



The VINE

News from the Secular Discalced Carmelite Community in England and Wales



October 2023

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Deadline for contributions to the next Vine: Tuesday 6 February 2024

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Carmel and Grace

Dear Fellow Carmelites,

It may not seem like it, but we are living in a time of extraordinary grace. For grace enlightens, deepens and sanctifies in times of struggle, fear and loss. If they arise, crises bring about change. A crisis is a pivotal point of choice: go backwards to the known (however awful) and withdraw from others, or to go forwards into the unknown and outwards to others.

Grace is a gift of the Spirit 'who justifies and sanctifies us.' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2003) It also includes the gifts of the Holy Spirit 'to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church'. *Special graces* are also called *charisms*.

This is why our Father General, Fr Miguel, entitles his recent letter to our Discalced Secular Order 'Twenty Years of Grace', which are twenty years of the OCDS Constitutions. These Constitutions (which replaced the *Rule of Life*) have transformed the Secular Order by clarifying and enhancing the identity of our vocation. Our identity has two sources: Teresa and all Carmelites, living and dead, and identification with Jesus Christ, who is constantly transforming our lives.

Jesus Christ is not a statue, he lives and breathes in his Body, the Church, and we are daughters and sons of the Church. Carmel is in a constant process of evolving, both as individuals and as groups, as well as worldwide. Read Fr Miguel's Ukraine diary of his visit reaching towards the front-line (in the latest *Communicationis* 390) to get a feel of how Carmel is present in this terrible war in Ukraine, bringing hope and solace by being present.

Perhaps that is the essence of our vocation: being *present*. Caring for an elderly relative, driving to and fro for work or school run, at home alone in the kitchen or garden – we are present to the presence of Christ, that 'good friend' as Teresa calls him.

Being present with someone or Someone requires stillness and listening. In his letter, Fr Miguel implores us to listen each other – friars, nuns and seculars.

While playing and doing the usual things, my grandchild aged two years has suddenly started asking the question; 'What are we *doing*?' Suddenly, the doing is enriched by this innocent question. We are not achieving for the future, not regretting the past, but simply being present in the doing, in the being.

So let us revisit our Constitutions, not as a rule book to make us 'good' Carmelites, but as a cradle that holds us and grows larger and deeper as we ourselves grow in our *doing*. They are an infinite source of grace, of the Special Grace that is our charism. All will be done for the good of the Order, in hearing the needs of the hungry and feeling the thirst of the world.

Revisit the *spirit* of the Constitutions, see them through the window of Fr Miguel's letter, for the Spirit will take us forward to the future of the Secular Order in these times of change. We are invited as one community in communion with each other to open our hearts to our charism. To use Fr Miguel's words, we need to stop fearing to say what God has given us, and live our first mission, which is to be a true community of prayer.

In the conversation with Fr Miguel in the recent issue of *Mount Carmel* (Vol 71 October – December 2023), he speaks for his dream for the Order: to be united as a family, in communion, an Order that listens and speaks with that Teresian style, so heartfelt. Our most pressing priority, he says, is to 'return to the experience of Jesus, as the love and Lord of our lives, with a mature and committed spirituality that is both lived and life-giving.'

Well, I can say no more. We live in the mystery of community and communion, in the Body of Christ.

May God fill us with all the blessings he wants to give us.

Annette

Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus, Kensington

Our group is based in Kensington and despite being very close to Notting Hill we have never in our history visited our Carmelite sisters! So we thought it was high time to make this right.

On Saturday 8 July 2023 we were kindly invited to spend the day with the sisters in their monastery which is dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity. Their hospitality was so warm and generous. They prepared a beautiful room for us, with plenty of coffee and tea available throughout the day.

Our day started with lunch and our usual community discussion. Because of the anniversaries of St Thérèse of Lisieux we have been reading *The Story of a Soul*. In a truly providential way, our chapter for this meeting was the entry of Thérèse into Carmel. As you can imagine, being with the sisters in Notting Hill added greater depth to this chapter because we could visualise the scene so clearly. In the afternoon we were given the opportunity to meet with the Prioress and five members of the community.

Some of you will be aware that the Prioress, Sr Mary of St Joseph, is the authoress of the exceptional book on prayer *Upon this Mountain: Prayer in the Carmelite Tradition*, so to spend time with her was very precious indeed. We had a fascinating discussion and pondered topics such as discernment, vocations, formation, the needs of our world, community life, Catholic education and even the sisters' new bees. We were delighted to discover the new honey will be called Flos Carmeli - what a great name! As you can well imagine, it was also a time with much humour and kindness.

