



Carmelite Newsletter

Australia, New Zealand & Oceania

17 July 2025

Memoria of the Carmelite Martyrs of Compiègne

St. Teresa of St Augustine & Companions

Homily for Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit for the Commencement of the Law Term ('The Red Mass') at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney on 3 February 2025 by Archbishop Anthony Fisher, OP, Archbishop of Sydney

Antoine Quentin Fouquier de Tinville, was the notorious Public Prosecutor during France's 'Reign of Terror'. For his outsized role in delivering thousands to the 'National Razor,' he earned the nickname 'Purveyor to the Guillotine.'¹ An industrious lawyer, sympathetic to the ideals of the revolution, Fouquier was appointed *Accusateur Public* of the infamous Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris in 1793.² He ardently implemented the revolutionary laws, prosecuting cases speedily and achieving a near 100% conviction rate by trying the accused in batches, while denying them legal defence.³ When cases were stalling or the court seemed indifferent, he'd expedite things by asking the jury if they'd "heard enough to be illuminated yet."⁴



The Red Mass has been celebrated annually in Sydney since 1931. The first recorded Red Mass was celebrated at Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, in 1245. The Red Mass takes its name partly from the scarlet robes worn by the royal judges attending the Mass in 14th century England. In London the tradition began around 1310, during the reign of Edward II. [Photo from 2024 Red Mass, Sydney.]

Following the abolition of religious orders and confiscation of ecclesiastical property under the 1790 Civil Constitution of the Clergy, **Mother Teresa of St Augustine, Prioress of the Discalced Carmelite Convent of Compiègne**, and her sisters sought to live their vows as best they could and to offer their lives, and if needs be their deaths, for the salvation of France.⁵ After being exiled from their convent and stripped of their habits, they rented apartments and lived in groups of four, attending clandestine Masses with nonjuring priests and constantly praying for peace. But eventually they were caught by the Revolutionary forces and imprisoned.

On 17 July 1794, Fouquier brought the sixteen nuns to trial, accusing them of fermenting counter-revolutionary thoughts and consorting to commit sedition. When pressed by a young nun as to what he meant by calling them 'fanatics', the dogged prosecutor defined the term as anyone who is too attached to "childish beliefs" and "silly religious practices".⁶ Unsurprisingly, the silly 'fanatics' were found guilty and sentenced to death that very day. The nuns sang

hymns all the way to the scaffold and on arrival renewed their vows. The youngest novice, Constance de St Denis, was first to ascend and chanted the *Laudate Dominum* as her death approached. As one by one the nuns followed her, they sang the *Veni Creator Spiritus* with which we opened today's Mass, which silenced the usually boisterous crowd.⁷ Ten days later the great architect of the Terror, Robespierre, was himself executed, marking the waning of the Terror and, less than a year later, the Revolutionary Tribunal was itself abolished after executing its final convict: prosecutor Antoine Fouquier.

The heroic witness of the sixteen martyrs of the Carmel of Compiègne inspired Le Fort's novel *The Song at the Scaffold* (1931), and Bernanos' screenplay (1949) and Poulenc's opera, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (1956). Late last year Pope Francis canonised these women as saints of the Church.

In reflecting on their lives and deaths, we witness not only faith and integrity in time of persecution, but also the importance of a legal system that genuinely seeks truth and justice. That laws and legal processes should be ordered to the common good and protect the weak, rather than extinguishing enemies and advancing the interests of the comfortable, may seem obvious to us. That freedom of religion and other basic liberties should not be suspended or unjust laws made in service of ideologies seems a no-brainer: theorists, such as Augustine, Aquinas and Thomas More promoted obedience to law but judged radically unjust laws scarcely law at all.⁸ Yet it has not always been obvious to all, as demonstrated by the recent spate of antisemitic attacks on synagogues, schools, businesses, homes and vehicles, and the discovery of caravan-load of explosives destined for more such terrorism, that have stained our city's soul.

The story of the Carmelite martyrs is also an example, albeit an egregious one, of the tensions that can arise between Church and State. In today's Gospel (*Mt 22:15-21*), Jesus is interrogated about paying Roman taxes, not with a view to truth or justice, but in order to trap Him into seeming either a collaborator with the Roman oppressor or an anarchist denying the legitimate authority of the state. Whichever way He leans, Jesus can't win.

But Jesus sees through the trap of the *Accusateurs Publics* and ignores their simplistic binaries. "Render unto Caesar what is properly Caesar's and to God what is properly God's" affirms proper spheres for both politics and religion, each with its own responsibilities, principles and authorities. Temporal rulers shouldn't play God or infringe on the sacred, including the dignity of human persons, and religious rulers shouldn't play king or engage in worldly politics. Which is not to say "ne'er the twain shall meet" between Church and State or that the two are necessarily rivals. Here in Australia, Church and State generally make space for each other, leaving well enough alone, but collaborating where useful for the common good. Our citizens' values, laws and customs, so much of our culture, are largely a Judeo-Christian inheritance. And the same people are at Church, synagogue or mosque at week's end, and in parliament, court or community during the week, and must find ways to live in both worlds with integrity. To try to exclude faith from the public square in pursuit of a totalitarian secularism, or to try to subject the state to the





views of one religion in pursuit of theocracy, would be to fail in respect for some part of the human good and some members of the human community.

