



# *Carmelite Newsletter*

*Australia, New Zealand & Oceania*

*Feast of St Titus Brandsma, O.Carm.  
27 July 2022*

## **Canonisation of St Titus Brandsma, O.Carm.**



**On 15 May 2022, Blessed Titus Brandsma, O.Carm. (Carmelite friar, priest & martyr) was canonised in a ceremony in Rome presided over the Holy Father.**

Titus Brandsma was born in 1881 on a small dairy farm to deeply pious Catholic parents in a Calvinist region in Friesland. He studied to become a Carmelite priest and was renowned for his knowledge of Carmelite spirituality and mysticism, translating the works of Saint Teresa of Avila into Dutch and being involved in founding a Catholic University.

He was a professor and also worked as a journalist and was the ecclesiastical adviser to Catholic journalists by 1935. He was outspoken against the evils of his times. He enjoyed smoking a pipe and was an approachable, deeply holy priest, instructing his students and fellow Catholics with his knowledge, humour and good example.

When the Nazis invaded and occupied the Netherlands, Titus Brandsma fought against the spread of Nazi ideology and for Christian educational and press freedom. He was stalked and shadowed by the gestapo and when, in January 1942, he undertook to deliver by hand a letter from the Conference of Dutch Bishops to the editors of Catholic newspapers in which the bishops ordered them not to print official Nazi documents, as was required under a new law by the German occupiers, the Nazi's plotted to arrest him.

Titus Brandsma had visited 14 editors before being arrested on 19 January 1942 at the Boxmeer monastery. He was held a prisoner in several locations, questioned by the Nazis and kept in a room where he spent his time in a routine of holy prayer and meditation, wrote reflections, prayers and thoughts and made many spiritual Communion. Eventually he was sent to Dachau Concentration camp.

In the camp, he continued his witness to Christ. On one occasion he was kicked and beaten by Nazi soldiers while concealing the Blessed Sacrament in his little tobacco pouch. He secretly heard confessions, gave spiritual advice and encouragement in the terrifying environment but gradually fell ill and feared being taken to the infamous medical hospitals in the camp.

When his ill health could no longer be ignored, Titus Brandsma was taken to one of the medical facilities. He suffered as part of the Nazi program of medical experimentation on prisoners with an aspect of holy peace and a few days later was murdered by lethal injection administered by an SS nurse who had abandoned the Catholic faith.

Titus Brandsma's studies on mysticism were the basis for the establishment of the Titus Brandsma Institute in Nijmegen, dedicated to the study of spirituality. He is the patron of Catholic journalists, Friesland and tobaccoists. He was imbued with the spirit of the Carmelite Reform of Touraine and had a profound devotion to Our Lady.



## Lessons from Brandsma's Life



- Opening lines of the poem he composed in his prison cell at Scheveningen explains the source of his inner strength: *O Jesus, when I see you, I know again that I love you and that also your heart loves me ...*
- The experience of those with him at Dachau was that Brandsma's serene inner peace came from a deep source: *Your nearness makes all things well within me* – enabling him to be so serene in the midst of so much activity and so many concerns.
- Brandsma taught that our orientation towards God comes from within ourselves: *The indwelling and inworking of God must not only be the object of intuition but also manifest themselves in our life, come to expression in our words and deeds, and radiate from our whole being and behaviour.*
- In his 1932 Foundation Day Rector's speech at the University of Nijmegen, Brandsma said: *The idea of God is not immutable like rock but manifests itself in our lives in ever-shifting images which do not mean an essential change but place our idea of God in a different light. Titus calls for great openness to this variability of the idea of God. We must seek the Eternal One in time.*

## God is the deepest ground of our being

... a person notices that he/she is being moved and shaped by forces that come from the core of his/her being;

... to open oneself up to the inner world is to experience it as mystery. It is not from oneself ... it is given to us.

God's life in us is dynamic – continually coming to power in us: God is an inner power who impacts us in a liberating and clarifying way and causes us to look at the world differently.

**This sense of God in/with him enabled Brandsma to be at home anywhere, whether in the midst of people or in the silence of his cell.**

- Brandsma taught that God works in humans in such a hidden way that all that is human remains and is not destroyed and that **in the inner life of every human being there are moments of waiting and receiving – alongside a time for decision, action and self-giving.**
- Real life is shaped and led by what we can understand and is rational but also by the accidental.
- Brandsma taught: ***Kneel before the image of God in your brother.***
  - Brandsma's respect for people arises from the fact that they are connected with each other in and through God. This respect for others induces a person to give his/her fellow humans the space in which they can be themselves.
- On June 16 1942, Brandsma was dispatched to Dachau, where he was stripped of all dignity, known only as number 30492.
  - He conducted himself as if he lived in freedom. His inner silence was something no one could take from him.
  - Terrible indignities suffered at Dachau. From this time on, Titus died continually: he let go of what he expected from this human existence and abandoned himself to what became possible in the eyes of God. His deepest base was the certainty of his being beloved ... *O Jesus, when I look on you My love for you becomes more true. And yours, I know, will never end: You see me as a special friend.*
  - Raphael repeatedly mentions the serenity and balance which Brandsma displayed.
  - Brandsma remained totally serene ... he displayed the mystic's spirit of "disinterestedness".
  - "The man who beat and kicked him could not touch his interior life".
  - "The Capuchin priest Othmarus comments: *An eternal smile full of patience and inner serenity, a smile of mystical resignation in all the suffering he had to bear, marked Titus. He had been maltreated so badly that his teeth literally hung loose in his mouth. He repaid all that with the prayer of Christ: 'Father, forgive them'. Neither I nor anyone else ever heard him complain. He was a saint.*
- "In Scheveningen and Amersfoort he lived and spoke from the riches of his knowledge and experience, as that became evident from his interrogation, his defence, his speech about Geert Grote. In Kleve and Dachau he realized that he had been abandoned by the authorities. This realization shocked him deeply. After a severe inner conflict, he surrendered. He no longer expected a rescue. The only thing that was strongly alive in him was the realization that he was in God's hands and that his dignity was 'inviolable'".
- His reflection in Scheveningen, *I know that You love me*, sustained him.
- On 26 July 1942, Brandsma was administered a fatal injection and died.



