



# Newsletter

Number 320, December 2025

## Carmel OCDS Community Meeting

**Sunday 7 December 2025**

### 12:00pm Formation Groups

#### 1pm Community Meeting

Welcome & opening prayers

Roll call & apologies

Minutes of previous meeting

Treasurer's report, Formator's report

Retreat report, Correspondence

General business, General discussion

### 1:45pm Community Formation

St Thérèse of Lisieux

"Story of a Soul: Study Edition"

(Community Study: Chapter 7, from p.247)

### Closing prayers

### 2:30pm Chapel

Jacob is admitted to Formation

### Divine Office in Chapel

Leader: Christine, Reader: Claire

### Afternoon Tea

Prep. & Serving: Ann-Marie & Maureen

Dishes: Marian & Mary

(Please bring a Christmas gift for our

Carmelite Sisters,

and a small plate to share

for our Christmas afternoon tea.)



**Note: No Bethany Day in December**

### Birthdays

Claire

Saturday 3 Jan.

Lyn

Wednesday 14 Jan.

Tess

Friday 30 Jan.

NZ OCDS Website: [www.carmel.org.nz](http://www.carmel.org.nz)

Don't forget our OCDS library,  
full of Carmelite jewels!

## **December: Dedicated to the Immaculate Conception**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have a wonderful month of December to look forward to!

Firstly, we have the joy of **Jacob** being admitted to Formation in the Secular Carmel at our meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December. Welcome Jacob! And please be assured of the prayers of the Community for your growth in Carmel and for perseverance.

The 14<sup>th</sup> falls on a Sunday, but with **St John of the Cross** being a Solemnity for us, he is transferred to the 15<sup>th</sup> on the Carmelite calendar. We prayerfully thank St John of the Cross, our Father, for all he teaches us, for all his insights and encouragement for us on our way up Mount Carmel.

I have also received a directive from the OCDS Generalate in Rome to complete a census of our Community. This then goes to Dianna in Auckland, our National Convener, to send, with Auckland and Wellington's documents, to Fr Ramiro. I have completed and sent the census, and will explain more at our meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Advent**, our time of preparation and promise, begins on 30<sup>th</sup> November. I unashamedly admit I enjoy this time of the year so much. The excitement and anticipation! The tinsel and the trees!! The piped Christmas music playing through the Malls. All these "trappings" give opportunities to explain their origins and the real meaning of Christmas to our families, especially the little ones!

I love it when the grandies help set up the Advent wreath and the Crib, finding a place to hide Baby Jesus until we put Him in the manger on Christmas Eve.

But my favourite part of Advent is the time of the 'O' Antiphons. Such food for contemplation! Sheer grace!

So, I wish you all and those you love, every blessing this Advent and Christmas time, and consolation and comfort for all who are worried or sorrowing.

In prayer,

Your little sister in Carmel, Barbara Hempseed, OCDS  
(President, Peace of Christ Community, Christchurch)



**"The immense blessings of God can only enter and fit into an empty and solitary heart."** (St John of the Cross)

Advent is the time to make more room for God.

# RETREAT TALKS – CARMEL 2025

## “The Gift of Carmel” with Fr Justin Lee, CSJ (recorded by Lyn)

### Talk 1

We discover the gifts available for us: we pray the Holy Spirit will give us all we need. Mary is a gift for the Church, for the world, for Secular Carmelites.

Secular Carmelites are a gift to the Diocese, an important part of the holiness of the Church. Time spent with the Lord is to rediscover that. Receive a healing from the Lord – the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of perfection: Father quoted the Constitutions – all are called to share the holiness that belongs to God. The desire God has placed in you is a wonderful thing and has given you a way for perfection and a path to follow. Take moments of silence and tell the Lord that you want to follow and do well. Give it to the Holy Spirit and let Him fill the gaps.

Father spoke of the fire of Elijah and his humble prayer. We need the fire of the Holy Spirit so that our hearts are consumed. Have no more to do with idols. Hide under the mantle of Mary. Following Christ is the way of perfection – to know Christ more deeply that we may be filled with the fullness of God. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in us those virtues.

