



Carmelite Newsletter

Australia, New Zealand & Oceania

1 January 2025

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

"May God bless us and make his face to shine upon us." We proclaimed these words from Psalm 66 after hearing in the first reading the ancient priestly blessing upon the people of the covenant. It is especially significant that at the start of every new year God sheds upon us, his people, the light of his Holy Name, the Name pronounced three times in the solemn form of biblical blessing. Nor is it less

significant that to the Word of God – who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (*Jn 1:14*) as "the true light that enlightens every man" (1:9) – is given, as today's Gospel tells us, the Name of Jesus eight days after his birth (cf. *Lk 2:21*).

The biblical texts, especially the one just read from the Gospel of Luke, ask us to contemplate the interior peace of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. During the days in which "she gave birth to her first-born son" (*Lk 2:7*), many unexpected things occurred: not only the birth of the Son but, even before, the tiring journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, not finding room at the inn, the search for a chance place to stay for the night; then the song of the angels and the unexpected visit of the shepherds. In all this, however, Mary remains even tempered, she does not get agitated, she is not overcome by events greater than herself; in silence she considers what happens, keeping it in her mind and heart, and pondering it calmly and serenely. This is the

interior peace which we ought to have amid the sometimes tumultuous and confusing events of history, events whose meaning we often do not grasp and which disconcert us.

The Gospel passage finishes with a mention of the circumcision of Jesus. According to the Law of Moses, eight days after birth, baby boys were to be circumcised and then given their name. Through his messenger, God himself had said to Mary – as well as to Joseph – that the Name to be given to the child was "Jesus" (cf. *Mt 1:21*; *Lk 1:31*); and so it came to be. The Name which God had already chosen, even before the child had been conceived, is now officially conferred upon him at the moment of circumcision. This also changes Mary's identity once and for all: she becomes "the mother of Jesus that is the mother of the Saviour, of Christ, of the Lord. Jesus is not a man

like any other, but the Word of God, one of the Divine Persons, the Son of God: therefore the Church has given Mary the title *Theotokos* or Mother of God.

The first reading reminds us that peace is a gift from God and is linked to the splendour of the face of God, according to the text from the Book of Numbers, which hands down the blessing used by the priests of the People of Israel in their liturgical assemblies. This blessing repeats three times the Holy Name of God,



a Name not to be spoken, and each time it is linked to two words indicating an action in favour of man: "The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (6:24-26). So peace is the summit of these six actions of God in our favour, in which he turns towards us the splendour of his face.

For sacred Scripture, contemplating the face of God is the greatest happiness: "You gladden him with the joy of your face" (*Ps 21:7*). From the contemplation of the face of God are born joy, security and peace. But what does it mean concretely to contemplate the face of the Lord, as understood in the New Testament? It means knowing him directly, in so far as is possible in this life, through Jesus Christ in whom he is revealed. To rejoice in the splendour of God's face means penetrating the mystery of his Name made known to us in Jesus, understanding something of his interior life and will, so that we

live according to his plan of love for humanity. In the second reading, taken from Galatians (4:4-7), Saint Paul says as much as he describes the Spirit who, in our inmost hearts, cries: "Abba! Father!" It is the cry that rises from the contemplation of the true face of God, from the revelation of the mystery of his Name. Jesus declares, "I have manifested thy name to men"

(*Jn 17:6*). God's Son made man has let us know the Father, he has let us know the hidden face of the Father through his visible human face; by the gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts, he has led us to understand that, in him, we too are children of God, as Saint Paul says in the passage we have just heard: "The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, 'Abba, Father'" (*Gal 4:6*). Here, dear brothers and sisters, is the foundation of our peace: the certainty of contemplating in Jesus Christ the splendour of the face of God the Father, of being sons in the Son, and thus of having, on life's journey, the same security that a child feels in the arms of a loving and all-powerful Father. The splendour of the face of God shining upon Us, granting us, peace, is the manifestation of his fatherhood: the Lord turns his face to us, he reveals himself as our

Father and grants us peace. Here is the principle of that profound peace – "peace with God", firmly linked to faith and grace, as Saint Paul says (cf. *Rom 5:2*). Nothing can take this peace from believers, not even the difficulties and sufferings of life. Indeed, sufferings, trials and darkness do not undermine but build up our hope, which does not deceive because "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (5:5). May the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God whom today we venerate, help us to contemplate the face of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. May she sustain us and accompany us in this New Year: and obtain for us and for the whole world the gift of peace. Amen!

From the homily of Pope Benedict XVI, 1 January 2013.



Canonisation of the Carmelite Martyrs of Compiègne



The Carmelite nuns of Compiègne, the Prioress Mother Teresa of St Augustine, and companions, were guillotined in Paris on 17 July 1794 at the Place du Trône Renversé (Square of the Overturned Throne, now called Place de la Nation), less than 4 kilometres east of the recently restored and reconsecrated Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris. They were declared saints by the Holy Father on 18 December 2024 by a process called equipollent canonisation, because of their acknowledged and widespread renown, without the normal requirement of the post beatification miracle. They had been beatified as martyrs on 27 May 1906 by St Pius X. The community had been expelled from their monastery, as part of the anti-religious policies of the French Revolution to try to abolish religion. Inspired and supported by their prioress, the community, though dispersed, continued to live their religious consecration and offered themselves daily for the peace of France and the Church. They were eventually arrested and tried for treason. On their way to the guillotine in open carts, called tumbrels, along with other condemned prisoners, they chanted the Divine Office and various hymns. Arriving at the place of execution, the prioress intoned the *Te Deum* and the hymn to the Holy Spirit, the *Veni Creator*, as at their profession, then renewed the vows of their baptism and religious profession. After seeking permission to die from her prioress, the novice, St Constance, mounted the scaffold unaided



and began singing the *Laudate Dominum Omnes Gentes*. The chant was taken up by the other nuns and continued with decreasing numbers until the last of the community, the prioress, was guillotined. Absolute silence prevailed the whole time that the executions were proceeding. The period of intense executions, known as the Reign of Terror, ended 10 days after their execution. Their heroic sacrifice inspired Gertrud von le Fort's novella, the play by Georges Bernanos, *The Dialogue of the Carmelites* and the oft performed eponymous opera by Francis Poulenc.