*In Mary, we see the most beautiful image of our union with God. She, the bride of the Holy Spirit, teaches us how also we, although not in that fullness of grace, but in a removed sense, must be brides of God the Holy Spirit, how his overshadowing power must also make us conceive God, in order that He be born in us, united, also in us, with human nature, our human nature. We must, under the beneficial influence of the Holy Spirit, be born to a new life with God, who lives in us, more than we live through ourselves. (St. Titus Brandsma)*

### HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS, St Peter's Square, Sunday, 15 May 2022

We have heard what Jesus told his disciples before leaving this world and returning to the Father. He told us what it means to be a Christian: "Even as I have loved you, so you must love one another" (Jn 13:34). This is the legacy that Christ bequeathed to us, the ultimate criterion for discerning whether or not we are truly his disciples. It is the commandment of love. Let us stop to consider two essential elements of this commandment: Jesus' love for us – "as I have loved you" – and the love he asks us to show to others – "so you must love one another".

First, the words "as I have loved you". How did Jesus love us? To the very end, to the total gift of himself. It is striking to think that he spoke these words on that night of darkness, when the atmosphere in the Upper Room was one of deep emotion and anxiety: deep emotion, because the Master was about to bid farewell to his disciples; anxiety because he had said that one of them would betray him. We can imagine the sorrow that filled the heart of Jesus, the dark clouds that were gathering in the hearts of the apostles, and their bitterness at seeing Judas who, after receiving the morsel dipped for him by the Master, left the room to enter into the night of betrayal. Yet at the very hour of his betrayal, Jesus reaffirmed his love for his own. For amid the darkness and tempests of life, that is the most important thing of all: God loves us.

Brothers and sisters, may this message be the core of our own faith and all the ways in which we express it: "...not that we loved God but that he loved us" (1 Jn 4:10). Let us never forget this. Our abilities and our merits are not the central thing, but rather the unconditional, free and unmerited love of God. Our Christian lives begin not with doctrine and good works, but with the amazement born of realizing that we are loved, prior to any response on our part. While the world frequently tries to convince us that we are valued only for what we can produce, the Gospel reminds us of the real truth of life: *we are loved*. A contemporary spiritual writer put it this way: "Long before any human being saw us, we were seen by God's loving eyes. Long before anyone heard us cry or laugh, we were heard by our God, who is all ears for us. Long before any person spoke to us in this world, we were spoken to by the voice of eternal love" (H. NOUWEN, *Life of the Beloved*). He loved us first; he waits for us; he keeps loving us. This is our identity: we are God's loved ones. This is our strength: we are loved by God.



Acknowledging this truth requires a conversion in the way we often think of holiness. At times, by over-emphasizing our efforts to do good works, we have created an ideal of holiness excessively based on ourselves, our personal heroics, our capacity for renunciation, our readiness for self-sacrifice to achieve a reward. This can at times appear as an overly "pelagian" way of viewing life and holiness. We have turned holiness into an unattainable goal. We have separated it from everyday life, instead of looking for it and embracing it in our daily routines, in the dust of the streets, in the trials of real life and, in the words of Teresa of Avila to her Sisters, "among the pots and pans". Being disciples of Jesus and advancing on the path of holiness means first and foremost letting ourselves be transfigured by the power of God's love. Let us never forget the primacy of God over self, of the Spirit over the flesh, of grace over works. For we at times give more importance to self, flesh and works. No, the primacy is that of God over self, of the Spirit over the flesh, of grace over works.

The love that we receive from the Lord is the force that transforms our lives. It opens our hearts and enables us to love. For this reason, Jesus says – here is the second element – "as I have loved you, so must you love one another". That word "as" is not simply an invitation to imitate Jesus' love; it tells us that we are able to love only because he has loved us, because he pours into our hearts his own Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, love that heals and transforms. As a result, we can make decisions and perform works of love in every situation and for every brother and sister whom we meet, because we ourselves are loved and we have the power to love. As I myself am loved, so I can love others. The love I give is united to Jesus' love for me. "As" he loved me, so I can love others. The Christian life is just that simple. Let's not make it more complicated with so many things. It is just that simple.

In practice, what does it mean to live this love? Before giving us this commandment, Jesus had washed the disciples' feet; then, after giving it, he gave himself up to the wood of the cross. To love means this: *to serve* and *to give one's life*. *To serve*, that is, not to put our own interests first: to clear our systems of the poison of greed and competitiveness; to fight the cancer of indifference and the worm of self-referentiality; to share the charisms and gifts that God has given us. Specifically, we should ask ourselves,



“What do I do for others?” That is what it means to love, to go about our daily lives in a spirit of service, with unassuming love and without seeking any recompense.

Then, *to give one’s life*. This is about more than simply offering something of ours to others; it is about giving them our very selves. I like to ask people who seek my counsel whether they give alms. And if they do, whether they touch the hand of the recipient or simply, antiseptically, throw down the alms. Those people usually blush and say no. And I ask whether, in giving alms, they look the person in the eye, or look the other way. They say no. Touching and looking, touching and looking at the flesh of Christ who suffers in our brothers and sisters. This is very important; it is what it means *to give one’s life*.

Holiness does not consist of a few heroic gestures, but of many small acts of daily love. “Are you called to the consecrated life? So many of you are here today! Then be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters, by fighting for justice for your comrades, so that they do not remain without work, so that they always receive a just wage. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Tell me, are you in a position of authority? So many people in authority are here today! Then be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, §14). This is the path of holiness, and it is so simple! To see Jesus always in others.

To serve the Gospel and our brothers and sisters, to offer our lives without expecting anything in return, any worldly glory: this is a secret and it is our calling. That was how our fellow travellers canonized today lived their holiness. By embracing with enthusiasm their vocation – as a priest, as a consecrated woman, as a lay person – they devoted their lives to the Gospel. They discovered an incomparable joy and they became brilliant reflections of the Lord of history. For that is what a saint is: a luminous reflection of the Lord of history. May we strive to do the same. The path of holiness is not barred; it is universal and it starts with Baptism. Let us strive to follow it, for each of us is called to holiness, to a form of holiness all our own. Holiness is always “original”, as Blessed Carlo Cutis used to say: it is not a photocopy, but an “original”, mine, yours, all of ours. It is uniquely our own. Truly, the Lord has a plan of love for everyone. He has a dream for your life, for my life, for the life of each of us. What else can I say? Pursue that dream with joy.



View this video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1nleuui8x0>

Prior General, Míceál O’Neill, O.Carm. at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hd0lAdWPBhk>





## The Irish Pilgrimage

The Irish Province of Carmelites of the Ancient Observance organised a pilgrimage to attend the canonisation of St Titus Brandsma in Rome from 12th to 17th May 2022. The canonisation took place at St Peter's Square on Sunday 15th May. The President of the National Council of the Secular Order of Disalced Carmelites of Australia, Samoa & Tonga was providentially in Rome at that time and was able to join this pilgrimage.