But when the law allows space both for believers and unbelievers to pursue truth, beauty and goodness, when legitimate authority recognises the good of religion and its place in educating citizens in virtue and in enabling their charitable contributions to the polity, when believers are well protected from those who would harm or silence them, then society is strengthened, the Carmels will be safe and the synagogues also. Then can those who make and apply our laws join Mr Justice Isaiah this morning (Isa 1:10,16-20) in declaring: "Take your crimes and torts out of my sight. Cease doing evil and learn to do good. Seek justice, help the oppressed, protect orphans, plead for widows."

- 1 Alphonse Dunoyer, *The Public Prosecutor of the Terror: Antoine Quentin Fouquier-Tinville*, translated by A.W. Evans (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1914), 115.
- 2 Eric Hazan, *A People's History of the French Revolution* (London: Verso, 2017), 228
- 3 M.A. Thiers, *The History of the French Revolution: Vol III* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1843), 62.
- 4 Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (UK: Penguin, 1998), 677-8.
- 5 William Bush, *To Quell the Terror: The Mystery of the Vocation of the Sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne Guillotined July 17, 1794* (Washington D.C: ICS Publications, 1999), 116.
- 6 Bush, *To Quell the Terror*, 183. See also Edwin Barron, *Refractory Men, Fanatical Women: Fidelity to Conscience during the French Revolution* (Gracewing, 1992), 101-104; Warren Carrol, *The Cross and the Guillotine* (Front Royal VA: Christendom Press, 1991).
- 7 Bush, *To Quell the Terror*, 208; "These 16 Nuns were guillotined in the French Revolution. Now the Pope has declared them saints," *The Conversation* 13 January 2025.
- 8 See for example Augustine, *On Free the Choice of the Will*, 1.5.11.33- 1.5.12.37; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 96, a.4.



The Australian Opera contacted us in mid 1984 seeking information about our life in order to make its production of Poulenc's opera, Dialogue of the Carmelites mor realistic. This was the beginning of a happy association which climaxed in our extern sisters being guests at one of the performances during which they met the 'stars'. The cast told the sisters that to be in the performance was a most moving experience. From left to right: Anne-Maree McDonald, Sr. Margarite, Isobel Buchanan, Sr. Anna, Dame Joan Sutherland, Sr. Lucia, Heather Begg, Lone Kopel.

To Quell the Terror: The True Story of the Carmelite Martyrs of Compiègne by William Bush is available [ICS Publications](#) in Washington DC.



First Promises in the OCDS community in Tonga



Malia Luisa and Siaoisi Tonga made their first Professions on Saturday 21st June 2025 in the OCDS community in Tonga.

Fr. 'Epele Manisela celebrated mass. The President and members of the OCDS community attended along with the Mother Prioress and the Carmelite nuns.





Influence of St Thérèse in the early development of Carmel in Australia

We know about the beginnings of Carmel in Australia through the recollections of Mother Marie du St Esprit, who wrote an account over 40 years after the Foundation arrived in Sydney on 30 July 1885. She was the youngest sister of twelve chosen to join the Foundation. She was born on 17 April 1863 and professed on 15 April 1883, two days before her 20th birthday. The foundation left the Carmel of Angoulême on Trinity Sunday, 31 May 1885.

When the Foundation arrived in Sydney, the sisters were met at the wharf by a barge sent by the Marist Fathers, and were ferried up river to the Marist property at Hunters Hill. They stayed in a small cottage on that property for six months before moving to the Warren at Marrickville. They lived at the Warren for 15 years, before being evicted for defaulting on their loan. For about two years they lived in rented accommodation, and then bought a house on Wardell Road, Dulwich Hill. They moved there in April or May 1902.

The first canonical election of the Foundation in Australia was held on 13 June 1910. Mother Marie du St Esprit was elected prioress. Recalling the difficulties of establishing Dulwich Hill during her first term as prioress, she writes for the first time of her devotion to Sister Thérèse, “the Little Flower”:

Back in 1897, when the Carmel of Lisieux announced the death of the Little Flower while we were at the Warren, I was very struck by her angelic life and death. From that moment an intimate love for her sprang up in my heart; I felt greatly drawn to her and found easy access for the unburdening of my loaded heart. Great was the burden I had to carry now as prioress. My first act was to consecrate my priorship to her, making her the prioress of this monastery. From that moment, such great courage took possession of me that I felt capable of anything.



Cardinal Moran visited the monastery on 30 July 1910, 25 years to the day after the Foundation arrived in Sydney. A few months later, he supported an appeal to raise funds for the monastery, beginning with his donation of £50. The appeal was made in the name of Sister Thérèse, the “Little Flower”.

