God as Father and leads to a deeper experience of God.

The Rule invites us to imitate the fraternity of the first Christians

Chapters 10 to 15 of the Rule of Saint Albert describe the ‘nucleus’, the essence of Carmelite life, the ideal of the prophetic and praying community.

When he described this central part of our Formula Vitae (Way of Life), Saint Albert had in mind the model of the community of the first Christians in Jerusalem, as it appears in two particular passages in the Acts of the Apostles included below:

Biblical description

“These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. And everyone was filled with awe; the apostles worked many signs and miracles.

For us Carmelites, community is as important as ‘pondering the Lord’s law day and night’

And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed.

Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.”

(Acts 2:42-27)

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all accorded great respect. None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or
houses would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any who might be in need. (Acts 4:32-35)

When we compare the description of the community of the first Christians in the Acts of Apostles with the ideal of community expressed by Saint Albert in his Rule (Chapters 10-15), we can see a number of similarities:

The first Christian community in Acts:
• Prayed regularly.  
  (Acts 2:42; 4:24)
• Went regularly went to the Temple.  
  (Acts 2:46-47)
• Held everything in common.  
  (Acts 2:42, 44; 4:32, 34-35)
• Broke the bread in their houses.  
  (Acts 2:42, 46)
• Were united, heart and soul.  
  (Acts 4:32; 1:14)

The Carmelite community in the Rule:
• Personal prayer and vigilance.  
  (Rule 10)
• Prayed the Liturgy in common.  
  (Rule 11)
• Put goods to common use.  
  (Rule 12 & 13)
• Celebrated Mass daily.  
  (Rule 14)
• Reviewed the state of community.  
  (Rule 15)

These five points, that determined the communal life of the first Christians, also form the basis of community as it should be lived by the Carmelites:

1. Fraternity must be nourished by the Word of God and by the regular prayer of each member: this requires prayerful reading and ongoing meditation.  
   (Rule 10)

2. Fraternity must have its communal expression: liturgical prayer or communal celebration of the Word of God.  
   (Rule 11)

3. Fraternity must be lived out economically, through holding everything in common, through a substantial equality, and through poverty that leads us to remain alongside the “little ones” (the poor).  
   (Rule 12 and 13)

4. Fraternity must find its nourishment in the Eucharist, which is our participation in the Death and in the Resurrection of Christ: a radical gift of oneself to God and to the brothers and sisters alongside whom we worship.  
   (Rule 14)

5. Fraternity becomes deeper and stronger through the weekly review of the community’s affairs (the local chapter or meeting), that promotes the co-responsibility of everybody in the general organization and the welfare of each of the members.  
   (Rule 15)

Such an ideal of a prophetic and praying fraternity in the midst of the people, specific to the Carmelites, is ritualized in the whole of our Rule as follows:

The Rule: Chapters 4 to 9 deals with the infrastructure of life. Saint Albert sets out things that ensure a space for Carmelites to live together; he points out the condi-
tions necessary for Carmelite life, and sets out the required infrastructure.

*The Rule Chapters 10 to 15 deals with the ideal to be achieved.* Albert describes the Carmelite ideal as the imitation of the first Christian community in Jerusalem.

*The Rule Chapters 16 to 21 deals with the means to achieve the ideal.* Albert, drawing on the richness of the monastic tradition, considers how the community is to find the means necessary to achieve the ideal of imitating the Jerusalem community.

**Further reflection:**
it would be a useful exercise to spend some time reflecting upon this material and our own experiences, insights and reactions.

*The box opposite* contains some questions that you and your community can ask together, or alone.

**Commitment and prayer**
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:

- 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 24 (23) “*Who shall go up to the mountain of the Lord?*”

In the next reflection, which will be published in the next issue of Assumpta, we shall consider, in-depth, the topic of “Forming community that lives in faith”.

**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:*

What particularly drew your attention during this reflection about Carmelite community life? Why?