The names of our newest Carmelite saints are listed below.

- Madeleine-Claudine Ledoine (Mother Teresa of St. Augustine), prioress, b. in Paris, 22 September 1752, professed 16 or 17 May, 1775.
- Marie-Anne (or Antoinette) Brideau (Mother St. Louis), sub-prioress, b. at Belfort, 7 December 1752, professed 3 September, 1771.
- Marie-Anne Piedcourt (Sister of Jesus Crucified), choir-nun, b. 1715, professed 1737; on mounting the scaffold she said: *I forgive you as heartily as I wish God to forgive me*.
- Anne-Marie-Madeleine Thouret (Sister Charlotte of the Resurrection), sacristan, b. at Mouy, 16 September 1715, professed 19 August, 1740, twice sub-prioress in 1764 and 1778. Her portrait is reproduced opposite p. 2 of Miss Willson's work.
- Marie-Antoniette or Anne Hanisset (Sister Teresa of the Holy Heart of Mary), b. at Rheims in 1740 or 1742, professed in 1764.
- Marie-Françoise Gabrielle de Croissy (Mother Henriette of Jesus), b. in Paris, 18 June 1745, professed 22 February 1764, prioress from 1779 to 1785.
- Marie-Gabrielle Trézel (Sister Teresa of St. Ignatius), choir-nun, b. at Compiègne, 4 April 1743, professed 12 December 1771.
- Rose-Chrétien de la Neuville, widow, choir-nun (Sister Julia Louisa of Jesus), b. at Loreau (or Evreux), in 1741, professed probably in 1777.
- Anne Petras (Sister Mary Henrietta of Providence), choir-nun, b. at Cajarc (Lot), 17 June 1760, professed 22 October 1786.
- Concerning Sister Euphrasia of the Immaculate Conception accounts vary. Miss Willson says that her name was Marie Claude Cyprienne Brard, and that she was born 12 May 1736; Pierre, that her name was Catherine Charlotte Brard, and that she was born 7 September 1736. She was born at Bourth, and professed in 1757.
- Marie-Geneviève Meunier (Sister Constance), novice, b. 28 May 1765, or 1766, at St. Denis, received the habit 16 December 1788. She mounted the scaffold singing "Laudate Dominum". In addition to the above, three lay sisters suffered and two *tourières*. The lay sisters are:
- Angélique Roussel (Sister Mary of the Holy Ghost), lay sister, b. at Fresnes, 4 August, 1742, professed 14 May 1769;
- Marie Dufour (Sister St. Martha), lay sister, b. at Beaune, 1 or 2 October 1742, entered the community in 1772;
- Julie or Juliette Vérolot (Sister St. Francis Xavier), lay sister, b. at Laignes or Lignièrès, 11 January 1764, professed 12 Jan., 1789.



For further details see [Vatican News](#); [Martyrs of Compiègne Wikipedia](#). The book by William Bush, *To Quell the Terror: The True Story of the Carmelite Martyrs of Compiègne*, is available [ICS Publications](#) in Washington DC.



Celebrations for Angela's definitive promise – Mary Immaculate OC Community, Sydney

On Sunday, 1 December 2024, Angela Finnigan OCDS made her definitive (final) promise as a member of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites during Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr Gerard Moran OCD at St Augustine's church in Balmain, in the presence of many of the members of the Mary Immaculate Community. Angela chose as her devotional title "St Mary of the Incarnation", which was very fitting for the season of Advent. The community then had a festive lunch to celebrate Angela's final profession and in anticipation of the Solemnity of Christmas.



Ormiston Carmel of the Holy Spirit - Highlights of 2024

It has been yet another busy year - Sister Matilda celebrated her Diamond Jubilee of Profession and Sr Moira attended a world-wide meeting of Carmelite nuns in Rome – for these see Newsletter No. 11.

Sr. Stephanie received the Carmelite Habit in August. We welcome her with joy as a novice in our midst.



Nine sisters from across the region met at our Carmel for a Formators' Meeting



Our Community hosted two events this year for our nuns' Association: a Council meeting in July, and a Formators meeting in November. Our Region is very diverse, encompassing numerous countries and cultures. Saint Teresa would have smiled to hear the various accents sharing time together.



MELBOURNE OCDS COMMUNITY HOST EXPO ON ST THÉRÈSE IN ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

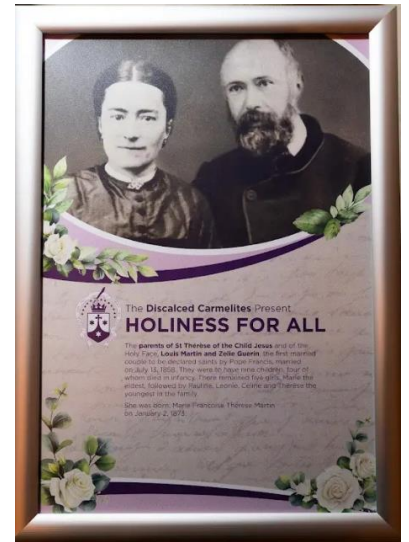
The Expo on St Thérèse at St Patrick's Cathedral was open from Tuesday the 1st October and, at the invitation of the Dean, was extended until after the celebrations of All Saints and All Souls on Monday 4th November, 2024, which allowed many more people the opportunity to visit the Expo. Attendances exceeded expectations and many were exposed to the life and teaching of St Thérèse. A number of OCDS members were on hand for many hours to help with enquiries.

Two hundred and twenty four (224) books on St Thérèse were sold and stocks need to be regularly replenished. Initially 4,500 prayer cards, based on the various banners in the Expo, were available but all were distributed and a further 4,500 prayer cards were ordered. Prayer cards for Carmelite vocations were also available. Two hundred brochures, giving information about the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, were printed and a further 300 had to be printed. All the vocational brochures about the Carmelite nuns were used up and also a good number of brochures about the Discalced Carmelite friars.



