



November 2025

News from the Secular Discalced Carmelite Community in Great Britain

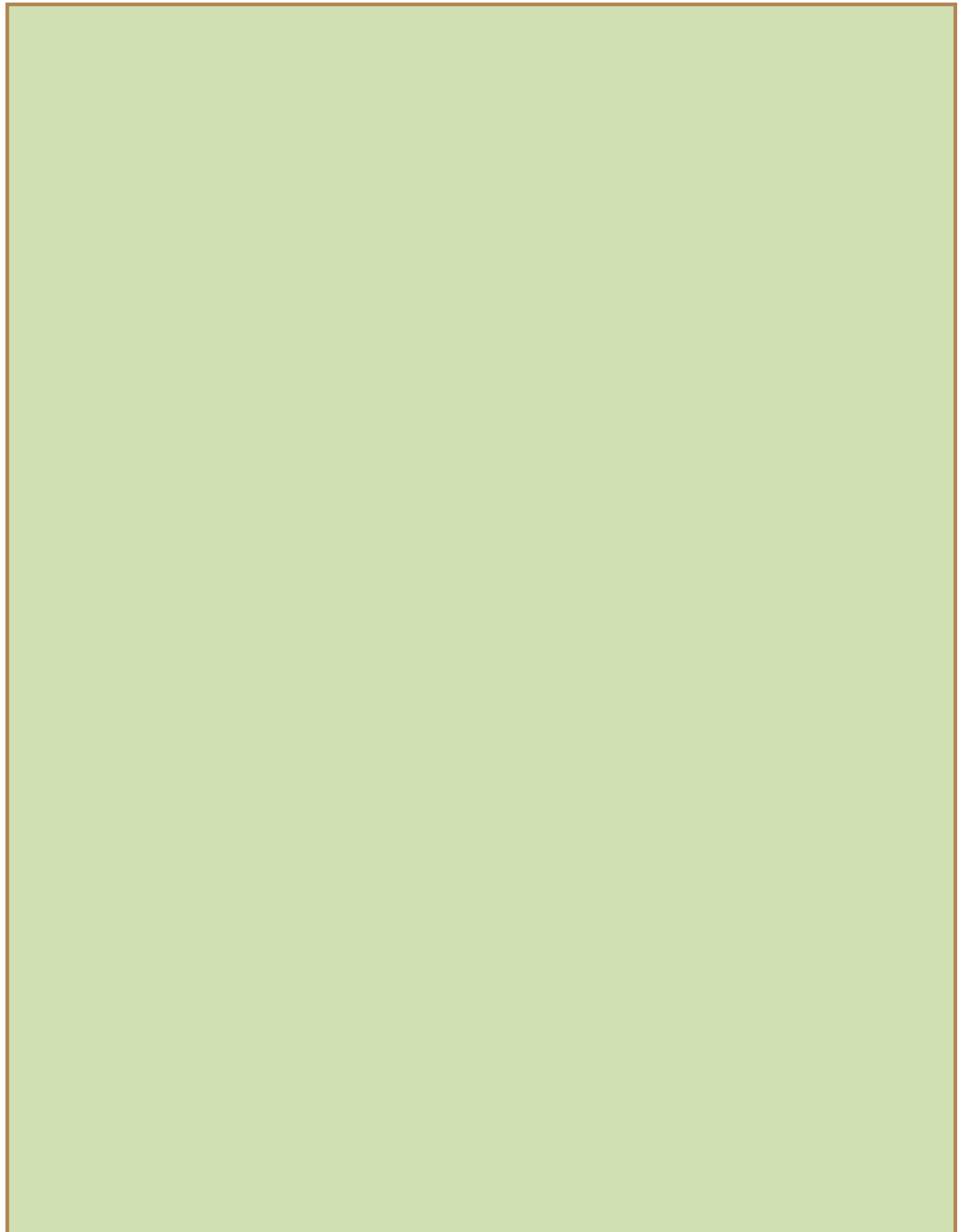


Presidents' Conference, Hinsley Hall, September 2025

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Deadline for contributions to the next Vine: Tuesday 10 February 2026
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FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT



East Anglia Regional Day

On 4 October the three Secular Order communities of East Anglia, Mother of Carmel and St. Henry Morse, Quidenham, The Holy Family, Norwich and Our Lady Mother of Divine Grace and St Joseph, Letchworth met at Quidenham Carmel for our Regional Day. There were more than twenty five of us present to welcome Fr Matt and Annette Goulden who joined us for the day which began with Morning Prayer in the church.

