



Carmelite Newsletter

Australia, New Zealand & Oceania

Memoria of Bl. Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus 4 February 2022



During his novitiate, he experienced the spirituality that was dominant at that time, which emphasised penance and asceticism. He gave his all to what was asked of him but inwardly questioned these perspectives. Thérèse of Lisieux, in whom he confided at the end of his initial formation, gave him light: it was the way of spiritual childhood that would be his and which he would teach. The reason for this decision is fundamental: the great obstacle to holiness is none other than the pride of intelligence, which nourishes the will to power that has become Promethean. It is this obstacle that must be overcome.

To inherit eternal life, it is first of all a question of looking at God, to Christ Jesus with faith, so that He can transform our life – including our poverty. It is a question of daring to turn to God as we are and to respond to His call by the gift of ourselves. To be baptised is to live under the influence of the Holy Spirit in an ordinary way. We must act, of course, but in response to the call of God.

“There is something marvellous in Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus: her use of failure, which comes above all from weakness. By weakness is meant here misery, tendencies. There is something sublime in this use of failure to make mercy triumph.

The secret that Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus brought to light is the use of weakness, of concrete misery.”

At the end of his life, Father Marie-Eugène simply recognised that: “I have understood Mercy. Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus felt its sweetness, I feel its power.”

Our Lady of the Central West: A Carmelite Iconographer's Story

The Iconographer

My name is Mary Clancy. I joined the Varroville OCDS community in 2009 and made my Definitive Promise in 2015.

I had felt drawn to iconography for quite some time, but as I lived in Bathurst, there was not the opportunity to study this. In 2011, I attended a weekend course at the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre in Varroville presented by the Melbourne iconographer Anna Prifti. In 2012, I started taking iconography seriously, working first with Anna, then with Philip Davydov and Olga Shalnova who come to Australia every year from St Petersburg.

My development as an iconographer has been closely tied to my formation and growth in Carmel. I have come to see my Carmelite vocation as one of prayer. Not only my prayer, but more importantly, helping others to pray. The main way I do this is through the icons I have written.

The Origin of the Our Lady of the Central West Icon



When Bishop Michael McKenna (Bathurst Diocese) was preparing for his episcopal ordination he did a retreat at Tarrawarra Abbey. Whilst there he asked a monk under what title Our Lady was venerated at the Abbey. The reply was “Our Lady of Tarrawarra, of course.” So from his ordination Mass onwards, he has always inserted the prayer, “Our Lady of the Central West, pray for us.”

In 2015, Bishop Michael asked me to write an icon of Our Lady of the Central West for the sesquicentenary of the diocese. As there was no model from which to work, I took over 10 months of research and prayer, before arriving at the final design; it took another 2 months to finally complete. It was unveiled for the Diocesan Assembly in 2016. The icon was professionally photographed, and copies were given to every parish and to members of the Diocesan Assembly; copies are also given as gifts to visiting prelates and were taken as gifts in the days when Bishop Michael could travel overseas!

Our Cathedral restoration began back in 2014, and Bishop Michael planned to have the icon installed there. This finally happened in March 2021, with a Solemn Blessing during Mass as part of the Cathedral re-opening celebrations. I was touched that there were members of the congregation who had come from hours



away especially for this Solemn Blessing, as they already had a love of this icon as part of their prayer life.

The Design of the Icon

The icon Our Lady of the Central West is in the form of the Theotokos Oranta, that is, the Mother of God Praying. This is a very ancient, traditional form of iconography, a religious tradition belonging to the whole Church and coming from the time before the Great Schism between the Western Church and the Eastern Church in 1054. As such, icons belong to all Christians no matter where they are from or what tradition they belong to.

The border places this image in the Central West of New South Wales. It contains the totems of the two predominant local Indigenous tribes, the Goanna of the Wiradjuri and the Kangaroo of the Gamilaraay. The border also uses Wiradjuri imagery to represent the churches of the diocese joined by a pathway of dots. This also brings to mind the significance of the Rosary in our faith. All of the pigments used in this icon are natural

earths, mainly ochres. These come from all over the world, reflecting the wide-spread origins of the people of the area. The gold highlights are symbolic of the role which gold has played in bringing people to the Central West.

Understanding and Praying with the Icon

As mentioned, the icon of Our Lady of the Central West is depicted in a traditional form called the Theotokos Oranta (The Mother of God Praying). This is a well-known depiction of the Virgin Mary in prayer with extended arms, a common posture for prayer. The Mother of God is shown in this posture in the most ancient image we have of her, which is found on the walls of the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome, a site used for Christian burials from the late 2nd century through to the 4th century. This posture of extended arms is also a traditional form of welcome and of comfort and embrace in times of distress.

The Virgin's solemn and static posture, the characteristic folds of her garments, and her pensive expression are all characteristics of Byzantine iconography. The clothes are quite stylised, but the face and hands are much more realistic. The Mother of God is always represented with three stars, on her head and on each shoulder. These represent her perpetual virginity – before the conception of Christ, in his conception, and afterwards.

The handkerchief on the belt of the Mother of God is popularly thought to be for wiping away the tears of those who come before her with their problems and concerns. The colours are also symbolic. Mary is shown wearing a veil typical of women of the period. The veil is red, the colour of divinity, whilst the clothes under the veil are green or blue, the colours of humanity.

Icons are always named, and often these names are abbreviated in Greek letters. Beside her head are the letters "MP OY," an abbreviation of the Greek: "Mater Theos" – the Mother of God. The little curve line above the letters tells us the name is shortened.

This item is reproduced from the Carmelite.com website: <https://carmelite.com/our-lady-of-the-central-west-a-carmelite-iconographers-story/>



Celebration for St John of the Cross OCDS Community, Melbourne.

The severe Covid 19 restrictions imposed in Melbourne since the pandemic began presented many difficulties for many people and naturally also had quite an impact on our OCDS Community, being unable to meet for many months at a time. We were delighted that, after having to cancel our plans a number of times, we were finally able to meet and hold a Reflection Day in November, 2021. Fr Patrick Moroney OMI, kindly agreed to assist us and Fr Gerard Moran OCD authorised him to represent the Discalced Carmelite Order, in celebrating the various Rites for our candidates. There were a number of hurdles to overcome because of restrictions, which resulted in having to hold half the day in another venue before the Church became available, but eventually all went well and it was a very fruitful and happy day, especially for our six candidates who took their next step in our OCDS Community and Order. Angela and Jane were admitted into Formation, Nirmala and Joan made their First Promise and Tricia and Anna made their Definitive Promise. We give thanks for these many blessings and pray that the Lord's will be done in their lives.



Angela and Jane



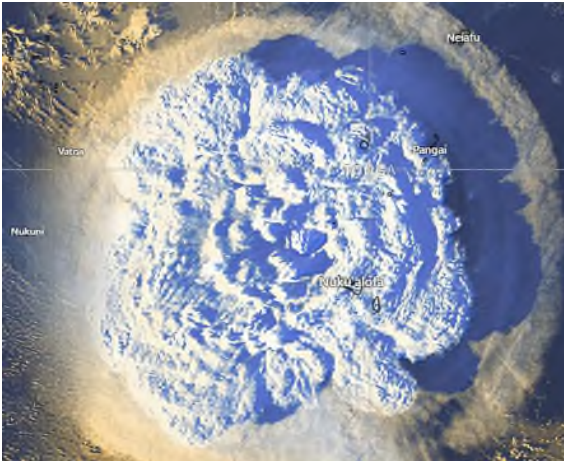
Nirmala and Joan



Tricia and Anna



News from Carmelite Seculars in Samoa



Following the eruption and tsunami, the cables are still not fixed but we are using satellite communications. Thank God and all the prayers of our Carmelite Family that the people of Tonga are starting to get on their feet with the charitable aids from their kind neighbours, the Australian and New Zealand governments were the first to arrive with help in spite of the difficulties to bring goods on the wharf because of the wharf restrictions. Of course, England and U.S. are coming also with more help. Thanks be to God. About two islands are completely destroyed with no houses standing on those islands. Fortunately, God protected Tonga. Even though it was a big eruption, only three people died – it could have swept many more people from those islands that were badly affected. People were quick to run to a higher part for safety.

We were relieved and thanked God when we talked to our Sisters and they were all fine. They told us that when they heard the bang they rushed out to see what it was. They saw smoke coming up and shooting up towards the sky and their whole house was rumbling

violently. They said it was a terrific and scary experience. Now they are all right but the ashes from the smoke had dirtied the roof of the house, the windows and doors. After cleaning everything, the ashes that were on the trees and coconut trees start to shake down onto their house again so they had to start to clean all over again. Hopefully all is cleared now.