Mother Marie du St Esprit recalls: *While at prayer on the feast of St Joseph, 19 March 1911, I was seized with a great desire that God would be loved and well-served in this monastery and that a serious sin would never be committed here. I said to Him:*

Most Holy, Most August Trinity, we beseech You by Your infinite Mercy, by the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by His Adorable Face all bruised, by His Most Precious Blood, by the Sweet Virgin Mary our Mother, by St Joseph our Protector and Beloved Father, and by our Holy Mother St Teresa: deign to grant us by the intercession of our Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face that the help be abundant enough to permit us to establish a poor but regular monastery.

If before the end of this year 1911 we see the realisation of our desires, even though the monastery might not be completely finished (provided that it is well on the way to completion), we promise to choose the Servant of God for one of the patronesses of this monastery. This will have to be done by the Rev. Mother Prioress then in charge.

Made on the Feast of the glorious Father St Joseph, 19 March 1911

The Sanctuary of the Carmel at Dulwich Hill bears witness to the great devotion in which St Therese of Lisieux was held by the Sisters of the community. Besides a life sized statue of Thérèse, there was a mural painted on the wall above the altar canopy of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, holding the Child Jesus who is reaching out to Thérèse and handing her roses, which she then scatters upon the earth. This was in accord with her promise to ‘spend her heaven doing good upon the earth’, by showering roses of blessings on the world. Throughout the history of the Carmel of Dulwich Hill, Thérèse had been there, and the Sisters of the community did much to foster the cause of her canonisation, and to make her known in this part of the world.

Mother Marie du St Esprit continues:

At this time, devotion to the Little Flower was greatly disputed. Even amongst ourselves she was not universally understood or believed to be what she was. I loved her and believed in her from the very first word we received from Mother Gonzague of Lisieux Carmel immediately after the Little Flower’s death. Consequently, it was an act of faith to name her patroness of the proposed monastery...

The additions were completed, and on 17 December 1911 (3rd Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday), His Grace Archbishop Kelly our superior, solemnly blessed the Pater Noster building and the grilles, and established Canonical Enclosure, the first in Australasia.

To the greater glory of God, His Glorious Mother, St Joseph, and His Servant Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face. Signed: Sr Marie du St Esprit, Prieure, Sr Marie de la Trinité, Sous-Prieure, Sr Madeleine de St Joseph, Sr St Jean de la Croix

The monastery now had a public chapel with the nuns’ choir separated by a grille.

In December 1911, the Little Flower was hardly known, although her cause for beatification was about to be introduced.³⁷ Varying impressions of her were held by priests and people. The Carmel of Lisieux, knowing of our devotion and love for her, wrote asking us to obtain signatures that carried weight for they were collecting names to send to Rome petitioning for the beatification of Sister Thérèse. His Eminence Cardinal Moran, His Grace Archbishop Kelly and others signed the

³⁷ By Pope Pius X on 10 June 1914.



paper that was sent to Rome. Some priests refused to sign. When I went into office as prioress, I immediately ordered from the Carmel of Lisieux quantities of pictures, books etc. of the Little Flower and spared no effort to make her known...

I well remember my first 'big gift' of half a crown³⁸ that was given to me for prayers. I thought it wonderful. A little later, another half-crown was donated, which I kept safely till I could speak to the priest. I said, 'Father Fernando, could you possibly say a Mass for us with this much?' holding out the two half-crowns in my hands. "No, I can't say it for that much", he said, pressing the money back in my hand, 'but I will say it for nothing!' Since that Mass we have never looked back. I put these two bright new coins away safely in a purple velvet-lined box; in this I placed a small portrait of Sister Thérèse, the one sent to us by Mother Gonzague from Lisieux, with a lock of the Little Flower's hair and a small piece of linen she wore. I kept these coins until Mother Anne of Jesus was elected in 1929, when I handed them over to her... After a while, the objects we received from Lisieux were a great help to us, for distributing them generally brought in some little alms.

Mother Marie du St Esprit recalls the growth of devotion to the Little Flower during the First World War:

A few weeks after our Sister Thérèse de Marie's death on 21 June 1914, the Great War broke out. We were happy to be able to meet the soldiers' requests for pictures and books of the Little Flower, whom they called their "Pretty Saint". The Pope,³⁹ seeing the clamour of the people for 'Saint' Thérèse and their enthusiasm for her, felt compelled to have medals struck to satisfy their demand. These medals were made according to our Holy Father's direction. In this he broke with convention; hitherto it was a derogation of the Rules of Beatification and Canonisation to allow them to be circulated before beatification. His doing so was mostly on account of the soldiers, for in recounting the wonders wrought on the battlefield by Sister Thérèse the soldiers demanded her prompt beatification. When soldiers visited us, they would not leave our parlour without taking her picture and medal, which we ordered directly from Lisieux.

It seemed prophetic that His Eminence, while speaking on 6 August 1911 at the laying of the foundation stone of Pater Noster, should have foretold that in seven years a complete regular monastery would be built. Seven years later this prophecy was fulfilled, for on 21 July 1918 the foundation stone of the Monastery of Mary Immaculate was blessed and laid by His Grace Archbishop Kelly.

