



The **VINE**



February 2026

News from the Secular Discalced Carmelite Community in England and Wales



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Deadline for contributions to the next Vine: Tuesday 2 June 2026
Contact: Tim Burton OCDS carmel@kinabra.net 07719 320284

FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Carmelites,

A big thank you to all you Presidents and Group Leaders for completing the census forms required by Fr Ramiro Casale, our General Delegate to the Secular Order in Rome. You went to great lengths to accurately complete the forms, so they have been accepted without any problem.

It is strange to be called to account; to count our numbers as we were asked to do. Numbers cannot present a true picture, for they do not reflect the reality of living a Carmelite life. There are those who are unable to get to meetings, those who, for whatever reason, are not members of a community, and those who live a full Carmelite life confined to one room due to ill health or physical immobility. God calls each one of us to live the life of Carmel, each in our own unique way and in our own unique circumstances.

The call to Carmel in these individual situations often involves a call to suffer physically or mentally. God's grace seems to be rich beyond measure, as Carmelites unite their suffering with the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is with them even in darkness and uncertainty, as Thérèse of the Child Jesus experienced. Through the compassionate prayer of Carmelites and others, so often those who are suffering enter ever deeper sounds of silence.

As many communities world-wide in one Secular Order, we have a shared Promise to live the Beatitudes, and this living may entail suffering: being despised, poor in spirit, peace-makers.... To open our hearts to this new Kingdom of God, as Jesus proclaimed on the hillside, takes courage and 'determined determination', and opens our heart to others.

'Passion' implies deep feeling, and compassion is feeling for and with others. Through prayer, we bring Christ, the Light of the World, into the unique situations of those in Carmel and those seeking Carmel. Prayer emerges from a personal relationship with God, and pours out light as the lamp placed on a lamp-stand. Let us be alert to

this light that reaches dark corners in our souls and also lightens the paths of those we meet every day.

As we approach Lent, may this Light of the Holy Spirit guide us in our compassionate reaching out to others who are searching for meaning in their lives. May they too come to share in our wealth of spiritual richness, so that poverty of spirit means giving and sharing of what little we have. May those who feel cut off from the Carmelite Vine find a way forward that leads ever deeper into communion with Carmel and com-passion with Christ.

May we grow in compassion for ourselves and for each other as we journey along the Carmelite way.

Wishing you a year full of Carmelite blessings,

Annette

National President for England and Wales

NEWS OF OUR REGIONS AND GROUPS

London Region

We gathered for our regional meeting in Kensington on Saturday 6 December 2025. It is always a special moment for all our communities to gather and in a sense 'come home'. We welcomed representatives from Gerrards Cross, Ealing, Notting Hill, Balham, Kensington and the Isle of Wight. A strong sense of Teresian friendship and joy lasted throughout the day.

We started our day by acknowledging all the work Teresa Lynch has undertaken in our region over the last few years. We have all turned to her for guidance, support and her prayers. She has served the region with great dedication. We were delighted to present her with flowers and express our thanks.

With great joy we received Marie Joseline (Ealing) and Lucy (Notting Hill) into formation during Morning Prayer. Joanna (Gerrards Cross) made her definitive promise during Mass. We assured them all of our full support and prayers in the years ahead

It is always good to have Father Matt with us and we eagerly awaited his talk. He began by explaining that we are now preparing to celebrate the jubilee year of Saint John of the Cross, which marks the 300th anniversary of his canonisation and the 100th anniversary of his proclamation as a Doctor of the Church.



The official poster for the Jubilee Celebration of Saint John of the Cross

Father Matt's talk focussed on Advent, and he drew on aspects of the *Spiritual Canticle*. When discussing the talk at the end of the day, many of us were deeply moved by one John's poems quoted by Fr Matt which felt so relevant as prepare to greet the Holy Child:

*The Virgin, weighed
with the Word of God,
comes down the road:
If only you'll shelter her.*

Rosie Hardwick TOC offered a wonderful reflection on a nativity icon. We each received a copy of the icon and little by little, with her knowledge, she explained each aspect to us. She also shared a reflection on the theme of inspiration in the Second Vatican Council and we were all encouraged to pick, from a very large collection of icons, an icon which spoke to us and to share our thoughts with others.