Another sad news is that Tonga which was Covid-free has now six community cases. Two men who were working on the wharf must have been in contact with someone with the virus from the boat. These men went back to their homes where their family members were infected as well. The poor men did not realise that they had the virus until they all got sick. So we ask your prayers that God may protect these people who are just trying to build up after such a big ordeal. Anyway, we trust in God's mercy to look after our people in Tonga especially our dear Sisters.

Greetings to you all from the nuns in Samoa at the beginning of this New Year, 2022.

We were very much united with you all at the busy time before and after Christmas even though we could not send our Christmas Cards for last year due to plane restrictions but we were very much united in prayers. Thank you all for your Christmas greetings and prayers sent through email. It was lovely to receive all your news. We remembered you especially in our Christmas Novena and during Christmastide.

We were still busy with repair work until the start of Advent when we stopped to prepare for Christmas. We are always busy with groups visiting with their Christmas gifts and we did a Calendar to give our people who came. People have been so generous and so we shared with our neighbours especially the poor people who often come to us for help. Christmastide was just a short period so Christmas decorations and Cribs were quick to return to their resting place till next time.

Now we are back to normal at Ordinary Time and are ready to resume our repair work. The Eastern side of the Monastery has to be repaired, roofing iron and all. Our Lord has been good to give us enough funds through the generosity of our people during Christmas to keep going. Thanks be to God and our great Father St Joseph.

On Saturday, 15 January while we were having our meal at 6 pm, we heard a strange bang like a big gun but with a rumbling sound. As the reader was still reading in the Refectory, we just looked to each other in surprise and wondered what it was. After the Office of Readings, I was just checking the mail and saw the news which said that the bang came all the way from Tonga. It said that it was heard from Samoa, Fiji, N.Z. and as far as Alaska. It was a volcano that erupted last year and it had erupted again, which caused tsunami waves to sweep right into the city of Nukualofa on the main Island of Tongatapu. Some of its waves came all the way to other islands of Samoa - Savaii and Manono, but not as bad as Nukualofa, Tonga. The local newspaper came this morning and an article by a 92 year old retired scientist from Australia who married a Samoan lady, said that this is a very dangerous kind of volcano which could cause a lot of damage to the islands of the Pacific. So Samoans have been warned especially those who reside at the coastal areas to move inland for safety. We tried to ring our Sisters in Tonga straight away but till now (3 days after) still no answer from them.

So we are praying earnestly for all the people of Tonga especially for our dear Sisters that God will look after them all. Please Sisters continue to pray for the dear people of Tonga and especially our Sisters. We remember Sr. Sesimani in Perth Carmel, who must be suffering with her people during this time.

Well, that is all our news and we pray for all of you as many of our people in Australia and New Zealand are still struggling with the different viruses. We are always united in our prayers. God bless. Love and prayers.

From all your Sisters in Samoa.

Blessed Marie- Eugène's threefold insight

- Baptismal grace is the foundation for all Christians called to live a life of holiness.
- Silent prayer, a relationship of intimate friendship with God, is the basis for every Christian life.
- Revealing this richness to today's world is a matter of urgency



Celebrations in Samoa for Our Lady's birthday, Christmas, Clothing with brown scapular

The Carmelite Seculars in Samoa is a group in Formation not yet Fraternally erected. Currently it has 13 members 10 of whom 10 have made their Definitive Promise and 3 preparing for their Definitive Promise.

In September 2021, the Catholic Archdiocese of Samoa-Apia celebrated Marian Week culminating with Our Blessed Mother's birthday on 8 September. This was well attended by many laity groups such as the Legion of Mary, Divine Mercy, Catholic youth groups from around the country and of course OCDS. Many of our members who didn't work and some who were working took leave and attended Mass, seminars, talks, entertainment provided by the youth. How wonderful it was to come together to listen, learn, laugh, cry and dance in celebration of our Holy Mother. OCDS Samoa president, Iuni Vaeau presented a short paper on the establishment of the Carmelite order worldwide and the arrival of the Carmelite Nuns in Samoa and the OCDS Samoa group.



We ended 2021 in celebrating Christmas with our Carmelite Sisters in December, with many of our children and grandchildren joining us doing items for the nuns. This is always a happy day every year when all can relax and enjoy (where age and weight doesn't matter lol) the short skirts, songs, dances and of course the food after.



Last year we had 2 enquirers to join our OCDS community, our group's first and only married couple, Nessa & Patrick Sinclair. We sadly lost Nessa to cancer. Patrick decided to join the Third Order of Mary which embraced him and his children (10) as members. Last Thursday one of our candidates, EMMANUEL CHAN CHUI, who had been Admitted to Formation and clothed with the Scapular, was laid to rest.

We hope to have our first meeting for 2022 soon, depending on the Covid situation. We remember to pray for our brothers and sisters in smaller vulnerable island nations especially Tonga which was hit by a tsunami brought on by Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai undersea volcanic eruptions two weeks ago. We trust and pray that the Nuns of the newly established Carmelite Monastery and the OCDS TONGA and their families are all well and protected by God's divine, loving embrace. Let us unite and remember Tonga and its people. Tonga is currently in lockdown because of a positive case has been identified, so more prayers for them please.



Update from Tonga and Samoa

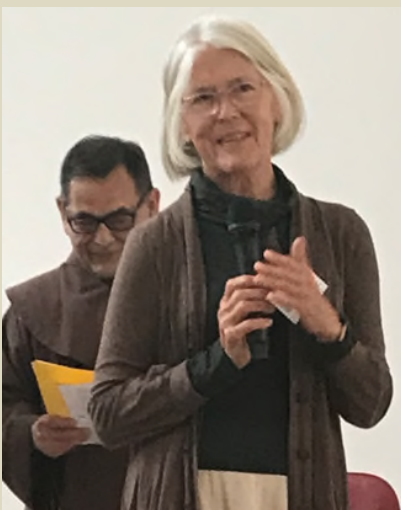


Mother Teresa and all our Sisters in Tonga wish to thank you all for your love and sisterly support especially your prayers for them as well as their poor people. The eruption was massive yet God protected their little islands especially their people – only three people died. How God is so kind and merciful to all His children.

They are all fine and well but it will take time for the country and people to return to their normal lives. They felt the warmth and power of your prayers. God bless you all. And they send their love.

Now I come to ask your kind prayers for our little island Samoa which has now 26 cases of the virus. A plane came from Australia returning home our people who were visiting or working in Australia and five of them tested positive upon arrival including a tiny baby of 11 months. Some had omicron and the number rose to 15 yesterday and by the end of the day, five workers caught the virus and then this morning six other cases tested positive, which means it is spreading very quickly. Please remember us and our people in your prayers. We are all fine now and we hope we will continue to keep well. But whatever the Lord wants we must be prepared for. We are now having complete lock down. We will be so grateful for your prayers. It is good to experience what many of you have experienced. With all our love and united in prayers. Your Sisters in Carmel, Sr. Maria Elisapeta ocd & Sisters - [Edited]

Angela makes first profession of promises in Sydney OCDS Community



After many months of cancelled meetings because of the pandemic, lockdowns and associated restrictions, the Sydney Mary Immaculate Community was delighted to celebrate with Angela Finnegan on 5 December when she made her first promise a Secular Disalced Carmelite. The Mary Immaculate community now meets at the St Thomas of Canterbury church on the first Sunday of the month in the parish hall. A number of new enquirers have joined the community over the months of shut down and despite the intermittent opportunities to meet remain enthusiastic to continue with the discernment.

Please continue to pray for Angela and others in formation.

The Mary Immaculate will have their elections for President and Council on Sunday 6 February and will also welcome a new priest to the parish of Lewisham/Summer Hill. Father Sam Lynch has moved to Lane Cove as parish priest and Father Gerard Woo Ling has been appointed Administrator having served for the last several years as an assistant priest at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

The Gift of Baptism:

Fr Marie-Eugène constantly said 'Believe in your grace!' Every baptised person receives a unique personal gift at baptism. This divine gift is a present from God that allows us to participate in his life and to journey towards him. It is a grace of sonship that enables us to have a personal relationship with the Father whose children we are. Baptism is not merely an action performed in a more-or-less remote past. The gift received that day is constantly called to develop itself anew.