After coffee and a catch up with friends from other communities, Fr Matt spoke to us about St John of the Cross, reminding us of his life and experience and how that influenced his teaching. He spoke of St John's childhood - one of love, poverty and separation in 16th century Spain, his experience of the suffering of others and how this impacted on how he went on to lead his life. Testimonies from those who knew him show that he was always concerned about the poor and the sick but always with the understanding that we are made for more than that, we are made in the image of God; the depths of Christian teaching is for everyone. He commented on Stanza 39 para 7 of the Spiritual Canticle during which St John appealed to his readers to consider 'What are you doing? How are you spending your time' St John says we are all created and called to the freedom of life in Christ. The great gifts of God are given to those who freely choose them. There are obstacles to free choice so God must purify us from all our imperfections and set us free from our 'ignorances', our limited understanding of God and who we are. Our goals may be limited but we are created for something much greater.

Later Annette spoke about the Presidents Conference recently held in Leeds which brought together many of the Presidents and Leaders of communities in England and Wales. She told us of the need for new ways of welcoming all those who feel drawn to Carmel: new groups have been formed to bring the Secular Order closer to people; new ways are being tried of meeting in

person and online and at retreats. The Holy Spirit is at work within the Secular Order today.

During Mass three of those present made their First Promise: **Beth Flatman, Eszter and Brian Dunleavy**; and two were accepted into Formation: **Emma Maiandi and Tandy Tarifiye**.

Central Region - old and new

The regional day for the Central Region was held at Northampton on Saturday 27 September. It was a very special day in the sense that it marked the end of 10 years of wonderful work by our beloved regional representative Cyprian Blamires. Cyprian had retired from this position the previous weekend at the Presidents conference attended by the presidents and leaders of OCDS groups and communities throughout England and Wales. At that same event it was agreed to reorganise the regions (see details later in this *Vine*).

As the day had been arranged months ago, we still went ahead with the old region, and how wonderful it was to see everyone, some for the last time, perhaps.

After joyful greetings and gathering up into morning prayer Fr Matt spoke to us about Saint John of the Cross, giving a general introduction as to what to choose to study, how to read him. Reluctant to answer, he advised and encouraged us to find our way, our own way, as Saint John would tell us himself, 'the answer is already in the person' and he would help them to find their own answer. Reading from *Sayings of Light and Love* (Prologue, 2nd paragraph): 'Lord, you love discretion, you love light, you love love...', he spoke about how our minds can become an obstacle, about the need to remove obstacles. If we don't understand, good! Let the understanding find you. A word can speak to us and find something in us already experienced. St John sang his songs to lift his spirit up. Let us sing them, imagine them and let them speak to us.

The day continued with silent prayer, with time to ponder on these words, and the Angelus. Afterwards, Cyprian talked about the

reorganisation of the regions, the use of the internet in Carmel, the Virtual community which meets for Morning prayer and Night prayer, on Zoom.

After a choice of delicious soup and cakes served by the wonderful Cathedral's catering staff, we heard three stories of members' journeys to Carmel in a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere where other members spontaneously asked further questions.



We finished the day with Holy Mass in the Cathedral where **Michael Green** and **Karen Jones** of the Lincoln group made their final promises. A young man called Giuseppe was waiting outside to ask to join the Northampton community. He took the picture above!

Holy Trinity group, Notting Hill

Pilgrimage to St Jude's Shrine in Kent, 8 September

Attached to the Carmelite parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and located in a narrow street in the market town of Faversham in the heart of Kent, is St Jude's Shrine which was described as 'a jewel for the diocese' by Archbishop Cyril Cowderoy of Southwark at its opening in 1955. A wonderful day was spent there on the Feast of

the Immaculate Conception. This was a joint pilgrimage of both Third Order and OCDS group members facilitated by Amanda C. Dickie, Lay member of the Third order.



The feast day of St Jude is on the 28th of October. Perhaps because of the confusion between St Jude's name and that of Judas Iscariot, he was gradually overlooked in the West and became 'the forgotten saint'. By the 20th century, St Jude was relatively unknown to the British Catholic population but had remained popular in India and in Eastern tradition.



