

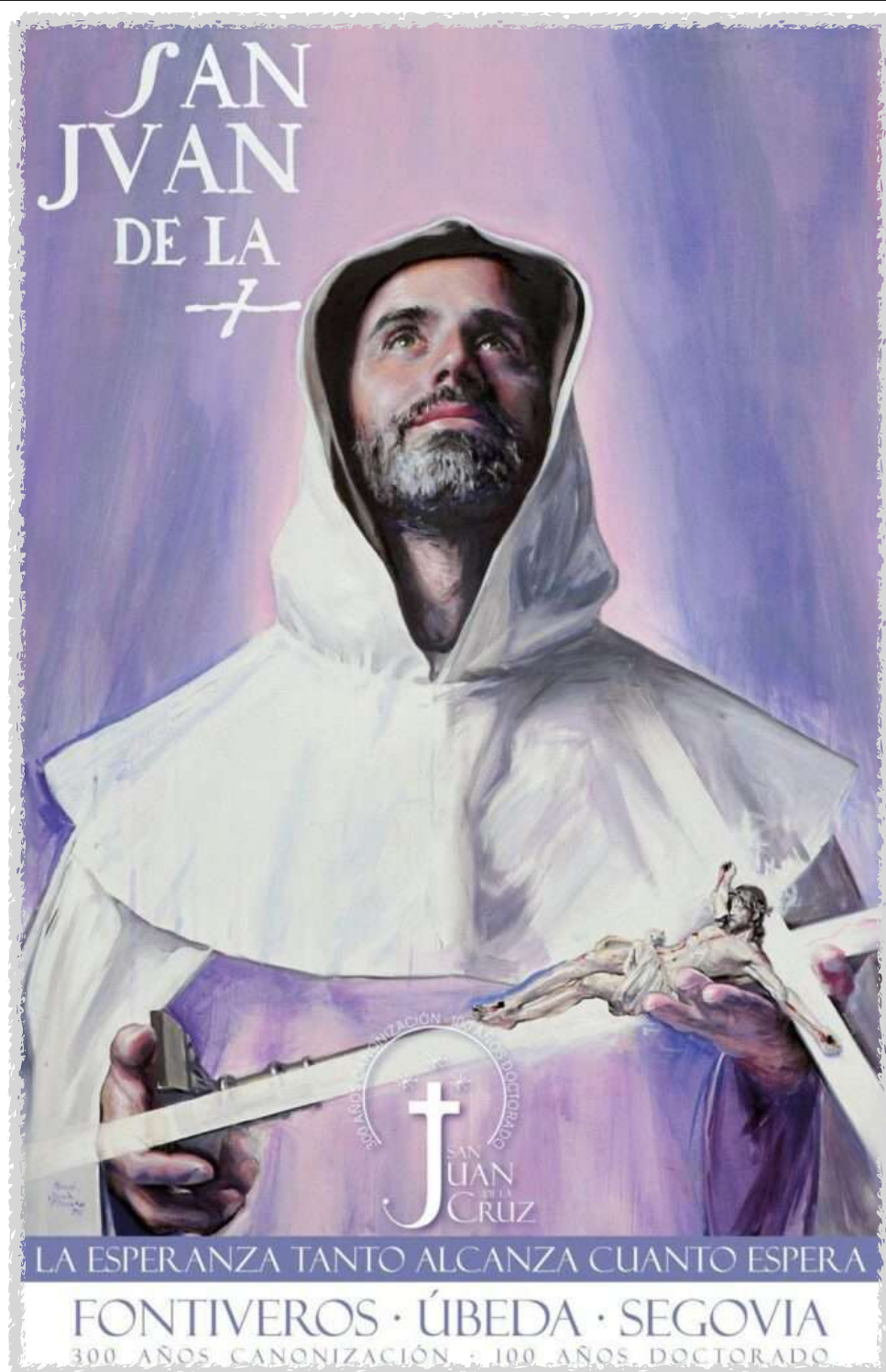


The **VINE**



June 2026

News from the Secular Discalced Carmelite Community in England and Wales



LA ESPERANZA TANTO ALCANZA CUANTO ESPERA

FONTIVEROS · ÚBEDA · SEGOVIA

300 AÑOS CANONIZACIÓN · 100 AÑOS DOCTORADO

FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Carmelites,

I wish you great joy in this this glorious time of the year, with bird song, new growth and wonderful feast days, most recently, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. The one merges into and emerges from the other, ever expanding our Carmelite limited understanding; what St John of the Cross refers to as, 'knowing nought'. (*Poems IV Trans. Roy Campbell*)

At Pentecost tongues of fire are seen on the heads of all those present in the upper room, after which the disciples proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to the crowd. Each person hears these men speaking to them in their own language, in their mother tongue.