Sadness and celebrations at Toronto Carmel



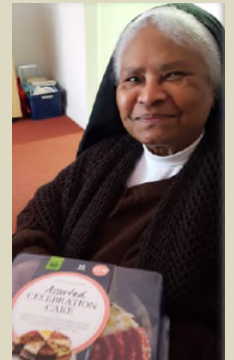
Recently our Bishop Bill Wright died of lung cancer. He was a very nice man. He graciously accepted our community's transfer into this Diocese in 2020. His only visit to us was for our celebration of the Espousals of Mary and Joseph, our titular feast on 23rd January. We were able to watch the funeral and some of the committal ceremony on live stream. The liturgy was so appropriate for him - simple, unpretentious and prayerful. He inherited many very difficult situations in the diocese. and he did his best to address them. May he rest in peace.

Another event of note this year was the celebration of Jacinta's 50 years of Profession. Her profession feast was the Sacred Heart.

This year it fell on the 11th June. The actual date of her profession anniversary was the 18th June.

This gave us a convenient excuse to celebrate for the week. It is quite a journey for her - from Yule Island in 1971 to Toronto in 2021!

We had Paul Maunder OCD here for the celebration of the Sacred Heart (his own titular day), and Father Bob Searle on the actual day. He very proudly gave Jacinta the Apostolic Blessing. As part of our festivities we received a 'celebration cake' from our sisters in Gelorup, WA. We did order a cake from a local bakery, but this 'cake' was unique. It was a made up of slices of different flavoured cakes. It was an ideal gift for a community who generally each prefer a different type of cake! We gave Jacinta first choice of course!



Greetings from Goonellabah Carmel.

We unite ourselves with you in prayer amidst the current pandemic and offer our special prayers for all the people in Tonga, especially our sisters in Carmel, as well as the sisters in other Carmels whose family and relatives are in Tonga, affected by the volcanic eruption and tsunami. We also remember in our prayers our sick brothers and sisters. We thank God for keeping us safe and protected and we continue to raise our prayers more than ever.

Last month, Bishop Greg Homeming OCD came for a visit with some updates of happenings within the diocese and about his visits to parishes. He has asked for prayers for more seminarians as we don't have any in Lismore diocese at present. He stayed for about an hour, gave us a Christmas present, then he blessed our beautiful infirmary gardens before going home.

On Christmas Eve we had our usual 7am Mass in the morning, followed by a busy day of preparations for the Midnight Mass and celebrations. After Vespers we processed around the monastery singing Advent hymns to welcome St Joseph and Our Lady into our own cells as there was no room for them in the inn. Then the novitiate sisters presented a Christmas play, which we enjoyed very much. They also prepared lovely gifts for the community. We then proceeded to the kitchen where we entertained St Joseph and Our Lady with a dance, each sister had her own way of expressing hospitality to St Joseph and Our Lady.

This beautiful custom sets our minds on welcoming Jesus in the manger of our hearts. Father Jim Griffin celebrated our Midnight Mass. Then we processed to the Crib singing Christmas carols, which was followed by a festive snack. On Christmas day, Bishop Emeritus Geoffrey Jarrett celebrated the Mass. It was the first time we had singing after some months of restrictions.

Other news: One of our friars in Coffs Harbour Parish, Fr Shabas Crasta, OCD, will be going back to India for medical reasons. He has been unwell for some time, which has affected his parish commitments. Doctors have been unsuccessful in finding any solution. Father came to visit us with the new friar, Fr Peter Rebello, OCD, who has just arrived from India to take the place of Fr Shabas. The prior in Coffs Harbour community is now Fr Joe D'Souza and the other friar is Fr Joy DSouza. Please keep them in your prayers during this time of transition, especially for Fr Shabas' health.

Since October last year, the Euthanasia Bill has been the subject of debate in the NSW Parliament. Please keep up the prayers that this death-dealing bill will not be passed into law. We say a prayer to St Joseph for this intention every day.

We turn to God in earnest prayer for all the intentions of the region, in a spirit of love, peace and unity. We journey together as we participate in communion with the mission for a synodal Church in preparation for the Synod of Bishops in 2023. God bless you all.

Love from your sisters in Goonellabah Carmel.



Mass with Bishop Greg Homeming, OCD.



Online mass continues every Sunday with Bishop Greg Homeming from St Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore. These Masses streamed at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYxOjNyku4JCl08vfeTq-fQ>

Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, community in Launceston celebrates annual retreat



From left to right: Elizabeth, Ester, Sandra, Helen, Michael, Meriam, Adrian - Ascent Missing: Tony

We might only be a small group but we were so very blessed to be able to have our annual weekend retreat at our local Retreat Centre. Because we are such a small group, we usually notify all the parishes in Tasmania so that anyone who might be interested can come along; however, because COVID restrictions, we decided not to advertise it this year. This didn't stop 5 regular 'extras' from coming, which was lovely for us all.

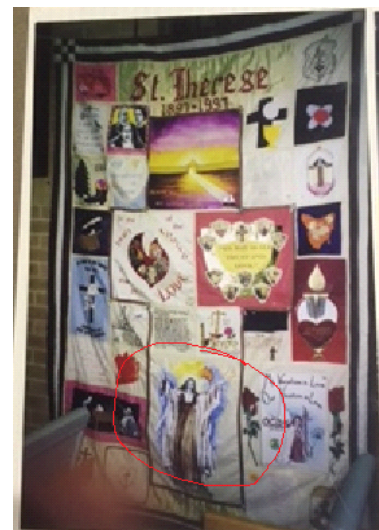
The COVID restrictions meant that we could not invite any of the Carmelite Friars down here to Tasmania but Fr Gerard Moran OCD, kindly agreed to give us our talks via zoom. Provisionally, the Retreat Centre had only just installed a very large screen with *Wi-Fi*, which allowed us to have Fr Gerard present his talks in living colour. These were very well received by us all. We were fortunate that Elizabeth and her husband, Adrian were both experienced in setting up this new technology for us.

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We were also blessed with a local, retired diocesan priest, Fr Chris Hope, who travelled up from Hobart and live in at the centre so that we could receive the Sacraments and celebrate the Eucharist. Fr Chris also officiated at the ceremonies of 1st Promise for Ester and Adrian being received into Formation. We congratulate both Ester and Adrian and pray that they continue in their journey with us.

Missing banner from Centenary of St Thérèse

Recently Kerrie Ninni OCDS, of the Mary Immaculate community, Sydney, was collating material that she'd had for years concerning the Secular Order and she came across some photos of this banner on the right, created by many hands across Australia and New Zealand - and perhaps Samoa as well - for the Centenary celebrations of St Thérèse of Lisieux in 1997.



Kerri travelled to Lisieux that year and told Sister Lucille whom she met about the banner and the celebrations that had been held in Sydney. The Sister Lucile asked whether Kerri would mind giving her a photo of the section of the banner that Kerri had painted, and naturally Kerri was delighted to oblige her. The section in question is the image of St Thérèse at the bottom with a small map of Australia, circled in red.

Kerri is wondering whether there is someone who knows the whereabouts of this banner because she believes it is worth conserving. Further photographs from the archive material of the Mari Immaculate community will appear in subsequent newsletters.

Can anyone shed any light on the whereabouts of the banner which part of our Carmelite story? If so, please contact the Mary Immaculate community.



St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) - 100th anniversary of the baptism



1 January 2022 was the 100th anniversary of the baptism of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein). She was born in Breslau then part of the German Empire. In Polish, this city is known as Wrocław and is now located in Poland. The local diocese has launched the [Year of Edith Stein](#) to celebrate the life and legacy. She was murdered in Auschwitz (in Polish Oświęcim) less than 200 kilometres from where she was born in 1891.

You can read more here about the Year of Edith Stein: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/250142/city-names-2022-the-year-of-edith-stein-to-mark-the-100th-anniversary-of-her-baptism>.

Around these times, St John Paul II was experiencing the call to his vocation and beginning his studies in the underground seminary in Poland.

