

## HOLY MEN AND WOMEN OF CARMEL

### A survey of saints from the earliest days of the Carmelite Family to the present

By Johan Bergström-Allen, Veronica Errington, and Fr. Tony Lester, O.Carm.

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We are all, to a certain extent, fascinated by saints: the spiritual heroes and heroines to whom we look for inspiration. In this summary we'll meet specific individuals who trod Carmel's pathway to God. It is important that Carmelites know about and love the earlier saints in our family; without their foundations Carmel would not be alive today. They are perfect examples of the flowering of God's grace within the Carmelite tradition and have contributed significantly to the Order's charism of prayer, community and service. We shall begin by looking briefly at saints who predated the existence of the Carmelite Order, but who have inspired our religious family.

Carmelites regard **Elijah** – who lived over 800 years before Christ – not as founder of our Order but as our earliest inspiration. Since Elijah has been considered throughout our Formation Programme and especially in module 6 we shall briefly consider his calling of **Elisha** as disciple (*1 Kings* 19). Elijah casts his mantle over Elisha as he passes by with his oxen. No words are uttered, only the symbolic invitation to be clothed in the same garment as the prophet, to share his charism, his gifts, his lot. Elisha kills his oxen and makes a feast for the people. The community is nourished by Elisha's response showing that a vocation is a gift not only for the one called but for all. When the time comes for Elijah to be taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot Elisha's vocation matures and he has the courage to ask his teacher for what he really wants: a double portion of Elijah's spirit (*2 Kings* 2:9). There is a lot to be said for brave honesty in prayer, rather than politely asking for less! One is reminded of Thérèse of Lisieux: "I choose all!"

Alongside Elijah Carmelites give special reverence to **Mary**, Our Lady. Like Elijah, she was never a 'member' of the Order but as the Carmelite community on Mount Carmel developed in the thirteenth century it looked to Mary as patron, beauty, and sister (see module 5). In particular, Carmelites have tried to imitate Mary's purity of heart (*puritas cordis*) by doing away with all that does not lead to Jesus.

In Carmelite tradition Mary's spouse, **Saint Joseph**, also has a place of special affection. Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born into Joseph's household and it is through him that Jesus is 'Son of David'. The Gospel references to Joseph are sparse, describing him simply as a *just man*. During the first thousand years of Christianity Joseph was obscured behind a wealth of colourful legends originating from the second-century apocryphal text the *Protevangelium* (First Gospel) of *James*. During the Middle Ages certain saints such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Bernadine of Siena began to explore the role of Saint Joseph in the Gospel, using the loving intuition of their hearts rather than searching for non-existent facts.

However, it was the Carmelite Teresa of Jesus (of Avila) who nurtured our Order's devotion to Saint Joseph by 'adopting' him as father. She dedicated her first reformed convent to the saint, and referring to Joseph in her autobiography she wrote: "he gave me greater blessings than I could ask" (*Life*, Chapter 6). Teresa seems to have understood that Joseph was protector of the Holy Family and, by extension, of the Church, and that it was by looking on the face of Joseph

that Jesus learnt to say “Abba, Father” to God. When discerning where to go in our lives, pondering the life of Saint Joseph is a great source of help. He was detached from his own desires, allowing himself to be guided by God’s will even when this involved enormous inconvenience such as the flight into Egypt. Saint Joseph has been named principal protector of the Carmelite Order.

As well as revering Mary and Joseph, devotion to the other members of the Holy Family is common in many Carmelite communities. Since the late Middle Ages Carmelites have promoted reverence of **Saints Anne and Joachim** who were named as the parents of the Virgin Mary in the *Protevangelium of James*. Anne and Joachim, like their son-in-law, are called protectors of the Carmelite Order. Jesus’ cousin **John the Baptist**, and his kinsman **Jude**, are often depicted in Carmelite art. Perhaps Carmelites have honoured these relatives of Christ because of our desire to be close to the Messiah. We call ourselves the *Brothers* (and sisters) of the *Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel*, and so we Carmelites have a strong sense of belonging to Our Lady’s family.

Since the emergence of the Order in the thirteenth century, Carmelites have been known for their devotion to other **early saints** from the Christian story. This may be because we originally claimed to derive from before the time of Christ and thus sought to associate ourselves with the earliest saints. Although we now accept that the Order began in the Middle Ages, Carmelites have always felt a special affinity with the first community of believers in Jerusalem, as described in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Medieval texts such as *The Ten Books (Book of the First Monks)* described how Carmelites helped the Apostles to spread the Good News across the globe. The Christian faith is built on the Good News handed to us from the first followers of Jesus, and therefore it is appropriate that we look to these saints when we seek to live ‘in allegiance to Jesus Christ’.

We know from historical sources that the Carmelite Order emerged early in the thirteenth century from a community of Christian hermits living on Mount Carmel. We know very little about these men, but we assume that they lived holy lives and because of their great legacy it is common for Carmelites to revere as saints the **holy hermits of Mount Carmel**. The *Brother B.* to whom the Carmelite *Rule* is addressed is often known as **Saint Brocard**. Another name connected with the early hermits is **Saint Berthold**, but there is some confusion about who he was (if he existed at all); *The Ten Books* refers to Berthold as the first formal prior on Carmel, whilst a medieval catalogue of Carmelite saints lists him as the second prior of Carmel and Brocard’s successor.

A much better documented saint associated with the hermits is **Saint Albert**, Patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 1214). A canon-regular, lawyer, theologian, and peace-maker, Albert Avogadro was born in Italy in a period of social and religious turmoil, but it was also an epoch of cultural rebirth and religious reform. Little is known of Albert’s early life, but his considerable talents must have been recognised because he was made bishop of Bobbio in 1184, gaining a reputation as a peacemaker in political disputes.

Perhaps because of these skills he was made Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1205, a difficult job which inevitably involved interaction with Muslims. He established his See at Acre because Jerusalem was in the hands of the Saracens. At some point in the ensuing years he was approached by the hermits living on Mount Carmel and asked to write or at least approve a *way of life* for them (see module 7), just as he had done for other religious communities.

In what way is Albert a Carmelite saint? Albert is called ‘lawgiver of Carmel’, not its founder, since Albert was not so much founding a religious order as recognizing a community that

already existed. Looking briefly at the *Rule* one is immediately struck by the riches it contains. Albert begins by blessing the hermits; as successor to the Apostles his blessing incorporated the fledgling community into the wider body of the Church. Albert emphasises prayer, especially rooted in the Bible (Chapter 10). The *Rule* is so entwined with Scripture that the author must have been wholly steeped in the Word of God. Liturgical prayer is also important, notably the Eucharist (Chapter 14) and the Divine Office (Chapter 11). Albert underlines the necessity of service, both in the work that we all must do wearing the armour of God (Chapter 18), as well as the more ordinary tasks of our daily life (Chapter 20). Looking at the *Rule* we encounter Albert as a man of God; prayerful and full of common sense, yet also eager that the new community should go into spiritual battle for the Lord God of Hosts.

The hermits migrated from Mount Carmel from the 1230s onwards, bringing the Carmelite way of life to Europe. Some of the foundational saints of the Order emerged at this time.

During the thirteenth century a young Carmelite called **Albert** (not to be confused with Albert of Jerusalem) became distinguished for his preaching, working miracles, and his desire for prayer. He had been born in the Sicilian town of Trapani and he died in Messina, probably in 1307. He was the first saint whose cult spread throughout the Order. As a result he is considered another patron and protector, or ‘father of the Order’, a title he shared with another Carmelite saint of his time, **Angelus**, who was reputedly a hermit who had migrated from Mount Carmel to Sicily where he was martyred. In the sixteenth century it was decided that every Carmelite church should have an altar dedicated to Saint Albert of Trapani, and Teresa of Jesus and Mary Magdalene de’Pazzi both had great devotion to him.

Perhaps the most famous – but most obscure – early Carmelite saint is **Simon Stock**. The first recognisable account of the ‘Simon Stock legend’ was written sometime between 1413-26 (that is well after his supposed death in 1265). This account describes Simon as an Englishman, the sixth prior general of the Carmelites, who prayed to the Virgin Mary for assistance for his Order, and who in return received a vision of Our Lady holding the Carmelite scapular as a pledge of salvation. Very few facts are known about Simon, but since a cult developed around his tomb in Bordeaux, France, he must have developed a reputation for holiness. The Carmelite hymn *Flos Carmeli* is sometimes attributed to him. He was probably elected prior general in the 1250s or 60s (not in 1247 at Aylesford as often suggested), and so he was responsible for the Order at a time of great expansion and development, when the brothers were making the transition from hermits to friars. He is thus often invoked by Carmelites in moments of change.

So little is actually known of Simon that we have to enter into the world of imagination. We can see him as a witness. Unlike most other orders the Carmelites had no personal founder. The Carmelite Order derives from a place. What trauma then it must have been for those hermits to abandon Mount Carmel. According to the scapular legend Simon inspired courage that enabled the early Carmelites to establish themselves afresh in Europe. Although there is little historical evidence for the scapular vision we would be foolish to dismiss the message behind it. It is part of the spiritual mythology of Carmel, enabling us to understand that when Mary clothes us with her habit we put on the yoke of Christ. Like Simon Stock we are consecrated to Jesus in the Order of his mother.

About forty years after the death of Simon Stock in France, **Saint Peter Thomas** was born in the same country. He entered the Carmelites aged twenty-one and was chosen to be procurator general (the person who liaises between the Order and the Holy See) at the Papal Court in Avignon in 1345. In 1354 he was ordained bishop, and entrusted with papal missions to promote unity with the Eastern Churches. In 1363 he was appointed Archbishop of Crete and

the following year Latin Patriarch of Constantinople. He died on Cyprus in 1366, and has been hailed by Carmelites ever since as an apostle of ecumenism.

Another Carmelite bishop from the same period obtained sanctity by God's grace. **Andrew Corsini** (d. 1374) entered the Order in Florence and became bishop of nearby Fiesole in 1350. He was renowned for his simplicity of life, care of the poor, and zeal in preaching. He is buried in the Carmine (Carmelite friary) in Florence, where he is still revered. A further Carmelite born in or near Florence, sometime before 1386, was **Blessed Angelus Augustine Mazzinghi**. He was a prior of various houses and the first member of a reform observance within the Order dedicated to Our Lady of the Wood. He was noted for his work in preaching the Word of God, and he died in 1438. **Saint Avertanus** was a French *conversus* (lay brother attached to the Carmelite Order). He was famous for making pilgrimages, and died sometime before 1284 whilst in the Tuscan town of Lucca where he is buried. He is often revered with his supposed travelling companion, **Blessed Romeo of Limoges**, though there is no evidence that Romeo was Carmelite.