Some of you will be aware that Maria Lancaster produces finely crafted transcripts of Fr Matt's talk. We are very grateful to her for joining our day and giving us access to these.

Each person plays their part in making these days special and memorable. Thank you to all who participated in the regional meeting; we look forward to our next one on Saturday, 30 May 2026.



Fr Tony Cussen SMA (pictured above) is a very well-known figure in the London Region. His contribution has been significant, especially in Kensington and Gerrards Cross. Sadly he had a bad fall recently and his religious congregation has decided that he needs to move back to their house in Manchester which has been set up to care for older members of their congregation. We are all

going to miss his kind presence greatly. Many of us were present for Mass, offered for his intentions, on 20 December 2025 in our Carmelite parish in Gerrards Cross. Our thoughts and prayers will continue for a speedy recovery and remain so thankful for his contribution.

*Christian Kendall-Daw
Regional Representative, London*

Holy Trinity Group Notting Hill

Lucy Quatre made her entry into Formation at the Advent London Region meeting last December.



Helga Mangion was unable to join us for our Advent Regional meeting last December. Fr Matt officiated instead at the Carmelite Monastery Chapel in Notting Hill in January this year. We welcomed Helga's parents for the ceremony with pleasure and for our shared lunch celebration with Fr Matt and the group members.



Lucy, centre, with Christian Kendall-Daw, London Region Representative, and Teresa Lynch, Safeguarding Lead and President of Holy Trinity group, Notting Hill.



Lucy with Fr Stewart, member of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Ealing group



Helga, top centre, with Fr Matt and her parents



Holy trinity Notting Hill group members supported Helga for her special day of entry into Formation.

Outreach

The RC Chaplaincy at Pentonville, a men's prison and young offenders' institution for whom we pray, has expressed grateful thanks for the Catholic resources that our group members generously gathered to send for the Catholic prisoners in time for Christmas.

Safeguarding

The Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality (CACS) offered a talk on 10 January which was arranged by Fr Alex of Boars Hill and given by Fr Hans Zolner, a world-renowned specialist on the subject of safeguarding. He describes this activity as: promoting safe spaces and safe relationships. Recognition of any abuse of power is paramount in any institution. The terms accountability, formalised (sacramental) contrition and reparation should be the focus for perpetrators. The importance of referral to relevant agencies needs understanding for the perpetrator and survivors. Helping survivors requires patience and understanding, relationship-building and unhurried rehabilitation as agreed practice for required support.

Awareness of this topic's importance was reflected by a total of 140 lay and religious who attended the zoom session.

A recommended generic online safeguarding course for all Secular group members can be accessed free of charge via Alison Learning, online.

This course provides a basic overview of safeguarding principles and is recommended for all levels of the Secular Order. On completion of the course an optional certificate can be purchased.

Father Zolner concluded his talk by emphasising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and the historic culture of denial and fear of confronting this difficult subject must change.

Our safeguarding policy and code of conduct for Seculars are both accessible via our national website.

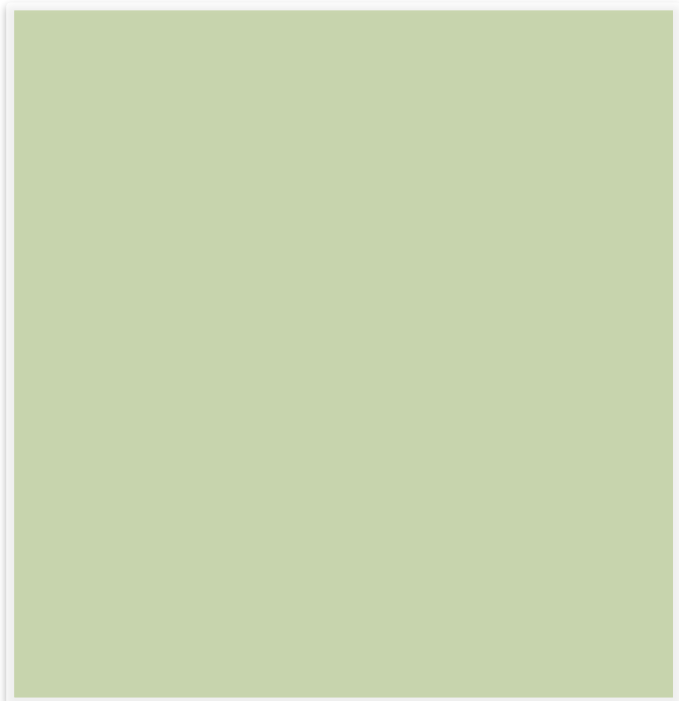
Teresa Lynch

AN OCDS OUTREACH IN OXFORDSHIRE

Armelle Belcher writes:

For the past three years, six parishioners have met at St John the Evangelist Church, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, to study St Thérèse's manuscripts selected by the General Curia of the Teresian Carmel.