At the UN in 1995, John Paul II assayed a self-definition and a ground for his vision of human possibility in sturdier terms:

"I come before you as a witness: a witness to human dignity, a witness to hope, a witness to the conviction that the destiny of all ... lies in the hands of a merciful Providence." Karol Wojtyła, whose personal story is beyond the imagining of novelists, has long believed what he said as pope at Fatima on 13 May 1982, the first anniversary of Mehmet Ali Agca's attempt on his life: **"In the designs of Providence there are no mere coincidences."** George Weigel: <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/faith-and-character/faith-and-character/john-paul-ii-preparing-the-21st-century.html>

For those who might be interested, the friars at Boars Hill, outside Oxford have scheduled 4 talks on St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross by Professor Peter Tyler on 3, 10, 17 and 24th March @ 7pm – 8.30pm (UK). **This will be 6.00 am on the next day, Tuesday, in Australia.** More details at: <https://www.carmelite.uk.net/courses/four-approaches-to-edith-stein/>. The cost is £80 pounds (approx. \$150). Some might know Peter Tyler, who is a Lay Carmelite (O.Carm tertiary) and teaches at St Mary's University in Twickenham in south west London where he is Professor of Pastoral Theology and Spirituality. He is a registered psychotherapist and contributes to the current dialogue between spirituality and psychotherapy. He has written a number of books including: *Teresa of Avila: Doctor of the Soul* and *The Return to the Mystical: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Teresa of Avila and the Christian Mystical Tradition*.

The course won't be to everyone's taste but would be good for those who want a fairly in-depth insight into her complex thought and spirituality. The course outline gives a sense of what to expect. In each week Professor Peter Tyler takes us through Edith's life, her approaches to empathy and her views on the development of the human soul and the spiritual life.

March 3rd: 'A Prussian Jew'

In the first session we take as our text 'Life in a Jewish Family'. A late work written as the Nazi party was coming into power in 1930s Germany it is a good introduction to Edith's life and biography. It raises questions about identity, race and gender.

March 10th: 'The Empathetic Phenomenologist'

It is difficult to grasp Edith's thought without some insight into the philosophical system that dominated her intellectual career: Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. Accordingly, in our second session we take her doctoral thesis 'On the Problem of Empathy' as our set text as we look at what this philosophy has to teach us today.

March 17th: 'The Story of the Soul'

Edith's reflections on the nature of personhood embrace some of her key contributions to contemporary thought. To explore this we take a text from 'Finite and Eternal Being' as we explore how her ideas on the soul developed during her lifetime.

March 24th: 'The Science of the Cross'

No course on Edith Stein can fail to mention her terrible martyrdom at the hands of the totalitarian state. We shall take as our text the last work she was writing just before she was arrested by the Gestapo: 'The Science of the Cross'. By examining her 'science of the cross' we shall explore how her spirituality remains relevant for our present troubled times.



Celebrations at the St Elijah Community, Varroville



On 5 December 2021 the St Elijah OCDS community had a quadruple celebration!

First we celebrated the Eucharist together, during which we celebrated as Andrew Jeon registered his definitive promise in our "red book" (made earlier in June), and then celebrated being together again when we had our annual Christmas party, joined by the Varroville friars. Our fourth celebration was the anniversary ~ 40 years since our founding, although 41 years have passed. It was a day filled with joy and happiness. While keeping in touch through emails and a zoom meeting has helped, it was wonderful to rejoice in being physically together as a community, especially after a year disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.



We also fondly remember Kathleen Lee, one of our enquirers who was received into our OCDS community on 6 October 2019. She has entered the Goonellabah Monastery as an aspirant with a view to becoming a postulant. Our love, prayers and well wishes are with her and all nuns at Goonellabah as she embarks on this exciting and challenging journey with our Lord. We heard from her earlier in the year, before she began her time of detachment and discernment, and were delighted to know how much she had valued being with us. Kathleen told Susan, her formator, that it was through the holiness of those she met in our St. Elijah Community and her Spiritual Director who helped with her decision! May she grow ever deeper in her Teresian spirituality.

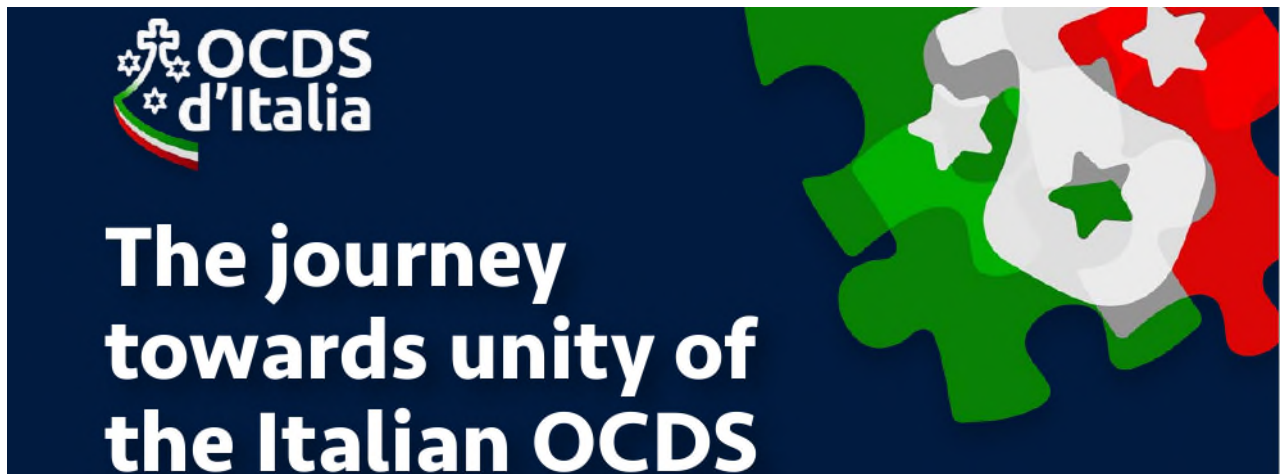
We look forward to a new year, praying that the pandemic will not prevent our gathering together. We will be focusing on the study edition of St Thérèse's Story of a Soul this year.



News from the Secular Order in Iceland



On December 11, 2021, six members in formation in the Disalced Carmelite Secular Order in Hafnarfjörður made their temporary Promises in the OCDS, during a celebration in the Monastery of the Disalced Carmelite nuns in Hafnarfjörður. Presiding at the celebration of Holy Mass was Fr Jan Piotr Malicki OCD, Provincial of the Province of Warsaw (Poland), together with Fr Robert M. Marciniak OCD, Delegate of the Secular Order in Iceland. Such an event was an absolute novelty in the history of Iceland, as this OCDS community is the first and only one in the country. It was officially erected on April 13, 2019, but members had been meeting regularly since 2011 under the spiritual direction of Mother Agnes, a Carmelite nun from Hafnarfjörður Monastery, which continues to provide spiritual assistance to the group. May the Icelandic members of the OCDS deepen their vocation, rejoice in a continual discovery of the richness of the Carmelite charism and joyfully give witness to their faith in the places where they live.



Walking towards unity was the aim motivating the Interprovincial Coordination Council of Italy, at the invitation of the previous General Delegate, Father Alzinir Debastiani ocd, to begin the drafting of a Formation Process that could be used by all six OCDS Provinces of Italy. This adventure began in November 2017 with the preparation of a Formation Notebook from each of the six Provinces. The most demanding work was certainly that of coordinating the individual contributions that were nuanced by different sensitivities and styles. This diversity, a source of wealth, had to find a logical and organic development: this involved a remarkable capacity for coordination, for which we thank the main architect, Brigida Silvana De Grandi, as National Head of Formation, and Maria Lupi who supported her in the final review of all the work. The process, approved by the General Definitory *ad experimentum* for five years on 18th of August 2021, has now been delivered to the individual Community Formators as a precious aid to be used on the path to human, Christian and Carmelite maturity of the formators. Let us entrust to the Lord, to the Virgin Mary and to Saint Joseph this National Formation Process so that it may bear good and abundant fruit for the good of the OCDS and for its journey in synodality, in line with the current path of the Church.

UNESCO joins in the 150th anniversary of the birth of Thérèse of Lisieux

The bells of the Basilica of Lisieux announced the good news: Thérèse of Lisieux has been inserted into the 2022/2023 calendar of anniversaries to which UNESCO will join on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Saint Thérèse (1973-2023).

May St. Thérèse open paths to Christ through the values that UNESCO wants to highlight: culture, science and education. The General Definitory will evaluate 'the possibility' of the Order's reading the saints manuscripts over the next six years and of enhancing these anniversaries at the ecclesial level', according to the Determinations of the last General Chapter.