The inscription carved on the stone was inlaid with gold. We had composed the inscription, which had been sent to His Grace for approval. He made a slight alteration in its wording, which greatly surprised us, for it showed that he remembered that we had told him that we had made Sister Thérèse "The Little Flower" the spiritual prioress of the Monastery. He inserted reference to her in the inscription, which read:

+ In laudem Verbi Incarnati; Alma Regina Decoris Carmeli;
St Joseph Patris Nostri; et in memoriam Sororis Teresiæ "Flosculi" Primæ huius Conventus Priorissæ,
fundamentum primæ de Monte Carmelo in Australia domus sacrauit.
+ M. Kelly, Archiep. Syd
Die XXI Julii MCMXVIII

In praise of the Incarnate Word; the Great Queen, Beauty of Carmel;
Our Father St Joseph;
and in memory of Sister Teresa, the "Little Flower" first Prioress of this Convent,
First sacred house of Mount Carmel founded in Australia.
+ M. Kelly, Archbishop of. Sydney
Die 21 July 1918

The ceremony of Solemn Blessing and Establishment of Enclosure was conducted by His Grace Archbishop Kelly on Laetare Sunday 30 March 1919... On 16 August 1919 our community's elections took place. Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit was elected prioress, Sister Mary of the Trinity subprioress, and Mother St John of the Cross bursar... By 1922, we were able to have our church dedicated for it was now free of debt. Archbishop Kelly selected 21 April 1922.

The Order begins to spread in Australia

Now that we were firmly established, our was debt paid off and we had a steady stream of sisters joining us, a strong desire took possession of me to spread our Order beyond the confines of New South Wales. It seemed to me that Melbourne, being the next in status, should be the first favoured with a Foundation formed from our Carmel of Dulwich Hill, Sydney, NSW.

Having gained approval from the archbishops of Sydney and Melbourne, Mother Marie du St Esprit accompanied the prioress, Mother St John of the Cross to Melbourne in 1922 to find a property for the first foundation from Sydney. They bought a property in Hawthorn. The foundation left Sydney by train on 21 September 1922 and arrived in Melbourne the next day.

Soon Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus reappears in the story of Carmel in Australia. On 29 April 1923, Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus was beatified by Pope Pius XI, who made her "the star of his pontificate." Then, on 17 May 1925, Blessed Thérèse of the Child Jesus was canonised by Pope Pius XI.

Three years later, in February 1928, Archbishop Kelly of Sydney asked Mother Marie du St Esprit to go to Melbourne again to inspect a new site that had been selected for the monastery and to be present for planning the placement of buildings on the site. She writes:

The following year, His Grace Dr Kelly desired that I go to be present at the Official Opening of the Monastery and Encloistering ceremony which took place on 19 May 1929.⁴⁰ The church was dedicated on 12 November 1931 by His Grace Archbishop Mannix. The church is considered one of the most beautiful shrines of the Little Flower in the world. It

³⁸ Two shillings and six pence.

³⁹ Pope Pius X died 20 August 1914 and was succeeded by Benedict XV (3 September 1914 – 22 January 1922).

⁴⁰ Nearest Sunday to the fourth anniversary of the canonisation of St Thérèse. The public chapel was erected as the Australian National Shrine to St Thérèse of Lisieux.



is a joy to us that the design and painting of the Holy Spirit, St Joseph, Little Flower and Angels, and also the painting of the Annunciation in the central panel of the high altar, and the designs on each side of it were executed by one of our own Dulwich Hill sisters.⁴¹ The painting of the Annunciation, made to scale measurement, was sent to Toppo, Italy, to be reproduced in mosaic for installation in the church.

Mother Marie du St Esprit ends her recollections with the second foundation from Dulwich Hill, made in Brisbane in 1927. A promise to St Thérèse prompted it:

On two separate occasions, Dr Duhig, Archbishop of Brisbane, begged us to make a Foundation in his archdiocese. He was urged by a promise he had made to St Thérèse, the Little Flower.⁴² He wrote, "Having made a promise to the Little Flower to have a Carmel established in my Archdiocese of Brisbane, I now in fulfilling this promise call on you to respond to my request. I free myself now in placing this engagement before you; it is for you now to accomplish it."

... In 1925, at the request of Dr Duhig, Mother St John and I went to New Farm, Brisbane, to inspect the house and land which the archbishop had selected with a view to our purchasing it.

The sisters considered the property unsuitable, and informed Dr Duhig of their reservations. In 1926, Sister Anne and Mother Marie du St Esprit travelled to Brisbane again, to purchase the residence of the former Premier Mr Ryan at Auchenflower, which had been secured for them by Father R Murphy SJ.

On 24 July 1927, nine sisters left Dulwich Hill Carmel for the Carmel of the Holy Spirit at Auchenflower, Brisbane, Queensland. The opening and blessing of the new monastery took place on 5 August 1927.

After the foundations of Melbourne and Brisbane, Mother Marie du St Esprit lived to see all the foundations from Dulwich Hill except Goonellabah: Christchurch (1933), Perth (1935) and Auckland (1937). She died at Dulwich Hill on 10 November 1940, aged 77 years.