A great desire to share journeys and go deeper into prayer life was felt by all, and of course a wonderful friendship ensued which was celebrated in our annual Christmas 'do'. All agreed to continue and get to know about St John of the Cross, and we have two new people wanting to join us. Thanks be to God!



THE POWER OF TRANSFORMING GRACE: FROM PIANIST TO PRIESTHOOD

The Servant of God Hermann Cohen

Introduction

You may be thinking, who is the Servant of God Hermann Cohen? Likewise, I had not heard of him until his name was mentioned in our Kensington OCDS community reading¹. However immediately I felt drawn to him through the small paragraph and discussions within the group. Here I had found a Carmelite with whom I share three great loves: spending time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, music and St John of the Cross. After being recommended a book on his life², I have got to know Hermann Cohen a little better and it is thanks to him that the Order of Discalced Carmelites was established in our country. The story of his life is inspirational and I recommend getting to know him.

Servant of God Hermann Cohen



Born on the 10th of November 1821 in Hamburg, Germany, into an influential Jewish family, Hermann Cohen was the second surviving child of his parents David and Rosalie. At the age of four he started to learn the piano and his prodigious musical talent soon became apparent. By the age

of seven he was giving public performances and aged twelve his mother took him to Paris where he became a pupil of Franz Liszt. Hermann was also a brilliant scholar and not only top of his class but capable of following classes years above.

Exposed to the praise and celebrity of being a precocious musician, Hermann soon developed an extravagant lifestyle and before long developed an addiction to gambling, falling into debt. In 1847, in order to repay some of his debts, he took a position as choir master at the church of St Valère, Paris and during Benediction had a profound spiritual experience. This led him to attend Mass with devotion and after leaving to go home, he felt drawn to return to church. On doing so he found Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and at last he felt a peace within. Following instruction and guidance from the priest, Fr Legrand, Hermann continued to go to church, having further encounters with Our Lord during Mass. During one such encounter, he experienced a moment of conversion, recognising a deep sorrow for his sins. He later attributed this grace of conversion to Our Lady.

On the 28th of August 1847, the Feast of St Augustine of Hippo, Hermann Cohen was baptised and his life was transformed.

*'At that moment, I was deeply moved; and I can only describe it like an electric shock. My eyes were closed, but I had an inner vision as if the Holy Spirit, as though to seal his promise, took me by the hand and revealed to my gaze, rapt in ecstasy, while directed above, that which no finite being can ever understand – the infinite.'*³

A later interior illumination or vision of Our Lady helped him to connect his Jewish heritage with his new religion. The name Cohen means 'priest' in Hebrew and in his heart, he knew he wanted to become a religious. However this was not possible until he had repaid all his debts. He continued to teach the piano, but his lifestyle changed and after giving a final concert to pay off his remaining debt he decided to 'leave the world'. A true contemplative at heart, having spent hours in Eucharistic Adoration and reading the works of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, he entered

the novitiate of the Order of Mount Carmel in Broussey, France in 1849, receiving the name Augustine Mary of the Blessed Sacrament. He studied for the priesthood and was ordained on Holy Saturday 1851, devoting his first homily to the Blessed Sacrament.

His life experience made him well equipped to discuss the entrapment of worldly pleasure which led to lack of fulfilment and a downward spiral, whereas a relationship with Christ would lead to true joy and happiness through transforming grace. His superiors entrusted him with an apostolate of travelling and preaching across much of southern France, including helping to build a new house for his Order in Bagnères and restoring the Carmelite monastery at Lyons, of which he became the prior. Following a time in Rome, Cardinal Wiseman invited him to England to found a Carmelite monastery. Pope Pius IX gave Fr Augustine his blessing and remembered how his predecessor Pope Gregory the Great had similarly sent the monk Augustine (later St Augustine of Canterbury) to England in the sixth century.

