



# Newsletter

Number 321, February 2026

## Carmel OCDS Community Meeting

Sunday 1 February 2026

**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 John of the Cross and Creation"

(Community Study: See Newsletter, p.2)

**2:30pm Father's Teaching**

Closing prayers

**Divine Office in Chapel**

Leader: Megan, Reader: Maureen

**Afternoon Tea**

Prep. & Serving: Therese & Christine

Dishes: Catherine & Lyn



## Bethany Day

Tuesday 17 February 2026

(10:30am – 1:00pm)

10:30am Morning Tea

11:00am DVD

11:45am Chapel – Quiet Prayer

12:15pm BYO Lunch

## Birthdays

Eddie Sunday 1 Feb.

Ken Tuesday 24 Feb.

Megan Wednesday 25 Feb.



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

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

## February: Dedicated to the Holy Family

Welcome to 2026 everyone!

May it be a year of blessings and good health, both spiritually and physically!

This is also a year of celebration of our Father in Carmel, **St John of the Cross**. 3<sup>rd</sup> Centenary of his Canonization, and 1<sup>st</sup> Centenary of his Doctorate.

We have already received from Rome, the beginnings of our study, and I have included the Introduction, for our preparation.

By the time you receive this newsletter, your Council will have already met to plan the implementation of this study for our Community, throughout this year.



St John of the Cross has given us so much through his writings. His focus is very much on leading us to **union with God**. He guides us so surely and so gently up the mountain which is Carmel. I used to be afraid of stepping into his works. It seemed unachievable, and way beyond me. But thanks to the visit of Fr James McCaffery all those years ago and with the help of our dear Jack Saxon, I plucked up the courage to "jump into the water" (as Jack put it!) and have never regretted it! So I pray that we can all gain much in this year of walking with St John of the Cross.

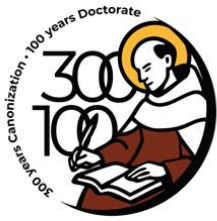
May I also recommend your most fervent prayer for our Sisters and their building project. There is still no starting date, please God their patience will be rewarded very soon.

Consequently – **OUR MEETING ON 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY WILL STILL BE AT CARMEL.**

With my prayer for you all,  
Barbara Hempseed, OCDS  
(President, Peace of Christ Community, Christchurch)

February quote from St John of the Cross:

**"God passes through the thicket of the world, and wherever His glance falls He turns all things to beauty."**



**ST JOHN OF THE CROSS AND CREATION  
READING THE WRITINGS OF JOHN OF THE CROSS  
Introductory Summary: Presentation  
General Introduction**

A year devoted to John of the Cross does not allow us to read his works in the way we were able to do previously with Saint Teresa of Jesus and later with Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Once again this year, we propose a reading of texts by John of the Cross, but with a particular theme: creation. In this way, we will bring these texts into dialogue with selected passages from Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*. This proposal may be seen as a way of reinterpreting the thought of John of the Cross around the central theme of ecology.

The works of John of the Cross offer a profoundly contemplative and mystical vision of creation. In his writings, nature is often portrayed as a trace of the Beloved, a discreet and veiled reflection of God, a symbolic language that speaks to the soul seeking the divine. Yet John of the Cross insists that we must not become attached to created things for their own sake. They are not the ultimate goal; when viewed in faith, they lead us to God. The danger is always that one might stop at the beauty of created things and lose sight of the Creator, which can then become a spiritual obstacle.

To understand John of the Cross's vision of creation properly, it is essential to place it within the whole of his doctrine. What he seeks above all is "union with God". This is the purpose of all his writings: to lead us towards this union. Far from hindering this search, creation is for him its privileged mediator. Everything depends on our relationship with creation. Faithful to the entirety of his teaching, John of the Cross wants us to look upon creation with a contemplative gaze – one of faith, hope, and charity. For him, creation is above all a mystery which, in revealing itself, reveals to us the mystery of God to whom we desire to be united: "I believe in one God, creator of heaven and earth..." (Creed).