Romeo is just one of several holy people that the Carmelite Order once claimed as its own. In older Carmelite books and works of art you will encounter saints who have subsequently been disclaimed by the Order, either because they were not really associated with our family or because there is not sufficient evidence that they existed. Amongst these are **Saint Telesphorus** (an early pope), and **Saint Cyril** (an alleged early prior general).

At various points in the Middle Ages the Order tried to claim a number of prominent laypeople as Carmelites, including **Saint Louis** (king of France), **Saint Edward** (king of England), and **Saint Henry** (first duke of Lancaster). It is unlikely that any of these died in the Carmelite habit; rather, some friars were seeking to promote the developing Order by aligning it with powerful political and religious figures.

In fact, the earliest laypeople to become Carmelite saints (if you discount the hermits on Mount Carmel who were mostly unordained) were not usually powerful people in the earthly sense. They were women and men who simply wanted to draw on the rich spirituality of the friars. In the absence of formal legislation, lay affiliation to the Order took a variety of forms. Some lay people set-up hermitages and anchorholds alongside Carmelite communities and followed the *Rule of Saint Albert*. Others made vows and wore a religious habit but lived in their own homes. Some were aggregated to the Order by 'letters of confraternity', whilst *confratres* lived in the world but regularly met in Carmelite churches for direction from the friars.

One of the earliest such lay Carmelites was **Blessed Joan (or Jane) of Toulouse**. She lived near the friary in that city, working with the sick and the poor, and praying the whole Psalter daily. She frequently conversed with the young friars, giving them instruction. During her life and after her death sometime in the late 1200s many miracles were attributed to her intercession, and she was beatified in 1895.

**Blessed Franco of Siena** (also known as Francis Lippi of Grotti, d. 1291) was another lay person attracted to the Carmelite perspective on the Christian story. According to the most likely hagiography he was a riotous youth. Converted by a preacher and the experience of being miraculously cured of blindness during a pilgrimage, Franco became a lay brother attached to the chapel of Our Lady in Siena, where he may also have been a member of the Carmelite confraternity.

**Blessed Louis Morbioli** (d. 1485) was similar to Blessed Franco in that he was notorious for his dissipated lifestyle until he converted following a serious illness. He became a member of

the Carmelite Third Order and was distinguished as a teacher of Christian doctrine and as a beggar on behalf of the poor.

Sometimes it is easy to forget that holiness is not what an individual does but is the result of what God does in, through, and with that person. The lives of lay Carmelite saints witness that sainthood can follow whenever an individual soul gives space for God (*vacare Deo*).

The fourteenth century was a time of great expansion for the Carmelite Family in Europe, but it was also a difficult period. The Black Death killed almost 20 million people across the continent and wars took yet more lives. However, adverse conditions can give birth to great sanctity, as can be seen in the life of **Blessed Nuno Alvares Pereira**. Nuno was born in 1360 near Lisbon in Portugal. A gifted soldier, he was made commander of Portugal's armies when he was only 23. Impetuous, resourceful and courageous, Nuno would kneel and pray on battlefields, and refused to share in the spoils of war.

Between the years 1383-5 there was a crisis in Portuguese politics concerning independence from Castile (Spain). Nuno led an outnumbered army to a heroic victory which brought him honours and wealth that he spent on building churches. He showed a practical love for the poor, particularly orphaned children to whom he frequently became godfather. In 1423, following the death of his wife, he became a Carmelite brother in the Lisbon convent taking the name Nuno of Saint Mary. As his epitaph declares: "His worldly honours were countless, but he turned his back on them. He was a great Prince, but he made himself a humble monk."

Blessed Nuno appeals to our sense of romance! He was husband, widower, father, friar. He was literally a knight in shining armour who influenced the history of his nation. He was a great soldier who hated war; a man of position who was sufficiently detached to renounce wealth for a life of poverty and penance. It could be said that like Elijah, Nuno was a man of action and of contemplation, a person who seized history in his hands and breathed the breath of God into it.

The fifteenth century brought great change to Church, society, and to Carmel. In 1453 the Hundred Years War ended just as the first printing press came into operation. This period of revolution in communication and technological growth is not unlike our own times. There was an explosion of new ideas as the Renaissance got into full swing, and ideas of reform spread across the Church which some perceived as being slack. Within the Carmelite Order too some felt that the original purity and inspiration of Carmel had declined.

During this period Carmel nurtured a number of saints who can be classified as reformers. One of the first major reforms within the Order was begun in the Italian city of Mantua by friars who wanted to live the *Rule of Saint Albert* more rigorously whilst remaining a full part of the Order. Houses that took part in the reform were known collectively as the *Congregation of Mantua*. A great saint of this reform movement, **Blessed Bartholomew Fanti**, was born in Mantua and by 1452 had become a priest of the Congregation. For thirty-five years he was rector of one of the earliest formal organisations within Lay Carmel, the *Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, for which he composed a rule and statutes. He died in 1495 and is especially remembered for his love of the Eucharist.

Another holy Carmelite born in Mantua was **Blessed Baptist Spagnoli** (1447-1516). As a youth he joined the Congregation of Mantua, becoming its vicar general, and eventually prior general of the whole Order in 1513. Baptist of Mantua was a renowned scholar and poet, and drew many people to a better Christian life by his writings. Like all Carmelites he regarded the Bible as the most important writing of all, as he stated in a treatise *On Patience*:

You will find that the reading of sacred scripture is a great and powerful remedy against bodily suffering and depression of mind. In my opinion, there is no other writing, no matter how eloquent and stylish it may be, that can bring such peace to our minds and so thoroughly dissolve our cares as sacred scripture can.

**Blessed Joanna (or Jane) Scopelli** (1428-91) was a Carmelite woman involved in the Mantuan reform, introducing its good effects into the convent in Regio Emilia. In the Carmel of Parma **Blessed Archangela Giralani** (1460-95) spread the same desire for a fulfilling relationship with God, and she bore a special devotion to the Holy Trinity.

The greatest reformer of this period was **Blessed John Soreth** from Normandy. He became Prior General of the Carmelite Order in 1451, a post he held until his death twenty years later. The first focus of John's interest was the holiness of his friars, based on faithfully observing the *Rule of Saint Albert* on which he wrote a beautiful *Commentary*. In each province John visited he established reformed houses to act as magnets for attracting brothers who were serious in their vocation. These friaries radiated prayer and service into the community. Instead of forcing reform, John had the gift of appealing to men's idealism, making them *want* to be better. John Soreth is also renowned for formally acknowledging the place of women and lay people in the Carmelite Family by securing the papal bull *Cum Nulla* (1452). Communities of Carmelite women quickly sprang up in various parts of Europe. John published the first *Rule for the Third Order* in March 1455, making use of the new printing technology. When we reflect on the developments within the Third Order in recent years it is profoundly humbling to remember our debt to this great prior general.

John's work of reform was greatly assisted by **Blessed Frances d'Amboise** (1427-85). She was the widow of the Duke of Brittany, and under the direction of John Soreth she took the Carmelite habit in a monastery she had previously founded. She is considered the foundress of the Carmelite nuns in France.

A contemporary of Frances d'Amboise was another holy Carmelite to hail from near Trapani, **Blessed Aloysius Rabatà**. He was born about the middle of the fifteenth century and after joining the Carmelites eventually became prior of his community. In 1490 he died from a head wound, but forgave his attacker and refused to reveal his identity. A witness during his beatification process said of him: "Brother Aloysius shared in every task, even the humblest, being willing to go from door to door begging bread to support the community and to help others in need. While he was on his begging rounds other poor people would in turn asks alms from him, knowing they would never be refused."

It would be fair to say that **Teresa of Jesus** (Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada, 1515-82), the saint from the central Spanish town of Avila, was the greatest of all Carmelite reformers, and of course her efforts gave rise to the Discalced (or *Teresian*) branch of the Carmelite Family. It is impossible to do justice to Teresa's life and character in so short a space, and there is a wealth of information written about her elsewhere. Teresa was a warm, energetic woman, a complex character with many gifts. It is for her wonderfully accessible teaching on prayer that she is most valued. Her writing provides almost limitless insights on this subject, but let us look at just one of her images of the process of prayer, from her *Life*, Chapter 14 onwards:

Carmel means 'garden', 'orchard' or 'vineyard' and Teresa imagines the soul as a garden in which we labour as tenants on behalf of the Master Gardener who is the Lord. Our concern is to water the garden so that the flowers (virtues) will flourish. Normally, in the beginning especially, our work of watering is very hard. We have to lug a heavy bucket to and from the

well, hoping all the time that there will actually be any water in it. The water here is best described as ‘an interior feeling of devotion’. This represents the ‘donkey work’ of prayer: the seemingly endless task of persevering whether we feel inspired or not, year-in and year-out, often for little obvious reward. Yet if we do persevere, the Master Gardener takes pity on us and makes our task easier with a pump, enabling us to draw more water from the well with greater ease. We still need to make an effort – we must operate the pump and still resort to the bucket at times – but the whole process is simpler and smoother. Recollection is easier to achieve and one gets the overwhelming feeling that there is more prayer for less effort.

Teresa emphasises that whether we notice much water or not the acid test of our prayer is the quality of the flowers. If our lives are increasingly marked by the virtues of loving God and neighbour, there isn’t much wrong with our prayer. If, on the other hand, our prayer seems exciting and wonderful but no love is growing in the garden, then we have got something wrong.

There are more phases in Teresa’s watering metaphor, more mysterious because they describe the work of God in prayer. One of these is the emergence of a stream, bubbling-up unbidden from an underground spring, from which water can run along channels into the garden. Suddenly we seem to have water provided for us and our only task is to direct it to the flowers, making sure that the irrigation ditches don’t get clogged-up. Even this water is not only for our delight; it is for the plants to flourish. A further phase brings cloudbursts of rain which saturate the garden. Teresa writes: “we can see how much rest the gardener would be able to have if the Lord never ceased to send rain whenever it was necessary... But during this life, that is impossible, and when one kind of water fails, we must always be thinking about obtaining another.”