How does our community live the five aspects of the ideal of fraternity proposed by the Rule of Saint Albert? Namely:

- Personal prayer
- Common liturgical prayer
- Sharing goods in common
- Celebrating Mass regularly
- Reviewing the state of the community

How could our community contribute to achieving a sense of being brothers and sisters in Carmel, both in our Province and in the wider Carmelite family: friars, enclosed nuns, active sisters, hermits and solitaries, laymen and laywomen?
Training days tackle formation

Through the month of November 2009, four regional training days were held across the Province to review how things are progressing regarding Formation within the Third Order. The days were held at Aylesford, Birmingham, York and Carlisle. The days were facilitated by John Berry, Provincial Delegate and Veronica Errington, National Secretary, who were assisted by participants at each venue. What follows is John’s summary of the days:

Aims
The aim of the regional training days was threefold:

1) To see where we are now as Third Order, four years since the introduction of the National Formation Programme (NFP).

2) To gain a clearer understanding of the holistic nature of formation.

3) To gain a clearer understanding of the vision the Third Order has set itself.

The days were a good opportunity for representatives from most of our Third Order communities to gather together to discuss all aspects of formation and to share in prayer and community.

Delegates were each given a draft copy of the “Guidelines for Formation”, a document recommended at the 4th National Gathering (NatGat 4) at Ushaw College in November 2007 which would be useful aid to formators in our communities.

Some of the feedback from the formation days will be incorporated to provide a final draft of the document which will be published by the spring.

Session 1: Formation
The basic programme for the days, which included Mass, consisted of three main sessions:

Session One: What is Formation?
Although this heading may seem rather basic, given it is now four years since the introduction of the NFP, nevertheless, John is still frequently asked on visits to some Third Order communities the following questions:

1) What is formation?
2) Why do we need formation?
3) Whose idea was it for the Third Order to do formation, anyway?

For that reason it was thought best to address these questions during session 1.
After listening to Module One of the NFP being read out, participants were asked to give their thoughts or ideas of *What is Formation?* in a word or a sentence. Feedback from all four of the days has been collated together:

**What is formation: feedback**
Participants gave the following comments:
- A process of transformation.
- A journey towards self realisation, getting closer to God.
- A life-long response to God’s love.
- Integrating the Gospel values into our lives.
- To gain a deeper knowledge of ourselves.
- Life changing.
- Conversion.
- Transformation of every part of our being.
- Becoming God Bearers.
- Letting go of yourself and your own values.
- Response to the urging of the Holy Spirit along the Carmelite way.
- Life-long and ongoing process.
- Listening.
- Reaching out and building relationships.
- A journey of love to love.
- Opening ourselves up to God’s Transforming love.
- Life long journey.
- Deeper experience of the love of God.
- Discernment.
- Responding to God’s call.
- Being open to change.
- Learning about and assimilating the Charism of Carmel.
- Journey to freedom.
- Searching for God.
- Growing in love and self knowledge.
- Daily letting go and letting God.
- Part of our journey towards God.
- Re-integration to become one whole person.
- Helps us to discern our vocation.
- Formation is not just a programme but a life long process.
- Growing in our relationships with God and others.
- Growth in Carmelite identity.
- Recognition that we need to be transformed.

**Group questions**
Participants were divided into groups and looked at the following questions:
What do you think is meant by the term “holistic formation”?  
- Development of the whole person.
- Learning to respect differences.
- Looking at the bigger picture.
- Transformation of the whole person, mind, body and spirit.
- Being a Carmelite involves every area of our lives, not just one day a month when we come to the monthly meeting.
- Formation of the whole person.
- Integrating Gospel values.
- Must go from head to heart.
- No separation between the spiritual and everyday life.
- Growing in our humanity.
- A wholeness, to seek perfection.
- Affects the whole person — mind, body, spirit, memory, understanding and will in conformity with Christ.
- Affecting every area of life.
- No separation between ‘spiritual’ and ‘normal everyday’ life.
How might formation affect us on the following levels?

**Intellectual/mental**
- Understanding, makes us aware of our need to change.
- Integrating the Gospel values into everyday life.
- Being ‘formed’ by the word of God.
- Openness to God.
- Through formation, the Word of God goes from head to heart.
- Getting balance between conformity and questioning authority.
- Academic learning, history, development of the tradition etc, openness to learn new things.

**Moral**
- Allows us to make right judgement which informs the decisions we make.
- Non-judgemental.
- Willingness to let go of our prejudices.
- Affects the everyday decisions we make
- Formation expands comfort zones
- Like Elijah, standing up for justice for all, especially the poor
- Like Mary, growing in humility and obedience
- Growing in virtue, righteousness, but not self-righteousness.