Many of the photos in this special edition of the Carmelite Newsletter appeared in *The Irish Catholic* newspaper of 19 May 2022, which along with many others can be viewed at: <https://carmelites.ie/titus-rome-pilgrimage/>.

Members of the Carmelite Family in Ireland, the Netherlands and around the world greeted with great joy the announcement by Pope Francis that he would declare the Carmelite friar, Titus Brandsma, a saint on Sunday, May 15th at St Peter's in Rome.

Irish Carmelites feel a special closeness to this new saint as he spent time in Ireland during 1935. Titus Brandsma stayed with his Irish brothers at Whitefriar Street, Dublin, and Kinsale, Co. Cork, as he improved his command of the English language ahead of a lecture tour in the United States. He wrote with warmth about his time in Ireland where he met, among others, the President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State, Mr Eamon De Valera.

Within seven years of this happy time in Ireland Titus would be killed by lethal injection in Dachau Concentration Camp, on Sunday July 26th, 1942. The nurse who had administered the injection, and to whom he had given a rosary, later converted to Catholicism. She was a key witness in the early stages of the process for his beatification and canonisation. In her testimony she declared: "I was brought back to the right way through the intercession of Fr Titus.



**Day 1** (Friday) began with a visit to St Albert's International Centre, where Titus stayed during his time in Rome. The Irish and British Pilgrims celebrated Mass together and received a tour of the Centre.

On **Day 2** of the Pilgrimage (Saturday), the Irish group joined with the wider International Carmelite Pilgrimage for a Thanksgiving Celebration and Vigil in the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, led by the Prior General, Fr Míceál O'Neill.

**Day 3** of the pilgrimage began early, to attend the Canonisation of Titus Brandsma at St Peter's, at 10.00 am. The main event was followed by prayer and a fraternal gathering at St Albert's International Centre.

**Day 4**, the final day, the Mass of Thanksgiving in St Peter's Basilica was celebrated by Willem Jacobus Cardinal Eijk, Archbishop of Utrecht.

### TITUS BRANDSMA IN ROME

*From 1906 to 1909 Titus Brandsma resided at St. Albert's International college in Rome, where he followed higher philosophical studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University and courses in sociology at the Leonine Institute.*

*Titus' signature features in the book recording religious professions celebrated at the College at time, and the admission of other candidates to the Order. Some of Titus' expenses are annotated in financial registers. The chronicle of the house notes his departure from Rome on June 1, 1909.*

*Liturgical books and artefacts, dating from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and kept at St. Albert's, which were in use in Titus' time. The image of our Lady, at the beginning of the Order's Breviary, is the same as the one Titus displays in his prison cell in Scheveningen.*





The pilgrims at St Paul Outside the Walls – Day 2.

### Message from Fr Miguel Màrquez Calle OCD to the OCDS



The transcript below is from a video recorded at a fraternal gathering hosted by the Ancient Observance Carmelites after the canonisation of St. Titus Brandsma in Rome on Sunday 15 May 2022.

**Brett Doyle OCDS:** I'm here in the Collegio San Alberto with our Superior General and it was a great surprise to see him here but a great delight and he would like to send everybody in Australia [and the region] his blessings.

**Miguel Marquez OCD:** Yes, I am delighted to find him here to meet him and I send greeting, message to all of you and I would like to visit you in Australia. And I bless you. I am with you and we are united in prayer. I love Secular Order. You encourage us and I want to encourage you. And I embrace him and in him I embrace all of you, all of you. Thank you very much.

**Brett Doyle OCDS:** Thank you. Muchas gracias.



Simon Nolan, O.Carm (Ireland); Miceál O'Neill, O.Carm. (Prior General); Aideen Ryan, TOC (Dublin) in the courtyard at St Albert's International Centre, 15 May 2022.



Paul Cahill, O.Carm. (Australian Provincial) and David Hoffman, O.Carm., relaxing in the corridor of St Albert's International Centre in Rome at the fraternal gathering on Sunday 15 May, after the canonisation in St Peter's earlier that day



## A Personal Reflection by Sanny Bruijns, O.Carm. Presentation in St. Patrick's, Rome, 13 May 2022



Over the years, Titus has become for me a witness to God's loving presence in a broken world. In this article I would like to reflect on two questions:

- How did Titus respond to the various crises which marked the time in which he lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- How did Titus face his own personal crisis after his imprisonment in January 1942?

### How did Titus respond to the various crises which marked the time in which he lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

From 1903 to 1923 Titus Brandsma lived and worked in the Carmelite community in the city of Oss. After his doctorate in philosophy he was lecturing philosophy to the Carmelite students in their study house in Oss. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century there was great poverty and a lack of employment in the city of Oss, in

the region of Brabant, the Netherlands. The young Titus and the other friars in his community were deeply affected by the needs of the people. As a contemplative community in the very midst of the people, they organised various social activities for the poor to improve their lives and their circumstances.

Aware of the importance of good communication, Father Titus Brandsma injected new life into 'De Stad Oss', a local newspaper. As its chief editor, he wrote about a range of social issues such as child mortality, alcoholism, unemployment, criminality, the dangers of National Socialism and women's suffrage.

Titus was very much aware of the need for and importance of good information and good education. So he founded a public library to help promote the spiritual and social development of those in Oss who were suffering under the burden of poverty. His next step involved the founding of a high school with the aim of offering good education to the young people. 1914 saw the outbreak of the First World War. Titus was then thirty three. He was touched by the suffering of the refugees and the soldiers who died on the battlefields across Belgium and France. This inspired him to write his first series of meditations on the stations of the cross for the artist Albert Servaes. With images of real life victims of war in his mind, Servaes depicted Jesus' way of the cross in the most graphic and striking manner. Inspired by these paintings, Titus wrote his first series of meditations on the pain and suffering of Jesus on his way of the cross.

The decade that followed the First World War is often referred to as the Roaring Twenties. It was during this decade that the Catholic University of Nijmegen was founded,

an important event which was part of the emancipation of Catholics in the Netherlands and the Low Countries. It was at this new university, that Titus was appointed to the Chair of the history of philosophy and the history of mysticism.

The end of the so-called roaring twenties was then suddenly marked by the Wall Street Crash. This heralded the period known as the Great Depression which impacted profoundly on all of the Western industrialized countries. It was during this challenging time that fascist ideology began to flower. Titus Brandsma was very much aware of the dangers of National Socialism. He lectured on this topic in his course on the philosophy of national socialism.