For Teresa, the most important thing about prayer is that it makes us more open to doing the will of God. She was not worried about personal holiness simply for the sake of her own salvation; rather she wanted herself and her sisters to grow in holiness so that they would better be able to discern what God was asking of them.

Like Teresa of Jesus, **Saint John of the Cross** (Juan de Yepes y Alvarez, 1542-91) is a Doctor of the Church. He is renowned for his teaching on the union of the soul with Christ, for his fruitful friendship with Teresa and help in the Discalced reform of the friars, for his teaching on spiritual growth, and for his poetry.

John’s father was disinherited because of his marriage to Catalina. She was left a widow with John being the youngest of three children. John’s adolescence was spent in poverty, although Catalina generated great warmth and love in the family, giving her children an early and vital experience of community. As a young man John served in a hospital, nursing those suffering from syphilis, a disease caused by the abuse of love. He joined the Carmelites, but being dissatisfied he was ready to leave, until he was persuaded otherwise by Teresa. She enlisted his help in her reform, a partnership of mutual benefit. In his role as spiritual director John was able to develop and exercise his astonishing gifts.

A key experience of his life was being imprisoned for nine months by his fellow friars (who distrusted his reform) in a tiny cell in Toledo. He was cut-off from all his friends who didn’t know what had become of him. John lived through the darkest of experiences, and during this time in prison he wrote much of his poetry which is a sublime expression not of desolation but of God’s secret work in his soul.

Many of us find John of the Cross difficult. He is too... everything! We can sense the beauty and grandeur of his insights but maybe feel that his teaching is not relevant for us. Yet in a nutshell what John of the Cross says is an echo of Jesus in the Gospel:

They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them... Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. (*John* 14: 21, 23)

Our part in the spiritual journey is to love God and to keep his word so that God will make a home in us. Many obstacles prevent us from doing this: our sins, our fears and even our more innocent attachments to false idols. As we gradually try and free ourselves from these we become increasingly open to the Lord's loving in-flow.

Much of John's imagery is derived from the Bible's *Song of Songs*, and he sees the relationship between God and the human soul as a lover's quest for his beloved. John also describes the work of God's divine love in the human soul as like a *living flame*. This work of God in his children (or as John would say God's lovers) can take a lifetime or it can be accomplished very quickly. But happen it must before we can be united with God.

For the most part this secret work of God's love occurs in 'darkness', in the obscurity of faith:

How well I know the living spring that flows, though it is night!  
That ever-living spring is hidden fast,  
and yet I found its dwelling place at last, although by night.  
*Song of the soul that rejoices to know God by faith, v.1-2*

John understands 'night' as the period or process of transformation during which God hollows out our heart to make space to dwell within. The 'dark night' may feel like a time when God has abandoned us, but in fact it is a period of 'sheer grace' when God is removing all the obstacles – even the trappings of religion – which prevent our hearts from fully loving God.

The 'dark night' is sometimes confused with depression or suffering. There is much pain in the world and all people suffer to some extent. Yet not all of these are experiences of the 'dark night'. In order for an experience of suffering or sorrow to become 'sheer grace' it must be accepted with trust. John is a reminder that saints are not simply people who always experience joy and religious fervour; rather they are people who trust God in difficult times as well as good.

Given the brilliance of Teresa and John it is sometimes easy to overlook the saints who were their contemporaries or who followed immediately after them.

One of the first followers of Teresa was **Blessed Anne of Saint-Bartholomew** (1549-1626). She made her profession in the hands of Teresa at the convent of St. Joseph's in Avila. She was the *Madre's* companion and nurse, and brought the Teresian spirit to France and Belgium. Also of note is **Blessed Barbe Avrillot** (1566-1618), better known by her married name of Barbe Acarie, or her religious name Mary of the Incarnation. She was a busy housewife who was inspired by Teresa's writings to introduce the Discalced Carmelite nuns into France. After her husband's death she became a nun herself and was distinguished by her spirit of prayer and zeal for propagating the Catholic faith. Other followers of Teresa worthy of memory are **Anne of Jesus** (1545-1621), **Anne of Saint-Augustine** (1555-1624), and **Madeleine of Saint-**



**Joseph** (1578-1637). Amongst the male Teresian Carmelites, **Venerable Dominic of Jesus and Mary** (1559-1630) is notable for his humility and charity.

In the 'O.Carm.' branch of the Carmelite Family we can speak proudly of several Carmelites from the sixteenth century. Of particular note is **Juan Sanz of Valencia** (1557-1608), a friar noted for his prayer life and humility. His story is told in the *Profiles in Holiness* series, as is that of **Venerable Miguel de la Fuente** (1573-1625), another Spanish friar, noted for his work with the Third Order and for being an active contemplative.

Again because of Teresa's great legacy it is sometimes forgotten that there were nuns before her reform, and after her life there continued to be nuns in the 'O.Carm.' tradition. The greatest of these was **Saint Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi** (1566-1607).

Born in Florence to a noble family, she was baptised Caterina. She was an unusually prayerful child with a very strong devotion to Our Lord in the Eucharist. She made her first communion at the early age of 10 and soon after vowed her virginity to God. Despite some parental opposition she felt she had a vocation to the religious life and chose the Carmelite monastery in Florence known for its strict adherence to the *Rule* and for the fact that the nuns received daily communion (a rare privilege at the time).

As a nun Sr. Mary Magdalene's life was marked by many mystical phenomena, daily raptures, and ecstasies at the time of Holy Communion. Among her many extraordinary gifts was the ability to read hearts ('cardiognosis'). More important though was her wisdom and strong common sense which made her an invaluable novice mistress. She was also artistically gifted, expressing her spirituality through drama, painting and embroidery. Despite being enclosed she appears to have had a deep awareness of the outside world and of the redemptive use of suffering offered up for her fellow human-beings.

Standing as she does at the threshold of the modern age, Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi is a beacon for much that we value in the Carmelite charism. Although the spiritual life is not a matter of receiving spectacular favours, and Carmelites are naturally suspicious of mystical phenomena, Mary Magdalene was grateful for all the graces God gave her, weaving both unusual and more pedestrian gifts into the seamless whole of a life lived for God. She faced both outwards and inwards, her eyes constantly on God and yet also resting on her community as she served it in the monastery and in the wider world.

In some cases we know very few facts about the many holy men and women who trod the path of Carmel before us in the early centuries of the Order, but they still stand out as torch-bearers, prepared to pass on the truth of God's love and the insights of Carmelite spirituality. The mission we face today is remarkably similar to that which faced them: spreading a vision of God and of life which is a challenge not only to ourselves but to the society in which we live.

The saints of Carmel encourage us to hear again the opening words of the *Psalms*:

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;  
but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night.  
(*Psalms* 1:1-2)

The Carmelite story is all about people; people called to be saints, lovers of Christ and each other in the Kingdom of God here on earth and later in heaven. Jesus himself revealed how we could inhabit the Kingdom: 'I am the way, and the truth and the life ... no one can come to the

Father except through me' (*John* 14:6). So the way to sainthood is to follow Christ closely. Saints shouldn't distract us from Jesus: rather they lead towards him, giving us an example to follow.

This was understood by holy people who emerged from another reform movement, the Reform of Touraine which has had a long-lasting effect on the Carmelite Family. This seventeenth-century reform took place in Rennes, France, in the Carmelite Province of Touraine, principally under the leadership of two friars called **Jean Behourt** and **Philippe Thibault** (1572-1638). These men sought to live a stricter observance of religious life, and shows that the Carmelite and Discalced Carmelite Orders (which had split by this time) did not have opposing values but rather shared a desire for living as fully for God as possible.

The spirit of the Touraine Reform was expressed in the writings of a great mystic, Venerable **John of Saint-Samson** (1571-1636). John was blind from the age of three, but despite many difficulties in early life made his way to Paris where he encountered the Carmelites. In the various communities he joined the friars were impressed with his wisdom. Settling finally in Rennes where he was novice master, John had a particular compassion for the sick, praying over them. Under obedience John dictated about four thousand pages recounting his mystical experiences. John has been called the 'John of the Cross of the Ancient Observance' because of his insights about prayer, and his appeal for living a simple lifestyle. John believed that the Carmelite way of life was not about living in ecstasies but seeking union with the God who is a living flame within us. To prepare ourselves for union with God John of Saint-Samson advised Carmelites to develop a type of prayer known as *aspiration* which basically means that in our hunger for God we must open ourselves to 'breathe' God.

At the time of the reforms in the Carmelite Order, the Discalced Reform continued in Spain and beyond. Notable holy Carmelites from this period include **Blessed Mary of Jesus** (María López Rivas, 1560-1640), a Discalced nun known as a great contemplative who often drew inspiration from the liturgy. Like Teresa, who admired her, Blessed Mary regarded prayer as conversation with a friend, a growing relationship with Christ who drew her to himself to the point where his interests became hers and she could exclaim with Saint Paul that 'it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me' (*Galatians* 2:20). Carmel also remembers with gratitude from this time the holy women from England, such as **Anne of Jesus** and her followers, who founded monasteries of nuns on the Continent because they were forbidden from doing so in their homeland.

Both the ancient and Teresian branches of the Carmelite Family produced saintly nuns at this period, including Venerable **Serafina of God** (1621-99), **Chiara Maria della Passione** (1610-75), and the stigmatic and visionary Venerable **Rosemary Serio** (1647-1726). We have already heard about Blessed Barbe Acarie who introduced the Discalced nuns into France. She also introduced Carmelite spirituality to her daughter, who became a nun taking the name **Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament** (1590-1660). Another nun of the same religious name, born **Marguerite Parigot** (1619-48) is regarded as 'Venerable'. She entered the Carmel of Beaune in France at the age of just twelve, so perhaps it is not surprising that she identified closely with the Infant Christ and began a confraternity known as "the family of the Child Jesus".

Outside of the reform movements there were outstanding saints in sixteenth-century Carmel. **Francis of the Cross**, O.Carm. (1585-1647) was a lay brother who reminds us that holiness is not dependent upon academic ability. He found reading and writing a real effort, but had a profound relationship with God. He made a three-year long pilgrimage from his native Spain to Jerusalem and back, carrying a wooden cross on his shoulders.