In 1862, he landed in England on the feast of The Transfiguration of the Lord and was given a room by the nuns of The Assumption in Kensington. Despite the restoration of the hierarchy twelve years earlier, he found religious life in England very different to France and experienced the prejudice against the Roman Catholic Church. One of his first missions was to establish Eucharistic Adoration in the Carmelite Chapel and soon due to the growing number of converts more Carmelite friars had to be brought over from France. A new priory was needed and with the intercession of St Joseph, that was provided for in Kensington, where the Carmelite friars still reside today.

After his three years as prior finished, he was sent to preach across Europe for two years, but he desired one thing, to retire into 'the desert' of solitude.⁴ In 1868, he moved to Trasteix near Tarbes which satisfied the longings of his soul, however he had glaucoma and this caused great suffering for him. He started a novena to Our Lady of Lourdes, which he began on the feast of Archangel Raphael and each day bathed his eyes in

the healing water of Lourdes. On the last day he visited Lourdes to complete the novena and was healed by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. After returning to his 'desert', he received the graces of mystical union, but in 1870 he had to leave and after a brief time in Switzerland, returned to Germany, to minister to French prisoners of war in Spandau. This exhausting work reduced his physical resilience and eventually he caught smallpox, dying on the 20th of January 1871.

The Discalced Carmelite Order has a lot to thank Hermann Cohen for, particularly for establishing the Carmelite monastery at Kensington from which the Carmelite Order in this country grew; and yet his name may not be that familiar to us.

As contemplatives, to spend time in adoration with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is such a gift and we can follow the example of our forefather in sharing time with Our Lord in this way and encouraging this within our parishes.

Servant of God Hermann Cohen, pray for us.

Rachel Sporton
Kensington OCDS

Bibliography

The Life of Hermann Cohen. From Franz Liszt to John of the Cross, Timothy Tierney, Balboa Press 2017

Mystics of Our Times, Hilda Graef, Burns & Oates, London, 1961 Chapter 2: Hermann Cohen

Notes

1: *Climbing the Mountain: The Carmelite Journey*. Johan Bergstrom-Allen, St Albert's Press, 2010. Chapter 19, p539.

2: *The Life of Hermann Cohen. From Franz Liszt to John of the Cross*, Timothy Tierney, Balboa Press. 2017

3: *The Life of Hermann Cohen. From Franz Liszt to John of the Cross*, Timothy Tierney, Balboa Press. 2017. Chapter 4, p54

4: *Mystics of our Times*, Hilda Graef, Burns & Oates, London, 1961. Chapter 2: Hermann Cohen, p59

A letter from our Delegate General

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Secular Order,

I am writing to inform you that registration for the 2026 OCDS World Meeting in Ávila is progressing well. Some people have requested an extension of the initial registration period for various personal reasons. It has been decided that they will have until February 28th to register.

Starting today, all those on the waiting list sent to the Provincial/National Councils will begin receiving the registration link. From the second week of February, the link will be sent to those who have contacted the secretariat (inscripcionesocds2026@mistica.edu.es) requesting to participate. They will also have until February 28th to register. The registration link will be sent gradually, so we ask for your patience.

From March onwards, registration will be open to all until all available places are filled. Therefore, I ask the National/Provincial Councils to send me an Excel spreadsheet with the names of those wishing to participate in the meeting. This list can be sent when it is ready. Please specify whether the persons have already received the scapular, whether they are aspirants, or companions. It is important to know that two people cannot have the same email address; the system blocks them for security reasons.

If someone who has already received the registration link receives it again and is not interested in participating, please ignore it. There is no need to contact the secretariat. Contact it only in urgent cases.

I would also like to thank all those who promptly sent the information for the OCDS World Census. The information of a few circumscriptions is still missing. We hope they will send it as soon as possible so we can process it.

Courage in your Carmelite vocation.

United in prayer,

Fr. Ramiro Casale, OCD

After 73 years in print, Mount Carmel magazine opens digital access to all

**Carmelite magazine
launches new website
in partnership with
DigiCarmel archive**



Mount Carmel is becoming a digital open access publication. Established in 1953, the magazine has circulated for over 70 years as a print journal among a limited number of subscribers. For the first time, the new web portal (MountCarmelMagazine.com) provides free access to all content from recent and future editions of the magazine.

