



The VINE



October 2024

News from the Secular Discalced Carmelite Community in England and Wales



Members and Fr Matt at the North-East Regional Day

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Deadline for contributions to the next Vine: Tuesday 4 February 2025
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FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

15th October 2024 Feast of St Teresa of Avila

The Castles of Carmel

I write this on the great feast day of our foundress and mother, dear Teresa of Avila. Her journey in Carmel was not easy but through the challenges and tribulations in her long life, her total trust in 'so good a Friend' became ever deeper. Like Elijah, she followed God's call to face apparently insurmountable difficulties and threats.

We too know, deep down, when God is calling us to do something or to go deeper into the unknown. But, like the rich young man, it can be hard, even crazy, to respond to the gaze of Love and let go of our treasured way of doing and seeing things.

Most of us don't have great wealth or riches to store up in bigger barns, but we do possess great wealth in Carmel. Wealth of spirit, of community, of companionship, of learning and of our saints. The gifts just keep coming if we have the rough, open hands to receive again and again. To those who have, more shall be given. These riches of the deep are not ours to covet and hold close, comfortable and safe from interference, but are given to put on a lamp stand for all to receive Light, to witness God's love in a person's life.

Our call to Carmel and the mansions of the soul is not a one-off, but an ever-deepening response to God and a yearning for more. The rich young man had everything: health, youth, riches, goodness, but he yearned for more. Jesus gazed at him and loved him, asked him to let go of everything and follow Him. When we are asked in this gaze of Love, do we make that blind step in total trust?

It may involve accepting more responsibility in the Order when we feel inadequate to the task, such as Formation Director or President, or we are asked to organise an event. These roles are

a vocation within our Carmelite vocation and will be filled with grace. God asks us to be another stone in the building of our Carmelite Order and the Church, and will always give us the strength and wisdom required, through prayer, through other people, in unexpected ways. Like Thérèse of Lisieux, we accept our inadequacies and grow ever deeper in trust that the Holy Spirit will be our Guide, even in darkness and emptiness and a sense of 'failure'.

So let us not be afraid to put our light on a lamp stand, to allow God to chisel away at us so that our inner beauty and strength is revealed. Our hidden talents will be thus discovered and multiplied.

Carmel is not cosy, not always comforting. Through contemplative prayer we are gently (or suddenly) opened up to respond to what God is asking of us. Let us support each other on our respective Carmelite journeys. The National Council also wishes to support you and be with you when things are hard, and recent guidelines for Presidents and Formation Directors can be found on our website. If in difficulty, feel free to contact one of the Regional Representatives or myself or Fr Matt or another president or formation director for help and advice. You are not alone.

I'll let Teresa finish with a verse from one of her poems, a morning hymn for her feast day:

In the mansion of thy mind
Is my dwelling place; and more
There I wander, unconfined,
Knocking loud if e'er I find
In thy thought a closed door.
With love and prayer in Carmel,

Annette

National President for England and Wales

NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

London Region

The London Regional Day was held at Kensington priory on 6 April 2024. This was well attended.

Fr Matt provided us with a great talk on 'the reason we are Carmelites'. This followed the recorded talk by Fr Deeney (RIP) on the same theme.

We were favoured in the afternoon by a talk by a Carmelite member of the ancient observance of Carmel, Rosie Bradshaw (The Order of Carmel, TOC), who talked us through the meaning, history and technicalities of the art of iconography which was beautifully demonstrated in her icon of Our Lady with Carmelite biblical Saints, also portrayed. This was a wonderful opportunity for review of both our Carmelite history and education in this special and difficult art form.

Final Promises made on 6 April

Kensington Ven Hermann Cohen:

Michael Thorne and Hazel White (left and right below).

Holy Trinity, Notting Hill:

Barbara Field (centre below).



Annual Kensington Seculars' Retreat

This year our retreat was held on 20 July (St Elijah's feast day). It was well attended. We were joined by some members of the Order of Carmel. Fr Matt talked on the theme of Edith Stein and the afternoon was devoted to our magnificent founding father, St Elijah.

London Region attendees who had made final promises completed a survey about the possible need for an ongoing Formation programme. Responses were positive. This has resulted in our

London Region Autumn Formation programme (August – December 2024) with the theme of 'Mission'. The programme commenced in August with Father Matt talking on the subject of Saint Elijah whose zeal for the glory of God is also part of our mission.

September talk

A talk on the Dutch Carmelite priest, ecumenist, educator and brave journalist, St Titus Brandsma, was provided by Lay Carmelite and Journalist, Amanda Dickie (TOC). She detailed his mission and martyrdom during the Nazi era. We were able to listen to a recording of his strong and lively voice and also to learn that Amanda had attended his canonization in May, 2022. The session was very well attended.