There will be another Expo in the Cathedral in 2025 to celebrate the centenary of the canonisation of St Thérèse on the 17 May, running from 9 May until 26 May 2025. Mass to commemorate the centenary will be held at the Cathedral on 18 May at 11.00 am, which will be the televised Mass from the Cathedral for that day. The duration of the 2025 Expo has had to be curtailed slightly because of many other events planned for St Patrick's Cathedral during the 2025 Jubilee Year, *Pilgrims of Hope*. It is expected that the Expo will be offered

to various parishes and schools in Melbourne and throughout the state of Victoria.



FIRST EVER WORLD MEETING OF OCDS IN AVILA: 23 TO 26 SEPTEMBER 2026



In a letter dated 10 November to the Secular Order, our Father General, announced that a meeting would be held in Avila from 23 to 26 September 2026. The meeting will have as its theme: **Witnesses to the Experience of God: Identity and Mission.** "This event will be a historical moment in the history of the OCDS and a unique opportunity to know each other, share our faith, renew our Carmelite charism, and strengthen the fraternal ties that unite us all as members of the Discalced Carmelite family. ... The program will include moments of prayer, reflection, conferences, and various spiritual and cultural activities, in an atmosphere of communion and celebration. We are sure that this meeting in the land of St. Teresa will be an enriching spiritual experience for all." The Full text of the letter will be included in the next Regional Newsletter. Pre-registration is open [at this link](#) until 31 March 2025.



MY SISTER HAD NO DEVOTIONS

... the main thing is to remain in God's presence ...

To gaze on the face of God

This presence of God is in reality a contemplative presence, for contemplation consists primarily in being with God and gazing upon him. Here again, we would do well to drop some of our preconceived notions. Mediations, sentiments, feelings and so forth are entirely secondary, like the colour of the clothes we put on when we go to see someone. What matters to us is to see our friend's face.

This contact with God was very deep in St Thérèse. One day, in a conversation with [her sister] Sr. Geneviève [of the Holy Face] – I often spoke with her and obviously tried to learn all her secrets – she said to me:

My sister had no devotions.

Really? She had no devotions?

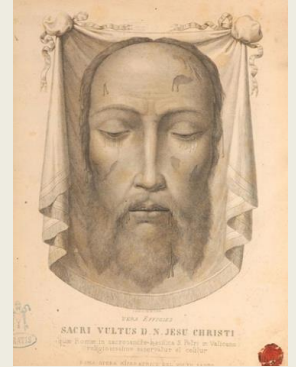
No, for example she did not share the popular devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Why not?

Because they turned it into a devotion, when it is really a form of worship, the worship of Love. Her own understanding went far beyond the usual practices, First Friday and so forth.

But what about the Holy Face?

Oh, she said: devotion to the Holy face was not a 'devotion'. When you love someone and you gaze at them, you look at their face, not their back or shoulders.



For Thérèse, devotion to the Holy Face meant looking at God, which was quite accurate and contemplative.

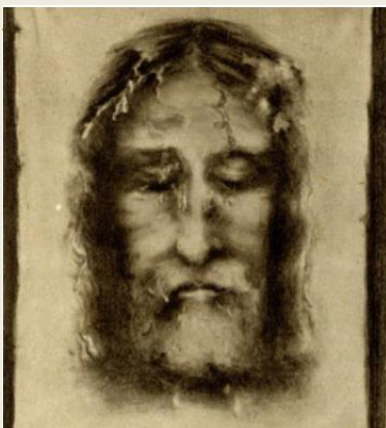
Thérèse saw Jesus and sought his face in the prophecies of Isaiah, in the Holy Face where he was sorrowful. Her devotion to the Holy Face was simply a form of devotion to the Person [of Jesus], for the face presents the person. She was quite right: *His face is my light, my devotion* (cf. *Last Conversations*, p. 135, 5-8-9; *Poems of St Thérèse*, No. 20)*. She saw God through his human form because there she found the reflection of divinity, together with the traces of his suffering. [* These references appear not to contain these words.]

Contemplation consists, then, in looking at God, regarding his face, regarding God himself. It is a simple gaze on Truth (*simplex intuitus veritatis*) [cf. *Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae, q. 180, a.6]. Thérèse looked at his face that she might see his sentiments and ways, might know his taste and conform to it. This was not for the sake of self-fulfillment but in order to give him pleasure. She too up the Gospels, too, searching in them for 'God's likeness' (*Procès ordinaire*, 275; cf. Phil 2:5).

Blessed Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus, *Under the Torrent of His Love*, Alba House, New York, 2000, pp. 38-40.

For further background and information see: [Boston Carmel](#), [The Holy Face](#), [National Catholic Reporter](#).

Sr. Geneviève Image of the Holy Face after the Shroud of Turin



One year after Saint Thérèse's death in 1898, the photographer Secondo Pia took the first photos of the Holy Shroud of Turin and made an incredible discovery. The dark yellow shadows visible on the linen cloth turned out to be a photographic negative. When the photographer developed the negatives, the 'positive' image of a man who underwent incredible sufferings appeared. He realised that the image on the shroud was not a painting, not a forgery, but a supernatural photo, created in the moment of His glorious resurrection. Pia's photos were published in newspapers worldwide, and a Frenchman, M. Guérin, wrote a book on the discovery: *Le Linceul du Christ (The Linen of Christ)*. During this time of reading, Sister Geneviève of the Holy Face had a vision. She heard Saint Thérèse speak to her: *Paint Him, paint a new Holy Face, paint Him as He was!* Sister Geneviève was an excellent painter. She spent hours

praying and meditating in front of the prints of Secondo Pia's photos of the Holy Shroud. Then she started to paint. She decided to use the iconography of Veronica (or "Holy Face") and just used a charcoal pencil. In 1904, she decided to print a limited number for visitors to the Carmel and for other Carmels in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. They have the imprint 'Carmel de Lisieux' and the year, 1904.