We then moved to the Chapel for None with the community. This time of prayer united our hearts at an even deeper level and we gave real thanks for our visit.

The visit was such a success that we have been invited back and we are going to make it part of our annual calendar. Because we are based in

Kensington Priory, we know the friars well and are so thankful for all their hard work, but this new annual visit provides an important opportunity for us to meet with our sisters and to celebrate all aspects of our Carmelite family.



On Saturday 12 August 2023 we started a new custom, which we hope will become an annual tradition, of having a summer picnic in the Priory garden. It provided a lovely opportunity for members of the community to get to know each other informally, it also meant our three enquirers could feel relaxed in our company. Several friars joined us, including our very dear Father Matt, we were delighted that they could spend time with us.



A highlight of the day was Yvette Khoury being welcomed into formation and receiving the scapular. We are proud that Yvette is a Maronite, an Eastern Rite Catholic, something which deeply enriches the life of our community. We welcome her warmly into Carmel and give her our full support and prayers.



In recent months it has been so good to see our Superior General, Father Miguel, launch a new social media account. Inspired by this, we have also developed a presence on social media and you are certainly welcome to follow us: @OCDSKensington



*Christian Kendall-Daw
President*

Holy Trinity, Notting Hill

The retreat held at the Kensington priory managed to create a retreat atmosphere that had many of the unique qualities of a residential Secular Carmelite retreat. We were so blessed with beautiful weather for exploring the priory garden via the beautiful Herman Cohen Chapel, pictured. We were able to pray together in this space at the end of the day.



Attendance at an annual retreat is an expectation of our Constitutions and Fr Matt contributed generously, as ever. He provided both talks that day which were described as revealing wisdom and an in-depth knowledge of St John of the Cross.

We met the needs of our target audience who were those who could not otherwise attend a Secular Carmelite retreat this year and who wanted to do so.

We were also joined by those who had attended a retreat outside central London this year who also benefited from the day.

We were also joined by a small group of those who are affiliated with the Order of Carmel (Carmel in the City - CITC) who would not have had a similar opportunity and appreciated meeting Secular Carmelites and looked forward to future collaboration with us.

Further information is available on CITC via this link: <https://carmelinthecity.org.uk/>



We remembered Marisa Wilson who is unwell (retired President of the Saturday Kensington group) in our rosary prayers which concluded the day.

All in all, the attendees from Carmel in the City and other group members appreciated meeting each other, having quiet time for prayer in the lovely garden or the Church and the benefit of the talks and confession made available by Fr Matt.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of Holy Trinity Group for their help throughout the day in management of the beverage table, the excellent catering and the required clearing at the end of the day. It was much appreciated.

*Teresa Lynch
President*

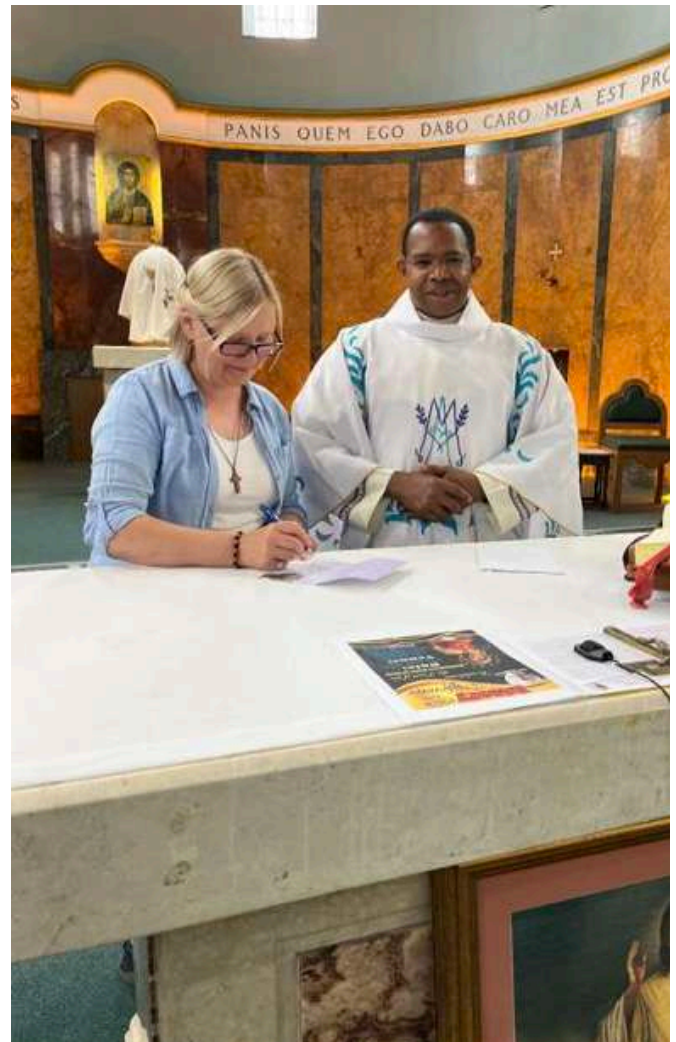
Flower of Carmel Secular Community, Birkenhead, Wirral