Postscript

The Angoulême Carmel, refounded in 1854, made its first foundation in Geneva, Switzerland in 1867. That foundation struggled and was recalled to Angoulême in 1871. Mother Mary of the Cross, prioress at that time, wished to further the Carmel's missionary outreach. When Sister Marie du St Esprit entered Angoulême Carmel in June 1881, plans for a foundation in mission territory were already underway. Mother Mary of the Cross led the foundation to Sydney in 1885, and Sister Marie du St Esprit clearly shared her missionary spirit.

After Mother Mary of the Cross' death in 1891, we can imagine the companionship Mother Marie du St Esprit found with Thérèse over the years, as a Carmelite with Teresian practicality, determination and a strong missionary spirit. How Mother Marie du St Esprit must have rejoiced when, on the feast of St John of the Cross in 1927, Pope Pius XI declared St Thérèse of the Child Jesus Principal Patroness of all missionaries, men and women, and of the missions throughout world!

News from Sydney OCDS Community



At two recent meetings the Sydney OCDS Community of Mary Immaculate enjoyed the company of Nila Conzales OCDS who is on the Filipino National Council. In the photo on the left, Marcelle Droulers OCDS, President of the Mary Immaculate Community, presents Nila will a gift. On the far left is Fr Gerard Moran, OCD, spiritual assistant to the Mary Immaculate Community.

To celebrate the Centenary of St Therese's canonisation, the Sydney OCDS Community organised a mass in St Mary's Cathedral which was well attended. A temporary bookstall was set up which was very popular. Fr Gerard was the principal celebrant and he wore the vestments made the nuns of the Dulwich Hill Carmel for the centenary celebrations in 1925.



⁴¹ Sister Marie Joseph Beatrix of the Holy Spirit (Bloxham).
⁴² During a pilgrimage to Lisieux in 1922.



'A moment of grace': Sr Mary Joseph's solemn profession



The solemn profession of Sr Mary Joseph of the Sacred Heart, OCD, at the Carmelite Monastery in Launceston was a day of peace, thanksgiving and joy.

It was not only the culmination of a lifelong yearning to become a nun, but also a day of deep gratitude as Sr Mary Joseph continues her recovery from cancer.

Sr Mary Joseph, 39, explained: "Around this time last year, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer which made the day of my solemn profession suddenly become uncertain.

"So, I just want to express my gratitude to God for the gift of life, as I am now recovering well."

Prioress Mother Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, OCD, said Sr Mary Joseph was a great inspiration to all, and a testimony to the power of prayer.

"Sr Mary Joseph's courage and surrender to the mysterious designs of God's providence in her life over this last year as she has endured major surgery and radiation treatment for cancer has been a great inspiration to us and to many people who have supported her in prayer and is a powerful testimony to the power of prayer at work in a Carmelite's life; and it is to this same life of prayer that Sr Mary Joseph has now committed herself for the sake of the Church in Tasmania," she said.

Archbishop Julian Porteous was the chief celebrant at the Mass and solemn profession on 11 February. The chapel was filled to capacity as priests and monks from the archdiocese, together with priests from Sr Mary Joseph's family, concelebrated Mass.

"As a bishop I say 'thank you', firstly, for giving your life in seeking a more intimate union with our Lord, Jesus Christ, and secondly, for devoting your life to pray in intercession for the Church and the world," Archbishop Julian said during his homily.

Mother Teresa Benedicta said a solemn profession was a time of deep joy for a contemplative community, in welcoming another Sister into 'full membership'.

"It is deeply affirming for us that another young woman, who could have easily had a successful career using her many gifts for the good of others in the world, has chosen this path of hidden prayer and sacrifice, in response to the Lord's claim on her life, and has found in our Carmel a place where she can flourish humanly and spiritually," Mother Teresa Benedicta said.

"Joy and thanksgiving sum up our reactions to this moment of grace!"

Sr Mary Joseph was born in the Philippines, the eighth of ten children, and moved to Australia in 2009 where she worked as a registered nurse, first in Darwin and then in the intensive care unit of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney.

"Since I can remember, I've always wanted to be a nun," Sr Mary Joseph explained.

"I was drawn to prayer since I was a child. I continued to discern the will of God in my life and remained open to whatever was His will for me as I pursued my nursing career. About 2015 I started to feel more drawn to prayer and quiet time with God."

Sister explained that she would rush to Mass at a nearby Catholic church after completing 12-hour night shifts in ICU. She attended a vocation retreat in 2016 where Prof Sr M. Isabell Naumann ISSM, spoke of the Carmelite Community in Launceston. After much prayer, Sr Mary Joseph contacted the Prioress and eventually entered Carmel on 2 February, 2017.

Sr Mary Joseph was drawn to the Carmelite life focused on prayer, silence and solitude; and the practice of charity between the Sisters.

"The silence within the monastery walls as we do our work in silence, except in times of recreation, fosters a disposition of living constantly in the presence of God," she said.