A mother's tongue speaks to the heart, is understood without 'knowing'. No translation is required. It gives nurture, confidence and encouragement. It warns, protects, awakens to danger. It lulls to sleep, gives security. The communication may be through words or singing, crooning, or humming. How often have you seen a crying and upset child immediately calmed by the mother or father's gentle voice?

Carmel is our mother tongue, our father tongue. In the mother's womb the infant hears and feels the voice of their mother, and as we grow into ourselves as adults, we begin to hear that voice, there from birth. As we listen, our hearts are touched, and we are drawn to listen again, to hear the voice of Carmel.

We study and read and listen to talks with our brains but, in tandem, the inner ear is tuning in to the inexpressible 'knowing nought'. Words, with their limits, definitions and containment, offer the beginning of a journey that reaches beyond any limits, has no defined boundaries, and breaks through neat boxes of knowledge.

In the sound of silence, in the whispering breeze, we tune in to the pervasive, gentle voice that speaks to our hearts in our mother tongue.

This hidden language unites us in our Carmelite charism, whatever our nationality or country of origin. A visitor from the USA can join an OCDS meeting in Oxford and feel completely at home. We have a common structure in the Carmelite Order that gives us stability and helps discern our calling, within which the deep, steady stream flows in one direction: towards union with God, and in communion with each other.

United by our mother tongue, we feel we have come home. In our communities, we are (hopefully) understood, accepted and feel safe, for we all speak the same language.

How do we learn our mother's tongue? We don't need to; we absorb it without words. We recognise the voice of the Shepherd and enter through the Door of the sheepfold. Safe.

With love and prayer in Carmel,

Annette

National President for England and Wales

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Cover image: Official image for the Centenary Year of St John of the Cross

Deadline for contributions to the next Vine: Tuesday 6 October 2026
Contact: Tim Burton OCDS carmel@kinabra.net 07719 320284

NEWS OF OUR REGIONS AND GROUPS

East Anglia Region

East Anglia is a small region in terms of the number of Secular Order groups it has but those groups, in Letchworth, Norwich and Quidenham have been steadily growing and we now hold two Regional Days each year, one in the autumn and the other in Lent. In addition to these, this year Fr Matt paid an extra visit to the Holy Family Group at the end of February to receive the First Promise of Maria Tubenhaus and Sona McCullough.

The Holy Family group meets in the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich so it was here that the Reception of Promises took place in front of the statue of Our Lady of Mt Carmel which has long been part of the prayer life of the Cathedral parish. It was a very joyful and blessed day for everyone and we were grateful to Fr Matt for making possible such a special occasion.

The following month, at the end of March all three East Anglian groups gathered at Quidenham Carmel in Norfolk for our Lent day. These Quidenham days are always well attended even though for some it can be a two hour drive from the coasts of Suffolk and Norfolk and the commuting towns of Bedfordshire. You can tell from the chatter that we're all pleased to see each other!

Our day begins with Morning Prayer in the Chapel with its beautiful stained glass windows and the almost tangible awareness of the continuing prayer offered here by the sisters for so many decades. Then, after coffee, Jim McManus from 'Our Lady of Divine Grace and St Joseph' in Letchworth gave us a talk on what he described as 'A Carmelite Moment for our time'. Jim had spoken on this topic at the retreat in Derry last autumn and, focusing as it does on human formation, it was seen to be an important element of our Carmelite Formation. This was witnessed by the personal testimonies given by several people in the discussion which followed.

By referencing our Constitutions and the developing psychology of spiritual intelligence, Jim brought together faith, science and Catholic Social Teaching in a most prescient and timely way, given Pope Leo's very recent encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*. If you would like to read his talk which

also appears in Mt Carmel online you can access it at:

<https://mountcarmelmagazine.com/2026/01/01/a-carmelite-moment-for-our-times-putting-the-soul-back-into-public-life/>

The centre of our day is always Holy Mass celebrated for us this time by Fr Mike Smith OCDS. During mass Fr Mike received the First Promise of Filip Zeilinski and Entrance into Formation for Anne Griffiths and Sandra Pestana, all from the 'Mother of Mt Carmel and St Henry Morse' group who meet at Quidenham. Again, a very blessed occasion.