Greetings everyone from our community. We have been very blessed! Here are some events from 2022. On the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, our sister in Carmel, Ruth Smith, made her Definite Promise. The following month, on the Feast of St Albert of Jerusalem, our brother in Carmel, Ioan Ap Dewi was received into

Formation. Over the next few months three enquirers have joined our Community: Alejandra McCombe-Mamczur originally from Argentina, Jacinta Adonis originally from South Africa and Jean Murray from Wirral. All are still with us.

This spring we were very happy to welcome Annette Goulden, our National President at our monthly meeting. It was lovely to listen to the news from the order, to share our experiences and pray together.

At our June meeting, the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Maggie Kowalska made her Final Profession at St John's Evangelist Church in Rock Ferry. In the absence of our Carmelite Friars, Father Mario, our parish priest, originally from Nigeria, celebrated the Holy Eucharist and received her Definitive Promise.



Maggie, signing her Definitive Promise in the presence of the Community and Father Mario

Father Mario spoke about the virtues of Our Lady and her example for us as Secular Carmelites.

He encouraged us as a community and as individuals to constantly deepen our spiritual life and commitment in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary by means of contemplative prayer, pondering the Scriptures and apostolic works. He encouraged us to witness to God's presence in the world in the Spirit of Carmel.



From the left: Ruth, Ann, Jean, Alejandra, Maggie, Father Mario, Ioan, Eileen, Pat and Mary

Our community was joined by a group of parishioners from St John's two of Maggie's friends from different countries: Mexico, Spain and St Helena. Maggie herself is Polish. It felt very international indeed.

After the Mass everyone received a card with a word from St Teresa of Jesus and was invited for a cuppa and cake, to share in the joy of the whole community.

Flower of Carmel Community

Cornwall Group

On Saturday, 20th May, we went to Bristol for the South West Regional Day. It was a very joyful occasion, especially as one of our members, Maureen Vincent, made her First Promise. It meant an early start, as it was a long way for us to travel, but it was well worth it to meet up with other members of our Carmelite family and to join in Mass in the beautiful church of St Patrick. We are continuing with our reading of the writings of St Thérèse. We have three people taking part in the Aspirants' Course and our ongoing Formation group is continuing its study of Christifideles Laici.



Wincanton Community

The Wincanton Community had the joy of our annual retreat at St Rita's in Honiton, on the weekend of 9th June, with Fr Matt Blake. This is a wonderful venue, an Augustinian Recollect Spirituality Centre which we have taken to our hearts, described in their brochure as a haven of peace and tranquillity in the heart of East Devon. The garden in June is a riot of beautiful scented roses of every colour and they grow their own tomatoes and some vegetables. We were welcomed warmly by the resident three Augustinian priests, and the chapel and rooms are just beautiful. Our meals, cooked with artistic and culinary flare, were wonderful by the French chef married to an English wife! He used to decorate the tables with flowers and came to chat to us at our evening meal. As a result of our happy experience there, we have decided to continue to go again both for our Regional Day and Retreat next year.

Fr Matt gave us inspirational talks on the Ascent to Mount Carmel, the Dark Night, and the Living Flame. It is hard to put into words just how our hearts expanded and were filled with joy and gratitude: 'did not our hearts burn within us, as he spoke to us on our different ways'. As John of the Cross said, no one person goes even half the same journey as another. I made some notes from

the richness of the three talks by Fr Matt each day as follows.

He explored with us the fundamental themes of Union with God, the Witness of Love, the Action of God in Contemplation and the work of God in prayer. How do we experience God in our lives? In what ways do we hinder, block or obstruct this experience so that the 'secret, peaceful, inflow of love in secret, the language of Love 'if not impeded or blocked' fills our hearts?. There are three signs of prayer changing in our lives. a) dryness, b) not fixing our minds on other things and being detached from addiction or craving, and c) wanting to remain alone in peace and loving awareness of God.