News from the Christchurch Carmel

Below are excerpts from the nuns' Christmas newsletter which can viewed in full at: <https://www.christchurchcarmel.org.nz/files/Christmas-Newsletter-2021.pdf>



We were delighted to be asked to accommodate in our cemetery the mortal remains of three of the bishops of Christchurch, which had been interred in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and will be re-interred in the new Cathedral. There was a lot of work to be done to prepare for them coming, including the establishment of a temporary

mausoleum. In a simple ceremony led by Fr. Rick Loughnan, and accompanied by diocesan personnel, three hearses drove through our paddocks to our cemetery, and, in prayer, our bishops were laid to rest once again. Bishop John Grimes was the first Catholic Bishop of Christchurch and served from 1887-1915. It was touching to read him mentioned by St. Mary Mackillop in one of her letters. Bishop Edward Joyce was the well-known to our older sisters – he served from 1950-1964. Whenever he went overseas he always brought us back something, including a large statue of Our Lady Of Fatima, which watches over our recreation room and a plaque of Mary and Jesus, which hangs in our kitchen. Bishop John Cunneen served from 1995-2007. He was our chaplain before he became a bishop, and one of his first episcopal decisions was to reappoint himself in that role, to the delight of all the sisters. Having the mortal remains of these three men with us means a lot to our community, and on All Souls' Day we were able to pray at their graves as well as those of our deceased sisters.

Mother Dorothea had hip surgery in June and is now able to get about with ease. In July and August most of us caught a bad virus. It almost became the Carmelite Hospital as rosters were drawn up so those still standing could care for those where not. In due time most of us recovered, but Sr. Mary Teresa ended up seriously ill in hospital. Tests revealed perforated bowel, along with heart failure making it inoperable. She returned home under palliative care. Sr. Anne cares for her devotedly in our infirmary, and Nurse Maude district nurses have been marvellous, coming regularly to check on her. Our daily Mass is live-streamed via Skype right to Sr. Anne's bed.



A very special 'visitor' to our infirmary was the beautiful painting of Ko Hata Maria, te Matua Wahine o te Atua (Holy Mary, Mother of God), which reached our Carmel on 24 November. This artwork was commissioned by the bishops of New Zealand to celebrate the rededication of New Zealand to Our Lady. Artist Damien Walker carefully explained all the parts of the painting to us. What a joy to have Mary visit Sr. Mary Teresa as she prepares for her journey to heaven.



On 14 October we welcomed Lauren Butler as an extern postulant. Extern sisters combine a Teresian contemplative life with attention to the external needs of a Carmelite monastery, allowing us to maintain an entirely contemplative way of life. Sr. Lauren brings with her much pastoral experience, and a love of all things Carmelite, along with many artistic skills. Over more than a year as an aspirant, she has come to our rescue many times, accompanying sisters to hospital and back, sometimes later at night, and shopping for sometimes hard to find items. Only days before she joined us, she had to recover Sr. Anne's lost passport from a busy road. We have nicknamed her blue car 'The Chariot'. Please pray for her during this time of postulancy.



The Hidden Life of St Joseph

Who is this remarkable figure, last of the Patriarchs, of whom we know so little detail - yet know so much about his importance?

■ Bishop Greg Homeming OCD (Disalced)

St Teresa of Avila dedicated 10 of the 15 monasteries which she founded to the care of St Joseph. Her devotion to him helped establish the place which the Church accords him today. In spite of the honour given him, very little is known about this man.

Like Prince Philip, the late husband of Queen Elizabeth, St Joseph took a lesser role compared to Jesus and Mary. He stood behind them, giving his support and love.

Even though he was not Jesus' father, Joseph does give Jesus a name and ancestry.

Jesus, the carpenter's son, thought to be the son of Joseph, is of the house of Joseph and through this a descendant of David. While we may conjecture the role that Joseph played in the Holy Family, we cannot build an historical picture of the man.

However, we may surmise the inner man by asking appropriate questions.

When we meet Joseph in Matthew's Gospel, he is about to informally divorce Mary because she is with child. He has a dream and as a consequence his life changes.

Why did he believe the dream? Few of us believe our dreams.

Psychologists tell us that dreams are about the one who dreams, not the people who populate the dream. What does Joseph's dream and his response tell us about the saint?

"Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

Joseph could not have understood this. There are no other instances of women conceiving of the Holy Spirit, and it is doubtful that he would have known who or what the Holy Spirit was. Why did he follow the dream?

As is often the case, a dream taps into the depths of the inner person. In Joseph's case, I think that he believed the dream because he wanted to. He loved Mary and did not want to divorce her. He believed because he loved. Here love and faith work together.

The darkest moment of Joseph's life is the instant that he realises that Mary is pregnant and he is not the father. The dream speaks into this darkness and uncovers the depth of his love for Mary. Perhaps



St Joseph was a man of dreams, a man with a profound interior life and a man of prayer, writes Bishop Greg Homeming OCD of Lismore. The saint is portrayed here in a work entitled *Dream of St Joseph*, painted c. 1625–1630 by the Flemish painter Gerard Seghers. IMAGE: WIKICOMMONS

he didn't know how much he loved her; nevertheless, the life which he will now live is proof of that love.

The dream, faith and love do not guarantee freedom from doubt. St Augustine tells us that to doubt is human. I wonder what Joseph expected. Perhaps he thought the child would be miraculous, a leader.

Tradition tells us that Joseph died before Jesus began his ministry and therefore Joseph was not privy to the miraculous signs worked by Jesus. For almost 30 years Joseph lived with and cared for a regular person.

I'm not sure that Joseph ever saw anything spectacular. Did he ever doubt his dream? Did he ever wonder whether Jesus really was conceived miraculously? This would have



How did Joseph cope and go on to live an integrated holy life? He was a man of dreams ... a man with a profound interior life, a man of prayer."

Bishop Greg Homeming OCD (Disalced)

happened in the secrecy of Joseph's heart.

Since we all have questions and moments of doubt and uncertainty, we have access to the hidden recesses of St Joseph. We have wondered whether we are loved, we have laboured under uncertainty and we have made mistakes because of our doubt. How did Joseph cope and go on to live an integrated holy life?

He was a man of dreams.

In the Carmelite tradition, this means St Joseph is a man with a profound interior life; he is a man of prayer. In the spiritual life, doubt, uncertainty and darkness furnish the inner sanctum of the soul. We search for God in this context.

Joseph is a master of this. In his struggles, he cries out "where are you hidden?" He does not wallow in his difficulties. He looks for God; this is a fruit of profound inner love.

We all understand this because in similar circumstances, even though it does not feel like love, we find an inner strength which enables us to go on living and loving. We discover a love deep within ourselves which impels us; we share this with St Joseph. Prayer is friendship with God.

St Teresa of Avila took Jesus as her closest friend. As she grew in relationship with him, she grew in self-knowledge, and through self-knowledge she grew in knowledge of Jesus.

Part of St Joseph's prayer was his relationship with Jesus and Mary. His love for them supported him in his trials. He experienced their love and he loved them. It was an intimate and real love. We can say that he was a master of prayer.

We might not have the biography of St Joseph, yet as we ponder him, we see that he had a profound hidden inner life which is relevant to us because we experience similar difficulties.

His hidden life is also my life. He shows me how to navigate the ups and downs of life in such a way that I might draw closer to Jesus. In darkness we may find light, and in faith learn to love.

Bishop Gregory Homeming OCD (Disalced) was named the Bishop of Lismore in 2016. At the time of his appointment, he had been serving as Regional Vicar (Major Superior) of the Disalced Carmelites in Australia.



News from the Ormiston Carmel

Below are excerpts from website of the Ormiston Carmel, which can viewed in full at: <https://www.carmeliteormiston.com/happenings-2021.html>



The sisters are wearing leis made for the Christmas celebrations



In 2021, Sr. Dymphna was called home to God and Sr. Therese celebrated her 75th anniversary of religious profession.

Witnessing to God in an ordinary life

Witnessing is part of the vocation of every baptised person. When Fr Marie-Eugène insisted that members of Notre Dame de Vie should be genuine contemplatives, it wasn't so that they should be isolated behind an enclosure wall. The love of Christ needs to be extended by a loving Church. "The Church is entirely and completely evangelizing" (St. Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*).

Atheism and secularity represent not dangers but stepping stones to hope for a witness to be achieved through being more than through words.

Today, the great tool of mission is not discussion; people no longer believe in that. It is not even good works! The great tool is the witness of someone who is possessed and taken by God, who through words and attitudes gives a glimpse and sight of God and shows what God can do in a life.

(Fr Marie-Eugène, *En marche vers Dieu (Journeying towards God)*, p. 93)

"Silent prayer is a search for God ... at the beginning, it's a search! One cannot find him, one is not used to it. Later on, it is he who draws one in. He responds. Silent prayer gives the experience of God. One looks for him in faith. One has to exercise that faith."

(Fr Marie-Eugène, *La Force de la prière (The Power of Prayer)*, pp. 16, 18)

"Once one has become aware of one's grace, aware of the light it bears, the direction it gives and the hope it imparts, one has an anchor in life."