Let us talk to our Blessed Lord in the Eucharist. The goal is not about punishing ourselves, but because I am in love with Jesus. Surrender to the Holy Spirit.

Find books during the Retreat suitable to refresh. Pray to Jesus. Meditate focusing on Jesus. Allow Mary and the Holy Spirit to help you.

### Talk 2

Father Justin opened the talk quoting Psalm 129.

He spoke of the importance of letters from friends and related it to reading the Bible. Spiritual reading, meditation is different. Jesus gave a key to all the Scriptures. The important thing is *“this is my friend writing to me”*, who is Christ. Father spoke of the image of ‘Mary and Joseph reciting the Psalms and looking at Jesus’.

Christ came to earth to teach us to pray. In prayer He gives us the Spirit.

Father quoted Elijah in the cave – God asked him *“What are you doing there?”* to which Elijah replied, *“I have been zealous for the Lord God.”* Gift of the presence of God. The Lord had to guide Elijah.

Mental prayer: there are moments when you pray and are fed up. God will manifest himself to you in good time. There is a genuine human effort in meditation prayer. When the Lord grants the desire to pray, the Lord searches our heart. Every time we come to pray, the Lord enters our heart.

Father spoke of the battle in surrendering yourself to the Lord. We bring our battles to the Lord. We must hold ourselves in His presence. The devil does not want you to pray. If you can't find half an hour to pray, increase it to one hour.

Let us encourage one another in prayer via fraternity. Turn your helplessness into compassion.

Don't covet your neighbours' goods or your neighbour's wife.

### Talk 3

Evangelical Counsels of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience constitute the law of Jesus Christ. Jesus is our friend, so we listen to his advice.

Life should not be just cruising along.

Father quoted two Scripture passages:

1. Matt CH.11 v.2 ...*Are you really the one?* There was a force in John the Baptist's preaching. He was a prophetic voice telling people to be ready.  
The Holy Spirit comes to judge but also to console.  
Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.
2. John CH.3 v.29-30 – *“He must increase and I must decrease.”* – the last words of John before he went to prison. He was the ‘bridegroom’ of Him who has the bride.  
John chose to be the least of the least!

Father asked the Seculars, *“How do you receive your vocation?”*  
Don't be a frustrated Carmelite.

The law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the Divine Law. The new law is a grace of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful through Jesus Christ. The new law is called a law of knowledge, a law of grace, a law of love and a law of freedom. The new law also includes the Evangelical Counsels.

Don't hold on to resentment. Don't call your brother a fool. Live in a spirit of poverty. Cultivate a certain holy indifference.

How are we going to live the Evangelical Counsels in the world? To live a new law of love and freedom. Practise acts of poverty, chastity and obedience e.g. fasting, alms giving etc – disciplines of Christ. Mary and Joseph lived their evangelical counsels at home, in the synagogue etc.

### Talk 4

Father opened the talk with prayer.

*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.*

John is continuing the work of salvation.

Thank-you, God, for the gift of Evangelical Counsels and the fullness of Christian life with the law of love, grace, freedom. The Lord gave us that gift so that we give the gift to the world. God moulds in us the likeness of Jesus Christ. God has given us His Spirit. In some way, the world is also a gift to us.

Secular consecration is a true vocation. Find Jesus exactly where you are. *“If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart.”* There is the sacrament of the present moment – in the office, in baby care etc. The present moment is a sign of eternity. God is an eternal presence. It is only today that we have access to eternity. I can manifest Christ to the world where I am. God's very kind providence helps us grow where He puts us.

Pope John 23<sup>rd</sup>: *Look after one day's problems – just for today.*  
Ps 131: *I have not gone after things too great for me...*

Re 'this' neighbour! Ask God to help me discreetly with holy wisdom, with holy charity – in full measure.

Mary and Joseph: God wanted Jesus to be part of a family life. Christian virtues should be part of our life.

Secular life: help one another, encourage one another.

Jesus shared the functions of Priest, Prophet and King for the salvation of the world.