It is important for us Carmelites in Britain to remember those saintly members of our family who gave their lives for the Catholic faith. After the Reformation in England the last surviving Whitefriar, **George Rayner**, was imprisoned and died in York Castle in the early 1600s. The Servant of God George Halley (1622-43), born into a noble family in Herefordshire, became a Discalced Carmelite friar in Dublin taking the name **Angelus of Saint-Joseph**. Like fellow friars **Thomas Aquinas of Saint-Teresa** and **Peter of the Mother-of-God**, Angelus was put to death in Ireland for being a Roman Catholic religious. We do not remember these martyrs in a sectarian way; rather in today's climate of violence in the name of religion they are witnesses to the need for toleration and freedom of conscience.

The martyrs' took to heart the words of Saint John that we cannot love God whom we cannot see if we do not love our neighbour whom we do see (*1 John* 4:20). This teaching also inspired Venerable **Girolamo (Jerome) Terzo** (1683-1758), a Carmelite lay brother in the Sicilian Province. As a young man Jerome was a shoemaker, before spending most of his life as a hermit. He only became a friar late in life and never felt called to priesthood. Nevertheless he was active in pastoral outreach. He founded a place of pilgrimage, the Sanctuary of Mary – Stairway of Heaven. He was a great catechist and preacher, and did missionary work among the Muslims of Malta.

Missionary activity was also vital to **Blessed Denis of the Nativity** (born Pierre Berthelot in France in 1600) and **Blessed Redemptus of the Cross** (born Thomas Rodriguez da Cunha in Portugal in 1598), two Discalced Carmelite friars who met as missionaries in Asia. Living *in allegiance to Jesus Christ* as expected by the Carmelite *Rule*, they took seriously his command "Go, make disciples of all the nations" (*Matthew* 28:19). They were martyred on the island of Sumatra in 1638. They are reminders to us that Carmelites are called to be missionaries; to spread the Good News of God's love to all peoples in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. Like them we are called to witness to God by our lives, and possibly even by our deaths.

Brother **Lawrence of the Resurrection** (Nicolas Herman, d. 1691) is not a saint in the formal sense, but his spiritual insights mean that he is regarded with special love by the Carmelite Family. Lawrence was a brother in the Discalced house in Paris where among his everyday tasks as a cook and cobbler he enjoyed a continual sense of God's love. Lawrence maintained a regular correspondence and received many people seeking his advice, realising that since Jesus became human and 'dwelt among us' (*John* 1:14) he too had to be where the people are, with and for those needing help. After Lawrence's death his letters and spiritual maxims were published, and his book *The Practice of the Presence of God* is an international bestseller among both Catholics and Protestants (it was highly recommended by John Wesley).

Two contemporaries of Lawrence have become revered for their teachings on the life of Mary, Our Lady, and how we can imitate it. Venerable **Michael of Saint-Augustine** (1621-84) and Venerable **Mary of Saint-Teresa Petijt** (Maria Petyt 1623-77) were Carmelites from the Lowlands who saw that Mary lived the beatitude 'blessed are the pure in heart'. They perceived that Carmelites must become other Marys. For members of Our Lady's Order it is not enough for Mary to be something external; instead our lives should be just like hers and lived with her.

Someone whose devotion to Our Lady inspired him to join the Carmelites was Venerable **Angelo Paoli** (1642-1720). Angelo was born into a modest farming family in Tuscany and as a youth he sought out the solitude of the local hills for prayer. As a friar he became bursar of the San Martino ai Monti community in Rome and this brought him into regular contact with the

poor and hungry who came to the friary door. Eventually Angelo was feeding 300 people daily, a ministry which his community continues even now. Like a true saint Angelo wasn't selfish or possessive about his apostolate; he involved as many people as he could, inspiring scores of the most illustrious people in Rome to spend time getting to know the poor of the city. Angelo also organized the first hospital for convalescents in Rome. His pastoral work overflowed from deep contemplative prayer. He is still much loved by the people of the Eternal City who pray at his tomb in San Martino. A contemporary particularly known for his love of the poor was Venerable **Giovanni Domenico Lucchesi** (1652-1714). He was a friar of the reform movement known as the Congregation of Mantua, and sought out by many as a sound spiritual guide.

A fellow Italian, Venerable **Maria Angela Virgili** (1662-1734), was a member of the Carmelite Third Order Secular. Raised by poor but prayerful parents, after their death she dedicated herself to God as a lay Carmelite, and committed to loving those around her. In particular she cared for both the physical and spiritual needs of the sick. She was not afraid, like Christ, to reach out to those despised by much of society, particularly prostitutes. Her cause for beatification is being examined by Vatican theologians at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

The Servant of God **Maria Maddalena Mazzoni** (1683-1749) is another Italian Carmelite whose introduction to Carmel was through the Third Order. Born in Bologna and baptised Caterina, she wanted to become a religious but out of obedience to her parents she was married at the age of nineteen. After twelve years of married life her husband died (as had three of their six children). Her grief left Caterina disoriented and on the verge of death herself. She recovered, and under the guidance of a Carmelite priest she made profession in the Third Order in 1721, changing her name to Maria Maddalena (after Saint Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi). As a tertiary Maria Maddalena wanted to develop a deep interior life inspired by the Carmelite tradition while still living with her family. She gave herself more and more to works of mercy, especially teaching Christian doctrine to young and old, and visiting prisoners. A few years after joining Lay Carmel Maria Maddalena, together with 5 or 6 companions, started a community called the "Small Carmel" or "Tiny Carmel of Mary". The community's aim was to educate needy young girls, and it grew into a religious congregation known today as the *Carmelite Sisters of the Graces*.

Carmelites such as Maria Maddalena Mazzoni remind us that it's important to speak about the contemplative life without romanticising or over-spiritualising it. For her being a Carmelite meant being available to God (practising *vacare Deo*) and being on call to help those around her. She was a mother, a Carmelite, and a saintly woman who discerned an extraordinary vocation in an ordinary life. Another Italian Carmelite who found God in the everyday was **Blessed Mary of the Angels** (1661-1717), a Discalced nun in Turin who was ardent in her love of God despite continual spiritual trials. True to the Carmelite spirit she was devoted to Saint Joseph, in whose honour Sr. Mary helped to found a convent.

Italy seems to have provided fertile soil for holy Carmelite women in the eighteenth century. In Florence Anna Maria Redi (**Saint Teresa Margaret Redi**, 1747-70) entered the Discalced Carmel and took the name Sr. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart. As well as having great devotion to Christ's Sacred Heart she had a profound sense of the meaning of Eucharist which went beyond the liturgical celebration of Mass. One of her responsibilities in the monastery was the care of the sick sisters; when some of her community expressed concern that Teresa Margaret's infirmary duties prevented her from having time to 'prepare' for Holy Communion she replied "Can there be any better preparation than the performance of duties given one by obedience, particularly when it is also serving the sick?" Before her death at the age of just

twenty-three, Teresa Margaret was given a special contemplative experience concerning the words of Saint John that “God is love”.

France was also fruitful in producing Carmelite saints in the eighteenth century, though the circumstances were different from Italy. In the 1700s new ideas and Enlightenment philosophies began to spread. The extreme differences between the lives of the rich and the poor bred resentment which turned into the violence of the French Revolution. The revolutionaries targeted those they believed had been repressing the people, namely the aristocracy and the church. There was certainly some truth in this accusation, but it was equally the case that some Christians gave up positions of wealth and power in solidarity with the poor. For example, Venerable Mother **Teresa of Saint-Augustine** (1737-87), daughter of King Louis XV, gave up royal privileges in favour of entering one of the poorest Carmels, Saint-Denis near Paris. She is not to be confused with another French Carmelite of the same religious name, **Blessed Teresa of Saint-Augustine** (Madeleine-Claudine Ledoin, b. 1752) superior of the Monastery of the Incarnation in Compiègne north of Paris. Together with her sisters and community servants she was arrested by citizens angry at the Church. The women – beginning with the novice and concluding with Mother Teresa – were put to death in Paris on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1794. It is ironic that the revolutionaries – who sought the wonderful values of ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’ – targeted a community that embodied those values. Convicted of ‘crimes against the state’, the Carmelites offered their lives as a sacrifice to God, hoping that their martyrdom would bring peace for the nation and the Church. Another Carmelite witness to Christ during the French Revolution was **Blessed Jacques Retouret**, O.Carm. (1746-94). Like other clergy he refused to accept the civil law introduced by the revolutionaries which decreed that the hierarchy and pope were subject to decisions made by the state. After enduring terrible conditions on board a prison ship, Jacques died at the age of forty-eight. He was beatified in 1995 as part of a group of sixty-four martyrs which included the Discalced friars **Jean-Baptiste Duverneuil** (1737-94), **Michel-Louis Brulard** (1758-94) and **Jacques Gagnot** (1753-94). Lay Carmel also has its own martyr from the French Revolution, the Servant of God **Anna Rosa Bernard**. She and her friend Thérèse Thiac were found guilty of sheltering a Carmelite friar who had refused to accept the state’s restrictions on the Church, Fr. **Martinien Pannetier** (who was a great supporter of Lay Carmel). Together the three of them were executed during the octave of Our Lady of Mount Carmel 1794.

Ill will towards the Catholic Church spread from Paris to other cities, including Barcelona where lived **Saint Joachina de Vedruna de Mas** (1783-1854). She bore her husband nine children, but ten years after his death she was prompted by the Spirit to found the *Congregation of Carmelite Sisters of Charity*, establishing houses for the care of the sick and the education of children, especially the poor. In one of her letters she wrote: ‘We must be careful to free our hearts from everything that might get in the way of the pure love of our beloved Jesus. He is love itself, and wants to give himself to us through love. Jesus is calling us all the time – how long are we going to remain deaf to his voice? No, let us keep our hearts ready, our wills completely for Jesus, our faculties and our senses for our Lord.’