Filip Zeilinski makes his First Promise



Anne Griffiths and Sandra Pestana (4th and 5th from left) enter formation.

After lunch, Sr Elizabeth Obbard OCD, author of many books on our Carmelite saints and others, spoke to us about St John of the Cross, showing how, in particular, he helps us distinguish between following a life of faith on the one hand and adhering to a religion on the other.

Joan MacInnes

South West Region

Regional Day, Saturday 25 April

The breathing of the air,
The song of the sweet nightingale,
The grove and its living beauty
In the serene night,
With a flame that is consuming and painless.

The Spiritual Canticle, Stanza 39

On this anniversary of the centenary of St John of the Cross Father Matt Blake reminded us of key dates in his life. In 1726 he was canonised, in 1926 he was made a Doctor of the Church so we are celebrating this year both that centenary and also the tricentenary of his canonisation.

What does it mean to be canonised? The Word that has become flesh, those lives whose Christianity is expressed in their flesh. Since early Christian times the Church has revealed both word and flesh. This can be seen in the gospels, in the Church's teaching and in the people of the Word. Since the beginning the Church has held up certain people as models of lived Christianity. They are the people who make known the gospel by their fruits.

In 1726 John of the Cross was held up as a witness to Christianity and one of the finest fruits of the church. Two centuries later he became a member of the elite group of 38 who were made Doctors of the Church. These are people whose writings and teaching bring some originality as to how the doctrine of the Church is expressed and developed. Newman was one of these and certain doctors have been given titles, thus Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor and John of the Cross Mystical Doctor.

What is mysticism? We don't know because we are speaking about an experience of God who cannot be known. We are describing something beyond the boundaries of anything created. With John of the Cross his teaching begins where everyone else's ends. John helps us go beyond what we cannot know or understand.

God is always taking us beyond what we can understand or control. How can we recognise what is going on. How can we recognise the obstacle to the work of God in us. God wants us to mature and become one mind and heart with God. We are so often not open to this invitation. John is teaching us about removing these obstacles so that God has free reign in us.

The last line of Stanza 39 (quoted above) is a call to be aware of what we have been created for and to what we are called. God has created each of us with a unique call. God speaks to us through creation, everything in creation is a great symphony of praise.

Jesus calls us to be disciples. He is calling us into relationship, whoever is seeking God that person is being sought by God. The initiative is God's and we respond to this call and this love. God desires this relationship and has put that desire into our hearts.

The second aspect of this relationship is that we bear witness to God, to our union with God. John speaks about the union of love and will, to love as He loves. In Chapter 17 of St John's gospel, Jesus prayed that the love that is in the Trinity will be in us. When somebody is loved that person is not content with that. The nature of love is when it is received it is only fulfilled when the person can respond an equal love. Love awakens love. God loves us with a love far greater than humanly possible. It is impossible for us to love Him in his way. Our love is always compromised.

The *Spiritual Canticle* reveals a God who transforms our love and gives us the love to love him with. The Bridegroom gives the bride the instruments of love and uses these to instruct. He teaches us how to love in and through us. One little drop of love does more good than great works because it is God's love and it enables God to work through the person.

Be aware as the Stanza 39 commentary points out the great tragedy for the person to settle for something less than our call from God. John shows us in his writing what God has created us for: to say 'yes' to his call and to help us co-operate with God's work to set us free.

There is this difficulty that nobody can tell us how it will work out in our lives. We are not given one set of instructions for the road. We are taken beyond the limits of these. Poetry gives us a special environment to explore this. However John is reluctant to comment on his poetry. He cannot because understanding comes from mystical love. Imagery, art poetry is his favourite way to explain something that is unexplainable. If he did explain we would be limited by his explanation.

We can see in the Bible that history, stories, allegories, psalms, symbolism etc demonstrate

this. The Holy Spirit cannot be tied down to any one person or one era, so the vast variety is expressed through all the wisdom of all the doctors saints and individuals down the ages. The commentaries that John uses are expansions of his poems making them more accessible and not confining or narrowing us down to any particular explanation.

God is working in a unique way in each one of us and in our open-ness we keep reading and allow ourselves to be drawn into a new world and a new reality. John's writings will speak to us in a way that is unique and personal. He wants us to have the courage to trust God to lead us beyond what we can see, understand or control. God is in charge of our spiritual life. Rejoice in what you don't know, see or understand.