He was not in pre-Reformation days much identified with the old Catholic life in Europe. The shrine today is very much a focus of unity attracting pilgrims and visitors of other faiths and Christian traditions. Growing out of a world at war the Shrine of St Jude is a sign of hope and reconciliation. Today, people around a world torn with terrorism in the lands associated with the apostle, turn to St Jude, the patron of hope, for his intercession and hope.

Jude is invoked in desperate situations because his New Testament letter stresses that the community should persevere despite difficult circumstances, just as their forefathers had done before them. Therefore, he became the patron saint of desperate cases. His writing resonates today. 'At the end of time ...there are going to be people who sneer at religion and follow nothing but their own desires. These unspiritual people are nothing but mischief makers' (v.18-19). He is also compassionate offering hope, "when there are some who have doubts, reassure them" (v22). We were warmly welcomed by the OCarm Friars and enjoyed a very interesting talk and tour by brother Paul who also conducted the anointing with the blessed, healing oil following the Mass in the morning.

The Shrine holds a first-class relic of Saint Jude which is part of his mortal remains in a copy of a monstrance, dated 1547 and is accessible to pilgrims, allowing them to venerate and pray there. The relic provides a physical connection for those seeking healing, hope, and solace in times of difficulty, as it is seen as a reminder of St. Jude's closeness to Christ as a cousin.

We prayed for all Carmelites, friends and families of both Orders, including those who are ill or recently deceased.

Acknowledgements to Amanda C. Dickie, Lay Carmelite, Third Order of Carmel

Worth Abbey Retreat 1–3 August

This was a lovely, restful venue for our weekend retreat in the beautiful Sussex countryside when we were blessed with lovely weather.



The Benedictine monks were most welcoming, and we were able to join them at their Divine Office. Overall, the evaluations of this first-time retreat venue were very positive.



Fr Matt provided us with inspiring talks about St John of the Cross. He emphasised that, particularly for people new to his work, there is benefit in just getting to know him by reading his works without being daunted by the apparent depth of his thoughts and prose.



We were joined by some members of the Third Order of Carmel and together with the OCDS members it was a good opportunity for networking. We tried to maintain a silent retreat except at mealtimes, with some difficulty as it is not a very extensive space! The talks, refreshments and dining areas are quite closely connected. However, the venue with good accommodation and wonderful food (albeit on a retreat) should be repeated, due to popular demand of attendees and silence may reign next year!

Teresa Lynch

President, Holy Trinity group, Notting Hill

Kensington Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Teresa

Would we ever forget our Election Day?

The time had come to elect our new Council after three years of sterling service. How could we replace our President Christian? Fortunately, he is going to serve as Regional President!

The day had come: 18th of October 2025.

We have been thinking about it for months and felt well prepared for the Election process but before it, there were more excitement and joy to share.

Everybody wanted to be present either in person or in spirit. Nobody wanted to miss such an occasion and to our great pleasure Michael (former president), joined us and added another light to our day.

We were all very happy and this feeling seemed to have diffused itself into the atmosphere. Fr Matt joined us in the Hermann Cohen Chapel with his wonderful smile and reassuring presence, we knew that we would experience unforgettable moments during Morning Prayer, and we did!

Julienne (picture below) was admitted into formation and received a Bible as a welcoming gift that we all signed as a mark of our affection.



Joanelle and **Yvette** (picture below) made their First Promise. This delightful moment was captured on video for them to keep. This First Promise has such a depth to it, it confirms a free choice to change one's life and a commitment to the Order's Constitutions. It is quite an undertaking to be celebrated with great joy and gratitude.



We celebrated the formal transfers of three sisters to our community: **Judy**, **Maria** and **Rachel**. What a delight to see them receive their scapulars. They were beaming with joy!



Then the moment had arrived and under the leadership of Fr Matt and our two witnesses, voting started.

We were assembled around the large table. and members without promises were attentive to the process and the secretary did her job to distribute the ballot papers, handed them over to Fr Matt to announce. It was all done as per our Constitutions and the new council was at last revealed!

Thank you, Fr Matt, we could not have done without you!

Caroline Moutell has been elected as our new president for the next three years, along with Bee Lín, Abundia and Chrissie who will complete the new council.

It seems to me that the light of the Lord had entered each heart during Mass, celebrating the Feast of St Luke the Evangelist.

This is how I recall this important day for our community and I am glad to share it with you all.

In Carmel,

Chrissie (newly elected councillor!)