**Emotional**
- Maturity.
- Growth in humanity.
- Selflessness.
- More easily understood.
- More selfless love, forgiveness, repentance.
- Exposes areas of our lives in need of healing, growing through our insecurities.
- We become more aware of our interdependence.
- Become more compassionate.

**Social**
- Consideration for the needs of others, it tempers one’s mood.
- Recognise need for good works.
- Respect for environment etc.
- Awareness of injustice.
- Re-appraisal of our religious responsibilities.
- More openness, entering into relationships.
- More courage to talk to people.
- Less ‘self’ conscious.
- More community spirited.
- More willing to interact with others.
- Friendliness.
- We are not formed on our own, but in and through relationships with others.
- Recognise need for good works, almsgiving, environmental awareness.

**Session 2: Sharing a vision**

In session two, participants were reminded how the renewed vision statement came about. It was compiled using the feedback from delegates at NatGat 4.

Some commented that the statement did not flow so well and seems to be a collection of statements. This was a fair comment given the fact that the statement was compiled putting together feedback and comments that came out in discussion throughout the weekend and this accounted for the way it reads.

It is important to remember however,
that the delegates who helped to compile
the statement were a broad representation
of the Third Order in the British Province
and it was their views expressed at the
gathering that were contained in the state-
ment.

The renewed vision statement was read
aloud and participants, going back into
their groups were asked to consider the
following further questions:

Vision statement
Reflecting on the renewed vision statement,
how do you think it relates to formation?
(asked at Aylesford and Birmingham)
\* Formation should be lifelong.
\* Approximately 50% of the statement is
referring to formation in some way.
\* Its universality.
\* Important that the statement reflects
the inspiration of the Rules of St. Albert/
Third Order.
\* Allowing ourselves to be formed by the
poor, the marginalised, the little ones by
meeting Christ in them.
\* More effective two way communica-
tion.
\* The importance of formation is reflected
in the statement.

The Ratio (The Friars’ document out-
lining the principles behind formation)
states that “from the start the process
of formation must teach individuals to
gradually assume functions of service to
the Church and to the World” [15]. Do
you think this point is adequately reflected
in the renewed vision statement? (asked at
York and Carlisle)
\* Our responsibility to the Church and the
world is probably not stressed enough in
the statement.
\* Statement not specific enough, how do
our communities contribute to the Church
and the world?
\* Should there be more Ecumenical activ-
ity?
\* Should there be more interfaith activ-
ity?
\* Third Order nationally and locally
should be encouraged to support charities,
good causes etc.
\* Local communities should be allowed
the scope and flexibility to be creative in
their responses.

Service and community
To what extent do you think the idea of
service, as a community, is a shared vision
in the Third Order? (All four events)
\* All elements of the Carmelite Charism
are present in the statement.
\* The statement is an aspiration rather
than an actuality, some communities
share the vision, others might not be so
inspired.
\* The vision is there and it is an ideal, but
how do we make it happen?
\* How do we get communities to take on
a project and see it through?
- We need to share our knowledge and resources with others of different denominations, different faiths or no faith at all.
- We need to share our hopes and dreams with other embodiments of the Carmelite Family.
- Lay Carmelites give service in the Parish environment, but do we need to start thinking outside of the box?
- No community can function without sharing.
- Communication is a key factor, we need to support and inspire one another.
- Let the vision be known.
- We need to pray for our sick members, have masses said for our dead members and keep in touch with one another - outside of monthly meetings wherever possible.
- We can’t survive without a vision.

Identify positive and challenging aspects of the vision. (All four events)

Positives:
- We are now better formed in the Charism.
- Better able to discern God’s will for our communities
- Deeper sense of community/identity.
- We are now embracing new technology: Carmelite website, Assumpta are invaluable.
- More confident.
- The statement is hopeful and forward looking.
- Inclusive.

Challenging:
- Service as a community and self financing are challenging.
- Ecumenism is challenging.
- Interfaith dialogue is challenging
- How do we reach younger people?
- We need courage to accept change.
- Openness is challenging.
- Outreach: Getting speakers for meetings, challenging.
- Getting people to listen.
- Accepting change.

More talk at the formation day at Aylesford.

Aylesford, again, and, opposite, the training day at York.
Embracing people of all faiths and none.