Fr Matt drew our attention to the centrality of Jesus Christ in our Christian life. He is the greatest gift from the Father, His Word made Flesh, His love for Jesus is the most quoted in John's works, one example being 'the soul taken in love' from the Sayings . Jesus Christ is God's own Word to us, may we fix our eyes on Him, stay close to Him, listen to His words. For John of the Cross the greatest guide is Scripture. This combined with the right and correct interpretation comes from the Church, Tradition, the Fathers of the Church and the Magisterium.

All of John's works reveal his profound knowledge and reliance on the Scriptures. For Example in Book 2 of the Dark Night, Ch 5-12, John quotes from the Psalms, Jeremiah, Isiah and Lamentations, in texts where the writer is dealing with difficult issues. These books were written in tough times and we find like John that the scriptures speak to us at every point in our lives. A key passage in the Ascent Bk 3, Ch 6, Par 1 quoting from Palm 59 'I keep my strength for you'. As the passage in Deuteronomy says, we are bidden to Love the Lord with all our soul, all our strength'. We pray for the inner freedom to apply all our strength to love.

I have brought you into the Land of Carmel to taste the good things of God. On Mount Carmel we come face to face with God in our everyday lives, Mount Tabor, Zion, Calvary ... we journey up the narrow path to be transformed by the encounter with the Infinite Love of God.

Before we left we rejoiced with Elizabeth Morris making her first promise.

Joan Brown

East Anglia Regional Meeting

Our Regional Day took place at Quidenham Monastery on Saturday 30th September. It was a very joyful gathering in beautiful late summer weather.

In the morning Father Matt spoke on the recent letter from our Father General, Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD. Here we are first reminded of the very early origins of the Secular Order and the fundamental importance, still, of the Rule of St Albert. This rule has three aspects: Elijah's call to live in right relationship with God; allegiance to Christ; and fellowship with Mary. Then, addressing the Constitutions, Father Miguel highlights especially our ecclesial vocation: we exist not for ourselves but for the Church and, indeed, for the whole world, drawing on a creativity which 'gives wings to the gifts of the Holy Spirit'.

At the Mass which followed Rachel Sporton entered formation, final promises were made by Andrea Cope, Jim McManus and Sue Armstrong, and first promises were made by Jenny Sansom and Renata Mankiewicz.



Rachel Sporton with Antonia Braithwaite

In the afternoon Annette Goulden spoke movingly of the way in which the loving gaze of God, experienced through one another, heals us and teaches us our true identity. God 'mirrors us to

ourselves'. In community 'we become more truly ourselves through our encounter with each other but are always called to go on further'. A wonderful thought to ponder as we took our separate ways.

Tim Burton



Renata Mankiewicz, Jim McManus, Jenny Sansom, Sue Armstrong and Andrea Cope



Members of the Letchworth Group

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING, LAUNDE ABBEY

The National Council met for its annual 'in person' meeting at Launde Abbey in Leicestershire on 25-26 September. We usually have three other meetings in the year but they are held on Zoom so it was good to come together personally again.

We discussed the content and benefits of our website: secularcarmel.org.uk which will now have the recordings of the Secular Order Retreats given by Fr Matt at Ampleforth and Aylesford this year as well as many other useful Formation resources in the 'For Seculars' section.

On the subject of retreats, in 2024 there will be at least six retreats for the Secular Order in different parts of the country as apposed to two or there in pre-pandemic years. They vary in duration and location so it is hoped that there is at least one to suit each region:

The Kairos Centre, Roehampton from 31 May - 2 June 2024 (Contact Mark Courtney)

Douai Abbey from Tuesday 2nd to Saturday 6th July 2024. (Contact Armelle Belcher)

Ampleforth from 15-19 July 2024 (Contact Mary Farrell) Wistaston from 26-28 July 2024 (Contact Annette Goulden)

The Briery, Ilkley from 13-15 September 2024 Contact Mary Farrell

The first Honiton retreat is 28-30 June and the second is in September.

Fr Matt is also speaking at the Christian Heritage Centre, Stonyhurst 8-10 March

The Retreat Fund is going well in its first year with several people applying for and receiving a proportion of the costs of attending a retreat.

The rest of our time together was spent in reflecting on how best to grow and support communities as we come out of Covid. It's important work and cannot be hurried but, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we'll get there!

Joan MacInnes

OUR FAMILY CAMINO

Brigitte Garcia writes:

So, are you thinking of the Camino? Let me tell you our story.

We have two teenage boys, whose faith has been challenged by the world and by a church in which teenagers are often not present. Thus, we were looking to do something that would hopefully help them rediscover their faith. After some thinking and a lot of planning, we embarked on a very different kind of family holiday and walked the 'Camino de Santiago' as a family.