Teresa Lynch

Holy Trinity group, Notting Hill

Autumn wedding

Two members of Holy Trinity group, Notting Hill Kim Dawson and Thomas Bradley are now a married couple – see the picture below. The wedding on 14 September was held at the lovely



church of St Thomas of Canterbury in Harrow. Four priests were in attendance and one sister from the Carmelite convent in Notting Hill was able to join us among the many guests – each of whom was gifted with a beautiful rosary, so kindly made by one of the Carmelite Sisters from the Notting Hill convent. God blessed the beautiful wedding service with a lovely sunny, September day.

Teresa Lynch

North-East Regional Day

All had a good day at the North-East Regional Day. Members from Darlington, Doncaster, Middlesbrough, Thornaby, Durham and Leeds were able to attend.

The meeting took place at Thicket Priory, York where we were greeted by the sisters and made to feel very welcome. The sisters joined us for Mass and Vespers. Father Matt Blake presided over the meeting.

Six people were received for Formation: Jerome and Chimobi, a married couple who came from Durham but attend the Darlington Community; Joanne Norton, Anne Belbin, and Mary Rogers who also attend Darlington; and Pam Lythe from Leeds.

Roseanne Mills from the Leeds Community took her Final Promises. Some members had family come along to support them.



Father Matt spoke on two topics, Edith Stein and Mother Anne of Jesus. Speaking about Edith Stein Father Matt referred to a paragraph from her collected works. 'The Hidden Life', written by Dr. L Gelba and Michael Linsen. OCDS, p.38. This is a paragraph in which Edith is defining prayer. She says, Carmelite life is incomprehensible without prayer – prayer gives meaning to life. Prayer is communication of the soul with God, and God is love. God wants to share his life with others. Edith speaks of prayer as the Jacob's ladder – it ascends and descends, and where it no longer depends upon our own effort, this is mystical life.

God is love, love is God's language – and love is goodness giving itself away. It is a fullness of being which does not want to stay enclosed, it is given away to make people happy, love is free of self-interest. Edith says this what creation is: everything is an expression of love, it exists and is sustained because of love.

Humans and angels have the capacity to understand and respond to this love by free choice. The greatest of human achievement is to respond to this love, but it is not just an achievement – God is engaging in us in a new way. The person of prayer is the one who helps the whole world. When a person self-gives, God is working in that person, and as one grows one becomes aware that all is God. We need to know the bigger picture. Something bigger than the person is going on – nothing less than the creative power of God.

The second part of Father Matt's talk was about the Beatification of Mother Anne of Jesus. This took place in Brussels on 29 of September with Pope Francis in attendance. Mother Anne was born in 1545 at Medina de Campo and entered Carmel in Teresa's first Foundation. She moved to Salamanca where she made her profession. She had a deep relationship with John of the Cross, who dedicated the Spiritual Canticle to her, and who helped her make a foundation at Granada. Anne was the only sister to make a foundation in Teresa's lifetime and she succeeded in doing two things Teresa could not do, making a foundation in Madrid, and publishing the book of Teresa's Life. During her lifetime the book was with the Inquisition. It was approved, but not released. With the help of John of the Cross, Mother Anne succeeded.

Verity Smith

Southwest Region Retreat, 28 June

The Wincanton, Bristol and Cornwall communities had a wonderful retreat weekend with Fr Matt in the Augustinian Recollects Retreat Centre St Rita's in Honiton. Edith Stein was the topic chosen this summer and Fr Matt opened the weekend on Friday evening with a prayer to the Holy Spirit

taken from Edith Stein's poem *And I Remain with you* from a Pentecost novena. (This is included in the notes on Fr Matt's talk later in this *Vine*.)

Anita Watson who joined our Carmelite community in 1999 died on the first day of our Retreat. She had been a Councillor from 2007 till 2020. Her birthday was 15 October, so St Teresa had a vested interest in her from the beginning. Angela Oxborough made her first promises this weekend, too.

Caroline Dawnay

Caroline also recommends Timothy (now Cardinal) Radcliffe's recent Synod Retreat meditation 'Resurrection: Searching in the Dark'. Just pop the title into the Vatican News site's search box.

Romsey Secular Carmelite Group

The Romsey Group are happy to celebrate their second anniversary this October.

Originally started with three professed members and two enquirers, the first meeting actually attracted 19 people. Advertised in the St Swithunwell's Parish Newsletter, which serves six churches, the 'Going Deeper with the Carmelite Saints' notice clearly aroused a lot of interest.

A core of about twelve people remain at present. Samantha Harris and Andrea Hurry will be making their First Promises on February 15 2025 and Therese Cook will be received into Formation at their Regional Day on October 19.

Over the past two years, the group has invited a few visitors, namely Father Matt Blake who at the group's suggestion discussed spiritual direction amongst other issues of interest. The then Romsey Church Priest, Father Marco Vignolo visited and talked about confession and we also invited a Dominican Sister from the Sway Community in Hampshire, Sister Veronica, who spoke to us about her vocation as a religious.

The group is also trying to decide on a suitable name, with St Joseph being a favourite contender due in part to the local church being St Joseph's!