"Not having the distraction of noise allows me to be in constant conversation with God in everything that I do and grow in intimate relationship with Him; having the strong conviction that as I offer everything that I am to God, He will in turn help the Church and the people in the world in the way He knows."

Family and friends travelled from the Philippines, USA, Canada, Sydney and Darwin to attend the solemn profession. This included Sr Mary Joseph's parents, Libredo and Eva Durango, her three sisters and their families, and five relatives who are priests – two brothers, two uncles and one cousin.

Sr Mary Joseph of the Sacred Heart explained her religious name. Her family has a deep devotion to St Joseph and she admires his silent work. The Sacred Heart "speaks of the truth of God's love and mercy for mankind".



"This resonates well with me as I love helping people. My love for God drives me on to offer everything to draw souls to God."

Sr Mary Joseph reflected that the sung Mass and rite of solemn profession, on the Feast of Our lady of Lourdes, was a day filled with peace and gratitude.

"It was a very moving experience for me that I will cherish for the rest of my life," she said.

"I felt very strongly the unity of the Church as we all gathered together, with the clergy, the religious community and all the laity as my witnesses and to join me in prayer as I consecrate myself to God."

Sr Mary Joseph thanked: her Prioress and Carmelite community and her family for their love, care and support; people in Australia and abroad for their sustaining prayers; Archbishop Julian and priests for prayerful support; and friends of the community. She also thanked Dr Joe Tempone, Dr Fiona Lee, Dr Owen Pointon and Dr Joanne Campbell; the staff at St Vincent's Hospital and Royal Hobart Hospital; her sisters and brothers in the Carmelite Order; and all who attended her solemn profession.

"I felt very much loved by everyone on that day," she added. "Please continue to keep me in your prayers as I do for you."

Left to right, Mother Teresa Benedicta OCD, Sr Mary Joseph OCD, Archbishop Julian Porteous of Hobart.



Venerable Maria Eletta of Jesus OCD

She was born in Terni, Italy, on the 28th of January 1605, the third daughter of the nobleman Alessandro.

At the age of twenty-one, together with her sister Lucia, she entered the recently founded monastery of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns in her city.

On the 5th of September 1629, she left Terni together with another nun. She was, in fact, on her way to the foundation of the Carmel of Vienna, of which – although very young – she would become prioress from 1638 to 1642, the year in which she was entrusted with the foundation of the monastery of Graz, where she lived her happiest and most spiritually fruitful years.

In 1656, she was given the task of founding a third monastery in Prague. A true daughter of Saint Teresa of Avila, she obeyed with enthusiasm and thus contributed to promoting a true spiritual awakening of the Bohemian capital.

It was in Prague that Mother Maria Eletta closed her earthly journey on January the 11th, 1663, surrounded by the love and veneration of her spiritual daughters who guarded her incorrupt body, still today an object of veneration.

The Diocesan Inquiry on her "life, virtue and reputation of holiness" closed on 28 June 2007. On the 13th of November 2009, the decree of validity was granted.

Three years after her death, after the opening of her tomb, her body was found whole and flexible and today it is exposed on the side of the presbytery of the church of St. Benedict in Hradčany, the current seat of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers. After the construction of their new residence in Drasty, a few km north of Prague, the venerable mother Maria Eletta of Jesus will accompany the sisters to their new home as soon as the work is finished.



The process of her beatification has been underway since 1924 and is encountering difficulties due to the loss of documents suffered over the centuries and war conflicts. On Saturday 29 March 2025, the diocese of Terni-Narni-Amelia held the closing session of the diocesan inquiry into an alleged miracle attributed to the Servant of God Maria Eletta of Jesus (born Caterina Tramazzoli, 1605-1663), a professed nun of the Discalced Carmelite Order.



The smiling Carmelite is on her way to the altars: she is recognized as a “servant of God”

After a winding journey of discernment - including time in two other Carmelite communities - Sister Cecilia María finally found her home in the Carmelite convent of Santa Fe. There, she embraced the contemplative life with a warmth and humanity that would become her hallmark. In a small Carmelite convent in Santa Fe, Argentina, the first formal steps toward the beatification and canonisation of Sister Cecilia María Sánchez Sorondo have begun. The announcement by Archbishop Sergio Fenoy marks a significant moment, not just for the Carmelite community but for all who have been touched by the remarkable story of this humble yet extraordinary nun. Born in 1973 in San Martín de los Andes, Cecilia María grew up as one of ten siblings in a military family. Despite the challenges of frequent relocations, she was deeply inspired by the faith she encountered through her family and education. Her calling to the Carmelite order began to take shape during her university years, when the writings of St. Teresa of Ávila awakened in her a desire for intimacy with Christ. After a winding journey of discernment - including time in two other Carmelite communities - Sister Cecilia María finally found her home in the Carmelite convent of Santa Fe. There, she embraced the contemplative life with a warmth and humanity that would become her hallmark.