In 1932, at the University of Nijmegen, he delivered his famous speech on 'The concept of God'. I will now quote the opening lines:

*Among the many questions which I ask myself, none occupies me more than the riddle (the puzzle), that the evolving human being, proud and spirited in his progress, turns away from God in such great number...*

*And yet... There is in these dark times a special light in the developing concept of God. And this is the idea, that God dwells within us, and in the whole of our life, that divine indwelling can become a bright radiance.*

It is during times of crisis that Prof. Brandsma experiences God's indwelling, as a ray of light in a dark night. The darkness of 1932 became even darker in the years that followed Adolf Hitler's appearance as Chancellor of Germany, and Führer of his nation. During the years of growing Nazi tyranny, the Carmelite Titus Brandsma responded to this dark movement in a determined and focused, and yet non-violent way. He was an active member of the Roman Catholic Peace Union.

During his philosophy lectures at the University of Nijmegen, he explored the dangers of National Socialism. During his courses on Dutch mysticism, he focused on the mysticism of suffering. With hindsight, we can look back and say that these experiences were preparing him for what was to come: imprisonment in Scheveningen, Amersfoort, Cleve and finally his death in Dachau. This brings me to my second question.

### How did Titus face his own personal crisis after his imprisonment in January 1942?

We all know that Father Titus was arrested in January 1942 as a political prisoner because of his resistance to the Nazi propaganda. This arrest marks the moment when he began to walk his own way of the cross. Because his life was rooted in contemplation he was given the strength to face his enemies. In the prison of Scheveningen he was interrogated by the German captain Hardegen. Hardegen asked Titus Brandsma to explain why the Dutch were against the National Socialist Movement. He set out his response to this question in what is called his 'Last writing'. In the prison of Scheveningen, he explains in his 'Last writing' his own resistance to the Nazis and the resistance of the Dutch nation. He writes that by denying the Christian roots and free spirit of the Dutch people, the National Socialist Movement was in reality an anti-Dutch movement. Titus said, and I quote:

*the love of liberty in our people is great, truly great. The Dutch people will assume and accept more from the German people in complete freedom and independence, than they shall ever accept by force and terror.*

After reading what Titus wrote the German Captain Hardegen concludes, and I quote:



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*Brandsma is genuinely a man of character with firm convictions, who wants to "protect Christianity" against National Socialism. He is anti-Nazi in principle and shows this everywhere.*

Hardegen advised to eliminate this dangerous Little Friar and to send him to the transit prison camp at Amersfoort because of his firm convictions. The firm convictions of Titus Brandsma can be felt in his well-known poem that opens with the lines: 'O Jesus, when I look on you, My love for you becomes more true. And yours, I know, will never end, moreover as your special friend.'

In these lines we sense an atmosphere of contemplation during which we see Titus gazing lovingly at Jesus on the cross, feeling a mutual love, experiencing a 'special friendship' with Jesus. The political setting where this poem was written is 'in prison'. The spiritual setting is 'in union with his special friend Jesus'. After a life of prayer and study, of lecturing and writing, Titus Brandsma seemed to be someone whose whole being was rooted in contemplation. It was his friendship with the Lord, that gave him the strength and inspiration to love his Lord, to love his fellow prisoners, and to remain friendly to those who imprisoned him. The source of his inner strength was his union with the risen Jesus and with Mary, our mother and sister.

After seven weeks in his private prison cell in Scheveningen Professor Brandsma was transferred to the transit prison camp of Amersfoort, where he shared a barrack with other prisoners. Whilst in Amersfoort he was invited by a protestant political prisoner to speak about the mysticism of the Passion. Several people who were listening to him at that time, testified after the Second World War to what happened during that moment when Titus spoke from his very depths. One of them wrote, and I quote:

*The conference became – and it couldn't be otherwise on Good Friday – a meditation on the Passion of Christ, of which his heart was full... there, heart touched heart. The words sprang up spontaneously in his heart from the love for his Saviour which burned there and they hit the mark. You could hear a pin drop in the barracks. Even the Communists were listening with interest. Had love ever been preached to them with so much ardent conviction? (Summarium p.293-294, Staring p.181)*

It was during that moment in a prison barrack in Amersfoort, when Titus spoke about the meaning of the Passion, that he witnessed to his deep faith, and to his resolute determination to resist the Nazi ideology. Whilst reading, translating and meditating on a text entitled 'The meaning of Geert Grootte in our spiritual literature. The specific character of the Dutch 'Mysticism of Suffering', I myself have also been struck by the way in which Titus, the professor of Dutch mysticism, summarizes his wisdom, which circles around the mysticism of suffering.

For Titus, mysticism is not about the divine hiding away in the human being. Rather, it is about the divine shining and radiating in and through the human being. It is about us, as human persons, becoming more transparent by that divine presence, which radiates through our earthly flesh. When Titus spoke those words on suffering in that prison barrack the external circumstances of those who were present did not change. What did change was the perception of their situation. By listening attentively to the words of Titus, the hearts of the prisoners in Camp Amersfoort were deeply moved, we might say 'strangely warmed'. At that moment in Amersfoort, Titus Brandsma was physically very fragile. And yet, mentally, he was unbroken. Spiritually, he knew himself to be united with the Crucified Lord.

May Titus' model of contemplative resistance remain a great source of inspiration for all who find themselves facing a personal crisis. And for all of us today, who are now facing crises that are clearly 'global', may Titus be for us a sign that points to that resolute hope and trust in the 'indwelling God'. Just like Titus, may we become 'a bright radiance' in the midst of a broken world.



YouTube: <https://carmelites.ie/saints/blessed-titus-brandsma/>

A series of leaflets on various aspects of the life and witness of St Titus Brandsma was produced for the canonisation. The Australian Carmelite province has reproduced them in very attractive formats, downloadable from <https://carmelites.org.au/titus-brandsma-leaflets-prayer-cards>. Two of them are set out below: *Adoro Te – Hidden God*; and *Mary, the Mother of God*. The full series is as follows: 1. *A Brief Biography*; 2. *Education*; 3. *Eucharist*; 4. *Witness to Forgiveness*; 5. *A Poet of the Cross*; 6. *Adoro Te – Hidden God*; 7. *Contemplative & Martyr*; 8. *O Jesus When I Gaze on You*; 9. *Mary, Mother of God*; 10. *Clash of Ideas*; 11. *A Tale of Two Cells*.



# Titus Brandsma Carmelite and Martyr

## MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

Anno Brandsma was born in the Dutch province of Friesland in 1881. He joined the Carmelite Order in 1898 taking his father's name, Titus, as his religious name. He made his First Profession in October 1899 and was ordained priest on 17 June 1905. As an academic Titus specialised in philosophy and mysticism. He helped to found the Catholic University of Nijmegen in 1923 and later served as *Rector Magnificus*.