Your Secular consecration: Priestly call – our Promises are also an act of worship. We are called to lay down our life. Intercession lasts all our life. Intercede with the Sisters. We need to be holy – to want to be with Jesus.

Kingly: many of us serve the Church: whatever we do, we are “washing the feet”. We must win the battle against sin. Father quoted St Thérèse coming downstairs to please her father with a ‘kingly’ face. To encourage one another is a royal act.

Bear witness to God: discern with discretion things that are essential. In all things – charity. Unity in things that are in doubt, in matters of opinion – freedom.

### **Talk 5**

The gift of the Cross

Christ is the centre of our life. Devote ourselves to Him.

There are three fundamental demands:

- Family ties
- Living in detachment from wealth (depend on God’s strength)
- To carry the Cross that He has given to each person, i.e. acceptance of God’s will in the mission God has entrusted.

To follow Christ is to follow His redemption. There will be moments when you fall short. However, Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit. He suffered and rose for me.

Secular Carmelites: chastity – we have our family even though consecrated people.

Married: Spirit of chastity means you are going to serve God where your husband/children/grandchildren are – “*am I doing it for myself or am I doing it for the Lord?*”

Put Christ at the centre of our family: allow him to redeem and resurrect.

Jesus gives us opportunities to choose Jesus first.

Wealth, material concerns: ‘*my job, my salary, my land...*’

We need to value certain things and yet it is the Lord who provides my shelter. One needs to live in an attitude of deep surrender. It requires a voluntary act. I empty out a space to work on my reliance on Him. Work on experiencing God’s caring for me. It is absolutely normal to complain. Welcome it with peace, as a privileged way to know God’s caring for me.

The ordinary practice of the Evangelical Counsels is not particularly heroic. Unite with Jesus i.e. going without breakfast, or have an extra hour with your grandchildren. Unite ourselves to the cross of Christ. Our Lord asks us to walk the extra mile: say “*Here I am*” or “*I don’t know you Lord*”. If I do the Evangelical Counsels well, I have died to something of myself.

Cor 2<sup>nd</sup> Ltr, CH.4 v.7-12 “*I am not living my own life, but the life of Christ.*” The Evangelical Counsels do lead us to the Beatitudes. “*How is it this person is so dedicated to serving the poor? Yet she is so free, so rich in the Spirit.*” God is transforming life through the Cross. The crucified hands of Christ are holding mine.

Holy Mass should be attended daily. It is the sacrifice of Jesus. See Him as the source of life. Jesus’ prayer on the Cross is a

prayer of thanksgiving. Give thanks to God after Holy Communion. Mary is with us at every Communion and in our suffering. Online Mass and Spiritual Communion is also very important.

Sacramentals/Indulgences: we need to be free of attachments and pray for the Pope’s intentions every day.

Reconciliation should be every 3 weeks.

### **Talk 6**

Participate in spiritual exercises (or other suitable works) in a devout spirit.

Gift of fraternity: first, the gift of the Scapular. It is a continuation of the grace of Baptism. Mary clothes us with a Scapular in order that we put on Christ by imitating her works of charity. We need to receive it beyond benefitting from the prayers of the Sisters/Friars. The important thing is to ask for fervour in following Our Lady’s footsteps. To build up the body of Christ which is your Order.

Fraternity: we need to love with all our strength and others as ourselves. If I hate another, my life for God is a lie. God has put people into my path. Who is my neighbour? The Presbyterians across the road? God puts on my path my neighbour. God manifests himself today in someone else – my family, my next-door neighbours, my Brothers/Sisters in Carmel or Priests of your Parish, of your Diocese, for Father and the faithful in his Parish. The Lord gave me those people!

We need to have an understanding of charity calling for a particular fraternity. One can be inspired by Carmelite spirituality. You have a special calling. You desire to share it with your fellow members. To love one another, to serve with esteem and value.

Beatified Secular Carmelites: there is a special grace of discernment in which you are going to serve the Church and Secular members of the Community. It is perfectly normal to look for a spiritual community, i.e. a small group in which to grow. Seculars can be a bit lost in a big parish: prayer support, serving the Church, evangelising activities of the Church, formation activities. There is a challenge in belonging to a spiritual family. There is a jump! You discover this is a living member of Christ and Christ puts you there.