**Session 3: Presenting formation**

*Session Three: Presenting formation in our Third Order communities*

John explained the reasons for the delay in the National Formation Programme (NFP) being published in book form. But the good news is that the book is expected to be available early in the New Year. To complement the booklet, which it is hoped every Third Order member will own, John will be issuing folders to communities containing all twenty of the NFP modules.

If any communities need copies of any of the modules in the meantime, please let either Veronica Errington, or John know and we will send you copies.

In session three, delegates shared with one another their own experiences of presenting formation in their respective communities, while also considering the following points:

**What are the positives?**

- Focus and structure.
- Deeper sharing and getting to know one another better.
- Spend more time on formation topics.
- Because we no longer have Mass within the meeting, we have more time for Carmelite input.

- Lectio Divina
  - Sense of belonging and climbing Mount Carmel together.
  - Food for the journey.
  - Learning to share experiences and struggles.
  - Enriching.
  - A summary of topics in the NFP booklet will be helpful.

- Each community now given more room to be creative and can produce their own annual programmes.
- Opportunities to share our faith.
- New members are now feeding back to the community what they have learned.
- Our meetings are friendlier.
- Our meetings are warm, welcoming and fun.
- A sense of family is more evident in our communities.

‘Deeper sharing’
The day was a full one at Birmingham.
‘Difficult to fit it in’

What are the challenges?
- Finding more time for the meetings.
- Planning an annual programme.
- How to present the modules, some of them are too long.
- Depleted numbers at meeting due to sickness, elderly housebound members.
- Visiting distance members.
- Losing contact with members who no longer attend meetings.
- Meeting needs of new formation structure.
- No pre-reading before meeting as a community.
- Too academic.
- Remaining Carmelite in the community at large.
- Carmelite at meetings, then what?
- In some communities, leader having to take on too many roles.
- Confined to one day a month.
- Getting good group leader.
- Difficult to fit everything in, in the time available.
- Finding speakers.
- NFP needs to meet the needs of individuals.

What are the solutions?
- Being able to meet at venues outside of normal monthly meeting, each others Parish, home etc.
- Go for a meal together as a community
- Phone and home visits.
- Assistant for formators.
- Formation modules on website.
- Carmelite Institute of Britain and Ireland (Distance learning Diploma or Certificate courses).
- Formators could exchange e-mail addresses and maintain contact with Formators of other communities to share experiences ideas etc.
- Members can visit nearby communities to help one another with speakers where possible.
- Allow members who wish to have the opportunity of giving a talk or presenting a summary of module.
- Guidelines for formators will be helpful.
- Discuss problems as a community.

Each session concluded with a plenary feedback and lively discussion in all of the venues.

To sum it all up...

To summarise how the days went overall, it is clearly evident there has been considerable growth in the Third Order since the introduction of the NFP in 2005 and the regular use of Lectio Divina.

Members are now much more confident in their Carmelite identity and are more familiar and comfortable with Carmelite terms and language than was the case just a few years ago.

Veronica and I were struck by the enthusiasm and the quality of the discussions and feedback that took place at all of the venues. This is a very encouraging sign for the future of Lay Carmel in Britain.

Well done to all who participated!
Attendance at the training days

**Aylesford**
Nick Reith (Carmel in the City)
Madeleine Armstrong (Aylesford)
Virginia Crowe (Brighton)
Richard France (Brighton)
Sr Jane Frances (Margate)
Joan Hart (Aylesford)
Anne Holt (Leigh on Sea)
Brian Holt (Leigh on Sea)
Barbara Lee (Aylesford)
Geoff Levet (Brighton)
Irene Perman-Main (Aylesford)
Sarah McKenner (Margate)
Anne Murdoch (Aylesford)
Suzanne Phillips (Margate)
Michael Price (Aylesford)
Monica Spalding (Leigh on Sea)
Anne Hayden (NCB)

*Apologies:*
Simon Whitney (Reading)
Robert Thompson (Reading)
Colin Harman (Guildford)

**Birmingham**
Victoria Adebiyi (Birmingham)
Anne Bunyan (Leicester)
Tony French (Coventry)
Maria Pedro (Birmingham)
Madeleine Scott (B’ham)
Margaret Williams (B’ham)

*Apologies:*
Joe Patterson (Coventry)

**York**
Johan Bergström-Allen (York/Leeds)
Angela Bergström-Allen (York)
John Cole (York/Leeds)

Gerard Dillon (Manchester)
Joseph Durham (Sheffield)
Maureen Pickman (York/Leeds)
Pat Quaile (Manchester)
Stephen Sanger (York/Leeds)