Sœur Geneviève de la Sainte Face



New from the Christchurch Carmel



First Profession of Sr Lauren of the Cross

We had the joy of Sr Lauren of the Cross making her First Profession as an extern sister on 15th October, a first for our Carmel. Bishop John Adams of Palmerston North Diocese, for whom she worked as a pastoral assistant, concelebrated the Mass, along with many other priests. Her welcoming presence for those who visit our monastery has been a great blessing, and now that she is professed, she will be sharing more of the treasures of Carmelite Spirituality with those interested.

Rebuilding the Chapel at Christchurch

When our founding sisters arrived in Christchurch in 1933, they built a temporary wooden chapel adjacent to the house they had bought. Their next building priority was to construct a monastery so they could accept vocations; this was completed in 1938. After World War II, more room was needed to house a growing community, so a further wing was added in 1950. Then there was the foundation to Samoa in 1959 to provide for. Over these decades the 'temporary' chapel has been lengthened several times. It stood up well to the earthquakes in 2010/2011.

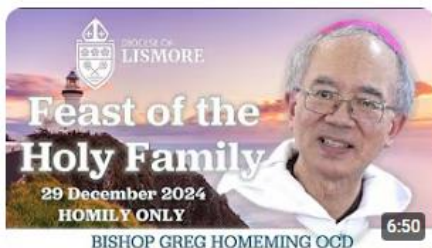


We have discovered that substantial changes are needed to bring it up to current fire compliance regulations, so we have taken the decision to rebuild it, making it wider and providing suitable exits. This will also give us the opportunity to use materials that require less maintenance, thus reducing long-term costs. Our main monastery building, built of brick in 1938, has required minimal exterior maintenance over the past almost nine decades, and has also stood up well to the earthquakes. A rebuild will also provide the opportunity to add some features

that will enhance its beauty, like stained glass windows, though some of these may need to be phased in over time. Our vision is that there will be a round Holy Spirit window high up in the sanctuary, shining down into the main body of the chapel. Arched windows along the sides will tell the story of the various Carmelite saints, as they have let God shine through them, seeking union with him in prayer. In the foyer we hope to have a window of Christ the King, our monastery's titular. We want our chapel to be a place where those who come are inspired to enter into that great loving conversation with God, which is prayer. A rebuild will come with a substantial cost, and for this reason we intend to raise funds, something we have not done for more than 65 years. We will be setting up a place on our website www.christchurchcarmel.org.nz to provide detailed information and updates of where the project is at. We are intending to launch this fundraising campaign early in 2025. We ask for your prayers that all will go according to God's will.

Summer homilies with Greg Homeming OCD, Bishop of Lismore

https://www.youtube.com/@LismoreDioceseAU/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=1



20 Day Pilgrimage - Exploring Carmelite Spirituality – September/October 2025

Fr. Adalbert Imperial OCD and Fr. John Pallipadan OCD will be leading this 20 day pilgrimage, leaving from Perth. Highlights include: Lisieux (feast of St Thérèse on 1 October); Segovia (tomb of St John of the Cross); Avila (15 October – feast of St Teresa); Lourdes (7 October – feast of Our Lady of the Rosary); free time in Madrid and Paris (an opportunity to visit the newly re-opened Notre Dame). This reasonably priced pilgrimage is filing fast.

If interested contact the friars at the Infant Jesus Priory 47 Wellington Road Morley WA 6062. Tel: (08) 9276 8497.



Jubilee Joy as Launceston Prioress renews her vows

By Wendy Shaw – republished and abridged from [Hobart Archdiocese website](https://www.hobart.catholic.edu.au/) – originally published on 10 December 2024

Mother Teresa Benedicta of the Cross OCD, the Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery in West Launceston was filled with gratitude, peace and joy as she marked 25 years of religious profession. Family and friends from interstate, parishioners and priests joined Mother Teresa Benedicta and the other nuns at a Jubilee Mass at the Carmel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 8 November. Mother Teresa Benedicta renewed her vows during Mass before the Regional Superior of the Disalced Carmelites, Fr Bernard Hancock OCD.

The Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving was very beautiful as we celebrated the feast that day of the young Carmelite St Elizabeth of the Trinity, a wonderful model of intimacy with God ...

More than anything, I wanted the Jubilee to be an opportunity to renew the gift of my whole self to the Lord for the sake of the Church in Tasmania, and this was summed up for me most movingly through the renewal of vows.

The Prioress explained that while she was filled with youthful enthusiasm 25 years ago, she now felt 'even more deeply humbled and overwhelmed with gratitude to the Lord for what He has done in my life and my complete unworthiness, a quarter of a century later.



This has blossomed into a deep joy that spurs me on to continue the journey with fresh desire and zeal, the most important part of which journey is yet to come.

Leading up to the jubilee day, Mother Teresa Benedicta made a ten-day silent retreat in the small hermitage in the monastery grounds to pray and reflect on the 'tremendous gift' of her call to Carmel.

Mother Teresa Benedicta had a happy childhood in Kyneton in Central Victoria, the elder of two daughters. She grew up in the 'beautiful context of a prayerful and practical faith' and enjoyed school, sport and reading. She sensed a possible call to religious life when she was 14. This grew stronger during her tertiary studies because of the joyful witness of a number of young religious and seminarians; and a feeling of being drawn to prayer and longing for greater silence and solitude for this reason. Her parish priest suggested a visit to the Launceston monastery for further

discernment. She entered the monastery 27 years ago, and made her profession two years later.

I knew I had found where I was meant to be.

The greatest source of joy for me as I look back over these 25 years of religious consecration is the Lord's fidelity, His love and mercy in my life that have enabled me to grow and flourish humanly and spiritually.

I derive tremendous peace and joy from the knowledge that through my vows I belong entirely to Christ, that He continually meets me in my weakness and struggle through prayer that transforms that weakness, and that this journey of prayer is leading me into ever deeper intimacy with Him.