(Fr Marie-Eugène, *Au souffle de l'esprit (Where the Spirit Breathes)*, p. 88)



Blessed Maria Candida of the Eucharist - Feast day in Carmelite calendar - 14 June.



Blessed Maria Candida (Maria Barba) was born on 16 January 1884 into a deeply believing family, who nonetheless resolutely opposed her religious vocation, manifested since the age of fifteen. It was almost twenty years before she could enter Carmel. During these waiting years she bore her interior suffering with a surprising fortitude of soul and an uncommon fidelity to her call to Carmel. She entered the Carmel of Ragusa on 25 September 1919. Maria Candida had a deep devotion to the Eucharist in which she saw the mystery of God's presence in the world, the concreteness of his infinite love for humanity and the reason for our full trust in his promises. In Carmel, she fully developed what she called her "vocation for the Eucharist".

Elected prioress of the monastery in 1924, she remained so, except for a brief interruption, until 1947, instilling in her community a deep love for the Rule of St. Teresa of Jesus and contributing directly to the expansion of the Teresian Carmel in Sicily, and to the return of the male branch of the Order. The Lord called her, after a few months of acute physical suffering, on 12 June 1949, on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. She was beatified by St John Paul II on 21 March 2004, who said:

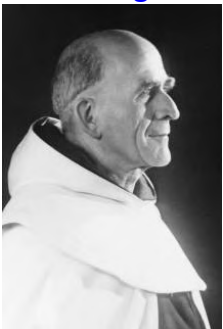
The model of a Eucharistic life is, of course, the Virgin Mary, who carried the Son of God in her womb and who continues to give birth to him in the souls of his disciples. "I want to be like Mary," she wrote in one of the most intense and profound pages of The Eucharist, "to be Mary for Jesus, to take the place of His Mother. When I receive Jesus in Communion Mary is always present. I want to receive Jesus from her hands, she must make me one with Him. I cannot separate Mary from Jesus. Hail, O Body born of Mary. Hail Mary, dawn of the Eucharist!"

For Mother Maria Candida, the Eucharist is a school, it is food and an encounter with God, a coming together of hearts, a school of virtue and wisdom. "Heaven itself does not contain more. God, that unique treasure is here! Really, yes really: my God is my everything".

See https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20040321_candida_en.html for the beatification homily in full.

The second miracle, required for canonisation, is currently under investigation. On 16 December 2020, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints issued the decree of validity of the diocesan process on an alleged Eucharistic miracle through the intercession of Blessed Mary Candida of the Eucharist. The alleged miracle involved the multiplication of consecrated hosts so that the faithful should not go without communion.

Marie- Eugène of the Child Jesus - "I want to see God" <https://schoolofmary.org/i-want-to-see-god/>



«How much time do you think one must devote to mental prayer each day?» a young wife asked Father Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus. «To start, an hour a day,» replied the Father. The young woman was flabbergasted: «An hour a day for prayer! But that's impossible! Unthinkable! Where would I find an hour for prayer in a life that's already as full as it can be?» A kind smile lit up the Father's face: «Madame, if you do not feel ready to give God an hour each day in prayer, it's certain proof for me that you were knocking on the wrong door when you came to mine.» So who was this priest who made such astonishing demands?

Henri Grialou, the future Father Marie-Eugène, was born on December 2, 1894, into a country family in the Rouergue region of France, in the small town of Gua. He was not yet ten years old when his father died after a few days of illness, leaving the young mother five children to raise. Growing up, Henri became a robust boy: enterprising, headstrong, aggressive. Later, he would speak of his «rough husk.»

Very early, prompted by his family environment and encouraged by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, he wanted to be a priest. In 1905, he left for Suse, Italy, where he would be able to study for free with the Fathers of the Holy Spirit. There, he discerned that his vocation was not in this congregation and asked to enter the minor seminary in Graves. However, his mother, who thought she wouldn't be able to pay his boarding expenses, placed him in an apprenticeship with a metal worker. Henri applied himself as much as he could to this work that he didn't feel cut out for. His mother, a very intuitive woman, understood and took on the great sacrifice of paying his board at the minor seminary. At the end of his secondary studies, the young man entered the major seminary in Rodez, on October 2, 1911. After the retreat he took upon first entering the major seminary, he wrote, «Especially during a retreat, you perceive the 'pros and cons' of the priesthood, if I may put it in these terms. You weigh all the reasons... We are rushing, with the love of God in our hearts, and hope for the future in our heads, into the lists, where, it seems to us, we will be happy, if not to shed our blood all at one time, at least, and it may be just as good, to shed it drop by drop, to use up our physical and intellectual strength little by little, and in the end, to fall on the field as a good captain in Christ's army.» During these years, Henri discovered the writings of Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus, to whom he was passionately devoted. «Pray well for me,» he wrote in 1913 to one of his friends, «so that I might be, like Sister Thérèse, God's little thing, that He might do with me as He wishes, consuming my life little by little here or somewhere else, or taking me away in another manner as He wishes. Ask for this perfect conformity to His will for me.» The future Saint herself had written, «Perfection consists in doing the will [of God], of being what He wants us to be» (Ms. A, v. 2, 20). Later on, this communion of spirit with Thérèse would progress to the point that Mother Agnes of Jesus, the saint's eldest sister, would be able to say, «I have never seen a soul that resembled my little sister's as much as Father Marie-Eugène's.»



«He speaks to us in a whisper»

The First World War broke out; Henri left for the front. After six years in the armed forces, he returned with the rank of lieutenant, decorated with the Military Cross and the Legion of Honour. In August 1919, he returned to the seminary, but his readings of the saints of Carmel (Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of the Child Jesus) awakened in him the desire to become a Carmelite. He wrote to his youngest sister: «God speaks to us directly and very clearly only on rare occasions. Most of the time, He slips into our souls through inspirations, through circumstances that He causes. He speaks to us in veiled terms, in a whisper, and shows us what we might do if we wanted to please Him.» He was ordained a priest on February 4, 1922; on the 24th, Father Grialou crossed the threshold of the Carmelite monastery in Avon, near Fontainebleau. After an austere novitiate, where he learned of the primacy of mental prayer, he made his first religious profession on March 11, 1923, taking the name Father Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus. «Mental prayer,» he wrote to a friend, «is, as it were, the sun and centre of all one's daily occupations. One has the impression every evening that one has done nothing else of importance... Mental prayer is a great consolation here and makes me forget everything else.» What is mental prayer? Saint Teresa of Avila answers, «Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us» (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC, 2709*).

The years 1923-25 were marked by the beatification and canonization of Sister Thérèse of Lisieux. This gave Father Marie Eugène great joy. On April 29, 1923, the day of her beatification, he wrote to a seminarian friend, «I have the impression that this is one of the most beautiful days of my life. It's the realization of very old and very deep desires.... This glorification of the little Sister is the form in which I best understand the glorification of Jesus Himself. The little Blessed's mission is an outpouring of the divine love in souls, in the form God desires for our age.» During these two great events, just as for the proclamation of Saint John of the Cross as Doctor of the Church, in 1926, Father Marie-Eugène was called upon to give numerous conferences or homilies on the spirituality of the Carmelite masters. Having come to intimately know their spiritual doctrine, he would publish syntheses of their teachings in two books in 1949 and 1951, *I Am a Daughter of the Church*, and *I Want to See God*.

An antidote for atheism

Father Marie-Eugène had long been convinced that the doctrine of the Carmel saints was something everyone could understand, provided that it was presented in a form adapted to the needs of our time. On Pentecost Monday, 1929, at the time superior of the Carmelite boys' school at the Petit Castelet in Tarascon, he was approached by three young female teachers, including Marie Pila, who wished to know the tenets of Carmel and to learn mental prayer. He quickly realized that God intended him to found an organization for them, but he also knew that he would have to «have the humility to wait for the moment, the way, the hour, and God's grace, instead of rushing into plans to carry out this project, which would then be arrogant because they would be our own.» So he waited until May 1931 to begin a series of conferences on mental prayer at «Our Lady of France» in Aix-en-Provence. There, he discovered an audience of young women who were very anxious to be introduced to the contemplative life, all the while retaining their jobs. Thus was born a secular institute, which he set up on the property of Our Lady of Life in Venasque, in the diocese of Avignon. The aim of this institute was the original Carmelite ideal, realized by the prophet Elijah: «To closely join a contemplative and apostolic life in the world, by permeating every apostolate with mental prayer, so as to be the witness through word and life to the living God.» Each of these women began by spending a year in the solitude of Our Lady of Life; she then could take the spirit of contemplation into her social circle, while trying diligently to be a model of professional ability.