In the 1800s two other young women from Spain stand out in our family story: **Liberata Ferrarons y Vivés** (1803-42) and **Blessed Josepha Naval Girbés** (1820-93). Josepha was a member of the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order (OCDS). She dedicated herself to works of mercy in her parish community, opening a school in her own home. Before her beatification in 1988 her life was studied by a Theological Commission, and at the conclusion the General Promoter of the Faith declared: ‘Josepha Naval Girbés is an exceptional mistress of secular holiness; a model of Christian life in her heroic simplicity... Without extraordinary gifts and without dazzling events in her life, the Servant of God was an exceptional woman in her genuine simplicity as a daughter of the people. She carried out her duties faithfully, in intense

union with God, in the midst of the ordinary circumstances of her working day.’ Likewise Liberata Ferrarons, a young worker in a textile factory and member of the Carmelite Third Order (TOC) shows us the true meaning of ‘heroic sanctity’; not performing superhuman feats, but rather loving and living Christ in the joys and boredoms of daily life. Like the Lord on Horeb, Liberata was *a still small voice* who brought others to know the presence of God in gentleness and quiet.

Saints are essentially people who respond to the call of God that we hear about in sacred scripture:

We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son, so that his Son might be the eldest within a large family. (*Romans 8: 28-29*)

Among the Carmelites of the nineteenth century who became ‘true images of Jesus’ one of the most gifted was **Hermann Cohen** (1821-71). Hermann was born into a Jewish family in Hamburg, Germany. He lived a very worldly life but as a composer produced beautiful music, and it was music that drew him to Christianity. One day he was asked to substitute as a choir director during a church music festival, and during Benediction he became aware of the presence of God: “I felt something deep within me as if I had found myself. It was like the prodigal son facing himself.” After his conversion Hermann became a Discalced Carmelite friar, taking the name Augustin-Marie of the Blessed Sacrament. He was so devoted to the Eucharist that he began the *Nocturnal Adoration Society*. He continued to write music, and founded several convents before dying of smallpox.

Hundreds of miles away from Germany, in Kerala, India, **Blessed Kuriakos Elias Chavara** (1805-71) was to have a massive influence on the future direction of the Carmelite Family. He was ordained priest in 1829, and two years later he co-founded the *Carmelites of Mary Immaculate* (C.M.I.), taking his religious name from the prophet Elijah (Elias). This religious congregation combined the spirituality of Carmel with the rites and heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church, one of the twenty or so ‘Eastern’ churches in communion with Rome, which had existed in India since the days of the apostle Thomas. Blessed Elias became vicar general for the Syro-Malabar church, defending its unity with Rome, and through the CMIs he made great strides in the spiritual renovation of the Church of Malabar. The CMI brothers dedicated themselves to the renewal of the Church by building seminaries, a publishing house, schools, and a house for the dying and destitute. In 1866 Elias co-founded, with the support of a Discalced friar, another Carmelite congregation, the Sisters of the Mother of Carmel. If holiness can be judged by the fruits a Christian produces (*Matthew 7:20*) then Elias is indeed a great saint. The congregation he founded has dedicated itself to serving the people of God, and in 2003 it counted 7 bishops, 2100 priests, 55 brothers, 482 seminarians, and 208 novices. The CMIs are now spreading beyond India to undertake missions in Europe and America. Elias was beatified in 1986.

A Carmelite with an experience not unlike Blessed Elias was Mariam Baouardy, better known as **Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified**. She was born near Nazareth in 1846 as a Catholic of the Greek Melchite Rite, and thus (like Elias) Mariam blended the Christian heritage of East and West. Raised by an uncle after the death of her parents when she was two, Mariam became a serving girl. In 1867 she entered the Discalced Carmelites at Pau in France and in 1870 was sent to India, the land of Blessed Elias, where she was part of a group that founded the Carmel of Mangalore. In 1875 she returned to the Holy Land where she built a monastery in Bethlehem. She is one of the more unusual modern Carmelite saints, associated with many

mystical phenomena: ecstasies, levitations, stigmata, bilocation, mysterious knowledge and transpiercings of the heart. These teach us something about God's power in our lives, but more importantly we can learn much from the example of Mariam's everyday experiences. Blending the traditions of East and West, in Carmel Mariam was also able to integrate the Old and New Testaments. In the convent she was known to dance before the altar, declaring "David danced before the Ark, and I dance before the tabernacle". She died at 33, the reputed age of Christ when he was crucified.

**Blessed Francis Palau y Quer** (1811-72) was a Discalced Carmelite friar who lived much of his life in exile from his native mainland Spain because of civil turmoil and opposition to the school he established. In the 1860s he founded the *Congregations of Carmelite Brothers and Carmelite Sisters*, and preached popular missions, spreading love of Our Lady wherever he went. He was beatified in 1980. Another Discalced friar renowned for holiness is **Saint Raphael Kalinowski** (1835-1907). He was a Polish Teresian Carmelite who contributed greatly to restoring his Order in Poland, and his life was distinguished by zeal for Church unity and his unflagging dedication as confessor and spiritual director. A third Discalced friar from this period, **Antonio Augusto Intreccialagli** (1852-1924) was also noted for his loving service to the church as Archbishop of Monreale in Sicily. He was declared 'Venerable' by the Pope in 1991.

**Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face** (1873-97) needs little introduction; the 'Little Flower' is probably the best-known and best-loved saint that Carmel has produced, with millions of devotees worldwide. In her the prophecy of Daniel is true: 'Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever' (*Daniel* 12:3). She was born Thérèse Martin and lost her mother at the age of four which had a profoundly debilitating impact on the young girl. Thérèse became withdrawn and self-centred, and by her own admission was very much the baby of the family. Following what she described as her 'conversion' one Christmas at the age of fourteen, Thérèse began to mature and nurture adult relationships, not only with her father and sisters but also with Jesus Christ. She entered the Carmel in Lisieux in 1888. Seven years later at the request of the Mother Prioress Sister Agnes (her blood sister Pauline), Thérèse began writing her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*. After Thérèse's death of tuberculosis at just twenty-four, this text was circulated to other Carmelite monasteries. The book was full of such spiritual wisdom put so simply that it became an instant success. Within a quarter-century of Thérèse's death the story of this young French girl who had spent all her adult life within an enclosure had spread across the globe, and she was canonised in 1925.

It is sometimes possible for the real Thérèse to be lost behind the pious and sentimental images of her. We should not be deceived by her nickname 'the Little Flower' into thinking that Thérèse was somehow a shrinking violet. In her autobiography Thérèse describes periods of great darkness, doubt, and depression that have helped many people through similar experiences. In an age of religious conservatism Thérèse expressed radical ideas, such as her desire to be a priest. She believed that the love and mercy of God was more powerful than any sin; so powerful that God would save Henri Pranzini, a criminal condemned to death whom Thérèse 'adopted' in prayer. Writing in her autobiography Thérèse's confidence in God shines through: "I told God I was sure He would pardon the poor, unfortunate Pranzini; that I'd believe this even if he went to his death without any signs of repentance or without having gone to confession. I was absolutely confident in the mercy of Jesus". Thérèse was so confident in God's love that she declared: 'Even if I had on my conscience all the sins that can be committed, I would go, my heart broken with repentance, to throw myself into the arms of Jesus... If I had committed all the crimes it is possible to commit, I would still have the same

confidence, I would feel that this multitude of offences would be like a drop of water thrown into a raging blaze.’

Like all Carmelite saints Thérèse had a profound relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist. She wrote “It is not to remain in a golden ciborium that He comes to us each day from heaven; it’s to find another heaven, infinitely more dear to Him than the first: the heaven of our soul, made to His image, the living temple of the adorable Trinity!” Thérèse’s religious name is significant. By taking the name ‘the Child Jesus’ she strove to follow her saviour’s hidden years of childhood innocence and obedience; by taking the name of ‘the Holy Face’ she embraced the years of Christ’s maturity, mission and suffering.

Thérèse’s teachings have been judged so universally important that in 1997 she was declared a *Doctor of the Church*. Her wisdom was nourished by the Carmelite tradition which she expressed in a very simple way. Thérèse believed that there was a ‘short cut’ to God for ordinary people which she called the *little way of spiritual childhood*. She said that by living with simplicity and openness, we can trust that God will carry us towards heaven like a parent picking up a child. The smaller the child, the easier it is for it to trust absolutely. Thérèse therefore did not seek to become a ‘giant’ saint but rather found opportunities in the ordinary activities of everyday to renounce selfish desires and express thanks to God. As she put it in a letter to another of her sisters, Céline: ‘when I am *feeling* nothing, when I am incapable of praying, of practising virtue, then is the moment for seeking opportunities, *nothings*, which please Jesus more than mastery of the world or even martyrdom suffered with generosity. For example, a smile, a friendly word when I would want to say nothing, or put on a look of annoyance.’ (*Letter 143*).

We have not the room here to do justice to Thérèse’s impact on Carmel and the Church, so we shall look at her life – and the saintly lives of some of her relatives – in ongoing formation modules of the province formation programme.

A contemporary and compatriot of Thérèse was Elizabeth Catez (1880-1906) known in Carmel as **Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity**. Like Thérèse, Elizabeth died young, and spent most of her life nurturing Carmelite values not in the monastery but at home. Elizabeth realised that God dwelt within her, and she let God have possession of her heart. A recent writer has summed up her life as follows:

Elizabeth Catez was an enthusiastic and balanced young person with an unusually deep prayer life... Her gift was a felt awareness of God the Holy Trinity dwelling in the depth of her being. She summed up her spirituality in a prayer in 1904: ‘O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to be oblivious of myself that I may be rooted in you, changeless and calm as though my soul were in eternity...’ Reading Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross helped her to understand her own experiences, which included times of dryness in prayer. Typically, she spoke of God’s indwelling as a foretaste of heaven... She left letters and retreat notes, and to a sister shortly before she died she wrote: ‘It seems to me that in heaven my mission will be to attract souls by helping them to go out of themselves in order to cling to God... and to keep them in the great interior silence which allows God to imprint himself upon them, to transform them into himself.’

(*The Story of Christian Spirituality*, p. 239)

In her writings Elizabeth gave advice to friends seeking to deepen their prayer life, drawing strongly on the Carmelite tradition of silence and stillness in God’s presence: ‘Always love prayer; but when I say prayer I do not mean reciting a vast quantity of vocal prayers every day.



I mean the elevation of the soul to God through all things, which places us in a kind of continual communion with the Holy Trinity so that everything we do is done under God's watchful gaze.' (*Letter* 191).