Samantha Harris

East Anglia Regional Day

Groups from Letchworth, Quidenham and Norwich met at Quidenham for their autumn regional day on October.

In the morning Father Matt gave us a fascinating and inspiring talk on Mother Anne of Jesus, beatified by Pope Francis on 29 September. At the Mass that followed Mary Clark and Marie Murphy (both from the Norwich group) were received into Formation (see first below) and Dominique Summerford (Quidenham Group) took her First Promise (see second below).



After lunch Sister Elizabeth spoke on the theme of Father Marie-Eugène and the Institute of Notre Dame de Vie. She also considered new ways of living the Carmelite charism – helping us all appreciate just how precious our heritage is within the wider church.

Tim Burton

Our Lady of Mt Carmel & Ven. Hermann Cohen Community, Kensington (now dissolved)

The last eight months have been a time of blessing for our Community. Our study of *The Dark Night of the Soul* has been particularly rewarding, as we have recognised our individual experiences in living through or emerging from the dark night of the senses: far from the book being gloomy, we have been discovering in it an illumination in our darkness.

Moreover, we have all recently experienced the power of the Lord working in us, in two cases through extraordinary acts of healing of body or spirit, and in other cases because we have discerned the unexpected working of God's providence in difficult situations.

And so we have been granted the grace of understanding, not merely by faith but by experience or observation, that the Lord's power is, indeed, made perfect in weakness.

Mark Courtney

Cornwall Group

Some members of our group attended a weekend Retreat at St Rita's Centre, Honiton, from 20-22nd September. Father Matt gave some inspiring talks on St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Some of us had felt a bit overawed by her, but Father Matt's talks brought her to life for us and left us wanting to read more about this saint.

During Mass on the Sunday, MaryClare Shaw made her First Promise and her husband, Peter, was received into Formation (pictured below with Father Matt). This was a very joyful occasion for us all.

We were very grateful to the Bristol Community for letting us join them on the Retreat and for the hard work they had put into the organisation of it.

St Rita's Centre is very comfortable and is conveniently located for those of us in the South West Region, as it is on the M5 motorway and there is a railway station nearby. We are looking forward to meeting up with other Secular Carmelite communities and groups there in April next year.

Joan Brown



A NOTTING HILL PROFESSION

On Tuesday 16 July 2024, on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, members of our community were invited to attend the First Profession of Sister Teresa Mary of the Trinity at the Notting Hill Monastery. Sister Teresa was a member of the Nottingham OCDS community before entering the monastery. The Profession was such a wonderful and joyful occasion; it was also a poignant reminder, not only of our Secular promise, but also our deep connection with the whole Discalced Carmelite Order.

We entered the beautiful chapel full of excitement and anticipation. One of the nuns noticed our ceremonial scapulars and told us to sit in the front row, giving us a full view of the grille behind which Sr Teresa Mary of the Trinity stood surrounded by her Community.



The Holy Mass was concelebrated by four priests and the readings were taken from the Book of Kings, a letter of St Paul to the Galatians, and the Gospel of St John. The angelic voices of the nuns

added to the wonderfully serene atmosphere of the celebration.

We noticed the similarities of the ceremony with the wordings of our own Promise as Secular Carmelites. Sister Teresa received a crucifix from the Prioress before being crowned with a wreath of white flowers. She looked beautiful and was adorned like a bride. It was a wonderful moment of solemnity, beauty, commitment, joy and from us a sentiment of gratitude to be present to such a loving act of betrothal to Jesus Christ.

After the ceremony we were treated to a feast of tea, coffee and delicious treats, sharing the



happiness with all the guests who attended. This was an important opportunity for us to express our friendship with our nuns and stand united as Discalced Carmelites. We sincerely thank all of the Carmelite nuns of Notting Hill for their hospitality, kindness and friendship.

Caroline Moutell and Christiane Ghose

Christian Kendall-Daw

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

CARMELITE PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM

A Personal Testimony

The Carmelite Pilgrimage to Walsingham which took place on Saturday 22nd June, the Feast of Saint Thomas More and Saint John Fisher, has provided an amazing opportunity for many Secular Carmelites from across the UK to come together for a time of prayer and recollection at this wonderful Shrine. The day began with a talk by Fr Matt Blake in the Chapel of Our Lady of Reconciliation followed by the Pilgrims' Mass (concelebrated by Fr Matt). After a picnic lunch in the grounds of the shrine, some of us were able to take part to a silent procession to the Church of the Annunciation where there was Exposition and Benediction.

This pilgrimage was particularly meaningful from a personal point of view since I was officially received into Formation by Fr Matt after Eucharistic Adoration at the Church of the Annunciation. It was such a grace-filled and joyful moment. The fact that the ceremony took place at Walsingham, the Marian shrine par excellence in England, which I had not been able to visit before, made it even more special. And having the support of other Secular Carmelites present at the ceremony was really significant, especially other



members of my community who were there.