Those who knew Sister Cecilia María describe her as a beacon of joy and empathy. Her smile, often visible even in her final days of suffering, became a symbol of her profound spiritual peace. “She had the gift of connecting with people,” recalls Sister Fabiana Guadalupe Retamal, a fellow Carmelite. “Even in her hardest moments, her smile came from the depths of her heart. It wasn’t forced - it was a reflection of her trust in God.” Sister Cecilia María’s humility extended to her candid self-reflection. In the throes of her illness, she admitted to a fellow nun, “My great sin was doing things my way, my whims. There were times I scared myself with my stubbornness.” Yet even these admissions were accompanied by a characteristic light-heartedness and a readiness to laugh at her own shortcomings. A Public Witness to Grace in Suffering In late 2015, during the Advent season and the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Sister Cecilia María received a devastating diagnosis: cancer of the tongue, with metastasis to a lymph node. Despite the pain and gruelling treatments, she exuded a sense of peace that astonished those around her. A poignant image of her, lying in a hospital bed with a serene smile on her face, went viral shortly before her death in June 2016. The photo

encapsulated her ability to radiate hope and beauty even in the face of profound suffering. In one of her final letters to her family, she wrote, “I feel the pain growing, but I am not alone. Together, we will follow the Lamb.” A Legacy of Faith and Intercession Since her passing, Sister Cecilia María’s reputation for sanctity has only grown. Pilgrims visit her convent, and her intercession is sought by many who are moved by her story. Testimonies of graces and favours received through her prayers are pouring in, contributing to the evidence required for her canonization process. The beatification process officially commenced with Archbishop Fenoy’s edict on February 14, 2024. The first public session, including a special Mass, will take place on February 23, 2025, at the Carmelite convent of San José and Santa Teresa in Santa Fe.

[The smiling Carmelite is on her way to the altars: she is recognized as a “servant of God” | ZENIT - English](#)

Carmelite Spirit Online Silent Book Club

An opportunity to be spiritually enriched...

How do you like the sound of gathering with other people online to read together in silence? Interested? Here are the details:

WHEN? Saturdays, 8.30am-9.30am (West Australia time). Just come along whenever the Saturday suits you!

HOW? Via Zoom

HOW MUCH? There is no charge to participate

WHAT? Here's the format:

- Prayer and hellos
- 30 minutes of silent reading/audiobook listening
- 15 minutes of optional sharing of new insights

WHAT ELSE? Participants can read/listen to whatever book they choose. The only requirement is that the chosen book is meaningful to the participant’s spiritual journey.

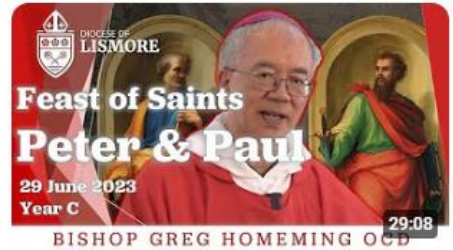
I'M KEEN! Simply register by filling out the form! The Zoom link will be sent to you a couple of days before the Saturday.

<https://carmelite.com/retreats/>





Homilies with Greg Homeming OCD, Bishop of Lismore



<https://www.youtube.com/@LismoreDioceseAU/videos>



Italy: Father Saverio Cannistra named Archbishop Metropolitan of Pisa

On Friday, 6th February, the Holy Father named as Metropolitan Archbishop of Pisa Father Saverio Cannistra, OCD, former Prepositor General of Disalced Carmelites, and currently Vicar of the parish of Saint Pancras in Rome.

Curriculum vitae

Msgr. Saverio Cannistra, OCD, was born in Catanzaro on 3rd October 1958. After obtaining a licence in Romance philology at the *Scuola Normale Superiore* of Pisa, he worked as an editor at a publishing house. On 17th September, 1985, he entered the novitiate of the Disalced Carmelites of the Italian Province of Tuscany. He made his perpetual profession on 14th September, 1990, and was ordained as a priest on 24th October, 1992.

Among the positions he has occupied and studies he has pursued, we can list the following: Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology at the Gregorian Pontifical University of Rome (1998); lecturer in Trinitarian Theology at the Pontifical Theology Faculty and Institute of Spirituality "Teresianum" in Rome (1995-2003); Professor of Christology and Theological Anthropology at the Theological Faculty of Central Italy in Florence (2003-2009). In 2007, he was elected member of the Council of the Presidency of the Italian Theological Association.

In his Province of Tuscany, he has been a provincial counsellor (1996-2002), master of postulants and students (1999-2008) and provincial (2008). He was Prepositor General of the Order of Disalced Carmelites from 2009 to 2021. He is a member of the presbyteral council of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Florence, and Vicar of the Parish of Saint Pancras in Rome.





PORTUGAL: 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF SISTER LUCIE



On 13th February, 2005, Sister Lucie of Jesus and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary died at the Carmel of Saint Teresa at Coimbra. She was 97 years old, having spent 57 of them at the Carmel, during her long pilgrimage on this earth.