But not only for my own sake; that this relationship of spousal love flows into prayer for others, especially priests, is also a great joy. I tried to summarize these sentiments by using a quote from Psalm 72 on my Jubilee commemorative card: 'To be near God is my happiness'.

Mother Teresa Benedicta is thankful to her parents for their faith and unwavering support and to the older Sisters who nurtured her vocation and taught her to follow Christ as a Carmelite.

I was the first to make vows in our community for 18 years and I give thanks at this time of jubilee joy that those Sisters were so faithful in living the charism and praying for vocations during those long years of vocational drought. I pray I will be as faithful and generous as they were.

For those sensing a call to follow Christ more closely in Carmel, Mother Teresa Benedicta says **Don't be afraid - trust in His love and in His choice of you, and step out in faith.** Her advice is to speak to a priest or religious who is joyful and strong in their vocation and spend time in silent prayer, listening to the Lord. **And take a leap of faith by getting in touch with us at Carmel to begin learning more about a call to Carmel.**

Mother Teresa Benedicta explained that the Carmelite seeks to live with and for God alone, but in so doing, she is deeply inserted into the very heart of the Church's mission to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people. Carmelite prayer has an apostolic focus, praying for the Church, the Holy Father, the Archbishop and priests, and the needs and intentions of all people, especially in Tasmania.

Mother Teresa Benedicta thanked the Tasmanian priests who concelebrated the Jubilee Mass with Fr Bernard; and the many friends of Carmel, especially in Tasmania, who have encouraged her vocation over the years through prayers and expressions of support. In his homily, Fr Bernard spoke of the important role Mother Teresa Benedicta has in God's church.

Mother, over 25 years ago you entered this Carmel which became your home your family life, your little piece of heaven in this corner of Launceston ...

Thank you, well done, good and faithful servant and now we look to the next 25 years of blessings and good health and grace as you continue to walk this wonderful journey which is Carmel.

Launceston Parish Priest Fr Leonard Caldera also congratulated the Prioress on her jubilee.

We wish Mother God's choicest blessing as she continues to live out her consecration in service to the church and our parish.



Supporting our Carmelites Nuns in the Congo

Aid to the Church in Need is committed to supporting religious sisters around the world. For example, ACN is supporting the Carmelite sisters in the Congolese city of Malole.



The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a troubled land. Despite this, in the heart of the African nation lies the oldest Carmelite convent in the whole of Africa. In 1934, six Carmelite sisters from Belgium founded their monastery in the Kasai Region of what was then called the Belgian Congo. The convent was dedicated to the Christ Child and was later transferred to the city of Malole in the Kananga Region in the heart of DRC.

Today there are 18 African religious sisters in the monastery. Their ages range from 21 to 88. The average age is around 40. Beautifully the Carmel is located close to a seminary. In this Carmel, the Carmelites focus their prayer particularly on the seminary, for vocations and the sanctification of the priestly ministry.

Violence and unrest are sadly very common in DRC. In 2017 this violence reached the convent and seminary. There was a local outbreak of violence. Both the monastery and seminary were attacked and looted. Part of the seminary was set on fire. We should pray that the perpetrators of the crime may realise the error of their ways and may return to faithfulness in God. A section of the seminary was burnt down but thankfully no one was killed or physically harmed in the attack.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated occurrence in DRC. Churches, convents and other Church facilities and buildings are frequently attacked. This is not the first time that the Carmelites have been attacked in DRC.

The local community is very happy to have the sisters in their midst praying for the local people and Church. Holy Mass is celebrated in the convent every day. The local people are very poor and are unable to fully support the Carmelites. For this reason, Aid to the Church in Need has pledged €5400 to help support this monastery of Carmelite nuns.



If you would like to donate, go to: <http://acnireland.org/journal/2021/4/21/acn-supporting-carmelites-in-drc>

Silent Retreat for OCDS Peace of Christ community, Christchurch, New Zealand

As a busy working mother of teenage daughters, I need more silence in my life. I also constantly desire to be closer to God, so for many weeks I felt a leap of excitement in my chest whenever I thought about the silent retreat I'd signed up for with the OCDS 'Peace of Christ' community with guests such as myself. I was eager to not only learn more about silent, contemplative prayer, but to truly immerse myself in it.



During the retreat, we were given an opportunity to draw a theme for our personal reflection. A box filled with folded pieces of paper sat in the main foyer. On each piece of paper was a quote. I closed my eyes and drew out a random choice. My theme was a gift from Saint Teresa of Avila. It read, *I can nourish myself on nothing but the truth*. This resonated deeply with me, as I had already been contemplating the importance of truth in my life. There are times when I avoid looking at the truth when it feels too hard or unpleasant. This meant I had much to contemplate in the silence and to discuss honestly with God.

The visiting retreat director, Fr Adalbert Imperial, OCD, structured the retreat around the multi-faceted theme of silence. There were conferences on the following topics: Silence in Daily Life; Silence in the New and Old Testaments; St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross on Silence; and Practical Ways to Incorporate Silence into Daily Life.

A more detailed account of this personal experience of the silent retreat can be viewed at: [Catholic Discovery NZ](https://www.catholicdiscovery.co.nz/).



St John of the Cross on Silence



Through hope and prayer, our traumas can be purified, leading to healing. During the retreat, I found that memories of old traumas resurfaced. I had been well-prepared for this, and was able to pray for the purification and healing that Saint John of the Cross describes.

St Teresa of Jesus on Silence



Making space for God allows His presence to become an integral part of us. In silent prayer, we can experience communion with the Trinity, going more deeply into ourselves, moving towards God, who is at the centre of our being. Silence makes us more open to receiving what God wants to give.

News from the OCDS and Carmelite nuns in Tonga

The Carmelite nuns held their elections on the 21 October 2024 at the Carmelite Monastery of St Teresa of Avila in Fahefa, Tonga, with Cardinal Mafi presiding. Sr M. Sonia was elected prioress; and Srs. Teresa, Stella & Pauline elected 1st, 2nd & 3rd councillors respectively.