In the years before the Second World War Titus was openly critical of the Nazi ideology. During the occupation of Holland, he defended the freedom of the Press and of the Catholic Press in particular. Titus was arrested in January 1942 and sent to Dachau Concentration Camp where he was killed by lethal injection on 26 July 1942. He was beatified as a martyr in 1985 and canonised on 15 May 2022.



### To Jesus with Mary

Our Lady held a special importance for Titus Brandsma throughout his life. As a young boy Titus became familiar with various Marian practices including the rosary which the Brandsma family prayed on a daily basis. This Marian devotion would last a lifetime for Titus who even in prison organised several rosaries for himself when his one was taken from him.

In addition, Titus became familiar with the idea that we find Jesus by going through Mary. With Mary as a mother and as a sister, he followed Jesus on his way to the heavenly father.

#### ▼ Young Titus with the Blessed Virgin Mary



### My soul magnifies the Lord

Titus entered the Carmelite novitiate out of his desire for a more intense prayer life and because of the Order's great devotion to Our Lady. Later, Titus places on his ordination card the words of Mary in her Magnificat:

*My soul magnifies the Lord. He who is mighty has done great things to me.*  
(Luke 1: 46, 49)

During his Roman years (1905-1909) Titus visited the catacombs, where an ancient image of Our Lady, called the *Orante* impressed him. This he refers to as the image of the praying Church and to the image of Mary who sings her Magnificat. In a Marian magazine, *Carmelrozet*, which he co-founded, Titus wrote dozens of articles to foster love for Mary through an increased knowledge about the different forms of veneration of Mary, her feast days, Christian artwork and the teaching of the church and councils on Mary.

### Mary's divine motherhood

Of special importance to Titus was the Council of Ephesus (431) which had declared the dogma of Mary as *Theotokos* (God-bearer). Titus reflected on the divine motherhood of Mary writing:

*In Mary we see the most beautiful image of our union with God. She, the bride of the Holy Spirit, teaches us how we also, though not in the fullness of grace but in a wider sense, must be brides of God, in order that he be born in us, united – also in us – with human nature, our human nature. Under the beneficent influence of the Holy Spirit we must be born to a new life with God, who lives in us more than we live of ourselves.*

Increasing our devotion to Mary means learning to imitate the attitudes she has in her life. And so, we too are called to become like Mary, bearers of the divine life.

By following her example, we should obviously be other Marys. We ought to let Mary live in us. Mary should not stand outside the Carmelite, but the Carmelite should live a life so similar to Mary's that the Carmelite should live with, in, through, and for Mary.



## Prayer

God of peace and justice,  
you open our hearts to love  
and to the joy of the Gospel  
even in the midst of countless forms of  
violence that take away the dignity of  
our brothers and sisters,  
fill us with your grace,  
so that like Saint Titus Brandsma,  
we may in tenderness see beyond  
the horrors of inhumanity  
and contemplate your glory  
that shines forth through  
the martyrs of every age,  
and so become your authentic witnesses  
in the world of today.  
Amen.

## Mary, Hope of all Carmelites

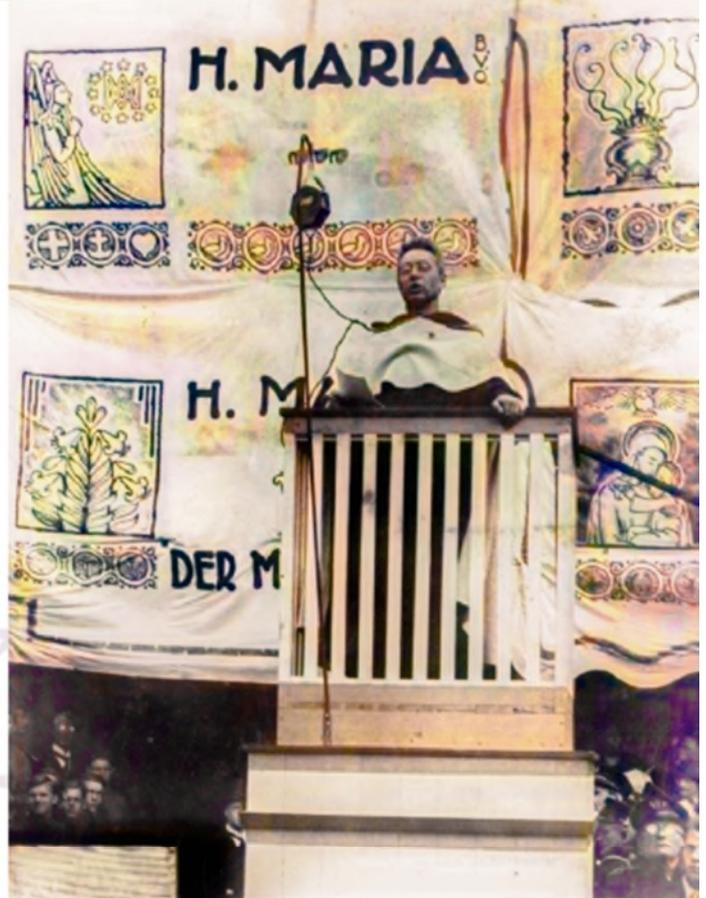
In 1939 Titus wrote a Way of the Cross for a pilgrimage. At the ninth station, when Jesus falls under the Cross for the third time, he prays:

*O Mary, who has observed with admiration and motherly compassion the final efforts of your Son, help me to remember this when the fulfilling of my task in life becomes too heavy.*

Perhaps this prayer was with him when he was arrested in January 1942 and sent initially to the prison of Scheveningen. There Titus transforms his prison cell into a Carmelite cell with a picture of Christ and a picture of Mary.

*In the part of the breviary we are using now and which was luckily left to me is the beautiful picture of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. So now my breviary is standing wide open on the topmost of the two corner shelves, to the left of the bed. When sitting at my table I only have to look a bit to the right and I can see her beautiful picture, while laying in bed my eye is firstly caught by that star-bearing Madonna, Hope of all Carmelites.*

With the eyes of his heart fixed on Mary and with Jesus at his side Titus continued his own way of the cross from Scheveningen to Dachau. There he died on 26 July 1942. May his example inspire us to live a Christian and Marian life.