The event was marked by the brothers of the Portugal Province, with a large gathering at the Carmel of Coimbra. We firstly organized a joyful fraternal meeting of Carmelite brothers, sisters and seculars in the parlour of the Carmel. Then, Sister Angela Coelho, ASM, vice-postulatrice for the cause of Sister Lucie's canonization, gave a conference in the chapel of the Carmel, entitled: 'Sister Lucie, a life between the Serra d'Aire and Mount Carmel'. Indeed, Sister Lucie's earthly pilgrimage – at times happy, at times very painful – took place between her time as a shepherdess at the Serra d'Aire and then her time as a Carmelite, ascending Mount Carmel, at Coimbra.

Later, at 6 o'clock, the Bishop of Coimbra, Mgr Virgilio Antunes, celebrated a commemorative Eucharist in the chapel of the monastery. Besides the Carmelite brothers and sister, there were other priests, religious brothers and sisters, as well as many of the faithful who participated.

It was a beautiful and joyful day of jubilee pilgrimage and our hearts opened, we decided to walk the long road of Yes, walking in the steps of the Lord.



Liturgy Proper of the Order

A new section has been created in the 'Documents' section of the Order's website (https://www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/categoria_documenti/liturgv/). This section will contain all the new official texts of our Proper Liturgy. It is currently possible to view our Proper Calendar in various languages with the latest updates.

We hope to be able to send you the new edition of the *Proprium Missarum OCD* (Proper Missal of the Order in Latin) soon. It is currently being examined by the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Once approved, we will be able to proceed with translations into various languages, which will also require the aforementioned Dicastery's approval. Work on the *Proprium Liturgiae Horarum OCD* (Liturgy of the Hours) will have to await the approval of the *Proprium Missarum OCD*.

The new *OCDS Ritual* (in Italian) is also under examination by the Dicastery for approval.





BELARUS: CONSECRATION OF THE CARMELITE CHURCH OF MINSK



The Carmelite Church in Minsk was consecrated on the 7th of June 2025. The people of Belarus built the Church of the Holy Cross to give thanks for the gift of the Eucharist. Those who attended the celebration included the Archbishop-Metropolitan of Minsk-Mahilyow, Msgr Yuzup Stanevski; the Apostolic Administrator of the Greek Catholics of Belarus, Archimandrite Syargei Hajek; the Provincial of the Carmelites, Fr Lukasz Kandy, OCD; and the Regional Vicar of Belarus, Fr Piotr Froščega, OCD. Representatives of the state authorities

and the diplomatic corps were also present, including Mr Dzmitry Chaslavovich Vrublevski. Numerous priests and faithful from the Carmelite nuns and friars of Belarus also attended the celebration.

At the end of the Eucharist, the parish priest, Fr Yurii Kulai OCD, thanked everyone who had contributed to the construction of the church. Archbishop Stanevski blessed a commemorative plaque to be placed in the church.

In the evening, a fraternal picnic was organised where parishioners and guests alike enjoyed spending time together in a convivial atmosphere.





Update from the Carmelite nun in Aleppo, Syria

Dear friends,
 Many of you have asked for an update on the situation here, and we are very touched. The massacres that have taken place and continue to take place on the north-west coast of Syria, in the Alawite region where the former President's family comes from, have absolutely no description. It is an outright crime against humanity, a genocide in the true sense of the word. How are the simple, very poor Alawite people responsible for the decades of Assad family rule? Shock, anger and fear are everywhere in the Latakia region and throughout the country. Where are we headed? Will no one defend these poor people who have no money, no power and no way of defending themselves? We implore you to pray and, insofar as you are able, to take action to stop this massacre, which is unworthy of humanity!
 This morning we spoke to Sr Rima, Superior of the Apostolic Carmelites of St Joseph, in Latakia. She was crying on the phone. They have a hostel for students, most of whom are Alawites. The poor girls have gone mad with grief at the news of the massacre of their parents, brothers and sisters, friends, etc. In addition to everything is happening, the city of Latakia has been without electricity and water for five days. Here, too, deprivation is increasing.



This tragedy has provoked reactions and demonstrations in the country itself, but unfortunately these have very quickly degenerated into violence... And the government is not reacting. How much responsibility has the government for this tragedy?

In the Church, patriarchs and bishops have reacted in the strongest possible terms, calling on the government to stop the massacre and to really work towards the good and reconstruction of the whole country. Our Latin bishop, Mgr Jallouf, was particularly firm in his response. He knew the 'Jehbat el nosra' in Idlib well... And the different factions in the country (Druze, Kurds, Shiites, etc...) are also demonstrating, often in defence of the Alawites...

As with all disasters and revolutions, the country nevertheless witnessed some beautiful and heroic deeds. Among other examples, Sunni and Shia families have welcomed and protected Alawites.

Let us pray that the violence will stop and that the government will assume its responsibilities to work towards reconciliation, peace and the well-being of the country. And pray that the Christians, who are very upset, will remain confident and not leave their country... Thank you for your prayers and affection.... And a happy and holy Lent. Our Saviour Jesus is and always will be victorious through his offering and loving death on the Cross.

Carmelite Retreats at Varroville for 2025



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|-----------------|---|
| 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 | Cantic 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. |