The OCDS community in Tonga held their first monthly meeting with the new prioress, Mother Sonia, together with her Councillors. Sr Pauline is the OCDS spiritual assistant, replacing Sr. Stella.



Pope Francis venerated the relics of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus at the general audience on 18 December 2024. During the whole of the Holy Year of Hope, a relic of the St Thérèse (a foot bone within a statue seen on left) will be available for veneration at the French church in Rome, Santa Trinità deli Monti. For the Jubilee year *Peregrinantes in spem (Pilgrims of hope)*, Pope Francis wanted to associate several churches in Rome with holy female saints proclaimed Patrons and Doctors of the Church.





The Teresianum and the Catacombs of San Pancrazio

San Pancrazio (St Pancras) is better known to English speakers as the London railway station that is now the terminus for the Chunnel, the rail link between London and Paris. San Pancrazio was a Roman martyr of the early 4th century.



At age 8, after the death of his parents, San Pancrazio was entrusted to his uncle Dionysus who brought him to Rome. San Pancrazio converted to Christianity while in Rome. At the age of 14, he was martyred in May 304 for refusing to sacrifice to the Roman gods. The Emperor Diocletian, impressed by the youth's courage, offered him money and power to deny faith in Christ. San Pancrazio refused and was beheaded. Ottavilla, a Christian matron, buried his remains in the nearby catacombs, which now bear his name, on the Via Aurelia leading out of Rome. His feast day is 12 May, the anniversary of Ottavilla's finding of his severed head and torso. The site has been a



place of continual pilgrimage and since his martyrdom. The location has, over the last 1700 years, had a turbulent and varied history. This minor basilica has been in the care of the Discalced Carmelite friars since 1662. In 1798 a general under Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Rome and established the Roman Republic. During this time intruders entered the church of *San Pancrazio* and severely damaged the remains of St Pancras. His head, which was kept in the *Basilica of St John Lateran* from 850 to 1966, fortunately was left untouched. The relic is carried in procession on his feast day. In 1966 Pope Paul VI returned this relic to *San Pancrazio*.



It now rests within a reliquary bust on the right side of the nave. Below the church there are huge catacombs, the *Catacomb of San Pancrazio* or *di Ottavilla*. Entrance is next to the small *Museo di S. Pancrazio* with fragments of sculpture and pagan and early Christian inscriptions.^[3] The ancient sources, particularly the Medieval itineraries for pilgrims, mention other martyrs buried within the catacomb: Artemy, Paulina, Sophia and her three daughters Faith, Hope and Charity. Between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th, Pope Symmachus built a basilica above the catacomb consecrated to the martyr and restored the nearby, but now abandoned thermal baths. In 594 Gregory the Great provided the basilica with a cloister. In 625 Pope Honorius I rebuilt the basilica after a Greek-Gothic war, with three naves. Pope Honorius' rebuilding is the basilica that still exists today. Excavations carried out at the beginning of the 1930s under the floor of the Basilica of San



Pancrazio led to the discovery of a Roman street that cut in two, diagonally to the church; they also brought to light some mausolea and ground graves, both inside the basilica and in its square. From a testimony of St. Gregory of Tours we know that the tomb was accessed from inside the basilica through a gate, from which one descended via the still existing passage. Adjacent to the basilica, which is the home to the local parish, staffed by Polish Carmelites, is the Carmelite International College, more formally the *Pontifical Faculty of Theology of St Teresa and St John of the Cross*, and the *Pontifical Institute of Spirituality*, called the 'Teresianum'. See also: [San Pancrazio](#) (in Italian); [Catacomb of San Pancrazio](#); [San Pancrazio](#). The Teresianum offers [online courses in spirituality in English](#).

UKRAINE: OCDS PROMISES

The OCDS Community of the Guardian Angels in Kiev shared in a very joyful celebration on Saturday 27 July. Mrs. Ludmila of the Holy Spirit made her promises in the presence of the Community's assistant, Fr. Jana Dudeck OCD. The Eucharistic ceremony took place in the monastery of our Carmelite Nuns and this provided the blessed opportunity for members of all three branches of our Order to be in attendance. Despite many difficulties and the on-going war, members of the OCDS Community managed to gather in the Monastery to celebrate this important event together. The fact that all three branches of the Order were represented as well, underlined their unity and mutual support. Such gatherings help us to imitate our Mother Mary and our Carmelite Saints and encourage us to pray for each other and for the whole world with greater devotion.





Korea: 50th Anniversary of the arrival of Carmelites



On Saturday, 5 October 2024, a special Mass was celebrated in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the arrival of Friars of the Discalced Carmelite Order in Korea. Under the slogan "A Mysterious Journey, 50 years of blessings, still being renewed", the Korean Province expressed its gratitude to all those who, either materially or with their prayers, had helped the progress and development of the Korean Carmelite Order of Friars during the last 50 years. And every one of those Friars strove to walk in the spirit of the Teresian-Carmelite Order charism, responding to God's call with a new heart.

Fr. Miguel, the Superior General, and Fr. Christianus, Definitor, were present for the closure of the Pastoral Visitation and for this commemoration Mass. Between Friars, Nuns and members of the Secular Order, around 1,600 Korean Carmelites also attended this Mass.

Fr. Miguel expressed his gratitude to all those who had worked so diligently in helping the Order to establish itself in Korea during the past 50 years. He added: "The Carmelite Order has spread and developed in many cultures throughout the world, but it is indeed surprising that 7 monasteries of Friars and 3,500 Secular Order members practise Carmelite spirituality in Korea, which has a different culture and is so geographically distanced".