*Apologies:*
Walter Whitman (Sheffield)

**Carlisle**
Joyce Middleton (Bedlington)
Angela Reid (Bedlington)
John Wilson (Newcastle)
Patricia Wilson (Newcastle)

*Apologies:*
Tom Condie (Glasgow)
Síne Cameron-Moffat (Glasgow)
Training days: in photographs

More shots of Birmingham — cups of tea at the ready!
Above: Discussions at York in full swing as the day progresses.
Opposite, and opposite page: More photographs of the training day held at Aylesford, as delegates tackle the questions they were invited to contemplate.
A Pope speaks...

At the most recent meeting of the Carmel in the City spirituality group in London, we were lucky to have a distinguished guest speaker in the form of Bishop John Crowley who presented the afternoon programme under the theme “A Bishop’s view of priesthood”. Bishop John was Bishop in Central London before becoming Bishop of Middlesbrough until he retired in 2007. Of the many fascinating quotations he invited us to ponder, one particularly stood out, coming from a speech His Holiness Paul VI gave in November 1970. Edited highlights of part of this speech follow:

A meditation on Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Christ
The Son of the Living God.
He is the teacher of mankind
and its redeemer.

He is the centre of history
and of the world.

He is the One who knows us
and who loves us.

He is the companion
and friend of our life.

He is the man of sorrows
and of hope.

I could never finish speaking about Him.

He is the light and truth.

Like us
and more than us
he has been made little,
poor, humiliated.

I proclaim Him
as my friend
and my brother.
‘Bless those who sit there...’

Bearing in mind Pope John Paul II’s words on prayer carried in October’s edition of Assumpta, (Vol 52. No. 10 p.7) — “Any method of prayer is valid in so far as it is inspired by Christ and leads to Christ, who is the way, the truth and life” — newly-appointed Assumpta editor Nick Black describes one method of intercessory prayer that is intended for crowded urban environments and may be helpful for Third Order members. As well as being a member of Carmel in the City, Nick is the co-founder of Catholic intercessory prayer group Pasture, which organised a well-attended gun and knife crime vigil in Westminster Cathedral, London, in 2008. Pasture aims to pioneer innovative intercessory prayers which are steeped in Catholic tradition.

What is it?

This prayer technique is something you might like to try out if you are in a crowded urban environment, travelling on public transport or in some public space — where you will be seated next to strangers.

It’s a very human quality to want for peace and quiet during a journey, especially as the crowds swirl around you. Carmelites have, after all, “a love of silence” as well as a “love of scripture”. Our society has got so noisy and over the past few years an extra layer of disturbance has sprung up in the form of mobiles and music from iPods.

But this desire for quiet when in a crowded environment contains within it the subtle seeds of a lack of charity — which if unchecked can grow into a visceral intolerance for noise, upset, and other human beings.

One solution is to turn the tables on your environment. Instead of being disturbed by the environment you can opt to beneficially alter it. And with this technique you can transform that crowded environment into a place where you can be a silent witness to your faith.

The idea behind the technique is very simple. It is to:

Bless, in the privacy of your own heart, all those strangers you meet on your journey and who sit next to you or near you, acting in this way as a conduit for God’s love.

Blessing strangers in this way creates a very unusual situation where you really can learn how to express inner love for people you have never met before and will never meet again.

This is how we do it:

The technique

1) Choose a seat (or seats) which is empty opposite, near or next to you.

2) Ask for the Lord’s blessing.

3) Mentally visualise some Catholic symbol (I use a cross, as well as a sacred heart and a rosary) and imagine this symbol(s) placed carefully and reverently on the chair.
4) Then pray to God to bless all those who will be sitting on this seat throughout the journey. And inwardly welcome all hurry ing by to come and sit next to you.

5) Ask the Lord that those who do appear to sit on the blessed seats benefit from grace, that their lives be eased and their suffering relieved, and that they feel on that very day the light of God’s presence according to their capacity and understanding.

6) Good prayers to use for the blessing are from Psalm 121:
   “May the Lord preserve their going out and com- ing in, and preserve them from all evil. May He preserve their souls from this time forth for ever-more.”

7) Or, in your own prayer language simply pray for their well-being.

8) Sit back, and wait to welcome whoever turns up!