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For further information on Titus Brandsma please visit  
[carmelites.org.au/titusbrandsma](http://carmelites.org.au/titusbrandsma)



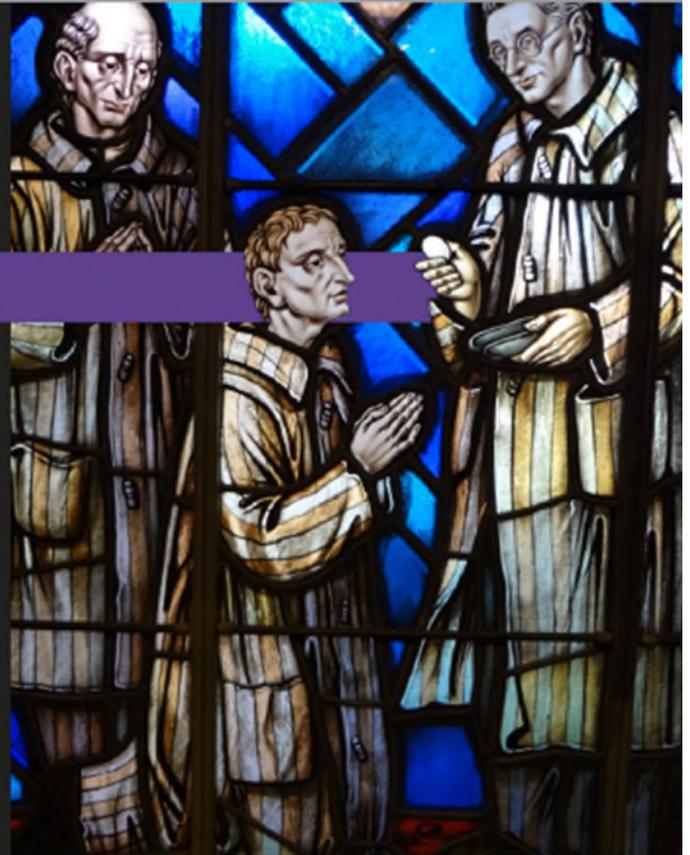


## Titus Brandsma Carmelite and Martyr

### ADORO TE - HIDDEN GOD

Anno Brandsma was born in the Dutch province of Friesland in 1881. He joined the Carmelite Order in 1898 taking his father's name, Titus, as his religious name. He made his First Profession in October 1899 and was ordained priest on 17 June 1905. As an academic Titus specialised in philosophy and mysticism. He helped to found the Catholic University of Nijmegen in 1923 and later served as *Rector Magnificus*.

In the years before the Second World War Titus was openly critical of the Nazi ideology. During the occupation of Holland, he defended the freedom of the Press and of the Catholic Press in particular. Titus was arrested in January 1942 and sent to Dachau Concentration Camp where he was killed by lethal injection on 26 July 1942. He was beatified as a martyr in 1985 and canonised on 15 May 2022.



## Hidden God

Many of us experience God as hidden. There is nothing new in this. It is not something unique to our time. Already, two and a half thousand years ago, Isaiah sighed in exile: *"Truly, You are a hidden God"*. (Is 45:15). Throughout the centuries, people of faith have repeated such words to the Lord, up to and including Titus Brandsma. For Titus, the hiddenness of God was a deeply lived reality.



In his prison cell at Scheveningen, Titus prayed the well-known hymn *Adoro Te* after lunch. In his account of his time in prison, *My Cell*, he tells us about this: *"The Adoro Te has become my favourite prayer. Frequently I sing it softly and this helps me to make a spiritual communion"*.

Titus knew this song by heart. He prayed it daily and every Saturday evening he sang it with his fellow Carmelites during the Saturday Station of Our Lady. The hymn touched Titus deeply. He was familiar with it. He carried it with him into prison. There Titus sang it "softly", on his knees, after his lunch of soup and bread. Prayerfully it dawned on him: really, God is hidden. Not now and then. Not here and there. Always and everywhere, God is hidden.

After this moment of worship, Titus lit a pipe, walked to and fro in his small cell, and filed his nails, which by now had become *"too long and I could not find the scissors"*. God, for Titus, is hidden in the most ordinary things: a pipe of tobacco, walking to and fro, filing his nails.

God's hidden presence is hopeful for those who have come to know it and to live from it. Seeing his hiddenness can even become so familiar to us that it makes us happy. Our God does not come like a jack-in-the-box. He is not an Easter egg hidden somewhere or a magic trick.

In the Dachau concentration camp, Titus' hidden relationship with God is severely tested. *Adoro Te* drags him through it. When the camp guard has beaten him, he prays the *Adoro Te* together with his fellow Carmelite, Rafaël Tjihuis. Hurt in his frail body, he remained standing in God's hidden presence.



▲ Carmelite students visit Dachau Concentration Camp in 2018

## Adoro Te

Godhead here in hiding whom I do adore  
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more.  
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart  
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.

Seeing, touching, tasting are in thee deceived;  
How says trusty hearing? that shall be believed;  
What God's Son has told me, take for truth I do;  
Truth himself speaks truly or there's nothing true.

On the cross thy godhead made no sign to men;  
Here thy very manhood steals from human ken:  
Both are my confession, both are my belief,  
And I pray the prayer made by the dying thief.

I am not like Thomas, wounds I cannot see,  
But I plainly call thee Lord and God as he:  
This faith each day deeper be my holding of,  
Daily make me harder hope and dearer love.

O thou, our reminder of the Crucified,  
Living Bread, the life of us for whom he died,  
Lend this life to me, then; feed and feast my mind,  
There be thou the sweetness man was meant to find.

Like what tender tales tell of the Pelican,  
Bathe me, Jesus Lord, in what thy bosom ran--  
Blood that but one drop of has the pow'r to win  
All the world forgiveness of its world of sin.

Jesus whom I look at shrouded here below,  
I beseech thee, send me what I thirst for so,  
Some day to gaze on thee face to face in light  
And be blest forever with thy glory's sight.

Attributed to St Thomas Aquinas; translation G.M. Hopkins.

