

Pilgrimage of Hope

In July 2010 over 200 young people associated with the Carmelite Order across Europe gathered in Rome for an event called the 'Pilgrimage of Hope'. One of the party from Britain, Roy Scivyer, shares with us his memories of the Pilgrimage some months later...

They came from all over Europe, young people aged 18-30 with one thing in common; our spiritual care was – for better or worse! – entrusted to the Carmelites. Every Carmelite-run parish, chaplaincy or school in Europe had sent one or two people as representatives to a gathering in Rome where we could discuss the future of Carmel and its relationship with young people. Over the course of six days we discussed the *Rule of Saint Albert* and the examples of Elijah and Mary as the spiritual models of our Order, as well as visiting important Carmelite sites in Rome. The basis for our reflections came from a letter written by the Prior General, Fr. Fernando Millán Romeral, O.Carm.

I was struck by a number of things as the week went on, the most obvious being that a Carmelite youth presence existed! It is fair to say that the British Province is one with a relatively high mean age, and as much as I have enjoyed the company of the fellow members of my Carmelite Spirituality Group in York I have often been challenged by the feeling that – though there are in fact some people under 40 – I am sometimes the youngest person present by ten or twenty years. Yet here, gathered in the Carmelite retreat complex in Sassone just outside central Rome, were young people full of life and energy all singing the words of the *Flos Carmeli* (Flower of Carmel) in unison. It was an inspiring sight, and I am grateful to the organising committee, led by Fr. John Keating, O.Carm., and other friars from all over Europe, for giving us the possibility to do so.

The second thing that struck me was the connection that existed between the participants during the week despite the barrier of language. English was just one of three main languages used during the Pilgrimage, and it was sometimes difficult to get used to speaking slowly enough that a comment may be translated two or even three times over! We were encouraged to use our own second languages during the various discussion sessions, and while many European participants joined the English discussion groups during the week, representatives of the British Province were able to use their French and German skills in a safe and patient environment. Student friars Gerard Walsh, O.Carm., and Paul Jenkins, O.Carm., had recently completed an intensive Italian language course in Florence and Rome, and were able to further practice their newfound language skills. With all of this, we were also able to share our opinions, feelings and faith with people from different backgrounds. The young people of the British and Irish Provinces forged a very strong bond during the week, and plans for a reunion are already afoot.

Finally, the importance of reading the *Rule of Saint Albert* in the context of the present age weighs heavy on the Order, as it has been one of many reasons Carmel has borne fruit for over 800 years. The concluding message of the Prior General's letter – "*dare to dream the Carmel of the twenty-first century*" – had a profound effect on many people, in particular the fact that the Order had been brave enough to ask us such a fundamental question. The final formal session of the Pilgrimage was a discussion in provincial groups about our next steps. Our discussion, led by

the group leader, Fr. Kevin Melody, O.Carm., posed some tough questions about the future for the Church in general, as well as looking at practical steps in which we can replicate the same positivity in our Carmelite parishes and communities.

Inspired by his contact with the Carmelites, Roy was enrolled in the Brown Scapular Confraternity in February 2010. After graduating from the University of York, in September 2010 Roy began a year's placement as a volunteer at Dachau concentration camp in Germany, where a number of Carmelites were killed during World War II, including Blessed Titus Brandsma. Roy is working for a charity that seeks to build peace and reconciliation. He is keeping a 'blog' record of his experiences on the internet, and has offered some profound reflections on the Carmelites who lived and died at the camp. To read Roy's blog online visit: www.asf-in-dachau.blogspot.com



British Province Pilgrims of Hope (left-right): Tom Griffith; Martin Imafidon; Bro. Paul Jenkins; Behn Reith; Matthew Sanderson; Hannah Porro; Fr. Kevin Melody; Eleanor Tate; Bro. Gerard Walsh; Roy Scivyer.