Kensington Group

Our July community meeting is always very special. We leave Kensington behind and venture into Notting Hill to visit our dear Carmelite sisters at Carmel of The Most Holy Trinity. The visit is highly anticipated by both parties so it could not be any different this year and thus on Saturday, July 5 we arrived at the monastery.

Our day started with lunch and a community discussion. Gathered in a cosy room we talked about a very humble, but very much loved, Carmelite - Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection. The starting point for our conversation was the 2014 letter from Father Saverio Cannistrá, O.C.D., concerning the life and teachings of Brother Lawrence. Reflecting on his, at times very challenging, journey we came to a fruitful conclusion - we need to learn to accept spiritual lemons God gives us and with God's help turn them into holy lemonade.

In the afternoon we had an opportunity to meet with the Prioress and the sisters. What a lovely

and happy meeting it was! We talked about formation, discernment, life in the monastery and how popular Flos Carmeli, honey produced at the monastery, has become. We were pleased to learn that the apiary has grown in strength and size and the sisters now produce 90 jars of honey.



We finished our visit in the most beautiful way - at the Chapel, participating in None. United in prayer we thanked for the great privilege of visiting the monastery and sharing our afternoon with the sisters. After taking some commemorative photos, we left Notting Hill Carmel with our hearts already looking forward to our next visit.

Anna Wolarz

Romsey Group

From little acorns grow great oaks and Romsey Secular Carmelite Group is certainly budding forth. The group was formed in October 2022 with the help of Cyprian Blamires and now has three members who have made their First Promises, two new members who have just started Formation and a number of enquirers. Whilst still small, we have been witnessing to the local communities with our recent celebrations and have attracted new interest.

The first celebration of the year was on February 15th when **Samantha Harris** and **Andrea Hurry** made their First Promises at a Mass celebrated by Fr Matt Blake. A lot of parishioners attended the Carmelite ceremony and were invited back to the church hall for cake and tea afterwards. It was a fantastic opportunity to share our Carmelite

charism and show our hospitality to the local Romsey community.

At this meeting a vote was taken on the group's name, it was a close vote between St Joseph and Our Lady of Mount



From left to right: Samantha Harris, Fr Matt, Andrea Hurry

Carmel but St Joseph won, perhaps due in part to the location of our Community, meeting at St Joseph's church hall and also in part to the great love that St Teresa of Avila had for St Joseph.

A further joyful day took place on August 16th with lots of celebrations for **Eleanor de Melo**, **Anthea Hollingworth** and **Mae Felongco**. Eleanor made her First Promises and Anthea and Mae were both received into Formation. Fr Jufel from St Boniface Church in Shirley, Southampton was delegated to perform the Mass with First Promises and the Rite of Formation. Fr Jufel was himself a Secular Carmelite with the O'Carms before he became a Priest and joined a Marian Fraternity. He still has a great love for Carmel to this day. Many friends of Eleanor, Anthea and Mae shared in the day and came to the church hall for a party afterwards and it was another opportunity to witness our faith and charism.

Looking to the future, the St Joseph, Romsey Group's Third Anniversary is in October and at this meeting it planned to have a quiet day which will be led by a retreat guide, Fr Tom Kleinsmidt, the Parish Priest of St Boniface, Southampton.

Samantha Harris



From left to right: Eleanor de Melo, Mae Felongco, Fr Jufel and Anthea Hollingworth.

Flower of Carmel Secular Carmelite Community, Rock Ferry

Our community meets in St Anne's Church, Rock Ferry with the strong support of the Parish Priest, Fr Mario. Our community day includes Morning and Evening prayer, Mass, initial and ongoing formation, the St Thérèse Study Guides, and time to catch up with each other over coffee and lunch.

The number of members in the community has increased to 17, and most recently we welcomed **Gabby Aley** and **Gillian Barber**. Five of our members are in formation, one preparing for final promise, and four preparing for the first promise. In May 2025, for the second time, we organised a Community Recreation Day. It was held at the Loreto Spirituality Centre in Llandudno on the North Wales coast (see photo overleaf). This was an opportunity for members to spend time together and to have valuable social interactions that helped build our relationships.

In September 2025, eight members of the Community attended a Regional Retreat at Wistaston Hall, led by Fr Matt who spoke about St John of the Cross. The talks were excellent and provided valuable insights into John's work. It was

also a great opportunity to meet Carmelites from other communities, strengthening our experiences and our sense of belonging to a wider group of people who share our desires and love of Carmel. We are looking forward to welcome Father Matt at our November meeting during his visit to Wirral. On the 1 April 2026, our Community will be celebrating 20 years since its Canonical Establishment. We are in the process of planning this special anniversary by collecting photographs and memories, sharing anecdotes, and reminding ourselves that we are 'fools for Christ!'