The Camino is a network of pilgrimage routes, all of which lead to the shrine of the apostle Saint James in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, where tradition holds that the remains of the apostle were buried. We opted for the French Camino which starts in France and can take about five weeks to walk as it is about 800 kms long. Since we only had two weeks in total, we decided we would start closer to Santiago and walk 'only' about 220 kms. On the first days we met people who had started in France and had been walking for weeks, we felt like amateurs among professionals, but that was about to change, hold on.

Our journey lasted nine days. Every day, we walked for about 6 to 8 hours doing around 22 to 30 kms. Each day was different, some days we had to walk uphill, some days downhill (downhill was far worse, if you are wondering). Some days we walked through Eucalyptus forests (not native to Spain but very popular), some days we walked through vineyards (we do not drink wine, but if a Rioja is your thing, this is the place), some days we walked next to the motorways (yes, not that pleasant), and others through old towns. In general, it was pleasantly hot; after all, it was Spain in August, but some days it was really, really, really hot and uncomfortable. Regardless of the changing scenery, the constant was the other pilgrims on the way, all united with the same goal. It was easy to identify pilgrims as we all carried a scallop on our backpacks.

'Buen Camino!' was the greeting everyone used as we passed each other. 'Buen Camino' literally translates as 'Good Way', but it can mean so much more: good morning, take care, God Bless you, have a safe journey or goodbye. If you do not speak Spanish, fear not, 'Buen Camino' will get you through and open conversations in a



variety of languages, English being probably the most popular after Spanish. We met people from different countries that were sharing the way with us and some of them became 'Camino friends' as we kept bumping into each other at our various stops.

On our first day of walking, the first stop to get our pilgrim's passport stamped (see photo overleaf) was a small church. As I walked into the church, I saw the image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, who was there at the front of the church as if welcoming me personally to the Camino. And throughout the Camino, at different stops, Mary kept being there.



Pilgrims carry a document which is like a pilgrim's passport. This passport is stamped at each town where the pilgrims stay to certify that they have actually walked what they claim to have walked. Pilgrims can get their passport stamped at churches, bars, restaurants; and even a bagpiper on the way had a personalised stamp.

Once pilgrims get to Santiago, the passport serves as proof of the journey and thus, provided they have walked at least 100 kms, they qualify to receive a 'Compostela', which is a nice certificate in Latin. Many (and I mean many) people start their Camino in a town that is just beyond the 100 km mark. On that morning, there were swarms of pilgrims starting their own journeys, and we, who had been walking for days, and had blisters to prove it, changed status and became professionals walking among amateurs.

One of the highlights of the pilgrimage was stopping at a small church in O'Cebreiro, where a Eucharistic Miracle had taken place in the 12th century. We had other small highlights here and there like wild swimming in clear water rivers, which was great to cool down, or taking the detour of 10 km to visit a huge and imposing Benedictine monastery. Coffee was also good everywhere.

But the biggest moment was arriving to Santiago de Compostela. You can see the Cathedral from a distance in a place called 'Mount of Joy', my husband was close to tears at this point. We still had to walk about an hour to reach the plaza outside the Cathedral.

We celebrated the pilgrim's Eucharist with hundreds of other pilgrims from all over the world on the 9th August, the feast day of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, and the homily focused on her life. All the prayers during mass were in different languages to reflect the different nationalities that were present. The church was full of young people who had gone to World Youth Day in Lisbon. That day my sons witnessed a youthful church that was very much alive!



On the last day, I went to visit a Carmelite monastery and through a wooden turn, a nun gave me a little prayer card. The card had a mother's prayer entrusting her children to Mary. So, Mary was there at the beginning and at the end of our Camino. I do not know what the fruits of the Camino will be for my family. Whatever these are, I leave them in God's hands. And I also know Mary will be praying for us.

WEBSITE NEWS

Our website continues to develop, thanks to many valuable new contributions. The enrichment material on the 'For Seculars' part of the site now comprises a valuable library of audio and print material which will be invaluable in formation programmes and beyond.


We have also - just - set up a new **OCDS blog**. Initial postings are by Cyprian Blamires and we hope to invite other contributors in due course. Current and back copies of the **Vine** are also available for reading or downloading.

UKRAINE ALBUM

A selection of photos from Fr Miguel's diary of his visit to Ukraine, 14-21 July (*Communicationes* 390).
The full document can be found via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/vt8rdbxx>



The
Secular Carmelite Calendar 2024



Carmelite saints,
other principal saints
and all Feasts listed
day by day
in a convenient booklet
to fit in your Office
book

Copies are available from:
Judith & Anthony Kirke
42 Keyhaven Road
Milford-on-Sea
Lymington, SO41 0QY

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