Like Elizabeth and Thérèse, **Blessed Elisha of Saint-Clement** (Theodora Fracasso, 1901-1927) was a Discalced Carmelite nun who died very young, but having made a great impression on her sisters in the Italian town of Bari. Elsewhere in Italy one of Elisha's sisters in the Teresian Carmel was Blessed Mother **Maria Candida of the Eucharist** (Maria Barba, 1884-1949). She appreciated the enormous love that existed between Jesus and his mother, writing: "I would like to be like Mary, to be Mary for Jesus, to take the place of his Mamma. I have Mary also present in my communions. I want to receive Jesus from her hands. She must help me to become only one thing with him... Hail, O Body born of Mary! Hail Mary, dawn of the Eucharist!" Maria Candida was beatified in 2004.

Some might question the value of these women living an enclosed life. Carmelite monasteries of nuns can be compared to the rainforests. It wasn't until the rainforests were cleared for 'useful' purposes that we came to realise how vital they are for maintaining a healthy planet climate. The rainforests make a vital contribution not by doing anything visible but simply by being there. Carmelite nuns are like lungs in the Church. They breathe in the needs, the loneliness, the poverty, the empty wealth, the hopes and fears of the people of the world, and breathe out love and faith. In Carmel, the 'vineyard of the Lord', they fertilise the Church with their constant praise of God.

The enclosed Carmelite vocation is only for those called to it, and some saints in our family tried it before discerning the call of God elsewhere. One such was **Blessed Maria Teresa Scilli** (1825-89) who was beatified on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2006 in her native Italian diocese of Fiesole, a region which had already produced illustrious Carmelite saints such as Andrew Corsini and Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi. Perhaps drawn by such figures Maria Teresa entered the monastery of St. Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi in Florence in 1846, but she wrote in her *Autobiography* that whilst she loved the cloister she felt called by God to bring people outside to know the love of God. This became clearer when back in her home village friends began entrusting their children to her. Maria Teresa eventually went on to found *The Institute of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, which had as its particular apostolate the education of youth, especially the poorest. Maria Teresa believed that the goal of education is growth in holiness, and for this reason she required her sisters to add a fourth vow to the three customary ones of poverty, chastity and obedience, namely to 'give oneself to the service of one's neighbour by means of Christian and civil moral instruction'. Maria Teresa's Institute was born in a period of political insurrection in the unification of Italy and for this reason her venture was crushed almost as soon as it had begun. This, combined with the untimely deaths of several sisters, meant that when Mother Maria herself died in 1889 the community numbered only two sisters, one novice and one postulant. Today the Institute numbers about 250 sisters worldwide, and this success is a reminder that we do not always see the fruits of good works in our own lifetimes, but like the parable of the mustard seed (*Luke* 13:19) great things can come from small beginnings.

Blessed Maria Teresa's Institute is part of the Carmelite Third Order Regular, that is the branch of the Carmelite Family consisting of sisters in active apostolates. The first of Carmel's congregations of active sisters was founded by **Mary Magdalene Mazzoni Sangiorgi** (1683-1749) who was an outstanding example of holiness. Thanks to her pioneering form of Carmelite life other institutes quickly developed. For example, the *Carmelite Sisters of Mother Candelaria* are named after their founder, Servant of God **Candelaria of Saint-Joseph** (in the world Susanna Paz Castillo Ramírez, 1863-1940). Her cause for beatification is well advanced, and would bring the South American nation of Venezuela its first native saint, who was a

servant to the poorest of the poor. The nineteenth century explosion of religious institutes which affiliated to the Carmelite Order has given us other inspiring examples, such as **Mother Elisea Maria Oliver Molina** (1869-1931), foundress of the *Carmelite Sisters of Orihuela*, **Arcángela Badosa** (1878-1918) of the same institute, and **Mother Angeline Teresa** (Bridget McCrory, 1893-1984), foundress of the *Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm*. Bridget was born in Northern Ireland and moved to Scotland aged eight. In 1912 she joined the *Little Sisters of the Poor*, a French community in which she learned reverence and respect for the aging and dying, and in 1915 they sent her to work in New York. There her encounters with the elderly inspired her to look for new ways to care for the aged in a manner that was more respectful of their independence and lifestyle. This led her and her community to break from the Little Sisters and look instead to the Carmelite Order for affiliation. At the present time the *Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm* care for some five thousand people in residential homes.

The United States of America became home to another institute in the 1920s, the *Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles*. Their founder, Mother **Maria Luisa Josefa of the Most Blessed Sacrament** (1866-1937) was declared Venerable by the Holy Father in the year 2000. As a young woman Luisa had married and with her husband, a doctor, had constructed a hospital for the poor. When she was widowed she entered the Carmel of Guadalajara in Mexico, and split her time between the cloister and working in the hospital. Through this ministry many staff and patients were drawn to Carmelite life. In 1927 when Mexican revolutionaries put a bounty on the heads of religious, she fled to Los Angeles where her institute flourished despite a massive lack of resources. Like the hermits who had fled Mount Carmel, Mother Maria Luisa found that God bestowed great blessings during her exile.

One of the wonderful things about the Carmelite Family is that we are very embracing in who we count amongst ‘our own’, and many people draw inspiration from our spirituality. It is therefore appropriate to give mention to **Saint Henry de Osso y Cervello** (1840-96). A Spanish priest, he was an apostle to young people. He was fascinated by Saint Teresa of Jesus (of Avila), and inspired by her teaching he founded the *Company of Saint Teresa* (Teresian Missionary Sisters), dedicated to educating women in the school of the Gospel. Through printing and preaching he spread the Good News and the insights of Teresa.

Another person inspired by Saint Teresa was **Blessed Teresa Mary Manetti of the Cross** (b. 1846). She founded the *Congregation of Carmelite Sisters of Saint Teresa* in Florence. There and in the Holy Land her sisters reached out with maternal care to children and to the poor. She died in 1910 and was beatified in 1986. She learnt to live without continual diversion and gratification, finding instead contentment with a simple lifestyle and steady rhythm that enabled her to explore her own inner depths where God sought to make a home.

Such a lifestyle was also lived by **Saint Juanita Fernandez Solar**, known in religion as Teresa of Jesus (1900-20). She was born in Santiago, Chile, and entered the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Los Andes. Like several other nuns of the period Saint Teresa “of the Andes” seems to have grown greatly in wisdom and holiness before a premature death. Juanita understood the fear that prevents some people from believing that God will fill their emptiness with meaning and satisfy the human yearning to be loved. She wrote:

Are you perhaps afraid that the abyss of the greatness of God and that of your nothingness cannot be united? There is love in him. His passionate love made him take flesh in order that by seeing a Man-God, we would not be afraid to draw near him. This passionate love made him become bread in order to assimilate our nothingness and make it disappear into his infinite being. This passionate love made

him give his life by dying on the cross. Are you perhaps afraid to draw near him? Look at him surrounded by little children... Look at him at the tomb of Lazarus. And listen to what he says of the Magdalene...What do you discover in these flashes from the Gospel except a heart that is good, gentle, tender, compassionate; in other words, the heart of a God?

Juanita was canonised in 1993, the first Chilean to be so honoured. Like Juanita, Venerable **Maria Teresa (Teresita) González-Quevedo** (1930-50) died at just twenty years old. In that short time Teresita lived an intense life. She went to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy and on a school retreat at the age of eleven she wrote a resolution in her notebook: "I have decided to become a saint". Teresita was a popular, pretty girl with a flair for tennis and driving her father's car too fast, but she decided to dedicate her vivacity to God. In 1947 she was admitted to the *Carmelites of Charity* but her novitiate was cut short by the diagnosis of tubercular meningitis. Shortly before her death, in the Holy Year of 1950, she made her final profession. Her sisters and friends perceived in Teresita someone who truly wished to live *in allegiance to Jesus Christ*.

Teresita grew up during the terrible religious persecution of the Spanish Civil War, in which three of her uncles were killed. There were more Christian martyrs in the twentieth century than any of the previous centuries, and Carmel – being at the heart of the Church's experience – was not exempt during the civil war that took place in Spain between the Nationalists of General Franco and the Republicans (1936-39). As in the French Revolution, the Church was targeted by those who felt that it represented oppression. Amongst the first Christians to be recognised for defending the Church during these years were three members of the Carmelite Family: **Maria Pilar of Saint-Francis Borgia**, **Teresa of the Child Jesus and Saint-John of the Cross**, and **Maria Angeles of Saint-Joseph** (the Martyrs of Guadalajara). These Discalced nuns were killed in 1936 having offered their lives for Christ's body the Church. They were beatified in 1987. Ten years later Pope John Paul II approved the decree establishing the martyrdom of another Spanish nun, **Blessed Maria Sagrario of Saint-Aloysius Gonzaga** (born Elvira Moragas Cantarero in 1881). A talented student, she was one of the first women in Spain to obtain a degree in pharmacy. However she knew her vocation was to put her skills to use in a religious community, and in 1915 she entered the Teresian Carmel of St. Anne and St. Joseph in Madrid where she eventually became prioress. As leader of her community she was noted for her service of the sisters, and she ensured their safety when the convent was attacked by a violent crowd shortly after the outbreak of the civil war. She was arrested and shot. Her fate was shared by yet another Discalced nun, **Blessed Maria Mercedes Prat**, who was shot in 1936 because she was a religious. A nun from the O.Carm. branch of the Carmelite Family, **Maria Badia** (1903-36) was likewise killed.

In June 2006 Pope Benedict XVI approved the decrees that recognize the martyrdoms of a further 150 Christians killed during the religious persecutions of the Spanish Civil War. Among these are **Ángel María Prat Hostench**, O.Carm. (1896-1936) and 16 companion friars (mostly students) from the Province of Cataluña (Catalonia). Another group who witnessed to Christ were the **martyrs of Segorbe** diocese where the bishop, Miguel Serra Sucarrats, and 213 companions – including 50 Carmelite and Discalced Carmelite friars, 3 nuns, and a lay Carmelite – were killed. Also vibrant in Carmelite memory are the deaths of Fr. Carmelo Moyano Linares, O.Carm. Provincial of Andalusia (now Baetica) and his nine companions, known as the **martyrs of Córdoba**, and Alberto María Marco Alemán, O.Carm., superior of the main Carmelite house in Madrid who died with eight companions known as the **martyrs of Castile**.