John loved the image of the Dark Night. Do not be afraid, God holding you by the hand in the darkness of faith teaches us to trust. Don't stop on the road, God's plan is always at the beginning, have courage and go forward on the adventure that John is showing us in his writings.

Caroline Dawnay

London Region

We gathered for our regional meeting at the Carmelite Priory in Kensington on Saturday 30 May 2026. We usually meet in Lent, but this year our meeting took place in May, giving us greater light and certainly greater warmth! We all appreciated slightly easier journeys than in colder months and it meant we could access the Priory garden and enjoy some its beauty.



The Carmelite Priory, Kensington

We were all delighted to welcome Annette Goulden, our National President. It was such a blessing for all of us to be able to spend time with her.

It is always good to have Father Matt with us and we eagerly awaited his talk. He explored the themes of night, love and appetites in the Ascent of Mount Carmel. As always, he shared so many pearls of wisdom on these topics.

Fr Matt also celebrated Mass, during which Rachel Sporton (Kensington) made her First Promise during Mass. We assured her of our full support and prayers in the years ahead. Some of you may recall that Rachel wrote an excellent article on Hermann Cohen, the founder of the Kensington Priory, in the last edition of *The Vine*.



Rachel making her First Promise accompanied by Caroline (President, Kensington) and Gloria (Director of Formation, Kensington)

Following lunch we were very pleased to spend time with Fr Yamai, the editor of Mount Carmel (www.mountcarmelmagazine.com), who is now based in Kensington. During his talk he showed us the very first edition and explained its development as a journal. It was fascinating to learn about its history and exciting to learn about

its future and digital presence. Br Eliot, the youngest friar in the Province, spoke of the importance of Mount Carmel when he was discerning his vocation and encouraged us to engage with the articles.



Fr Yamai, the editor of Mount Carmel, addressing the Regional Meeting

In the afternoon session we explored the theme of vocation, both in terms of the calling to Carmel and also how we nourish and deepen our vocation. It was incredibly special to hear representatives from different communities in the region: Wisam Khadhour (Ealing), Caroline Moutell (Kensington), Christiane Ghose (Kensington), Fr Stewart Hasker (Ealing), Lucy Quatre (Notting Hill) and Rachel Sporton (Kensington). All of them brought out different dimensions of our Teresian charism and Carmelite Saints who had meaning for them. We were very thankful and inspired by their words. Following these talks we all renewed our commitment to our Carmelite family.

We spent time together in silent prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament and concluded our day with Evening Prayer.

Throughout the day, books from Boars Hill has been made available to us, thanks to Annette. Maria Lancaster also provided copies of talks given by Fr Matt. She has created a large collection of these talks, and they are available directly from her. Please contact her on the following email and she will be able to provide the full catalogue of talks available: marialanca319@gmail.com

Each person plays their part in making these days special and memorable, and that includes tea,



Texts of talks given Fr Matt, transcribed by Maria Lancaster

coffee and lots of goodies prepared with great kindness and generosity, thank you to all who participated in London the regional meeting.

In the summer many members of the region will be attending retreats across the UK. In the Carmelite Priory in Kensington there will be a day retreat on Saturday 18 July 2026. If you wish to attend, please email me at the following address: ocdslondon@gmail.com

We are looking forward to our next regional day on Saturday, 13 December 2026. It will be a special one because we are opening our doors to other regions so that we can all celebrate St John of the Cross.

Further details about the day will be available soon but if you wish to attend please email ocdslondon@gmail.com

Christian Kendall-Daw
Regional Representative, London

Darlington Group

After six years of Zoom meetings we finally found a lovely home at Holy Family church sacristy where we can meet and pray together. Just by sheer coincidence the sacristy has a beautiful large statue of Our Lady on the sideboard, so she can preside over our meeting as our Mother, Sister and Friend. We have lectio, study, Carmelite Rosary (i.e. six decades) as well as Exposition. As the church itself is too cold, we bring Our Lord into the sacristy in a monstrance and sit/kneel round Him as His family. Everyone agrees that it is a very spirit filled occasion and we feel that God is very happy with us.