Reflecting on my entrance into Formation, I have been in awe of how our Heavenly Father has providentially led me to Carmel. Ten years ago I first arrived in the UK from Rome with an Italian passport and a French heart, due to a family

connection with France, which makes French Carmelite Saints like our beloved St. Thérèse de Lisieux (whose 100th canonization anniversary we will be celebrating in 2025) particularly dear to me. The reason why I moved to England was to undertake a PhD in Classics and Ancient History at the University of Exeter. At the time, I was sadly very ignorant of my faith and not focusing on living a Christ-centred life. Through many highs and lows and after several challenges I completed my PhD and since then I have gladly left academia behind as the Lord has shown me very clearly that He had other plans for my life and, as I have been experiencing first-hand in my earthly pilgrimage, His plans are indeed always incomparably better than ours (cf. Jeremiah 29:11).

As Christ has undoubtedly been drawing me closer and closer to Him in my own personal path to Heaven and has also been showing me the importance of trying to help other souls along the journey to eternal life, for the past two years I have had the huge privilege of working as the Assistant Chaplain at the Exeter University Catholic Chaplaincy, which plays such a vital role in the lives of many Catholic students in Exeter, as I myself experienced during my PhD studies.

After I participated in World Youth Day in Lisbon in August 2023 the calling to be a Secular Carmelite, which by then I had been pondering for a while, grew stronger in my heart. So, in October I started



attending the monthly meetings of the Community of Our Lady Star of the Sea in Newton Abbot and I am very grateful to the members of the community for their readiness in welcoming me and supporting me since I first began to attend the meetings. Looking back, I can see how

there have been Carmelite saints gently accompanying me at various times in my life since I was a child and how our Heavenly Father has

carried me through numerous struggles and major life storms. I give thanks and praise to Him for leading me through it all and for directing my steps to Carmel in His Divine Providence. As I embark on my Carmelite journey I ask Christ and Our Heavenly Mother for perseverance treasuring the words of Saint Teresa: 'What a favour our Lord has done us in bringing us to this Order (...). What a number of saints we have in heaven who have worn this habit of ours! We must have the holy audacity to aspire, with God's help, to be like them. The struggle will not last long, but the outcome will be eternal'.

Dr Maria Gisella Giannone

CAN YOU BE A PRAYER SPONSOR?

You may remember us from last year's *Vine*. We are the family that walked the Camino de Santiago together. This year, our small family of four, (mum, dad and two sons, aged 17 and 20), became part of a much bigger family in Tanzania, as we spent four weeks at an orphanage called Karibu Nyumbani. 'Karibu Nyumbani' is Swahili for 'welcome home' and that is what this wonderful place is, a home where children have been welcomed into a family with three 'mamas' who have dedicated their lives to caring for them. The Lord called the three mamas from different parts of the world (UK, Czech Republic and Tanzania) and gave them a common vision 'help some of God's little ones who cannot help themselves'. At Karibu Nyumbani there are also two nuns, few 'aunties' and 'uncles' (who do the cleaning, cooking, harvesting, etc) and the occasional visitors (yes, that was us!) that share their lives with the children.

At Karibu Nyumbani children learn about the love of God through the love and example of those who look after them, and this is complemented with prayer, song, worship and liturgy. The orphanage has a lovely chapel where the children gather every evening to pray, listen to the gospel and sing. The nuns and the mamas also gather there for morning and evening prayer, so on several occasions I joined them, following my Daily Office in English, while they were saying theirs in Swahili.

Currently, there are 29 children who are part of the Karibu Nyumbani family. All of them have been through a lot, despite their young age.

Nevertheless, they are bundles of joy, hope, love and life! The children truly treat each other as siblings and have found a home there. When we were there the youngest one was three-month old Anita, but now there is even a younger member of the family, Martha that arrived when she was just two weeks old.

The mamas are looking for prayer sponsors for the children. They would like people who can 'adopt' one child in their prayers, praying for their healing, protection and anything else that the Spirit suggests. If you are interested in sponsoring a child with your prayers please email Tim Burton the *Vine* editor: carmel@kinabra.net and he'll send you a link to my form.

Thank you!

If you want to learn more about Karibu Nyumbani you can visit www.karibunyumbani.org

Brigitte Garcia OCDS (Seaford)



THE OCDS JUBILEE FUND

History and ongoing work

The OCDS Jubilee Fund was originally set up*, at the request of the OCDS communities at a National Presidents' meeting, for the purpose of reimbursing the travel expenses of the Regional Representatives. These expenses included all visits to groups in their region (at that time to be made at least twice a year to each group) plus travel to Boars Hill or Kensington priory three times a year for National Council meetings.

Over the succeeding years things have changed. As is normal in our world, nothing is static. Even before the pandemic imposed so many changes, the ways of making the best use of the Jubilee Fund developed over time so that today the money contributed by members is used for the following purposes:

Printing of OCDS materials e.g. Our Rule and Constitutions; Ratio; leaflets (various).

Annual payment for our website software.

Annual contribution of £600 to the OCDS Generalate in Rome.