Experiences
Some Pasture members have long commutes across London — and those who know London commuting know that surviving them is an art-form in itself. But they report that the blessing of others has produced very unlikely, beautiful results.

The general experiences of using this blessing prayer in busy situations is that it transforms our own attitude to the problem which all commuters face - a lack of personal space.

One female friend, who we’ll call L, had become so intolerant of others, so sick and tired of being jostled, pushed, having to stand on trains and so forth that she seriously came close to quitting her well-paying job. She said she felt that the weight of humanity pressing down on her was too oppressive.

Introduced to the blessing technique, L soon discovered a remarkable thing. One particular part of her commute involved boarding a train at London Bridge around 10 minutes before it actually started. This normally meant a tense time as she waited to see what toxic combi- nation of noise and intrusion would shatter her peace, as she tried to read the Daily Office.

Double blessing
Using the blessing, L would carefully bless the empty seats and then sit back, wondering who would appear. One particular seat she would “double” bless just to see if this made a difference, asking the Lord to send someone there who was particularly in need of spiritual succour.

Now the rest of the carriage seats might be relatively empty, but unfailingly the blessed seats would be occupied. Even stranger, time after time the “special seat” would be taken at the very last minute, just as the train was leaving!

Whereas before L would tense as some- one stole away her precious silence, now she found herself becoming more and more interested in these brothers and sisters who sat next to her.

She found the technique helped her open her heart out to the rest of human- ity, as she realised both how different and how similar we all are. This, in turn, deepened her Christian commitment to fellowship in a surprising way.
### Community Meetings and Dates for your Diary

**Community**
- **Aylesford**  The Friars  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 10.30am
  - Feb: 20  March: 20
- **Bedlington**  St Bede’s Church  
  - Day & Time: Sunday 2.00pm
  - Feb: 21  March: 21
- **Birmingham**  St Chad’s  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 1.00pm
  - Feb: 6  March: 6
- **Blackhall CSG**  St Joseph’s Church  
  - Day & Time: Various
- **Brighton and Hove**  St Anne’s Convent  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 1.45pm
  - Feb: 27  March: 27
- **Cardiff**  St Peter’s Presbytery  
  - Day & Time: Friday 7.00pm
  - Feb: 5  March: 5
- **Cleator Moor**  St Joseph’s, Frizington  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 10.30am
  - Feb: 6  March: 6
- **Coventry**  St Thomas More Church  
  - Day & Time: Sunday 3.30pm
  - Feb: 7  March: 7
- **Glasgow**  Ogilvie Centre, Rose St.  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 1.15pm
  - Feb: 6  March: 6
- **Guildford**  St Joseph’s, Eastgate Gdns  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 9.40am
  - Feb: 13  March: 13
- **Leeds CSG**  St Theresa’s, Station Rd  
  - Day & Time: Sunday 11.30am
  - Feb: 21  March: 7
- **Leicester**  Corpus Christi Carmelites  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 2.00pm
  - Feb: 20  March: 20
- **Leigh-on-Sea**  Our Lady of Lourdes  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 2.45pm
  - Feb: 27  March: 27
- **London Carmel in the City**  St Joseph’s  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 11.30am
  - Feb: na  March: 6
- **London**  Warwick St  
  - Day & Time: Wed 5.30pm
  - Feb: 3  March: 3
- **Manchester**  St Catherine of Siena  
  - Day & Time: Sunday 2.45pm
  - Feb: 28  March: 28
- **Mawdesley CSG**  St Anne’s Church Hall  
  - Day & Time: Wednesday 2.00pm
  - Feb: 10  March: 10
- **Mawdesley CSG**  30 New Street  
  - Day & Time: Thursday 7.30pm
  - Feb: 18  March: 18
- **Newcastle**  Corpus Christi, Gateshead  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 1.30pm
  - Feb: 20  March: 20
- **Reading**  St Joseph’s, Tilehurst  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 11.00am
  - Feb: 20  March: 20
- **Sheffield**  Mother of God, Abbeydale Rd  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 1.00pm
  - Feb: 13  March: 13
- **Stevenage CSG**  St Hilda’s  
  - Day & Time: Thursday 6.30pm
  - Feb: 11  March: 11
- **York CSG**  110 Lawrence St  
  - Day & Time: Saturday 9.30am
  - Feb: 20  March: 6
St. Peter Thomas - Friar & Bishop
Born about 1305 in southern Perigord in France, Peter Thomas entered the Carmelites when he was 21. He was chosen by the Order as its procurator general to the papal court at Avignon in 1345. After being made bishop of Patti and Lipari in 1354, he was entrusted with many papal missions to promote peace and unity with the Eastern Churches. He was translated to the see of Corone in the Peloponnesus in 1359 and made papal legate for the East. In 1363 he was appointed Archbishop of Crete and in 1364 Latin Patriarch of Constantinople. He won a reputation as an apostle of church unity before he died in Farmagosta on Cyprus in 1366.