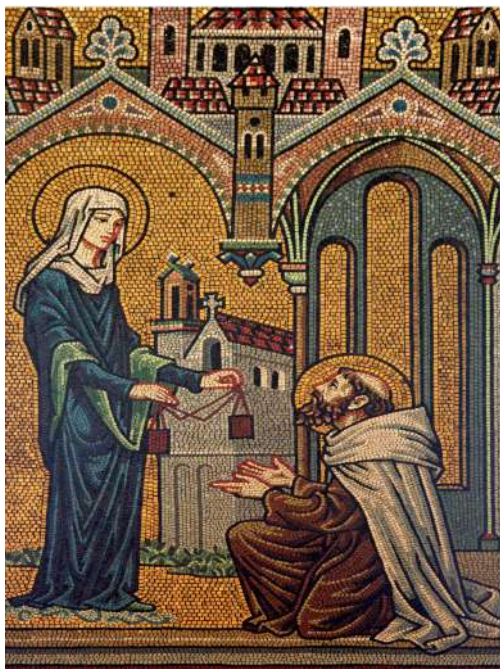
Emma Halliday

Holy Trinity Group, Notting Hill

At the London Region day of recollection 30 May Lucy Quatre, a member of our group, gave us a short summary of her journey to Carmel together with the other group members who shared such honest and touching narratives of their arrival in Carmel. Lucy explained that her experience of Carmelite spirituality since joining us, has increased the scope of her regular prayer groups that she provides for people at all stages in their search for a satisfying prayer life. May Our Lady of Mount Carmel help her in her committed efforts for helping others.

May 16 is the feast of St Simon Stock, a Carmelite friar to whom Our Lady appeared in 1251. He received from her the brown scapular in his time of distress and prayer for her help at his priory in Aylesford, Kent. What a blessing for the English Carmelites. A beautiful mosaic with subtle colours, representing this great event, is in the Lady Chapel of Westminster Cathedral. Our fellow Carmelite, Amanda C Dickie (The Order of Carmel) has described this chapel dedicated to Our Lady as 'a little Carmel'.

There are further links to the Carmelites in the Cathedral's artistic heritage - for example, in the mosaics which have always been an integral part of Westminster Cathedral and which include designs ranging from the traditional arts and crafts style to more modern interpretations.



Our Lady presenting the brown scapular to St Simon Stock (Flickr.com)



St Therese of Lisieux in Westminster Cathedral (Art and Christianity.org)

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel is another tour de force in its own right. It was created by renowned Russian artist, Boris Anrep and is one of the most memorable spectacles in Westminster Cathedral. It contains his mural of the Prophet Elijah being sustained by the Angel with food for the journey.



Blessed Sacrament chapel, Westminster Cathedral

The cathedral mosaics and bronze work may well be totally unknown to British Carmelites and overseas visitors to the Cathedral unless they know about them. Our Lady, our Patroness, St Elijah our founding father, St Therese and St Simon Stock the recipient of the beloved scapular and our continuing devotion to it, all help us on our journey in Carmel. We can direct others to this 'little Carmel' in Westminster Cathedral as part of our mission of sharing our important history as Carmelites.

Teresa Lynch
Safeguarding Lead, President,
Holy Trinity group, Notting Hill

A REPORT FROM THE ANGLO-IRISH PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, Derry, 4-8 May 2026

This is a brief summary of the Chapter, taken from the minutes. The Chapter is a triennial meeting that is like our Presidents' Conference, in that it receives reports, has small discussion groups and makes decisions for the next three years. We can see that it was an intense four days for all the participants.

Annette Goulden

Day One, Monday 4 May

Session 1: 10.00 am

The opening Session of the Chapter consisted of a morning retreat conducted by the Bishop of Derry, Dr. Dónal McKeown. He looked at the contribution that we as Carmelites can make in a society that is faced with increasingly demanding challenges, and encouraged us to look on crises as opportunities.

Session 2: 3.00 pm

Fr Jim Noonan, Provincial, formally opened the Chapter. He welcomed all the participants, who were 19 in all: 9 from Ireland, 6 from England, 3 from Nigeria and 1 from Australia.

Fr Jim then gave a presentation of Father General's letter to the Provincial Chapters, highlighting the themes of collaboration and integration, given the increasing internationality of our communities. Three reports were delivered: Fr Jim's report on the Province, Fr Chrysogonus's report on the Nigerian Vicariate and Fr Bernard Hancock's report on the Australian Vicariate.

Day Two, Tuesday 5 May

Session 3: 9.30 am

Fr Jim Noonan was formally installed as the reelected Provincial.

Nuns of the British Federation

A report was delivered by Sr Clare Donnelly on behalf of Sr Shelagh Banks.

The Federation comprises six monasteries in England, one in Wales, and three in Scotland, with affiliated monasteries in Malta, Lithuania, and Denmark. There is one postulant and three simply professed in initial formation.