Father Marie-Eugène deeply rooted his disciples in the mental prayer of faith, this simple looking at God that leads one to discover His Merciful Love. Struck by this phrase from Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus: «I beg You to look down with Your divine look on a great number of little souls, I beg You to choose a host of little victims worthy of Your love» (Ms. B 5 v. 5, 42), he explained, «I would like you to go where we (religious) cannot go, on the boulevards, in the middle of the sea, in every environment.» The organization wanted itself to be an antidote to the practical atheism of modern times: «In a world that has lost a sense of God, that is perhaps losing this sense more and more, the Institute has its place, it has its mission all the more urgent because atheism is taking more victims: atheism does not make us flee; on the contrary, it calls us, because it calls for a testimony, the testimony that affirms the existence of God and of His rights.» Indeed, the more the world forgets God, the more it is necessary to give witness to God. Mankind is hungry for God without knowing it, and it is groping for Him in the darkness. «Let us be anxious to lead them to God!» the priest loved to say. But the conditions of this apostolate are those of «the struggle between two ferments, between two kingdoms, that of God and that of Satan. For the divine ferment to triumph, it is necessary that it be the strongest and invincible in each apostle... This overwhelming ferment must be capable not only of keeping up the fight, but of strengthening itself to continue this fight... If it were otherwise, the first meeting would be presumptuous and would lead to a defeat of the kingdom of God, and perhaps to the loss of the apostle.»

Clinging to God

Mental prayer is therefore indispensable: «A certain experience of God is necessary to strengthen our faith and keep it strong in the midst of all these waves, and even in the midst of all these tidal waves, interior and exterior, that we all endure.... It is essential that we meet God, that we make contact with Him, that we live in close friendship with Him, that we cling to God so that we are not carried away by the torrent that threatens us all. For this clinging to God through faith implies that we devote time to God every day.» Indeed, «One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time,» the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* clarifies, «one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter» (CCC2710). This time devoted to God implies that a person organizes his or her daily life to make room for it. How much time is it necessary to provide for? «It seems,» said Father Marie-Eugène, «that, if a person wants mental prayer to have a certain influence on his life, he must spend a half-hour a day. How do you organize it? You can divide this time in two, in three or in four, according to your capacity, and resolve the problem in this manner. I myself have seen many



people who are busy, mothers of families, households, religious who have consuming occupations, administrative concerns with heavy correspondence burdens, and who manage to put in their two hours, their three hours of mental prayer each day.» How is this possible? Saint Francis de Sales explains that souls who devote themselves to mental prayer act more efficiently, because the time spent with God makes possible a spiritual relaxation which refines and improves the faculties, even from a human perspective. It can be added that the soul that often rests its gaze on the eternal truths sets priorities in life better, eliminating that which is useless. Such a soul also becomes capable of lengthening its prayer even during its occupations: «It is possible to offer fervent prayer even while walking in public or strolling alone, or seated in your shop, ... while buying or selling, ... or even while cooking» (Saint John Chrysostom). All this becomes even more important when one considers that prayer is a vital necessity. The person who does not allow himself to be led by the Spirit falls back into the slavery of sin. «Those who pray are certainly saved; those who do not pray are certainly damned» (Saint Alphonsus de Liguori; cf. CCC 2743-2744).

Adapted asceticism

Getting his new organization up and running did not exempt Father Marie-Eugène from weighty responsibilities entrusted to him by the Carmelite Order. Having taken on the duty of Prior in several monasteries, in 1937 he became Definitor General for the Carmelite Order in Rome. His numerous absences led him to entrust direction of the Institute to Marie Pila. Possessed of a strong personality, very balanced, far-reaching intellectually, this soul devoted herself entirely to the foundation. Father Marie-Eugène's stay at the Carmelite General House in Rome was cut short by war in 1939, which called him back to France. Demobilized at the end of 1940, and unable to go back to Rome, he stayed at the Petit Castelet and devoted his activities to the French province of the order until the end of the war. At this time, a group of young women joined those who made up the Institute's first nucleus at Our Lady of Life. The Father mapped out for these women, destined to observe in the world the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the principal lines of a program of perfection. A very realistic educator, he integrated manual work, outings, and recreation into this formation. All this promoted a fraternal environment, so necessary to spiritual growth, which can undergo crises. «The great proof of holiness is not to not have temptations or weariness, but to always go on, to react, to climb towards God.» He also trained them in an asceticism adapted to each one's temperament and to the difficulties of our times. Far from urging them on to do spectacular penances, he proposed an «asceticism of smallness,» which one could call «enduring the difficulties of our state.» He said, «If you know how to accept the trials, worries, sufferings, and fatigue arranged by God throughout the days and hours of life, you will practice a lot of asceticism, and you will not have to look for more of it.»

A complete Christianity

At the end of the war, the Father returned to Rome. Pope Pius XII's promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, which officially recognized secular institutes, made it possible for Our Lady of Life to be canonically erected, on August 15, 1948. «Secular institutes,» Pope Paul VI would say, «are currently the great army that the Church is sending out onto the battlefield of the world. Their members are immersed in this human reality which is so heterogeneous, so chaotic, and so disorderly, to sanctify it from within and configure it to God.» It was not until August 24, 1962 that the Institute, which had grown to include a men's branch and a priests' branch, would be receive a pontifical charter. On February 23, 1948, Father Marie-Eugène was named Apostolic Visitor for the Discalced Carmelites living in France. Over six years he made visits to 150 Carmels. In 1954, he became Vicar General of the order. As such, in the years that followed, he went to Cairo, the Philippines, Vietnam, India, and Palestine. During these journeys, he made every effort to gain a deep understanding of people of various cultures. «We must give them a complete Christianity,» he affirmed, «to Christianise their civilization, but while respecting or even extolling the human values of these refined civilizations, as the Church did for the Greek and Latin civilizations... The aim of adaptation is to translate doctrine that is good and necessary for all times, into a clear language for a given audience, and into a form adapted to its needs. This is an enormous task. It requires a perfect mastery of doctrine, a possession that is not only verbal, but that is able to go beyond words and even definitions, seizing the reality it signifies.» However, he also warned the contemporary apostle against the temptation to adapt Catholic doctrine to the taste of the day in order to make it accepted. «The great sin is not giving the complete message... Mutilating the Christian message is a crime not only against God, but against souls... Christ did not water down His message to make it accepted.»

Father Marie-Eugène was also interested in the intellectual formation of all members of the Order of Carmel. To this end, he closely followed the construction of the *Teresianum*, an international school in Rome. The general development of culture among young Carmelites requires very advanced intellectual formation, the Father thought, but at the same time, he insisted that this go hand in hand with the life of prayer and contemplation, so as to foster a better knowledge of the Lord. «Contemplation,» teaches the *Catechism*, «is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. 'I look at him and He looks at me': this is what a certain peasant of Ars used to say to his holy curé about his prayer before the tabernacle. This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self. His gaze purifies our heart; the light of the countenance of Jesus illuminates the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of His truth and His compassion for all men. Contemplation also turns its gaze on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Thus it learns the 'interior knowledge of our Lord,' the more to love Him and follow Him (cf. St. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 104)» (CCC 2715).

Relieved of his responsibilities in Rome, Father Marie-Eugène was able to return to France and, in 1961, he obtained permission to live at Our Lady of Life. After so much hard work, he felt tremendously fatigued. «A person needs,» he said, «this feeling of weakness, of poverty, of physical powerlessness... It is good to feel our weakness, so that we turn to mercy! Remember that for yourselves. God has placed me among you so that I might show you how to use weakness. It's the way you take to return home with joy, with your fullness of soul.» Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus had likewise put it: «O luminous Beacon of love, I know how to reach You, I have found the secret to appropriating your flame. I am just a child, powerless and weak, yet it is my very weakness that gives me the boldness to offer myself as a Victim to Your Love, O Jesus!» (Ms. B, 3 v. 36).