Community Recreation Day: Llandudno

Derby Group

The Edith Stein Derby Secular Carmelite Community held our annual retreat at Mount St Bernard Abbey from Friday 20 June to Sunday 22 June 2025.

We have had our retreat at Mount St Bernard Abbey, Coalville, Leicestershire, on a number of occasions previously and have always been made to feel very welcome by the Cistercian Monks.

From our arrival on the Friday afternoon, we try to fit in with the monk's daily routine as far as possible. We chanted the Divine Office in the abbey with the monks up to five times each day and ate our meals to coincide with their meal times. We also gathered as a community for silent prayer each day, lectio divina and three presentation sessions throughout the weekend. The theme this year was the writings of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus.



Michael Clark gave a very good talk on St Thérèse's writing on 'The Eagle and the Little Bird'. Elizabeth Hyde's account based on the 'Holy Face of Jesus' was very enlightening and Jo Gilbert presented some of St Thérèse's encouraging 'Letters written to Abbé Bellière', a missionary priest, who Thérèse wrote to before her death. These sessions gave us all the opportunity for further questions and plenty of discussion.

Saturday afternoon, we were led by Father Nicholas, the Guest Master, in a ceremony to receive **James Francis** and **Krystina Johnson** (front row in photo above) into Formation in our community. Father Nicholas gave an inspiring sermon with reference to the Carmelite commitment undertaken. At the same event, eight of us who have all made our definitive promises, individually renewed the promises. It was a really lovely occasion and many thanks to Father Nicholas.

On the Saturday evening, Sue Taylor facilitated a meditation session with the group. It was very focused and thought provoking.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the Sunday Corpus Christi mass and a procession around the beautiful grounds afterwards.

After our dinner on the Sunday, we all departed, truly grateful to have had this valuable time together and share the weekend experience as a community.

We would like to again thank Father Nicholas and all the monks for their kind generosity and look forward to seeing them again next year.

Jo Gilbert

North Regional Day

Emma Halliday writes:

We had our regional day at Thicket Priory in September. It was a lovely day and everyone felt very refreshed on that day. I made my definitive promises and I just wanted to say that it was a beautiful ceremony And since then I have had a peace and a joy that is so deep and so beautiful I can't describe it. I am very proud and happy to be a Carmelite.



NEWS FROM SCOTLAND

On Wednesday 16th July some Members of the Third Order O. Carmelites from Glasgow, Newcastle and Northumberland visited the Scottish National Marian Shrine at the Carfin Grotto, Motherwell to Celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. An invitation was extended to the Discalced Secular Order Members of which four from Dysart joined in. Fr. Stephen, a Secular Priest from the Newcastle Community, celebrated Mass with exposition in the Glass Chapel. The weather was perfect to enjoy the large tranquil grounds, a quiet and peaceful prayerful day was enjoyed by us all."

John Harris

Ampleforth Retreat 2025

In addition to our cover photo, I include here a photo of Jane F Deegan making her first promises at the retreat, on 16 July. *Ed*



WEBSITE NEWS

Thank you to Cyprian Blamires for sending me a link to an excellent new documentary. Lasting just over an hour, 'Blessed: the true story of the martyrs of Compiègne' is in French with English subtitles. The link can be found half-way through the Audio section, which for now the most appropriate location.

Cyprian's thought-provoking Blog now has an archive section, making it a valuable port of call for spiritual browsing. You'll see there's a link it top right. See what you think.

Finally, the Stories section continues to expand as a wonderful witness to the many and varied ways in which Our Lord leads people to their Carmelite vocation.

Should Seculars feel moved to contribute material to either the Blog or the Stories may I encourage them to contact Cyprian on:

cpblamires@aol.com

Tim Burton

POETRY CORNER

Your word is truth...
Truth never changes,
It's suffices.
Echoes through the saints
And through the word
Not through statues, visions,
But apostles,
The ordinary.
The bread that suffices
But shared,
On Holy ground,
Where all behold the beloved
In submission to the Church
Not above it
But in adoration
Of the one who instituted
It.
Speaking to us daily,
With authority
And truth.