Annual deposits to Retreat sites to secure bookings (usually £200 each place).

Cost of Fr. Matt's stay at each retreat site, which is the same cost as each individual pays for the retreat they attend – five centres this year.

Any expenses incurred by regional representatives in fulfilling their role.

Representatives make fewer visits today and contact with groups is largely maintained by phone, email and Zoom. However, visits are still made and your representatives do, in the main, fund these themselves.

Since the pandemic your National Council has met regularly via Zoom but in order to have more time for deeper discussion on some matters arising, once a year a 'face to face' meeting is arranged at a venue: once at Launde Abbey and twice at Wistaston Hall. Travel and accommodation expenses for these meetings have mostly been met by the members themselves, thereby saving the Jubilee Fund's resources.

I think that just about covers it but something else may have slipped my mind.

We could not have known, all those years ago, that we would lose the use of Boars Hill for our annual retreats – for how long, we do not yet know – and so your national council has had to investigate other venues and pay up front to secure bookings. At Boars Hill, Fr Matt's stay was, of course, free of charge but that is not so with other retreat houses. We hope to get back most of those £200 fees when members who have booked a place pay a small deposit directly into the Jubilee Fund (£10 – £20 plus, from this year on, an extra £20 approx. to cover Fr Matt's stay).

In the past the Darlington Carmel generously took on the work of arranging and printing our Rule and Constitutions, etc. and were reimbursed accordingly, but since its closure new arrangements had to be made by National Council and, of course, costs have risen.

It is entirely down to the fidelity of all our professed members in paying the annual subscription of £10 each that all this work is possible so, as treasurer, I am extremely grateful. (Sadly, this year there was not enough in the coffers to support the Generalate but, hopefully, we will be in a better position to do so next year, 2024 having been particularly expensive).

Phyllis Ibbs

OCDS National Treasurer

*I have been national treasurer since 2013 but I understand that, as the name suggests, the Jubilee Fund was set up in 2000. Intentions and needs do change over 24 years!

NB The Retreat Fund is an entirely separate fund which relies entirely on voluntary donations from OCDS members.

Don't forget to order your copy of the 2025 Secular Carmelite Calendar!

Full details below, on the final page of this Vine.

OUR FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Barbara Mary Heitzman OCDS

It is with great sadness that I write to advise you of the death of Barbara Mary Heitzman OCDS. Her Carmelite journey began in Kensington because she was living and working in London at the time. When she retired to Ledbury she joined the Hereford group where she was elected President when the group became canonically erected in 2002. When the group became too large and needed to split, she started a new group in Worcester, together with Richard Baldock and Winifred Hislop. The first meeting took place in January 2004. She named the group 'Immaculate Heart of Mary'. Barbara led the group until March 2017 when she was already experiencing health problems and felt that it was time for her to hand over to someone younger. She continued to be a key member of the group, especially where formation was concerned, until January 2024 when she told us that we shouldn't count on her attending meetings any more as she had multiple health problems and had been given three months to live. At the end of June she was admitted to the Ledbury Nursing Home for end-of-life care, where we were able to visit her and pray with her. She died peacefully on 22nd June 2024, aged 87. Her funeral took place in the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Ledbury, on 17th July 2024.

RIP Barbara.

Immaculate Heart of Mary group, Worcester

Mia - Lady Maria Antonia O'Donnell OCDS

Mia was welcomed into the Doncaster Secular Carmelite Community in 2008. She subsequently became a member of the Council and for many years acted as Treasurer.

Her life was ordered by a deep and abiding faith. A mechanical engineer by profession, she abandoned her career after marriage and devoted herself to her husband, her children and charitable works. Her unflinching kindness was always expressed in a most discreet and gentle way. One act, which must have brought relief to many, is worthy of mention. Together with her husband she founded the Hull branch of Emmaus, a charity devoted to helping people of homelessness in East Yorkshire.

The final years of her life were marked by illness and increasing suffering – suffering she managed to conceal behind a sense of humour which was always kind. Her patient acceptance of her travails can only be described as heroic.

Lady Maria Antonia O'Donnell, born 15 September 1948, died 19 July 2024, will be greatly missed by her brothers and sisters in the Doncaster Secular Carmelite Community. She is remembered in their prayers.

Patricia Haigh



**In the desert of the water
You appear with your boat.
Without sermon or book.
The presence of you is in the
wind,
The leaves remind me you are
still here
You appear
Always
by the river.**

RETREAT NOTES

**A retreat preached by Fr Matt Blake OCD
Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd September 2024
St Rita's Retreat Centre Honiton**

Thank you to Patrick Dillon for supplying these notes.

Friday Evening

Fr Matt opened the retreat with a prayer to the Holy Spirit using the first stanza of Edith Stein's poem AND I REMAIN WITH YOU, from a Pentecost Novena:

Who are you, sweet light, that fills me
And illumines the darkness of my heart?
You lead me like a mother's hand,
And should you let go of me,
I would not know how to take another step.
You are the space
That embraces my being and buries it in yourself.
Away from you it sinks into the abyss
Of nothingness, from which you raised it to the light.