Thanks to a partnership with DigiCarmel (DigiCarmel.com), 275 back issues of the magazine will also become freely available to the public. DigiCarmel is an online platform and database for the Carmelite Order. It provides access to a vast global archive of publications, research, and historical documents, creating a shared resource for the study and preservation of Carmelite heritage.

‘We’re excited to make this treasure-trove of past and future issues available free to whoever has a computer or phone,’ said Fr. Yamai Bature, OCD, editor of *Mount Carmel*. ‘Many people are looking for ways to immerse themselves in prayer and a more intimate relationship with God. The new website and archive will be of great benefit to them and allow us to bring Carmelite spirituality to many more people.’

This combined effort makes publicly available thousands of feature articles, book reviews, and poems, facilitating search and discoverability by a wider audience.

Mount Carmel reflects on the timeless wisdom of the great Carmelite Saints, including Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, Edith Stein, and Elizabeth of the Trinity. Articles are practical and accessible to readers striving for holiness in their everyday lives.

Writers include many well-known experts in Carmelite Spirituality, such as Ruth Burrows, OCD; Barbara Dent, OCDS; Julianne McLean; Conrad de Meester, OCD; John Hughes, OCD; Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD; Jennifer Moorcroft; Joanne Mosley; Susan Muto; and Peter Tyler.

To remind readers whenever a new free digital issue is published, e-mail updates are available by subscribing through the *Mount Carmel* website. For those preferring paper, print on demand issues of *Mount Carmel* magazine will continue to be available for purchase through The Great British Bookshop (www.TheGreatBritishBookshop.co.uk), which prints in the UK, Europe, and the United States, making ordering the magazine convenient across more countries.

‘This project has been a labour of love for all those involved,’ said Bature. ‘*Mount Carmel* is published four times a year by an incredible team of volunteers, with representation from the Carmelite family (seculars, nuns, and friars), alongside laypeople inspired by Carmelite spirituality.’

RETREATS AND REGIONAL DAYS

2026 (Easter Sunday April 5th)

Retreats

June 12 – 14	Honiton	Wincanton community Barbara Smith
June 29 – Jul 3	Belmont Abbey	Caroline Osborne
July 6 - 10	Ampleforth Abbey	Emma Halliday
July 31 – Aug 2	Wistaston Hall	Ioan Ap Dewy
Aug 7 – 9	Worth Abbey	Christian Kendall-Daw Now fully booked
Sept 11 – 13	Honiton	Bristol & St Austell Communities Maureen Vincent:

Day retreats

June 27	Birmingham St Paul's Convent	Martin Auger
July 18	Kensington Priory	Armelle Belcher

Regional Days

March 28	East Anglia Region	Quidenham	Joan MacInnes
March 28	Midlands Region	Derby	Martin Auger
April 25	South West Region	Honiton	Deborah Van Kroonenberg
September 5	Northern Region	Thicket Monastery	Emma Halliday
September 26	Central Region	Boars Hill, Oxford	Armelle Belcher
October 3	East Anglia Region	Quidenham	Joan MacInnes

OCDS World Meeting July 23-26 2026

Witnesses to the experience of God: Identity and Mission

<i>Michael Clark</i>	<i>Derby</i>
<i>Brigitte Garcia</i>	<i>South London (Bayswater)</i>
<i>Wisam Khadouri</i>	<i>Ealing</i>
<i>Christian</i>	<i>Kensington</i>
<i>Maria Beshay</i>	<i>Kensington</i>
<i>Armelle</i>	<i>Oxford Blessed Marie-Eugene</i>
<i>Maria Oliver</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Brian McNamee</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Jim McManus</i>	<i>Letchworth</i>

2028: 22-24 September Presidents' Conference Hinsley Hall Deborah Van Kroonenberg

Please contact the person looking after the retreat to check you can reserve a room and alert them to any dietary requirements you might have. Contact details can be found in the version of this document located in the For Seculars section of the national website.

MYSTICISM: MYSTICISM: PARADISE LOST OR PROMISED LAND

John of the Cross
Saint and Doctor of the Church

International Congress
June 22–26



For more information about this exciting international event please visit the congress website at:

<https://www.mistica.es/evento/mysticism-paradise-lost-or-promised-land/>