Andrea Cope

A NEW REGISTRAR

After twenty years of service as our national Registrar, Chris Noble has now handed over the reins to Cyprian Blamires. We are deeply grateful to Chris for maintaining our records, and thank Cyprian for fulfilling this statutory and important role.

To show our gratitude to Chris, we have given him an icon of St Elijah faithfully copied from the original by monks in a monastery in Greece.

Chris's Registrar's report for the Presidents' Conference can be seen in the notes of the conference which Joan MacInnes has sent to all Presidents and Group Leaders.



Annette Goulden

2026 RETREATS: THE STORY SO FAR

Honiton (Wincanton):	12–14 June
Ampleforth:	6–10 July
Wistaston:	31 July–2 August
Worth:	7–9 August
Honiton (Bristol/St Austell):	11–13 September

Please note:

Honiton retreats tend to be for Seculars in the South West

There is no retreat at **Douai** next year.

Cyprian Blamires has been in touch with **Buckden Towers**, a Claretian Centre, who can offer retreat accommodation from 11–14 August 2026. If you are interested in attending there please get in touch with him: CPBlamires@aol.com

Contact for the **Worth Abbey** retreat is Christian Kendall-Daw: ckendalldaw@hotmail.com

Please note that 15 guests is the ideal maximum. The contact details for Worth Abbey are:

Worth Abbey Paddockhurst Road, Turners Hill Crawley RH10 4SB Tel: 01342 710318

www.worth.co.uk

PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE 2025

On the weekend of September 19-21 twenty six presidents and three representatives met with members of the National Council for the triennial Presidents Conference. The meeting was held at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, which is the pastoral, conference, and retreat centre for the Catholic Diocese.

In his opening address Fr. Matt reminded us that Presidents have two areas of responsibility:

- Care of the Community they lead
- Duty to the wider Order and the Church, since the community exists for the whole Church and the Order.

This gathering of the Presidents, he said, is the highest authority of the Order in England and Wales since this gathering is concerned with what goes on beyond the local community. It is concerned with where God is calling us now and it requires us to take responsibility. The National Council takes its mandate from this meeting as if it were a standing committee of the Presidents Conference. This time together also allows for the sharing of experiences and challenges, for learning from each other. Being a President was a vocation within a vocation and while each community is autonomous it is never independent. It is always part of the Order and takes its identity from it.

Father Matt went on to speak of the work of the Holy Spirit in the great tradition of Carmelite, the spirit of Elijah and the Carmelite saints; a spirit that we live by and try to nurture in others. While life in community can be messy, God is always there.

In her address, Annette Goulden, the President of the National Council, brought us up to date with what's been happening in the Order over the past three years.

There are now 36 Communities of the Secular Order in England and Wales, 21 of which are canonically established and 15 recognised but not established. There is also a virtual group which meets online. 4 communities have closed, and new groups have been formed.

Since the last Conference the National Council has organised the annual Secular Order retreats in a variety of locations: this year there have been retreats in Ampleforth, Douai, Wistaston and Worth. These retreat centres have been booked again for next year.

Deborah Van Kroonenburg, Cyprian Blamires and Joan MacInnes gave accounts of their experience of being Regional Representatives: support given and received, new ways of meeting online, and 'opening doors' for everyone who feels called to Carmel.

One of the sessions was devoted to discussion groups covering the following topics which generated a lively exchange of ideas:

- Discerning a Carmelite vocation among those entering Formation
- Safeguarding and Code of Conduct
- Providing opportunities for all those called to Carmel
- Communication
- How to develop the relationship of local groups with the wider Order.
- Mutual Support.

Reports from the Treasurer, Phyllis Ibbs and the Registrar, Chris Noble were presented, the latter in absentia because of ill health. Chris is stepping down as Registrar and will be replaced by Cyprian Blamires who also edits the website and told us of the very positive feedback there has been for the site.

Election of the President

There was one application for the role and responsibilities of the National President. This was Annette Goulden of St Elijah Community, Oxford, proposed by Joan Burns and seconded by Emma Halliday. Annette was duly re-elected as National President.

Fr Matt then spoke to us on Stanza 11 of the Spiritual Canticle by St John of the Cross which he described as a spiritual interlude in Canticle B. It speaks of a very specific place in the process of transformation and spiritual growth. The full text of his talk will be made available on the website.

Re-arrangement of the Regions

Cyprian spoke about the proposed re-arrangement of the Regions which had come about partly because of geography where some communities in one region were too far apart to be easily reached and partly because of the demise of some of the smaller communities following Covid.