You, nearer to me than I to myself
And more interior than my most interior
And still impalpable and intangible
And beyond any name:
Holy Spirit-eternal love!

(p143 *The Hidden Life*, collected works IV)

Edith Stein read the Life of St Teresa in 1921, she was 30 years of age and searching for Truth, a light shone for her in these pages. Whoever is searching for truth is praying or seeking God. The past 15 years she had been an atheist, a deliberate choice, but Truth finds her. Everything in her life was preparing her for this encounter. Vocation is a journey of self discovery, we discover that is what we are searching for: 'before I formed you in the womb I knew you' (Jer) Edith discovers her deepest identity. Ch 40 Teresa in her book of her Life speaks about Truth in a unique way. Truth is personal, Jesus is the Truth and He makes himself known to us. We come to Truth through Love. The language of Love is Truth and Humility. Teresa never gave her book a title, she was asked to write about her life and so she wrote about her coming

to the life that Jesus lives in her. Ch 23, our relationship with Jesus brings us to the fullness of life. Ch 8 and 9 relates Teresa's conversion. From then on prayer was something that she committed to. Teresa is convinced of the importance of prayer.

Prayer is what we need, it is the most powerful force we have. Prayer enabled Teresa to be. She grows, matures, struggles and perseveres in prayer, it is the air she breathes and from her own experience she can be a teacher of prayer.

Jesus Christ is the Truth, we will only know Edith and Teresa if we know Jesus Christ. Prayer enables the human being to grow to the fullness of life, only prayer can bring us to the Truth.

The talk ended with a poem written by Edith's niece Suzanne Batzborz at her beatification. Beatrice herself lived over 100 years and remained a practicing Jew all her life dying on 9th July 1986.

Saturday 21st September Morning talk

A poem written by Edith on the Novitiate called the Vineyard of Carmel was read out. Once Edith had read the life of Teresa her heart was set on Carmel but she puts it off for fear of upsetting her family. The Intervening years, however, were very fruitful, as one journey ended and another began. She made a lot of Christian friends and she who had been a convinced atheist asked to be baptised on 1st January 1922 followed by her confirmation.

She takes up the role of a teacher in a Dominican school and became part of this large institution, praying much and translating two works, one of Newman's and the other Thomas Aquinas, from Latin to German. She was very aware that the contemplative must take life into the world and to combine serious academic study with prayer was very important for her. She wrote widely on education, women's role in the world, the suffragette movement. In the 30s the role of women was changing, it was a time of huge change and development in the world and in the church and the shadow of the Nazis was looming. She was very aware of the dangers and her Jewish background and being a woman prevented her getting professorships in universities.

All doors closed to her but in 1937 she applied to enter the Carmel in Cologne which had celebrated the third anniversary of its foundation.

To enter Carmel at the age of 42 was a huge adaptation coming from the heights of her experience and life. Practical tasks were difficult as she had never done these but she realised that she needed this to be set free from her academic reputation and achievements which could become an obstacle.

She did not expect to continue with her writing but Cologne Carmel realised that it was their mission to make Carmel better known. Thérèse had a huge influence on Edith and there was revival of mystical interest in the 30s. John of the Cross had been made a doctor of the Church in 1926 and Edith feeds into this as we can see in her essay on the history and spirit of Carmel (*Before the Face of God*, Ch 1, The Hidden Life op cit).

Edith reveals in this essay how wide her reading was in Carmelite literature before entering Carmel. Elijah, standing before the Face of God, bringing to God the needs of the people of his time, living in God's presence, looking up into the Face of God.

The importance of liturgy, the prayer of the church reveals the influence of Benedictine spirituality on her (St Teresa Benedicta her chosen name). Above all she wanted to emphasise the importance of private and personal prayer 'prayer is the highest achievement of which the human spirit is capable...it is a Jacob's ladder on which the human spirit ascends to God and God's grace descends to people' (p38 Hidden Life op.cit). Edith herself comments that no human eye can see what God is doing in prayer.

The rest of her life is her thanksgiving for what God has given her, grace upon grace, the person is not aware of how here prayer life affects others. It is a fountain of grace bubbling forth, personal prayer touches everyone, God hears the voice of prayer and enters into the needs of the world.

Evening talk

Edith wrote a poem for her sister Rosa who was baptised on 24th December 1936. DO NOT BE AFRAID, I BRING YOU NEWS OF GREAT JOY. Edith loved Christmas and this poem not only revealed

her joy in the Feast but her profound Christian faith. Her sister Rosa could not become a Catholic until after her mother died and she looked after her until the end.

It is difficult to discuss Edith's inner life as she was very reluctant to talk about it. Her spirit 'sealed with the seven seals' when her spiritual director Canon Schmidt died she took all the letters she had written to him and destroyed them. But in her writings and essay on Teresa and her own description of prayer, 'the source of life', we are given a wonderful insight: goodness giving itself away, love being the fullness of being, sharing, self giving, God's creation is an expression of God's love, love is God's language, angels and human beings endowed with God's spirit, God's breath so we are able to receive God's love with understanding and in turn give ourselves freely. The person seeking Truth is praying already as all truth comes from God.'