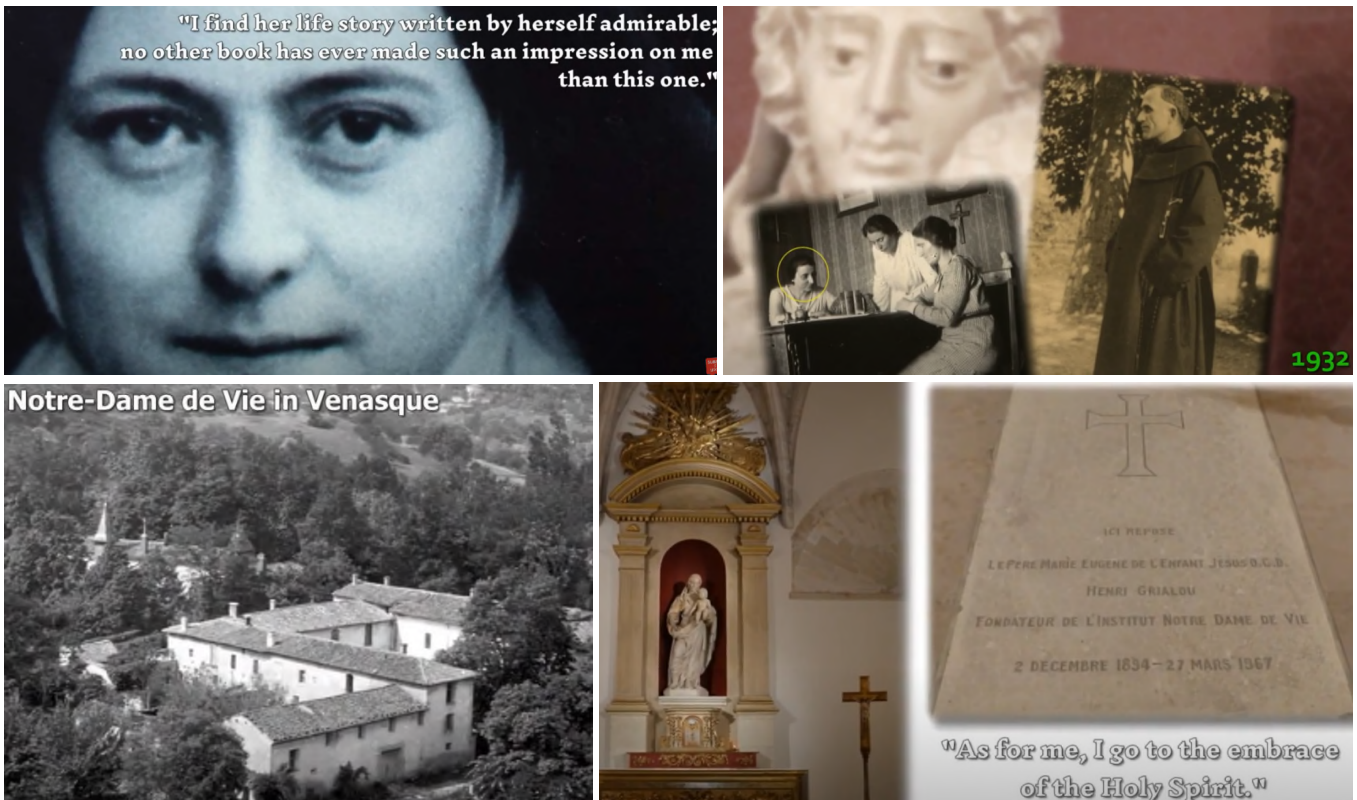
«The Holy Spirit is your Friend!»

Father Marie-Eugène's strength was diminishing. After a medical episode in February 1962, he recovered enough to accept the responsibility of provincial in 1963, and to undertake visits to the various countries where the organization had installed itself. In February 1965, a new health problem threatened his life. At this time, he wrote to his spiritual children: «This is the testament I leave you: may the grace of the Holy Spirit descend upon you, that you might all be able to say as soon as possible that the Holy Spirit is your Friend, that the Holy Spirit is your Light, that the Holy Spirit is your Master...» Another change for the better allowed the Father to take up his work again, and he spent the year 1966 traveling and preaching retreats. But at the end of December, his state of exhaustion forced him to stop. On Holy Thursday 1967, he was brought Holy Communion in his bed. On Holy Saturday, after having received the sacrament of Anointing, he murmured, «My God, I love You! Jesus, I love You! It seems that I love You perfectly and that I resemble You! All the minutes that pass allow me to love You more. God has given me everything... The depths of God are Love.» On the night of Easter Sunday, he sighed, «Into Your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit,» and the next day, Easter Monday, March 27, 1967, Father Marie-Eugène died, to, according to his own expression, go «toward the Holy Spirit's embrace.» His beatification process is underway in Rome.

«For many souls, even Christian souls, God is no longer the aim of our existence,» Father Marie-Eugène sadly observed. But, he added, «man has a supernatural vocation. Our end is the Holy Trinity!» It is precisely prayer that guides us towards this ultimate end, by putting us in a living relationship with God while we are here on earth. By devoting time to Him every day, we make an act of faith in Him from Whom we have everything and to Whom we must return at the hour of our death. Our Baptism will thus bear fruit not only for us, but also for the salvation of many souls. Indeed, «a soul filled with God cannot not give Him,» Father Marie-Eugène loved to repeat. If we do not know how to pray, let us call upon the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Carmel, for «everywhere that God is Father, Mary is Mother. Everywhere that the Holy Spirit spreads love, She collaborates in His work, through Her role as Mother.» Let us likewise call upon Saint Joseph, whom Saint Teresa of Avila recommended to all as a master of mental prayer. In a world suffering from the fleeting distractions of materialism, may Our Lady and Saint Joseph open our hearts to the light of the Holy Spirit!

Dom Antoine Marie OSB, Abbot, St Joseph's Abbey, Flavigny-sur-Ozerain, Burgundy.

Below are some screenshots from a video montage on the life of Blessed Marie-Eugène that can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qd-l4Nhqt2U&list=PLq_6HaZxooWcF8y9CZqlS2SS5-9aJdZz2&index=2.



See also the blog of the friars of the Washington DC province: <https://discalcedcarmel.org/blessed-marie-eugene-of-the-child-jesus-ocd/>



Servant of God, Victor Rodriguez Martínez OCDS

On Saturday, 18 December 2021 in Valladolid (Spain) at the church of the Disalced Carmelite nuns, the diocesan process opened on the life, heroic virtues, reputation of holiness and signs of the Servant of God, Víctor Rodríguez Martínez, a member of the Secular Order of Disalced Carmelites.



Victor Rodríguez Martínez was born in Quintanadiez de la Vega (Palencia), Spain, on April 12, 1925. He married Asunción Merino Cuadrado, and the marriage was blessed with 10 children. In 1951 he moved to Medina del Campo (Valladolid), where he set up a poultry farm. At the height of success, a poultry crisis overtook Spain and left his business in ruins. Understanding then that all things human are uncertain, he sought security in God. From then on, he began to live ever closer to God until the end of his days. He obtained employment in the Pepsi Cola Bottling Company in Madrid, but during his time there that company also went bankrupt, and he was left definitively unemployed. In 1990 he moved to Velillas del Duque (Palencia) and in 2002 returned to Medina del Campo. He died there on February 12, 2012, in the odor of sanctity. From the day of his conversion in 1966 until his death in 2012, God was everything to him. He was a Secular Carmelite and a nocturnal adorer in Madrid and Medina del Campo. A longer biography (in Italian) can be veived at:

*<https://www.postocd.org/index.php/en/biografia-victor-rodriguez-martinez>.
An English translation will be published in the next newsletter.*

Carmelite Retreats at Varroville



- 5 February *The Power of Faith in Uncertain Times - Bro. Adalbert Imperial, OCD.*
- 5 March *Practising the Presence of God in a Confusing World - Geoff Stumbles.*
- 11-13 March *The Gift of Joy! A Retreat in the Spirit of Taizé - Bro. Matthew (Taizé community, France).*
- 18-20 March *Embracing Three-Dimensional Thinking: The Length and the Breadth, The Height and the Depth - John Charadia and Artist Tutor Team.*
- 2 April *Jesus Encounters 'The Adulteress' John 8:1-11 - Lorraine Murphy, OCDS.*
- 8-10 April *Rediscovering the Christian Meaning of Love in a Secular Society - Bro. Adalbert Imperial, OCD.*
- 7 May *Learning with St Teresa How to Enjoy Prayer - Fr. Paul Maunder, OCD.*
- 13-15 May *Love in the Spirituality of St. Therese of Lisieux - Fr. Aloysius Rego, OCD.*
- 4 June *Who Am I Interiorly? - Barry Morkel, OCDS.*
- 24-26 June *The Light of Hope and Peace - John Charadia and Artist Tutor Team.*



Bookings at: <https://mtcarmel.com.au/carmelite-retreat-program>