Meeting of Major Superiors of the East Asia/Oceania at Varroville



The meeting of the **Major Superiors of the East Asia/Oceania (EAO)** region took place at the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre, Varroville, Australia, from the 27th to the 29th of August 2024. This meeting gathered the Major Superiors and Councillors of Australia, the Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan-Singapore and Japan. Fr Christianus Surinono, Definitor General, was also present. Following on from the Extraordinary Definitory that was held in Lisieux in August 2023, one of the areas discussed was of the reorganisation of the circumscriptions in the EAO region. Seeing the fruits of the initiatives in the area of formation, the EAO Conference has decided to look further into potential areas of collaboration, especially the possibility of a common second novitiate. For this purpose, a commission has been established to draw out its program, content, venue and time frame. It will also draw up a list of formators from the various EAO circumscription, as well as the potential cost of running the program. During the meeting, the Major Superiors also gave certain suggestion on how to improve communications between them and the Definitory in Rome. Fr Christianus in turn informed the Superiors of the updated *Ratio Institutionis*. The Definitory is requesting each circumscription to give its feedback on the reading/study of this document.



Dilixit Nos – He Loved Us – Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis on the Sacred Heart

133. Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus was influenced by the great renewal of devotion that swept nineteenth-century France. Father Almiere Pichon, the spiritual director of her family, was seen as a devoted apostle of the Sacred Heart. One of her sisters took as her name in religion “Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart”, and the monastery that Thérèse entered was dedicated to the Sacred Heart. Her devotion nonetheless took on certain distinctive traits with regard to the customary piety of that age.

134. When Thérèse was fifteen, she could speak of Jesus as the one “whose heart beats in unison with my own”. [129] Two years later, speaking of the image of Christ’s heart crowned with thorns, she wrote in a letter: “You know that I myself do not see the Sacred Heart as everyone else. I think that the Heart of my Spouse is mine alone, just as mine is his alone, and I speak to him then in the solitude of this delightful heart to heart, while waiting to contemplate him one day face to face”. [130]

135. In one of her poems, Thérèse voiced the meaning of her devotion, which had to do more with friendship and assurance than with trust in her sacrifices:

*I need a heart burning with tenderness,
Who will be my support forever,
Who loves everything in me, even my weakness...
And who never leaves me day or night...
I must have a God who takes on my nature,
And becomes my brother and is able to suffer! ...
Ah! I know well, all our righteousness
Is worthless in your sight...
So I, for my purgatory,
Choose your burning love, O heart of my God! [131]*



*I have been given the grace to understand also
the love of the heart of Jesus*

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

136. Perhaps the most important text for understanding the devotion of Thérèse to the heart of Christ is a letter that she wrote three months before her death to her friend Maurice Bellière. “When I see Mary Magdalene walking up before the many guests, washing with her tears the feet of her adored Master, whom she is touching for the first time, I feel that her heart has understood the abysses of love and mercy of the heart of Jesus, and, sinner though she is, this heart of love was disposed not only to pardon her but to lavish on her the blessings of his divine intimacy, to lift her to the highest summits of contemplation. Ah! dear little Brother, ever since I have been given the grace to understand also the love of the heart of Jesus, I admit that it has expelled all fear from my heart. The remembrance of my faults humbles me, draws me never to depend on my strength which is only weakness, but this remembrance speaks to me of mercy and love even more”. [132]

137. Those moralizers who want to keep a tight rein on God’s mercy and grace might claim that Thérèse could say this because she was a saint, but a simple person could not say the same. In that way, they excise from the spirituality of Saint Therese its wonderful originality, which reflects the heart of the Gospel. Sadly, in certain Christian circles we often encounter this attempt to fit the Holy Spirit into a certain preconceived pattern in a way that enables them to keep everything under their supervision. Yet this astute Doctor of the Church reduces them to silence and directly contradicts their reductive view in these clear words: “If I had committed all possible crimes, I would always have the same confidence; I feel that this whole multitude of offenses would be like a drop of water thrown into a fiery furnace”. [133]

138. To Sister Marie, who praised her generous love of God, prepared even to embrace martyrdom, Thérèse responded at length in a letter that is one of the great milestones in the history of spirituality. This page ought to be read a thousand times over for its depth, clarity and beauty. There, Thérèse helps her sister, “Marie of the Sacred Heart”, to avoid focusing this devotion on suffering, since some had presented reparation primarily in terms of accumulating sacrifices and good works. Therese, for her part, presents confidence as the greatest and best offering, pleasing to the heart of Christ: “My desires of martyrdom are nothing; they are not what give me the unlimited confidence that I feel in my heart. They are, to tell the truth, the spiritual riches that render one unjust, when one rests in them with complacency and one believes that he/she is something great... what pleases [Jesus] is that he sees me loving my littleness and my poverty, the blind hope that I have in his mercy... That is my only treasure... If you want to feel joy, to have an attraction for suffering, it is your consolation that you are seeking... Understand that to be his victim of love, the weaker one is, without desires or virtues, the more suited one is for the workings of this consuming and transforming Love... Oh! How I would like to be able to make you understand what I feel!... It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love”. [134]

139. In many of her writings, Thérèse speaks of her struggle with forms of spirituality overly focused on human effort, on individual merit, on offering sacrifices and carrying out certain acts in order to “win heaven”. For her, “merit does not consist in doing or in giving much, but rather in receiving”. [135] Let us read once again some of these deeply meaningful texts where she emphasizes this and presents it as a simple and rapid means of taking hold of the Lord “by his heart”.

140. To her sister Léonie she writes, “I assure you that God is much better than you believe. He is content with a glance, a sigh of love... As for me, I find perfection very easy to practise because I have understood it is a matter of taking hold of Jesus by his heart... Look at a little child who has just annoyed his mother... If he comes to her, holding out his little arms, smiling and saying: ‘Kiss me, I will not do it again’, will his mother be able not to press him to her heart tenderly and forget his childish mischief? However, she knows her dear little one will do it again on the next occasion, but this does not matter; if he takes her again by her heart, he will not be punished”. [136]

141. So too, in a letter to Father Adolphe Roulland she writes, “[M]y way is all confidence and love. I do not understand souls who fear a friend so tender. At times, when I am reading certain spiritual treatises in which perfection is shown through a thousand obstacles, surrounded by a crowd of illusions, my poor little mind quickly tires; I close the learned book that is breaking my head and drying up my heart, and I take up Holy Scripture. Then all seems luminous to me; a single word uncovers for my soul infinite horizons, perfection seems simple to me. I see that it is sufficient to recognize one’s nothingness and to abandon oneself like a child into God’s arms”. [137]