Nuns of the Irish Association

Sr Clare Donnelly reported that the Association consists of six monasteries with 54 solemnly professed sisters, half of whom are over 80. There are 16 sisters under 50, half of whom are international; five sisters are currently in formation. Only one native vocation enquiry has arisen in recent years.

Reports from the Secular Order (OCDS)

Reports were received from the Presidents of the Secular Order in England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. (Please see the OCDS website for the report from England and Wales.)

Session 4: 3.00 pm

Reports were received from the communities of Gerrards Cross, Kensington, Clarendon Street, and the Avila Centre. As with previous reports, each community outlined its membership, regular life, apostolates, relationship with the local diocese, and safeguarding measures.

Session 5: 4.30 pm

This Session was dedicated to reflecting on the question: What, from all the discussions of yesterday and today, emerges as important for the Province at this time?

Day Three, Wednesday 6 May

Session 6: 9.30 a.m.

Governance, financial report, safeguarding update, small group discussions.

Sessions 7-8: 3.30 p.m.

Small group discussions and feedback

Day Four, Thursday 7 May

Session 9: 9.30 a.m.

Formation and youth ministry.

Session 10: 9.30 a.m.

Small group feedback.

Session 11: 4.00 p.m.

Plenary

Day Five, Thursday 7 May

Session 12

Report on the work of Centre for Applied Carmelite Studies (CACS)

Session 13

Small group discussion and feedback

Session 14

Development plan for the Retreat Centre in Termonbacca

Session 15

Communication.

Concluding session

Presentation by Fr Yamai Bature on the *Mount Carmel* magazine

Conclusion of the Chapter

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL

A summary of the talk given by Fr Matt Blake OCD at the London Regional Day, 30 May 2026

Thank you to Annette for providing these valuable notes - Ed

Seen as difficult to read, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* is important because in it, John of the Cross lays the foundation of all his teaching in three areas: night, love, appetites.

NIGHT

Book 1, chapter 2. The whole journey towards union with God is night. That is what we are called to; that's the whole purpose of our lives.

It is night for three reasons

Departure, beginning. We begin to say 'no' to certain things of the senses, anything that is not God. We are living beyond understanding.

The journey in faith is always a darkness. Faith (not knowledge) enables us to be in union with God.

The point of arrival with God is always a dark night. The closer a person is to God, the deeper the darkness, which is in fact a superabundance of light. Because God is a bigger mystery, our understanding is less and less helpful or adequate.

LOVE

The Prologue is an introduction to the Dark Night. We enter only through love. No-one has the wisdom to proclaim God, but lack of understanding is not an obstacle, for it goes beyond knowledge and sets free. We let go out of love.

Cf: Chapter 13: only complete and irreversible love changes a person. This burning love purifies the person of all that is not God, that compromises the person's capacity for God. John says, "Now my every act is love".

Love causes equality and likeness and enables the person to grow. Anything less diminishes the person.

APPETITES

We have modern terms for these, such as addiction, compulsions. All have control over a person. They deprive a person of God, and they weary, darken, defile and weaken the person; they torment and suck the energy. The identity and dignity of the person is damaged.

It is not lack of things that is damaging, but the craving and desire for things, physical or spiritual. Denudation (nada) leaves the person free, then we can have everything (todo). Then we can be in a right relationship with God.

Cf: Spiritual Canticle: 'She is now free of her own appetites and the appetites of others'.

THREE SPECIAL EVENTS IN OXFORD THIS JULY

Celebrating the Double Jubilee of Saint John of the Cross

The Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality is hosting three special gatherings at the Carmelite Priory, Boars Hill, Oxford this July — all marking 300 years since the canonisation of Saint John of the Cross and 100 years since his proclamation as Doctor of the Church.

Contemplative Spirituality Summit (10–11 July) · *Contemplative Creativity and Human Flourishing*

Thirteen speakers including Cardinal Arborelius OCD, Dr Susan Muto, Fr Iain Matthew OCD
In person and online.

Within God Concert (11 July, 7:30 pm) · *Five original pieces inspired by the poetry of St John of the Cross*

Vocalist Angel Anyamele and pianist/cellist Simeon Elderfield
In person £38/£30
Online £20

Spirituality Summer School (12–16 July) · *Taste and See: The Wisdom Sayings of Saint John of the Cross*

Guided by Dr Susan Muto
Online £150
Residential from £789

For full details of these events visit:
<https://www.carmelite.uk.net/>
and click on What's On