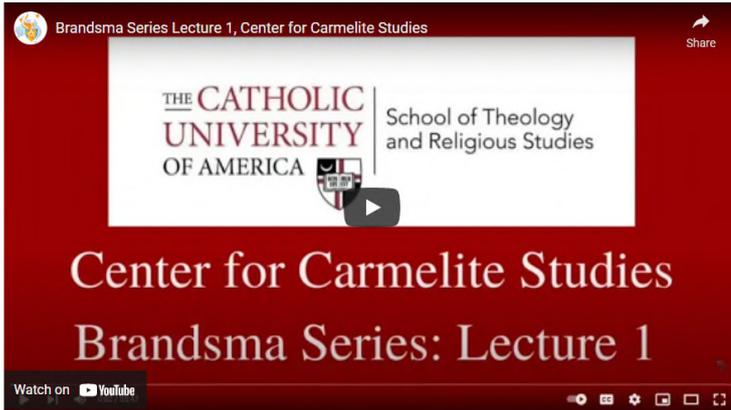


## Prayer

We ask you, Lord,  
that, in the imitation of Saint Titus Brandsma,  
we may know how to be close to you,  
near to the cross, and that we may always feel you  
near to us in our crosses, both large and small,  
as our Friend, our Companion on the journey,  
and our Redeemer.  
May the cross always be for us a sign of love,  
of generous and total surrender to the cause of life,  
of solidarity and compassion for all  
May we always say, in all the circumstances of life,  
with joy and full confidence in you..  
*Hail to the Cross, our only hope. Amen.*

Mary, Mother of Carmel, pray for us.  
Titus Brandsma, Carmelite martyr,  
intercede for us.





Fr Michael Driscoll, O.Carm., who was on the pilgrimage to Rome and who gave a talk at St Patrick's Church during the catechesis before the canonisation, was cured through the intercession of Titus Brandsma. In this first of 3 lectures Fr Michael Driscoll, O.Carm., talks about his miraculous cure from malignant cancer through the intercession of Titus Brandsma. Fr Michael is still cancer free 18 years after his initial diagnosis. Fr Mario Esposito outlines the steps the Church and the Carmelites took to verify Fr Michael's cure as a genuine miracle. This lecture series is hosted by the Center for Carmelite Studies at the Catholic University of America. <https://www.carmelites.org.au/item/1099-titus-brandsma-series-lecture-1>

## ***Thérèse & Titus – Saints of the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin***

**From an essay of Mary Heffernan, OCDS, for 'Titus Brandsma' unit at Carmelite Institute of Britain & Ireland.**

Thérèse was ardently Eucharistic from a very early age. There are a number of references to the Eucharist throughout her writings - *Story of a Soul*, her *Letters*, her *Prayers* and *Poems*. As a small child she loved above all the processions in honour of the Blessed Sacrament:

*What a joy it was for me to throw flowers beneath the feet of God! Before allowing them to fall to the ground, I threw them as high as I could and I was never so happy as when I saw my roses touch the sacred monstrance.<sup>1</sup>*

Thérèse tells us her First Communion was like a fusion. She and Jesus "were no longer two, Thérèse had vanished as a drop of water is lost in the immensity of the ocean. Jesus alone remained." "Ah! how sweet was that first kiss of Jesus. It was a kiss of love" and she understood herself to be loved.<sup>2</sup> It was a spousal union. Shortly after her First Communion Therese was given the grace to understand the important role suffering would play in her life:

*I felt born within my heart a great desire to suffer and at the same time the interior assurance that Jesus reserved a great number of crosses for me. I felt myself flooded with consolations so great that I look upon them as one of the greatest graces of my life. Suffering became my attraction.<sup>3</sup>*

Until being taken prisoner Titus had never been without daily Mass, having been formed in the habit by his parents. As a Carmelite he developed an intense Eucharistic spirituality which was to characterise his life. He made his First Communion at the customary age of eleven and around that time expressed his desire to become a priest. Five months later he left home for the junior seminary at Megan where he was privileged to carry a lantern in the Sacramental Procession, walking behind the priest who carried the monstrance under the baldachin.<sup>4</sup> Titus later described the Eucharist as being like "fresh air" and as necessary to him as having air to breathe. He wrote in a letter:

*This is the best treat of fresh air during the whole day. If I didn't have this divine nourishment every morning, by midday I would have forgotten Our Lord.<sup>5</sup>*

Titus believed that in the same way as breakfast was necessary for his physical well-being so the Eucharist was necessary for his spiritual nourishment "in the strength of which we walk in life's journey here below."<sup>6</sup> On another occasion perhaps inspired by St Teresa's "Four Waters" he described the Eucharist as being like a font in the middle of our mystical garden, watering the flowers and plants that grow there.

Because of a scrupulous mentality and fear daily reception of the Eucharist was not permitted in the time of Thérèse. Saddened by this she wrote:

<sup>1</sup> *Story of a Soul*, p.41

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.77

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p.79

<sup>4</sup> Dolle, *Encountering God in the Abyss*, p.15

<sup>5</sup> *CIBI Course Notes: SO5*, 13.1

<sup>6</sup> Titus Brandsma, O.Carm. *Carmelite Mysticism Historical Sketches*. (Darien, Illinois: The Carmelite Press), 1986, Growth of Contemplative Life in the Desert by Eucharistic Food, para. 2



*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!*<sup>7</sup>

Largely influenced by a letter to her cousin, Marie Guérin,<sup>8</sup> who suffered from scruples, Pope St Pius X later encouraged the frequent and daily reception of Holy Communion.<sup>9</sup>



Although it was forbidden to show any outward sign of religion, during his time in Amersfoort Titus used to hold a form of Sunday "service" concluding with a form of spiritual Holy Communion. Looking at each of his listeners in turn, he said to each of them in Latin: "*Corpus Domini ...* (The Body of our Lord, Jesus Christ, keep your soul unto life everlasting)."<sup>10</sup> Honouring the spirit of the Carmelite Rule Titus had begun the practice of reciting the Mass prayers and making a Spiritual Communion during his time at Scheveningen, thus uniting himself spiritually with the friars at Nijmegen. By means of the Sunday "service" and spiritually offering the "Eucharist" to his fellow prisoners Titus "gave them the strength to find themselves again"<sup>11</sup> and gave a supernatural meaning to their imprisonment.<sup>12</sup>

According to witnesses who miraculously survived Dachau Titus secretly received Communion a few times during his final weeks in Dachau. On one occasion he was carrying a communion waver hidden in his glasses case when he was accosted by one of the guards for not cleaning his feet properly and was severely beaten. Asked by his friend Brother Raphael if he hurt badly, Titus responded "Oh, I knew Whom I had with me," and showed Brother Raphael the spectacle case containing the Blessed Sacrament, tightly squeezed under his left arm. Together they recited the *Adoro Te* and Titus gave the Benediction with the sacred Host hidden in the glasses case. From two in the morning Titus, unable to sleep, spent the night in peaceful adoration. Titus knew himself strengthened by the realisation that Christ was with him and was willing to risk all to receive Holy Communion.

