



# Carmelite News

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## **Celebrating Our Lady of Mount Carmel**

**\*\*SPECIAL MASS ON SUNDAY JULY 17\*\***

Mary received the title *Our Lady of Mount Carmel* after lay hermits built a chapel in her honor near the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century on Mount Carmel in Israel. These hermits were the forbears of the Carmelites of today. Our order of religious women and men thus was established in Mary's name and under her aegis.

The feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16) is celebrated with great festivity throughout the world and is the titular feast of our Order. Given Mary's foundational place in Carmelite history and the inspiration to prophetic witness that we continue to draw from her life today, we hope over the next few years to use the feast to explore a contemporary theology of Mary with the public, possibly through a series of lectures by experts in the field.

We will celebrate the feast this year on Sunday, July 17, to make it possible for more to attend. The liturgy will include a special reflection by renowned theologian and writer Sr. Mary Aquin O'Neil, RSM. We invite all who are able to come to the Sunday Mass to share in the celebration and to learn more about the place and presence of Mary in the lives of God's people today. We include on the reverse side of this newsletter a brief reflection on some aspects of our Carmelite spirituality that Mary symbolizes for us.

## **Meeting Father Luis Arostegui, ocd General of the Order**

At the end of May, Father Luis Arostegui, ocd, the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelite Order, came to Baltimore for a short pastoral visit to our monastery, accompanied by one of his Councillors, Fr. Steven Watson, ocd, a native Baltimorean. They arrived on the evening of Memorial Day in time to join in our traditional picnic-barbecue. The next day we had an opportunity to meet and talk with Fr. Luis, hearing his perspective on the current state of the Order and its future, and sharing our views on living out a contemporary Carmelite life, its challenges and opportunities, and what we believe has been helpful in attracting new members. We also discussed the mutual desire for greater collaboration within the

entire Order, and practical ways that this may be advanced.

Fr. Luis had the opportunity during his visit to share in our liturgical life, a highlight of which was an evening Mass on May 31 to which we had specially invited the broader community that gathers here for Sunday liturgy. We so wanted Fr. Luis to meet the vibrant and faithful group with whom we are privileged to share our lives and to experience their full-hearted participation in Eucharist. We were deeply touched and grateful that so many of our people came to show their support and love and to meet Fr. Luis. The participation and singing was just wonderful, communicating a spirit truly representative of our Sunday liturgies together. Our heartfelt thanks to all who came to be with us for this special liturgy.

## **International Carmelites and CCA Meeting**

The biannual meeting of the Carmelite Communities Associated (CCA) to which our monastery belongs was held this year at the Jesuit retreat house in Faulkner, Maryland. As the geographically closest member monastery, we had the delight and privilege of hosting five Carmelites, from Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom, who had been invited to attend the meeting. It was very beneficial and a joy to share insights about the various expressions of Carmelite life that can be found around the world and to discuss future possibilities for collaboration.

The CCA meeting was very lively and informative, addressing dreams for the future and setting practical goals to achieve those dreams. Prior to the meeting, the CCA had received a grant that its leadership used to help newer members participate, covering the expenses of attending for those in initial formation. Thanks to this assistance, all six of our newer members were able to be present for at least part of the meeting.

We were responsible for the meeting's travel logistics, which meant arranging rides between several airports and Faulkner. We could not have managed this huge task without the gracious help of friends who served as drivers and offered such warm hospitality to our guests. We are deeply grateful to all who helped, for their time, energy, good cheer and sacrifices.

## **Mary as Prophetic Witness**

## and Archetype of Carmelite Life

Since the Second Vatican Council, scholars have been developing a contemporary theology of Mary that understands her as co-disciple and companion on the journey of faith. This theology is rooted in the ancient understanding of Mary held by the early Christians and preserved by the first Carmelites, who called themselves her “brothers.” For them and for us, Mary is one *in the midst* of the community of the Church, a model of prayer and fidelity who walks along with us. She is first and foremost a *sister*. As our sister, Mary pre-figures the eschatological fulfillment of humanity. She shows us that even now an intimate relationship with God is within the grasp of every person.

Mary is an archetypal figure for Carmelites, an icon of prophetic witness. She symbolizes and summarizes characteristics that are at the heart of our lives.

**Bearing God to and for others.** Mary’s most ancient title is the Greek word *Theotokos*, which literally means “God-bearer.” Following her example, Carmelites seek through prayer to allow God to dwell fully within them. St. John of the Cross instructs that this can take place only if we allow ourselves to be transformed, brought to authentic self-transcendence and made capable for genuine self-gift.

**Prayer.** Mary’s life reflects an overwhelming orientation towards God and a listening and attentive soul open to the inspiration of God’s spirit. This listening, attentive posture is the heart of the contemplative prayer to which we are dedicated and which flows outward for God’s people and the world.

**Courage and initiative.** Mary’s radical openness to God’s word and her self-gift required strong initiative and a deep strength. It also took great personal courage in the face of opposing societal norms for the behavior of women in her time. She faced scandal

and dishonor both at Jesus’ birth and at his death. Yet through her *fiat* she actively chose to participate in the life-giving mission that was offered to her, notwithstanding the suffering it would engender.

**Solidarity in suffering.** As Mary stood at the cross of Jesus, not running from his pain or hiding from the dangers of associating with someone condemned by society, we too are asked to stand courageously with all those who face injustice and oppression. We cannot shield ourselves from seeing the suffering of the world, the hunger of children, the generation of Africans being wiped out by the AIDS virus while the world community stands by, the trafficking in and abuse of the least powerful in society, especially poor women and children, war and the destructive effects of a global culture that resolves conflict primarily through violence. Mary’s witness at the foot of the cross, while non-verbal, was far from silent. Through her presence in sorrow and solidarity, she refused to turn her face away from the reality of evil and at the same time spoke an eloquent and non-violent opposition to it.

**Spiritual generativity.** Mary as a mother is a model of spiritual generativity. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila embodied this model by their lives of intimacy with God. They shared this experience with God’s people through writing, spiritual direction and prayer. We likewise commit ourselves through these same means to help others know God in more intimate personal relationship.

### 🕯️ Calendar 🕯️

**Sunday, July 17, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel**

Lauds 8:15 am, Mass 9 am, Solemn Vespers 5 pm

**Wednesday, July 20, Elijah the Prophet**

**Tuesday, August 9, St. Edith Stein**