As a result, it was proposed that the North East and North West Regions should be combined to form one new North Region; Central and West Midlands Regions should be re-aligned to produce three Regions comprising Central, Midlands and a new region of Wales and the Marches. East Anglia, London and South West Regions would remain the same as now.

The Conference approved the changes.

Meetings of all the Regions then took place during which the new Regional Representatives were elected as follows:

Central Region: *Armelle Blecher* of Marie Eugene Community Oxford; proposed by Cyprian Blamires and seconded by Annette Goulden.

East Anglia Region: *Joan MacInnes* of Holy Family, Norwich; proposed by Shirley Lyons, seconded by Hugh Lyons.

London Region: *Christian Kendall-Daw* of Our Lady of Mt Carmel and St Teresa, Kensington; proposed by Josephine Gilbert and seconded by Frances Fogg.

Midland Region: *Martin Auger* of the Birmingham group; Proposed by Cyprian Blamires and seconded by Joan MacInnes

Northern Region: *Emma Halliday* of Our Lady of Mt Carmel Community, Darlington; proposed by Betty Longbottom and seconded by Nora Borg.

South West Region: *Deborah Van Kroonenburg* of Our Lady Star of Sea and Ocean, Torquay; proposed by Tim Van Kroonenburg, seconded by Cyprian Blamires

Wales and the Marches Region: *Susan Watson* of Llandrindod Wells; proposed by Cyprian Blamires and seconded by Phyllis Ibbs.

These Representatives now make up your new National Council, along with Annette as National President, Fr Matt as Provincial Delegate, Phyllis

Ibbs as Treasurer, Cyprian Blamires as Registrar, Teresa Lynch as Safeguarding Officer. Tim Burton remains as Webmaster.

Annette offered grateful thanks to Mary Farrell, Representative for the North East for many years, to Chris Noble, Registrar and Representative for the North West who have stepped down from the National Council.

The Plenary session summed up the work of the weekend which Fr Matt described as a very fruitful Conference, evidence of the Holy Spirit at work.

IN MEMORIAM

Martin Gillham 1941 - 2025
(St Joseph's Seaford, Sussex)



Martin came to Carmel in January 2024. He was living in Lincolnshire when he got in touch with us as he was planning to move to Sussex to be near one of his sons. He was so keen to start his Carmelite journey that he started coming to meetings in Seaford even before he had moved, traveling to Seaford and back to Stamford the days when we had our meetings.

He was received into formation in December 2024. Shortly after joining us, he surprised us all with T-shirts that he had had custom made with the Carmelite crest. From that day we all wore our t-shirts to our community meetings. He loved Carmel and this love was evident even in the short amount of time he was with us.

Brigit Garcia

CARMELITE MARIOLOGY IN FATIMA

On the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16 July 2025, the friars launched MariStella, Mary and Carmel, which is a multi-lingual blog dedicated to Mariology initiated by the Discalced Carmelite friars in Fatima. In fact, the blog's editor-in-chief, Padre Joaquim da Silva Teixeira, OCD, is based at the Domus Carmeli where I was staying.



View from the Domus Carmeli

P. Joaquim is also the Provincial Delegate for the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites in Portugal. Was this all a bit of a coincidence? The syndic in me would proclaim it as such. But as a Marian devotee I knew better – it was Our Lady's providential orchestration to have me at Fatima, at



the Domus Carmeli, on the Feast Day of the Queen of Carmel, on a personal pilgrimage that marked the culmination of a 33-day devotion do-it-yourself retreat to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which I had prayed together with my sister in Carmel –

Christiane. In response to Mary's (not-so-subtle) nod, I immediately volunteered my services in support of the MariStella English editorial.



Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Domus Carmeli

Since the letter was sent out by our Father General, P. Miguel Márquez Calle, about Mariology in Carmel, numerous communications, prayer groups, and courses have been popping up across Discalced Carmelite sites worldwide. What then is so special about MariStella blog? Well, it was in Fatima, during her final appearance, 13 October 1917, that Our Lady appeared attired in the Carmel habit, holding the brown scapular. Thus, emphasizing the importance of wearing the scapular as a sign of consecration to her Immaculate Heart. The connection of Fatima and the Carmelite Order is well documented and thoroughly covered in Joseph Pronechen's document available on EWTN.

Yvette K Houry