The atrocities – committed by both sides – of the Spanish Civil War, inspired some of the dreadful violence of the Second World War which followed shortly afterwards. Among the millions killed because of their religion Carmel remembers **Saint Edith Stein** (Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, 1891-1942). She was born a Jewess in Germany, and even after her conversion to Christianity and her becoming a Discalced Carmelite nun Edith remained rightly proud of her Jewish inheritance. As a young woman her constant search for truth led her to study philosophy. However, she declared that she found a greater truth in reading the autobiography of Saint Teresa of Avila. Refusing to renounce her Jewish identity, she and her blood sister were arrested at the Carmel in Echt, Holland, and put to death in Auschwitz. Since her canonisation in 1998 Edith has been proclaimed one of the six patron saints of Europe.

Another martyr of World War II was **Blessed Titus Brandsma**, O.Carm. (1881-1942). Titus was a Carmelite friar from the Netherlands. A professor of theology, he was an expert in Carmelite spirituality. He was also a journalist. In 1942 he was arrested by the Nazis for stating that no Catholic publication could justify promoting fascist propaganda because it fundamentally contradicted the values of the Kingdom of God. For this he was imprisoned in concentration camps where he brought humanity to people degraded by the Nazi regime, including his captors. Titus was killed by lethal injection at Dachau. Like all true Carmelites Titus looked to Mary, Our Lady, as the perfect example of someone who followed Jesus, who could help us in times of suffering. Titus wrote: ‘Mary, who kept all God’s words in her heart, in the fullness of grace granted her, understood the great value of suffering. While the apostles fled, she went out to meet the Saviour on the way to Calvary and stood beneath the cross, in order to share his grief and shame to the end. And she carried him to the grave, firmly trusting that he would rise.’ (Introduction to *Het lijden vergoddelijkt*).

In Dachau Titus was joined by other Carmelites, including **Blessed Hilary Januszewski** (1907-45). Again like Titus, this friar was a scholar, having been professor at the institute of the Polish Province in Krakow, where he was also prior of the Carmelite community. Following the German occupation of Poland many priests and religious were deported. On 18<sup>th</sup> September 1940 the Gestapo arrested four friars from the Krakow fraternity. Fr. Hilary decided to present himself in exchange for an older and sick friar. The 2003 *Rule for the Third Order of Carmel* (§13) says that holiness lies in fulfilling Jesus’ double command to love God and to love our neighbour. That’s what Hilary did in Dachau by joining a group of priests who helped the sick, but his apostolate was cut short by his death from Typhus. He was beatified by fellow countryman John Paul II in 1999, alongside many other martyrs including the Discalced friar **Blessed Alphonsus Mary Mazurek** (1891-1944).

Servant of God **Jacques de Jesus Bunel**, O.C.D. (1900-45) was another friar who suffered at the hands of fascism. He was headmaster of the *Petite College* in Avon, France. His teaching style was revolutionary for its time, and he was much loved by his pupils. During the war Père Jacques harboured Jewish boys in his Catholic school to protect them from Nazi persecution. He was exposed and interned in three different prison camps. After liberation in 1945 he would not leave the camp until those he had been nursing had left, and the harsh conditions had so weakened him that he died shortly afterwards.

In contrast to the atrocities of the Nazi regime, holiness flourished in Germany in the person of Brother **Alois Ehrlich**, O.Carm. (1868-1945). Like his saviour, Alois was a carpenter. He travelled the Carmelite Province of Upper Germany and beyond using his skill for the glory of God and the benefit of his community. He had a great love of Scripture which helped him to be a wise and prayerful brother.

In the British Province we can remember with pride a Carmelite who took a mission from England to many parts of the world. As a young girl Clare Perrins (later known as Mother **Mary Ellerker**, 1875-1949) converted to Catholicism. She began a small religious community which spread from the Midlands of England to the Caribbean, becoming affiliated to the Carmelite Order as the *Corpus Christi Carmelite Sisters*.

Two years after the birth of Mary Ellerker, **Maria Carolina Scampone** was born. Maria also died two years after Mary, in 1951, in a hospice for the aged poor, having been received into the Third Order some days before. This Italian lay Carmelite led a varied life as mother, housewife, widow, and even prisoner during World War II. Throughout these experiences she was known as a woman of prayer. Her reputation for sanctity does not lie in extraordinary feats of holiness but rather in kind acts which although small have led her to be acclaimed as a saint by the people who knew and remember her. Sometimes even saints are not well remembered with the passage of time. One such lay Carmelite is **María Concetta Todaro** (1858-1923) from Palermo the capital of Sicily. During her lifetime, however, María Concetta was sought out as a spiritual guide and intercessor. People came to her asking for prayers and reassurance, particularly during the difficult years of the First World War. She joined the Third Order in 1887 at a time when the friars had been suppressed in her native city, and not for the first time it was lay people such as María Concetta who preserved the Carmelite spirit during the absence of religious. To mark her profession María Concetta made clothes to distribute to the poor: as she took on the habit of Carmel this simple gesture showed solidarity with those in need and a real understanding of her vocation.

A much more prominent member of the Third Order in Italy was **Wilhelmina Ronconi** (1864-1936). She was one of the most sought-after woman speakers of her time who used her powers of rhetoric to highlight social problems and champion justice. She understood that the Church's concern with matters of faith must necessarily impinge on civic and economic issues. She had contact with every social class from aristocracy to slum-dwellers, improving the lot of all through her educational projects. In a conservative society she was regarded as liberal. Today, too, she has been adopted by progressive church movements (she is often used as an example by groups campaigning for women priests). Someone equally interested in the social issues of Italy at the time was **Wiera Francia** (1898-1928), though unlike Wilhelmina she was a shy young woman. Reluctantly she held positions of responsibility in several Catholic organisations because her colleagues recognised her God-given talents. For Wiera the Carmelite Third Order was a support for her activities in the world. In a talk she delivered to a congress of Carmelite tertiaries Wiera said:

We are listless and degenerate Christians. Enter, then, the Third Order, to shake us up with the abundance of its graces, with the wisdom of its rules and the eloquence of its examples. Come, let it teach us how every day to live even the noisiest of lives, or the most humble and ordinary lives, and at the same time be more closely united to the Lord.

An equally dynamic though very different character was **Saint Maria Maravillas of Jesus** (1891-1974). She entered Carmel as a nun in El Escorial near Madrid, but soon felt that the Discalced Carmelites had lost the spirit of Teresa and John of the Cross as she perceived it. Maravillas (which means "marvels") protested that she did not wish to found a new order or 'branch off' from the Discalced Order, but felt called by God to make a new foundation, the first of what she called *Teresian Carmelite Monasteries* because they rigorously followed the original *Constitutions* of Saint Teresa rather than contemporary guidelines. After the difficult years of the Spanish Civil War Mother Maravillas went on to found eleven monasteries of nuns in Spain and India, and sent nuns to several of the ancient Discalced communities.

Saints inspire strong and sometimes conflicting emotions, and it must be said that Maravillas is one of Carmel's more controversial saints. This should not dismay us: Teresa was examined by the Inquisition and is now a Doctor of the Church! Why is Maravillas controversial? Speaking at her canonisation in 2003 Pope John Paul II said that she "lived inspired by a heroic faith, made concrete in the response of an austere vocation". Carmelites have been divided about Maravillas's austere interpretation of religious life. After the Second Vatican Council her reforms seemed to many to be a step backwards rather than forwards. Just as with the Teresian Reform centuries earlier, there was influence from outside the Order by Spanish politicians and the Vatican. Following her death there was divided opinion among the Discalced Carmelites about the way their Order should progress, which resulted in two different sets of *Constitutions* being issued for the nuns in the 1990s: one for those who followed the teachings of Maravillas (about 15% of monasteries worldwide), and another for those who did not. Those who followed Maravillas's vision split away from the governance of the Discalced Superior General. A nun recently summarised the splintering:

The renewal of religious life mandated by Vatican II has given rise to two major interpretations of Carmelite life. One focuses on the ministry of contemplative prayer and the retrieval of mysticism, particularly Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, etc. This reading of the charism... is willing to experiment with various ways how the life of contemplative prayer/liturgy can be lived and shared with the people. It values solitary prayer and shared life in a community of equals. The other highlights separation from the world and a literal fidelity to the life as it has been lived in the past. It values preservation, therefore, and sees enclosure as the essential manifestation of contemplative Carmelite Life. Although these two readings seem to be a contemporary expression of the order's age-old tension between solitary prayer and community, the hermit emphasis and the mendicant effort, communities are diverse and complex, spread along a continuum between these two poles. (Constance FitzGerald, O.C.D.).

The question always facing religious families such as ours is whether we should focus on preserving traditions intact or reinterpreting them. Are we called to be faithful to the lifestyle of the first hermits or of Saint Teresa, or are we called to adapt their vision for our own time and place? Both attitudes deserve respect: both are trying to be faithful to the Carmelite tradition, and the Carmelite Family can accommodate a variety of vocations. Saint Maravillas was undoubtedly a holy woman, whatever the legacy of her reform. Her legacy is a reminder to us of the teaching of Saint Paul that there are many different ways to come to God, and that people with different attitudes can all be seen as saints:

Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God. (*Romans* 14:3-6).

Someone who gave honour to God in every circumstance of his life and also in death was **Blessed Isidore Bakanja** (d. 1909), a labourer in the Belgian Congo (now Zaire). He converted to Christianity aged eighteen and sought to bring others to the faith. He was devoted

to Our Lady by praying the Rosary and wearing the Brown Scapular, the miniature Carmelite habit, and as such he was a member of the extended Carmelite Family. Isidore worked for Belgian colonists, many of whom were atheists who hated Christians because they insisted on justice and rights for the native people. This hatred was turned on Isidore who was teaching people how to pray on the rubber plantation where he worked. The supervisor told Isidore to stop preaching the Gospel and discard his scapular and when he wouldn't Isidore was flogged and chained. His torn skin became infected and Isidore was close to death. When an inspector came to visit the plantation the supervisor sought to hide Isidore but he was seen and taken to the inspector's house to heal. His wounds were too great, however, and Isidore told the inspector "tell them that I am dying because I am a Christian." Missionaries in the area visited Isidore and urged him to forgive the supervisor. He assured them that he already had, declaring "When I am in heaven, I shall pray for him very much." Isidore was beatified in 1994, and has become a powerful symbol for reconciliation between people of different colours and races. He was not an 'expert' in Carmelite spirituality. His faith was simple. But the life and death of this young black man are a brilliant witness to the life and death of Jesus and we are proud to number Isidore among the martyrs of Carmel.