We have spiritual/human needs. This is my family, a chosen place God has called me to in the Church. Love one another, together serving the Church and the Gospel. We learn to do things in the Church. Each work requires us to learn a talent, a particular work that you do together. All these different works are a training ground, the apostolate of love. We are inserted in the Church. The Lord has invited me to do this. If we are suffering or unable to help, your spirituality is more useful.

Crosses inside the community: Superiors should remind members that crosses in the community are penitential. We have difficulties, different temperaments. Each person needs to bear with one another’s shortcomings – end with hope. There are many virtues to cultivate: the particular virtue of encouragement (or consolation) – we need to encourage one another. Mutual love is so important in our journey to Christ. “*Love one another deeply from the heart.*”

Tribulation: we rub against each other – lose a little skin – but bear with one another’s trials and go through trials together.

## Prayers for December

*Thank-you, Lord, for all the blessings you give us each day.*

### We pray for:

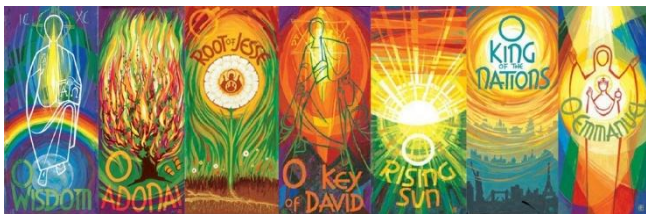
- Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, Archbishop Paul, SM, Bishop Michael, all our priests, religious and seminarians, and the welfare of our diocese
- Our Father General, Fr Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD, Fr Ramiro Casale, OCD (General Delegate of OCDS), and all our Carmel family, especially our Carmelite Sisters. Also, vocations to Carmel and to our own Peace of Christ Community (***Please offer a decade of the rosary daily for this, as requested by Bishop Greg Homeming, OCD.***)

### Special Intentions:

- All the people of the Middle East and the Ukraine, suffering from the terrors of war
- Our dear Carmelite Sisters, especially Sr Teresa of Jesus, Sr Elizabeth and Sr Dorothea
- The rebuild of the Chapel of our Carmelite Monastery [ [Web Link](#) ] [ Account Number: 03-1592-0216044-001 ]
- Fr Jérôme, OCD and our Goma mission to build another school, for displaced children (\$2,716 raised)
- Fr Michael-Therese, Fr Antoine (in Ethiopia), the CSJ, and especially the formation of Brothers in Africa
- Fr Philip, CSJ and the University Chaplaincy Team
- Our Special Members, especially Stephanie & Patricia
- ***Bishop Michael has asked us to pray a daily 'Hail Mary' for vocations and for our seminarians.***
- Matthew Clark, from our Diocese, joining the seminary
- John Paul II Centre for Life and prayers for life
- Those who have died recently and the consolation of their families and communities
- Those who have asked for, or need our prayers, especially Fr Bernard Hancock (preparing for surgery), Karen's friend, Erin, and Gay.

### Our Holy Father's Intentions for December:

- We pray that Christians living in areas of **war or conflict**, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation, and hope.



*The Great 'O' Antiphons of Advent*

## Our December Carmelite Saints

- 11 Thu. St Maria Maravillas of Jesus (virgin)  
15 Mon. **St John of the Cross** (transferred feast)  
(priest, doctor, our Father)  
16 Tue. Bl. Mary of the Angels (virgin)



**The Virgin,  
weighed with the Word of God,  
comes down the road:  
if only you will shelter her.**

~ **St. John of the Cross**

## Our January Carmelite Saints

- 3 Sat. St Kuriakos Elias Chavara (priest)  
8 Thu. St Peter Thomas (bishop)  
9 Fri. St Andrew Corsini (bishop)  
27 Tue. St Henry de Osso y Cervello (priest)



*Our Carmel Retreat with Fr Justin, CSJ*

**The Seal of Carmel: "Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum"**

*"With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts"*