Memorial Day 8 January

St. Andrew Corsini - Friar & Bishop
Andrew was born at the beginning of the fourteenth century in Florence and entered the Carmelite Order there. He was elected provincial of Tuscany at the general chapter in Metz in 1348. He was made bishop of Fiesole, near Florence, on October 13th 1349 and gave the Church a wonderful example of love, apostolic zeal, prudence and love of the poor. He died on 6th January 1374. His tomb in the Carmine (Carmelite Friary) in Florence is a place of pilgrimage to this day.

Memorial Day 9 January

St. Nuno Alvarez Pereira - Friar
Nuno was born in 1360, and for many years persuaded a military career, becoming the champion of Portuguese independence. After the death of his wife he joined the Order in 1423 at the monastery of Lisbon which he had founded, and took the name of Nuno of Saint-Mary. There he lived until his death in 1431. He was noted for his prayer, his practise of penance and his filial devotion to the Mother of God. He was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI in April 2009.

Memorial Day 1 May

Bl. Baptist Spagnoli of Mantua - Friar
Baptist was born on 17th April 1447 to a family of civil servants to the Dukes of Mantua. He entered the Carmelites of the Congregation of Mantua at Ferrara and had a stellar rise in academics and administration of his order. While not a poet of genius, he was a superb Latin stylist, imitating Virgil. His eclogues were used in European schools for a century and a half after his death as a model of style and he was quoted by Shakespeare, Boswell, and Nashe. He was friends with many of the leading Renaissance humanists. He made his religious profession in 1464 and served in many positions of responsibility in the community in addition to his literary work. Baptist performed a number of diplomatic missions for the popes; he was vicar general of his congregation six times and in 1513 he was elected Prior General of the whole Order. He was a renowned humanist who brought his richly varied poetry into the service of Christ. He died in Mantua on 20th March 1516.

Memorial day 17 May
Prayers for the sick
Please add to your prayers this month the following:

Marjorie Davis Margate
Alex D'Souza Aylesford
Marjorie Elphick Bristol
Charmaine Jayasuriya CITC
Jean Fletcher Morecambe
Ron Bryan York
Nicole Loftus-Potter Margate
Jennifer Moorcroft Stevenage
Agnes Maguire Warwick St
Claire Neal Brighton
Robin Vane Birmingham
Pat Waterhouse Newcastle
Michael Ainsworth Sheffield
Daphne Wilkinson New Malden

Prayers for the departed
Let us remember all those who have died, especially:

Mary Taylor
Birmingham - December 12th 2009.
Debbie Fricker
Stephen Dyson-Taylor
York CSG – November 2009.
Rita Cook
Aylesford - November 9th 2009. Many will remember Rita as working in the sacristy at Aylesford and as a loyal and faithful supporter of The Friars.
Jean Anderson
Betty Pearce

Receptions into the Third Order
On 5 December 2009, in St Chad’s Cathedral, Birmingham, Margaret Williams, Leader of the Birmingham Third Order Community, had the privilege and pleasure of receiving into the Third Order the following:

John Rumbold
Caroline Holland

First Profession:

John Fellows
Cardiff – November 6th 2009

Vows
Margaret Mary Phillips,
Originally from the Cardiff Community, she made her vows as a member of the Third Order on November 14th 2009 at Aylesford.

Profession anniversaries:
Congratulations to:

Michael McCann
John Bree
Birmingham – 40 years on December 6th 2009.

Future requests:
Please would you be kind enough to send all requests for prayers and remembrance 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 is now £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.

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 the Blessed Virgin and the rear picture “I am the true vine” are from modern-day Ukrainian Icons. The painting above of Jesus the compassionate shepherd is taken from an anonymous source and touchingly reflects the loving mercy and care of our Redeemer.