Another young lay Carmelite whose sanctity is worth remembering is **Santos Franco Sánchez** (1942-54). He went to a Carmelite school where he was known as a peacemaker for mediating in the quarrels of his peers. He was not without typical childish faults but he earnestly desired to do the will of God. Because of a misdiagnosis he died of meningitis aged just eleven. During two months of suffering he showed remarkable patience, saying to his mother "Don't be sad Mama. I want to do only the will of God and I am offering all to Him for sinners, for the missions, and for whatever God wants." Santos told his family that his own experience of intense headaches and fevers helped him to understand the love Jesus demonstrated in wearing a crown of thorns. His final words were "Whatever the will of God desires." Carmel has a further young candidate for beatification, **Ramón Montero Navarro** (1931-45). He was from the Spanish region of La Mancha, and proves once again the words of Christ that the deepest mysteries would be revealed to little children. Like Santos, Ramón suffered from illness, Pott's disease, and confined to bed he would read the *Little Office of Our Lady* according to the Carmelite Rite. He became known in the locale as a prayerful boy, and when visitors came to see him on his sick bed they asked him to pray for their intentions. One day he was asked to pray – in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War – for a good school run by religious in his home town of Tomelloso. Shortly after, the Carmelite friars came to the town becoming close friends with Ramón and his family, and eventually the child was received into the Third Order (the only male tertiary in Tomelloso!) and given the Order's habit in which the teenager was buried.

The Office of the Postulator General has about a hundred cases under consideration by the Vatican, including many lay Carmelites, and others may be proposed. We cannot possibly review them all, but **Carmen de Sojo** (1856-90), a Carmelite tertiary from Barcelona, is an interesting example of holiness. She was only fifteen when she married, and much of Carmen's life centred around her family life with husband Jorge and five children. She believed that her vocation was to attain holiness through her married status and her tender relationship with her husband was where she learned the joys and trials of love. Her relationship with her mother was difficult, and as a member of the Carmelite Third Order Carmen seems to have found Mary to be a comforting mother and sister. Some aspects of Carmen's life may be hard for us to understand: her poor health was not helped by her elaborate self-mortifications, and she seems to have compensated for her mother's lack of attention towards her by being somewhat strict with her own children. But in the life of Carmen de Sojo we see someone trying to do her best, and seeking to live out the will of God in the confusions of life; not a perfect woman, but a woman who found that Carmel helped make sense of her spiritual journey. By reflection and

self-examination she was able to become aware of her motives and desires and sought to bring them into line with Gospel values.

**Anicka (Annie) Zelikova** (1924-41) was an outstanding member of the Carmelite Third Order. In the series of books on Carmelite saints, *Profiles in Holiness*, she is considered as another Saint Thérèse, and like the Little Flower she died at a tender age, just seventeen. Annie was born in Moravia, the eastern province of what is now the Czech Republic, the daughter of a farmer. A vivacious girl, she brought happiness to others right up to her death from tuberculosis. Even when she was too weak for anything else, she practiced her ‘apostleship of smiling’, declaring “I must smile to my last breath. Ah, all I can give God now are my heartbeats and my smile. Nothing is left to me except love and trust.” Annie was like Saint Thérèse in recognising that holiness can come through little acts of love. In 1940 she wrote “true beauty is hidden in faithfulness in little things. I always desired to do great and heroic deeds of love, but when I saw that I was unable, I was grieved by it. Now I find great heroism precisely in little things, so that now I haven’t the slightest regret whether I can do something or not.” Like the Little Flower Annie had a great desire to enter Carmel as a nun, but her poor health prevented it. In fact Annie was so ill that she was given special permission to make profession as a member of the Carmelite Third Order Secular. Seven months later she died, smiling to the end. Her final statement was “I trust”, and the last audible word she could speak was “Carmel”. She was buried with the *Rule for the Third Order* over her heart.

The lay vocation in Carmel was also close to the heart of **Fr. Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus**, OCD (Henri Grialou, 1894-1967), founder of the *Institute of Notre-Dame de Vie*, and to **Amata Cerretelli**, TOC (1907-63), foundress of the Carmelite lay movement *La Famiglia* (The Family). Rooted in the Carmelite house in Castellina near Florence, *La Famiglia* consists of several branches: the Third Order, St. Raphael’s group for engaged couples, the ‘Swallows’ club for young people, the Samaritans who look after the sick, the ‘Elders of the Family’, artists’ groups, sports teams, prayer groups for vocations, and so on. The idea of the movement’s founder was that it should help ordinary people to find and share holiness in every sphere of life, inspired by the Carmelite vision.

It is not only lay people who are able to join the Third Order. Diocesan clergy are allowed to enter the Carmelite Family in this way too, and **Blessed George Preca** (1880-1962), a priest from the Diocese of Malta and Gozo, found his Third Order community a crucial support on his road to holiness. **Maria Crocifissa Curcio** (1877-1957) is another religious whose journey in Carmel took her through the Third Order, making profession as a teenager. She was the seventh of ten children born into an Italian family. Her father disapproved of her desire to study, but nevertheless she came upon a book about Saint Teresa of Jesus that changed her life. She was also greatly influenced by the “Little Way” of Saint Thérèse and went on to found a religious community, the *Carmelite Missionaries of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*. She was beatified in 2005.

Though we’re proud as Carmelites to belong to a distinct and distinguished family, we are not aloof from the Church. Quite the opposite! We are immersed in her heart at every level. This was proved in the life of two Carmelites who contributed to the Second Vatican Council. The Servant of God Fr. **Bartolomé F. M. Xiberta**, O.Carm. (1897-1967) was born in Girona in Spain, and was noted for living his Carmelite vocation in a very profound way with great devotion to Mary. He was elected an Assistant General of the Order and distinguished himself as a theologian, researcher, historian and teacher, which led to his being a Consultor at the Second Vatican Council. Another figure at the Council was Bishop **Donal R. Lamont**, O.Carm. (1911-2003). Donal was born in Ireland and educated by the Carmelites at Terenure College in Dublin. He made profession as a friar in 1930 and was appointed superior of the



Carmelite mission in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1946. In 1957 Donal was made Bishop of Umtali (now Mutare) Diocese. Two years later he founded a diocesan congregation of sisters, the *Handmaids of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*. As a bishop he made an intervention at the Second Vatican Council which paved the way for the decree on the missions *Ad Gentes*. At the Council he was elected to the newly formed Secretariat for Christian Unity and his passion for ecumenical work continued when he retired to Ireland, particularly in the north. His most outstanding work, however, was as a leading opponent of the Rhodesian government's oppression of the black population. His first pastoral letter, "A Purchased People", became a classic statement on racial injustice and human rights. The regime sentenced Donal to ten years in prison with hard labour (commuted on appeal to deportation in 1977). During his exile he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, and the government of Kenya issued a postage stamp to honour his contribution to the people of Africa. He returned to Zimbabwe after independence where he served as bishop for a further two years. The Carmelites who lived with Bishop Donal would remind us that he was not a perfect saint: he had faults and foibles like the rest of us. But he read the signs of the times (*Matthew* 16:3), and opened the eyes of the world to injustice. Surely bishop Donal would have agreed with the homily at his funeral: "How do we sum up his life? We don't – the final judgement must be left to God. In the end all human achievement except love is as straw in God's eyes; we all must come in the end to rely not on what we have done, but solely on God's mercy."

Ireland was home to another Carmelite who – like Bishop Lamont – received a round of applause from the bishops at Vatican II. **Frank Duff** (1889-1980) founded the *Legion of Mary* in 1921 as a means of supporting the lay apostolate in the Church. The Legion's Marian spirituality was heavily dependent upon Frank's own membership of the Carmelite Third Order.

The communion of saints incorporates the faithful on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven. We saints on earth can celebrate the memory of those Carmelites recently deceased such as the Discalced nun and poet **Jessica Powers** (Sr. Miriam of the Holy Spirit, 1905-88), **Valeria Carta**, OCDS (1941-84), Fr. **Benignus Calvi**, OCD (1904-37), Fr. **Valentin de San Jose**, OCD (d. 1989). There are men and women from the British Province in the twentieth century who are remembered as saints.

It is good for us to model our lives on those who have been transformed by an encounter with Christ, as Saint Paul advised: 'Join in following my example, brothers and sisters; keep an eye on those who are behaving like us, whom you have as your model.' (*Philippians* 3:17).

#### **IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION, REFLECTION, AND ACTION:**

- ✓ What do you think it is about Carmelite spirituality that has encouraged so many people on the path to sainthood?
- ✓ The succession of reforms in the Carmelite Family show us that even holy people do not always agree on how to live a life pleasing to God. How can we account for these differences of opinion?
- ✓ Baptist Spagnoli of Mantua and John of the Cross were both poets. Do you think that poetry is a good way of speaking about the experience of God?
- ✓ Pray for the work of Carmelite shrines throughout the world that keep alive the memory of our saints.

- ✓ The first hermits on Mount Carmel were probably crusading soldiers. Blessed Franco and Blessed Nuno were both soldiers. Why do you imagine they turned from physical warfare to spiritual battle?
- ✓ Do you find it easy to think of Mary and Elijah as ‘Carmelite’? How do you feel about God being your ‘lover’?
- ✓ Like Saint Peter Thomas, try to find out more about our brethren in the Eastern Churches.
- ✓ Does it come as a shock to you to see how many Carmelites have been martyred in recent times?
- ✓ One of the objections sometimes made against the beatification of Carmelites killed during the Spanish Civil War is that “they weren’t true martyrs; they just got in the way”. What do you think?
- ✓ Many of the Carmelite saints of the last two hundred years were educators. Why do you think the Carmelite spirit has encouraged this ministry?
- ✓ Physical illness and suffering seems to have been a common feature in the lives of the saints. Why do you think that is?
- ✓ The majority of Carmelite saints seem to have come from France, Italy, or Spain. Do you think the reasons for this are cultural or spiritual?
- ✓ Are you surprised how young many of Carmel’s saints were when they died?

#### **FURTHER READING ON CARMELITE HAGIOGRAPHY**

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