In her essay for the Feast of the Cross 1939 Edith comments 'the world is in flames and we live our vocation, looking at the Cross.' The Contemplative feels the pain of the world and becomes more sensitive to the pain and darkness all around. Page 96 could equally well be written today (Hidden Life op.cit) 'do you hear the groans of the wounded on the battlefields...you are not a physician and not nurse and cannot bind up the wounds. You are enclosed in a cell and cannot get to them. Do you hear the anguish of the dying? You would like to be a priest and comfort them. Does the lament of the widows and orphans distress you? You would like to be an angel of mercy and help them. Look at the Crucified...you can be at all fronts, wherever there is grief in the power of the Cross. Your compassionate love takes you everywhere, soothing healing saving...the eyes of the crucified look down on you, asking, probing, what will you answer him? Lord where shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'.

In prayer I can be everywhere, until with Jesus on the Cross.

Sunday morning final talk

Fr Matt looked at some of Edith's abundant writings which he said could fill many rooms.

When young she studied a variety of subjects to a very high level, languages, history, psychology and philosophy. She felt that psychology was still too much in its infancy to specialise in. She went for history, politics, education and in 1933 she wrote a book entitled *Life in a Jewish Family*. It got negative publicity from some quarters but Edith and others wanted to write positive experiences and up to 1916 it is a rich account of world that no longer exists, wiped out by the Nazi regime.

Her *Essays on Women* revealed her very much as a woman of her time between two world wars, uncertainty, insecurity etc. Women in the Bible and in the Church are in these essays.

Her Doctrinal Thesis in 1916 was on the problem of empathy.

We have a collection of her Spiritual Writings in Vol 4 op.cit. She also wrote a beautiful meditation on Christmas. She wrote plays and sketches and directed them in her community. She wrote poetry which is a Carmelite tradition: Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese all wrote poems. She wrote about Queen Esther in the Old Testament whom

she strongly identifies with on the fate of her Jewish people. A number of philosophy works reveal her main interests in the dignity of the human being. She wrote many letters between 1916 and 1938 which reveal much about her inner life and her concern for others.

Her final book *The Science of the Cross* has been translated anew by Josephine Koepfel. Earlier translations were not as accurate as this one. The purpose of the book in 1942 which she was writing before being arrested was to celebrate the centenary of John of the Cross. The Carmel asked her to give a brief summary of John of the Cross in the context of the times they were living in.

Edith prayed and lived with John of the Cross while writing this book for eighteen months. Her sources were not as good as we have today, she translated his poetry herself and that book was her final retreat.

An autobiography of Teresa Renata, prioress of Cologne gives us another insight into Edith Stein.

WEBSITE NEWS

Our website continues to develop – so do make a point of checking it regularly.

Cyprian Blamires' **Blog** is one of our most successful new features. Cyprian would be especially grateful for guest contributions and invites anyone interested to contact him:

pblamires@aol.com

Another recent feature are **Stories**, short accounts of personal journeys into Secular Carmel. These can be found under the 'Enrichment' menu item. If you have a story of your own you'd be willing to share please don't hesitate to get in touch with Cyprian at the email address above.

Finally, I have just uploaded the **seven talks on Edith Stein** given by Father Matt at the Douai Abbey retreat this summer. These can be found on our website in 'Audio Recordings' under the 'Enrichment' heading of the main menu. In the first talk, Fr Matt gives a useful explanation of all the books on or by Edith Stein that are now available in English. Thank you, Annette, for making available these eagerly awaited talks.

NATIONAL SECULAR ORDER RETREATS 2025

To reserve your place please contact the retreat coordinator

June	Tue 17th- Sat 21st	Douai Abbey	Armelle Belcher	c.armelle@btinternet.com
July	Mon 14th- Fri 18th	Ampleforth Abbey	Mary Farrell	imaryfarrell@yahoo.co.uk
August	Fri 1st - Sun 3rd	Worth Abbey	Teresa Lynch	teresalynch1@hotmail.co.uk
Sept	Fri 12th - Sun 14th	Wistaston Hall	Ioan Ap Dewi	ioanapdewi@gmail.com

Regional days 2025

Open to all: you are not restricted to your own Region if it is difficult to get to your Regional Day

April	Saturday 5 th	London Regional Day	Kensington	Teresa Lynch
April	Saturday 26 th	SW Regional Day	Honiton	deborahvankroo@googlemail.com
Sept	Saturday 8 th	NE Regional Day	Thicket Monastery	Mary Farrell
Sept	Saturday 27 th	Central Regional Day	Northampton	pblamires@aol.com
Oct	Saturday 4 th	E Anglia Regional Day	Quidenham	Joan MacInnes (see below)
Dec	Saturday 6 th	London Advent Regional Day	Kensington	Teresa Lynch

To be circulated soon: West Midlands Regional Day

Other events 2025

June	Saturday 28 th	Walsingham pilgrimage	Joan MacInnes	jpmacinnnes@gmail.com
Sept	Fri 19 th - Sun 21 st	Presidents' Conference Hinsley Hall	Deborah Van Kroonenberg	

The

Secular Carmelite Calendar

2025

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
Prices including postage:
1 copy: £3.20
2 copies: £5.80
£2.80 each for more copies
sent to the same address.