The encyclical *Laudato Si'*, published by Pope Francis in 2015, broadens and updates this spiritual tradition within the context of the contemporary world. It rests upon the same sense of wonder before creation, but extends its implications: it introduces a social, ecological, and communal dimension that the writings of John of the Cross address less directly. One of the strengths of the encyclical is its reminder that creation is a living reality – wounded and threatened. *Laudato Si'* therefore calls for an integral ecological conversion, engaging the human person in every dimension: relationship with God, with others, with oneself, and with nature. The encyclical strongly emphasises the link between Christian faith and the commitment to protect our common home. Creation becomes not only a beauty to contemplate, but also a responsibility to shoulder, a common good to safeguard.

Where John of the Cross stresses the inner detachment necessary to see God beyond created things, *Laudato Si'* invites us to inhabit the world with attentiveness, simplicity, and active love as an expression of an incarnate faith. Thus, *Laudato Si'* does not replace the teaching of John of the Cross; rather, it offers it a contemporary extension, integrating ecological and social concerns within a vision of creation as gift, mystery, call, and mission. It draws Carmelite contemplation into a missionary, fraternal, and solidaristic dynamic, where praise becomes action and love of the Creator becomes care for creation.

We will therefore explore several key texts of John of the Cross on creation. Each will be accompanied by an introductory explanation, followed by selected passages from *Laudato Si'* presented in dialogue, and finally some questions to guide reflection. In fidelity to John of the Cross's own manner of teaching, these introductions and questions are neither restrictive nor exhaustive; the reader is free to form their own understanding and raise their own questions.

For 2026, the texts chosen are as follows:

1. Creation as a 'palace' (*Romances* 3; 4:1-38)
2. Creation as an icon (*Spiritual Canticle* B 5:1-4)
3. Creation as a 'messenger' (*Spiritual Canticle* B 4:1-7)
4. Creation as a quasi-sacrament (*Spiritual Canticle* B 14-15:1-5, 9, 28-29)
5. The 'awakening' of creation (*Living Flame* B 4:1-5, 14-15)
6. Creation drawn from nothingness (*1 Ascent of Mount Carmel* 4, 1-4)
7. Creation as a gift rather than possession (*3 Ascent of Mount Carmel* 20, 1-4)
8. Creation as the place of our liberation (*Prayer of a Soul Enkindled with Love*)



## Prayers for February

*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 Carmelite 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 (\$2,766.10 sent to Goma in December 2025)
- Fr Michael-Therese, Fr Antoine (in Ethiopia), the CSJ, especially the formation of Brothers in Africa and the Christchurch 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, especially Therese's Auntie Iona and Samantha Taite
- Those who have asked for, or need our prayers, especially Barbara's sister, Margaret (recovering from a fall and surgery), Ray (medical problems), Claire's Sister Bernadette (recovering from a fall), Lyn's cousin, Dereck (hand injury), Phillip (tetraplegic), and Gay

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

- We Let us pray that **children suffering from incurable diseases** and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength & hope.



**Jacob admitted to Formation  
Carmel Chapel  
7 December 2025**

## Our February Carmelite Saints

4 Wed. Bl. Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus (priest)

24 Tue. Bl. Josepha Naval Girbés (virgin) OCDS



### ST JOHN OF THE CROSS

*As we will be looking more closely at the writings of St John of the Cross this year, I am including his quotes from "Sayings of Light and Love" (nos 162-167).*

*Blessings in Carmel, Megan (Formator)*

- **Anyone who complains or grumbles is not perfect, nor even a good Christian.**
- **The humble are those who hide in their own nothingness and know how to abandon themselves to God.**
- **The meek are those who know how to suffer their neighbour and themselves.**
- **If you desire to be perfect, sell your will, give it to the poor in spirit, come to Christ in meekness and humility, and follow him to Calvary and the sepulchre.**
- **Those who trust in themselves are worse than the devil.**
- **Those who do not love their neighbour abhor God.**

### FROM FR JÉRÔME

*Hearty greetings from Rome.*

*I would like to wish you and to all your community Merry Christmas and blessed happy new year 2026.*

*Once again, thanks a lot for your support to our school in Goma. Please, see how the work is progressing.*

*[The ground floor is being used already.]*



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

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