Thérèse received Holy Communion for the last time on 19 August 1897.<sup>13</sup> The impossibility of not receiving Communion because of her constant coughing and extreme weakness did not sadden her. With total surrender she said, "Without a doubt, it's a great grace to receive the sacraments; but when God doesn't allow it, it's good just the same; everything is a grace."<sup>14</sup>

Miraculously cured by a special grace of a mysterious illness at the age of ten by "Our Lady of the Smile"<sup>15</sup> Thérèse always had a very tender and intense love for the Blessed Virgin:

*From the first moments of my life,  
You took me in your arms.  
Ever since that day, dear Mother,  
You've protected me here below.*<sup>16</sup>

On the afternoon of her First Communion, perhaps because she had lost her mother at such a young age, Thérèse was chosen to make the Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin on behalf of her companions.<sup>17</sup> Not wishing to be less a child of her heavenly Mother than her sisters had been, on 31 May 1886, Thérèse, then thirteen, was received as a Child of Mary before the Altar of the Blessed Virgin at the Benedictine Abbey where she had earlier attended school and made her First Holy Communion.<sup>18</sup>

"We know very well that the Blessed Virgin is Queen of Heaven and earth," Thérèse said, "but she is more Mother than Queen."<sup>19</sup> Thérèse rejected those images of Mary which exalt her greatness without taking her earthly life into account.<sup>20</sup>

*For a sermon on the Blessed Virgin to please me and do me any good, I must see her real life, not her imagined life. I'm sure that her real life was very simple. They show her to us as unapproachable, but they should present her as imitable, bringing out her virtues, saying that she lived by faith just like ourselves, giving proofs of this from the Gospel.*<sup>21</sup>

The last poem she wrote, "Why I love you, O Mary,"<sup>22</sup> is a beautiful reflection on the life of Our Blessed Lady as revealed in the Gospels and a tender expression of Thérèse's intimate and childlike relationship with her.

<sup>7</sup> *Story of a Soul*, p.104.

<sup>8</sup> St Thérèse of Lisieux. *Letters: General Correspondence Volume 1*. Translated from the Original Manuscripts by John Clark, OCD. (Washington, DC: ICS Publication, 1982), Letter 92, 30 May 1889.

<sup>9</sup> Pius X *Sacra Trindentina*, On Frequent and Daily Reception of Holy Communion, 20 December 1905.

<sup>10</sup> *CIBI Course Notes: SO5*, 13.3.

<sup>11</sup> Dolle, *Encountering God in the Abyss*, p.135.

<sup>12</sup> Clarke, *Titus Brandsma* Ch. 8 Number 58 in the hell of Amersfoort.

<sup>13</sup> *Story of a Soul*, p.266.

<sup>14</sup> *Her Last Conversations*, 5 June 1897 p.57, *Story of a Soul* p.266.

<sup>15</sup> *Story of a Soul*, pp.65-66.

<sup>16</sup> *The Poetry of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Song of Gratitude to Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, Poem 7, 16 July 1894, p.57.

<sup>17</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 78.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, pp.87- 88.

<sup>19</sup> *Her Last Conversations*, 21 August 1897, p.161.

<sup>20</sup> Johan Bergstrom-Allen, T.O.C & Wilfrid McGreal, O.Carm. Ed. *The Gospel Sustains me : The word of God in the life and love of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*. (St Albert's Press & Edizioni Carmelitane, 2009), p.77.

<sup>21</sup> *Her Last Conversations*, 21 August 1897, p.161.

<sup>22</sup> *The Poetry of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, Poem 54 Why I love You O Mary!, (May 1897), p.215.



Anno Sjoerd (Titus) Brandsma  
23 februari 1881 - 26 juli 1942

Titus would not have been a true Carmelite if he did not have a tender yet genuine love for the Mother of Carmel. He thought and spoke of Mary with a deep love, recognising that in God's plan of Redemption Jesus and Mary could not be separated. He regarded the Blessed Virgin Mary as the most perfect model of union and intimacy with God and through our imitation of her we are drawn into a close union with her. For this reason Titus loved to wear the habit of Carmel. On one occasion when someone remarked his white cloak made him conspicuous when he should be seen as humble, he remarked: "My friend, don't be amazed that I am so happy to wear this cloak. It is a sign of Mary's protection. I have so much trust, actually certainty of her help!"<sup>23</sup> As an eleven-year-old, Titus was convinced he had been cured of a serious illness by the Mother of God through the rosary and the brown scapular.<sup>24</sup>

The nurse, who administered the "finishing injection" in the notorious hospital at Dachau, testified at his beatification process that he had given her his rosary at the end and said, "What a poor girl you are. I shall pray for you."<sup>25</sup> His response, the nurse said, was instrumental in bringing her back to the practice of her faith.<sup>26</sup>

Mary Heffernan, OCDS, President, St Joseph's Community, Wellington, New Zealand.

If you would like to read the whole of Mary Heffernan's essay, please let me know and I will pass on your request to Mary. Mary has also written another essay entitled: *St. Titus Brandsma O.Carm.: A Mystic in Conflict*, which might be of interest to readers.

## The Eucharist and Contemplation

An often-repeated spiritual teaching of Titus Brandsma is that *'the mystical contemplative life is a fruit of the Eucharistic life.'* The Eucharist is what strengthens us to receive the gift of contemplation from God. And such contemplation leads to action. Titus told a group of young people: *'Good deeds no longer suffice; they must originate in the consciousness that our union with God obliges us to perform them.'*



Titus Brandsma was always keen to educate people regarding their call to be mystics. He defined mysticism as: "a special union of God with human being, whereby they become aware of God's presence and also become one with God." Titus understood mysticism as a call directed to all and spoke of an everyday mysticism, convinced that God is the ground of our being and can be encountered always and everywhere and in our neighbour. His lectures on Carmelite mysticism, delivered in the United States in 1935, are a true classic of twentieth-century spirituality.

*Precisely because Mary is wholly one with and like to God, we must be mirrored in Mary ... we must make ourselves one with her, in order to share wholly in her intercourse and union with God. ...*

*God wills it so. He has appointed Mary to be our mediatrix ... [and] the proper understanding of it [is] no alienation from or neglect of God but is the way to an ever more intimate union ... The more she [Maria Petyt] is ... turned into her, the more she will share in Mary's grace through the communion of saints and be overwhelmed by God with his gifts. Her transformation into Mary is for her the key to God's treasure. - Titus Brandsma, 'Maria Petyt', in *In search of Living Water: Essays on the Mystical Heritage of the Netherlands*, trans. Joachim Smet (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 368.*

<sup>23</sup> *Course Notes: SO5, 6.2* (Carmelite Institute of Britain and Ireland).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 1.1.

<sup>25</sup> Dolle, *Encountering God in the Abyss*, p.186.

<sup>26</sup> *Essays on Titus Brandsma*.