142. In yet another letter, she relates this to the love shown by a parent: “I do not believe that the heart of [a] father could resist the filial confidence of his child, whose sincerity and love he knows. He realizes, however, that more than once his son will fall into the same faults, but he is prepared to pardon him always, if his son always takes him by his heart”. [138]



Two lectures by Rowan Williams on St Teresa of Jesus & St Edith Stein



On the Solemnity of our Holy Mother, St Teresa of Jesus, Emeritus Archbishop of Canterbury delivered a lecture for the inauguration of the 2024/2025 academic year at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology, the *Teresianum*, on St Teresa of Jesus. The lecture is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYkE9til0Vo>. The text is available at: https://www.teresianum.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Inaugurazione-Williams-Teresa_ENG.pdf.

I am deeply touched to be invited today to speak to you about the Mother of the reformed Carmel and Doctor of the Universal Church, Teresa of Jesus. Since my student days, the writings of St Teresa and St John of the Cross have been a source of inspiration and guidance, and it was my privilege some thirty five years ago to write a brief introductory study of St Teresa's teachings as well as more recently to compose, from time to time, various shorter studies of aspects of her thinking and teaching – as much to clarify my own studies in her work as to provide any insight for others. But it is a very particular honour to be awarded a doctorate by this august institution. My debt to Carmelites living and departed, and above all to the great Doctors of the sixteenth century, is enormous; and today we have also had occasion to celebrate the legacy of St Edith Stein, that great twentieth century Carmelite teacher, whose philosophical and theological creativity are still capable of astonishing the reader, and whose philosophical anthropology has been of the greatest interest and importance to my own thinking. To be associated even a little with the spiritual and intellectual heritage of Carmel is such a privilege, and I can only express my deepest gratitude to the Order and the College for today's invitation and for all that is done here and in the Order at large for the glory of God and the growth of souls.

For a Study Day at the Teresianum on 14 October 2024, he also delivered a lecture on St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) entitled "Edith Stein and the *Imago Trinitatis*". The lecture is available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7woiFAhHcdQ>. The English text can be viewed at: https://www.teresianum.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Williams_Stein_ENG.pdf

One aspect of Edith Stein's remarkable intellectual pilgrimage in the years that followed her baptism is the increasing depth of her critical engagement with Thomist metaphysics. Like her friend and mentor, Eich Przywara¹, she sets out to stage a conversation between Thomism and the world of phenomenological thought, and to develop an ontology that would serve as a creative supplement – and in some aspects corrective – to the system of the Angelic Doctor. Stein herself tells us² that she was able to see drafts of the First part of Przywara's great *Analogia Entis*, and she notes the areas both of convergence and of tension between Przywara's approach and her own. When she addresses the question³ of whether there is such a thing as 'Christian Philosophy' – a seriously contentious issue in mid-century Catholic debate – she invokes Przywara's authority for her conclusion that philosophy needs to be completed by theology in the sense that it must take account of what revelation delivers to us, in order to arrive at secure conclusions, but does not thereby itself become theology. What this seems to mean is that philosophy as such has to acknowledge the limits of ordinary finite reasoning, but may do so in one of two ways: either it remains at the level of hypothesis and inconclusiveness, or it recognizes that its own method has to be supplemented by positive insight drawn from revelation. As a system that confesses itself to be incomplete and defers to revealed truth, it retains its integrity as philosophy but explicitly looks towards a further and fuller kind of knowledge that is not attainable by unaided reasoning; and it is this explicit reference forward to a fuller knowledge grounded in divine gift that ultimately defines what 'Christian philosophy' is. The unbelieving philosopher is free to use theological data as 'thought experiments', we might say, but can have no strictly philosophical reasons for either accepting or rejecting them.



Carmelite Retreats at Varroville for 2025



1 February	Thomas Merton, a Prophet for our Times - Mr. Kirk Willcox - 10am - 4pm.
14-16 February	St. Thérèse's Letter to her Sister Marie - Fr. Paul Maunder, OCD.
1 March	Repent, and Believe the Good News - Fr. Gerard Moran, OCD - 10am - 4pm.
28-30 March	Walking as Pilgrims of Peace - a Retreat in the Spirit of Taizé - Ms. Tricia Watts.
5 April	Lenten Reflections - Second Isaiah - Fr. Paul Maunder, OCD - 10am - 4pm.
3 May	Hope: Present and Eternal - Mr. Matthew Delasey, OCDS - 10am - 4pm.
7 June	The Roses of St. Thérèse – Ms Jill Ditton, OCDS – 10am – 4pm.
12-13 June	The Artistic and Spiritual Dimensions of the Christmas Story – Mr. John Charadia & Artist Tutors.
20-22 June	Let yourself Be Loved – Fr. Gerard Moran, OCD.
5 July	Our Father & the Saints – Ms Barbara Stenning, OCDS.
2 August	The Beautiful Book – Fr Bernard Hancock, OCD - 10am - 4pm.
22-24 August	Spirituality & the Life of Jesus – Bishop Greg Homeming, OCD.
6 September	Called To Be – Ms. Lorraine Murphy, OCDS - 10am - 4pm.
14-21 September	Guided Retreat: A Week with Carmelite Saints – Fr. Aloysius Rego, OCD.
4 October	Canticle of the Creatures – Dr. Robert Gascoigne - 10am - 4pm.
17-19 October	Finding Inner Peace in a Chaotic World: St. Teresa of Avila - Fr. Ransom Rapirap, OCD.
1 November	The Beatitudes - Mr. George Morkel, OCDS - 10am - 4pm.
6 December	Darkness & Light: Advent with St. John of the Cross - Fr. Ransom Rapirap, OCD - 10am - 4pm.



Bookings at: bookings@mtcarmel.com.au - 0435 857 690



May the light and joy of Christmas shine in your hearts.