



*OCDS Team GB standing outside the walls of Ávila attending  
the first world meeting in July 2026.*

Towards the end of last year, Pope Leo drew attention to a book written by a Discalced Carmelite lay brother in Paris in the seventeenth century. He said that, after Saint Augustine, this Carmelite author, known as Brother Lawrence, had a significant influence on the development of his spirituality. It was, of course, a moment of great joy for the Carmelite family to hear the Holy Father speak of him in this way. It has also prompted many people to discover the teaching of Brother Lawrence and to reflect more deeply on what it means to be a Carmelite. In this editorial, I would like to share something of what it means to be a Secular Carmelite today, as well as reflecting on some recent news that may be of interest to readers.

As many of you will already know, within the Discalced Carmelite Order there are Friars (OCD), Nuns (OCD) and those who describe themselves as Secular Carmelites (OCDS). Secular Carmelites are people who choose to follow Jesus in the Carmelite tradition while embracing either married or single life. At the heart of this vocation is a daily commitment to contemplative prayer. Teresa of Jesus described prayer as ‘nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us’ (*Autobiography of Teresa of Jesus*).

It can sometimes surprise people to discover that Secular Carmelites are fully part of the Carmelite Order. Like Friars and Nuns, we make promises that shape the whole of our lives, including a commitment to poverty, chastity and obedience, and to living in the spirit of the Beatitudes. Our vocation is lived not behind walls, but in the midst of ordinary family, professional and community life.

In July, Secular Carmelites caused something of a stir in Ávila when more than 900 of us gathered there for our first ever world meeting, having travelled from more than 90 countries. It was fascinating to discover that there are currently 32,038 Secular Carmelites across 92 countries and five continents. Asia has the largest number of OCDS members, with 9,684, followed by the United States with around 6,000. I had the great privilege of staying at La Santa, the monastery built on the site of the childhood home of Teresa of Jesus, alongside Carmelite members from the Netherlands, Peru, Spain, Australia and the United States to name a few. The lived reality of our community lives extended now to being a member of a

family and deep friendships were formed. The theme of the gathering was: 'Witnesses of the experience of God: identity and mission'. These words influenced the rich variety of topics being discussed which included: identity, belonging, co-responsibility, formation, ministry, the Teresian community, prayer, fraternity, creative fidelity and mission. Each day we celebrated Mass together and it was very moving to end each day in silence in Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The gathering concluded with Mass in Avila Cathedral, we all departed with a sense of the strengthened communion amongst our communities around the world and we continue to give thanks for those very happy and blessed days.

To return to Brother Lawrence, his life can help us to understand an important aspect of our Carmelite family. He belonged to the Discalced Carmelite reform initiated by the great Teresa of Jesus in Spain. During her lifetime, Teresa founded numerous communities, and the work continued long after her death. Those early communities helped to shape the Carmelite charism and our understanding of what it means to be a Carmelite today.

Community is at the heart of the vocation of every Secular Carmelite. We do not simply practise Carmelite spirituality as individuals; we belong to a community, and this is an essential part of our vocation. Most communities are relatively small, reflecting the desire of Teresa of Jesus, who consciously favoured small communities 'so that all may be loved'. She envisioned her reformed Carmelite communities as places where every member would be known, valued and cherished as a beloved child of God.

We meet regularly for regional days across the United Kingdom, including gatherings at beautiful locations such as Thicket Priory alongside our Carmelite nuns. These occasions strengthen our shared Carmelite vocation. They include talks and formation from Fr Matt Blake OCD and other speakers, Mass and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, while also giving us time simply to be together, to listen to one another and to respond to the needs of each person. Alongside these gatherings, we have annual retreats at Worth, Ampleforth, Belmont and Wistaston. These provide a precious opportunity to step away from the demands of everyday life, deepen our prayer and return to the heart of our vocation.

But Secular Carmelites are not called to spend our lives in retreat. We are called to a contemplative life wherever Our Lord has placed us. This is where Brother Lawrence speaks so powerfully to our hidden vocation. He reminds us that, in the midst of ordinary life, we can continually lift our hearts towards God:

'He does not ask much of us, merely a thought of Him from time to time, a little act of adoration, sometimes to ask for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, at other times to thank Him for the graces, past and present, He has bestowed on you, in the midst of your troubles to take solace in Him as often as you can.'

Brother Lawrence goes on to encourage us to 'lift up your heart to Him during your meals and in company', reminding us that even 'the least little remembrance' is pleasing to God. 'One need not cry out very loudly; He is nearer to us than we think' (*The Practice of the Presence of God*).

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Brother Lawrence continues to speak so directly to us today. Our vocation is not primarily about withdrawing from the world, but about discovering God within the ordinary circumstances of our lives. Whether at work, at home, with our

families, in moments of joy or during times of difficulty, we are invited again and again to remember that God is present.

This hidden life of prayer lies at the heart of what it means to be a Secular Carmelite: to seek friendship with Christ, to live that friendship within a community, and to carry it into the ordinary places and responsibilities of everyday life. In this way, the simple wisdom of Brother Lawrence, now endorsed by a Successor of Peter, remains remarkably close to the heart of the Carmelite vocation.

**For further information please see:**

UK Secular Carmelites: [www.secularcarmel.org.uk/](http://www.secularcarmel.org.uk/)

Mount Carmel Magazine: <https://mountcarmelmagazine.com/>

Disalced Carmelites: [www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/](http://www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/)

DigiCarmel: <https://digicarmel.com/>

OCDS Encuentro Mundial: <https://ocdsavila2026.com/>