Cheque with your address
with order please
or pay by Paypal
a.kirke@talktalk.net

ADDENDUM 1: MORE NEWS FROM KENSINGTON



(Picture: Melissa, Bee Lin, Fr Matt, Anna)

On Saturday 7 September 2024, Fr Matt joined us to receive two of our members into formation. We were delighted to welcome Anna Wolarz and Melissa Ekwueme and we wish them every blessing as they begin their journey as Secular Carmelites. We also offered a special blessing as Bee Lin Lee transferred to our Community, we assure her of our full support and prayers. We were particularly delighted that this took place in the beautiful Venerable Hermann Cohen chapel where we have our monthly Holy Hour with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Vespers.



(Picture: Elsa, Melissa, Ngozi, Anna, Bee Lin, Fr Mat, Celine, Joanelle, Caroline, Yvette, Christian)

Caroline Moutell, Christiane Ghose & Christian Kendall-Daw Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus, Kensington

ADDENDUM 2: OUR LADY OF LIFE

‘Come and visit us ... we are waiting for you!’ said an acquaintance. They then pressed a card into my hand and by the time I looked at the image they had already gone. That encounter was over 20 years ago but I still have the card which is a beautiful image of Blessed Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus. The invitation was to visit the Carmelite institute he founded and where his body rests. Over the years I have enjoyed getting to know Father Marie-Eugène through his writings and finally accepted the invitation to visit the institute he founded, Notre Dame de Vie, near Avignon. In this article I would like to speak a little about the institute and I hope to explain why I think it is relevant to Secular Carmelites here in the UK.



(Icon of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and Blessed Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus.

Photo credit: Notre Dame de Vie website)

We will start our journey, far from Provence, beginning to the south of Dijon in Beaune. In 1926 the Prioress of the Carmel in Beaune wrote to Mother Agnès, the sister of St Thérèse of Lisieux, asking if she knew any Carmelite friars who could lead their retreat. She replied very quickly and recommended a young friar, Father Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus. So began his association with this community of Carmelite nuns.

The Carmel in Beaune is relevant to this article because in 1929 three young teachers approached the Prioress asking for help. They felt a strong call to Carmel, but they did not feel that they were being called to live within the enclosure as nuns. Just like Secular Carmelites, they felt that the Lord was asking them to share the message of Carmel in the world. The Prioress explained she could not help them further but knew someone who could: Father Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus. The three teachers began a life-long association with Father Marie-Eugène, which initially began with them living as Secular Carmelites. They maintained their professional and family commitments whilst living in a way which is so familiar to us. From a very early stage in their development as a community, they made a commitment to devoting time to contemplative prayer for at least two hours each day and this remains an important part of their lives today.



*(The Church of Notre Dame de Vie.
Photo credit: Notre Dame de Vie)*

In 1932 a property which had belonged to a Secular Carmelite, just beneath the village of Venasque in the south of France, was offered to Father Marie-Eugène. The property was steeped in religious history and enjoyed a profound spirituality of its own. The three teachers began to live in the house, known as Notre Dame de Vie, and little by little drew more and more people wishing to explore and share their Carmelite life.

As their community grew there was need for canonical recognition and in 1973 the Vatican recognised Notre Dame de Vie as a Secular Institute made up of women, men and priests. Each branch has their own constitutions and are governed by a superior and assistants, in addition there is a council which oversees the entire institute. The women, men and priests who join the institute spend a lengthy period in solitude, with formation in philosophy and theology. They return to the desert for a month each year. Members come from a variety of professions such as academia, teaching, engineering, nursing and medicine to name only a few. From a very early stage in their development they have been present in many countries and have communities throughout the world. The author happened to be present when new members received the large ceremonial scapular so well known to us as Secular Carmelites. It was an incredibly moving liturgy as the three members – one women and two priests – stepped out of their desert experience and made their new commitment to Carmel. Following the Mass, there was also a wonderful lunch and lavish hospitality – worthy of any Carmelite celebration!

If you ever have the opportunity to visit Notre Dame de Vie there is a wonderful centre for visitors outlining the life of Blessed Marie-Eugène. There is a chapel with the famous statue of Notre Dame de Vie as well as the reliquary containing the relics of Father Marie-Eugène. It is an incredibly beautiful chapel and to use the words



(Reliquary containing the remains of Blessed Marie-Eugène of the Child Jesus. Photo credit: Notre Dame de Vie)

of T S Eliot, there is a strong sense that 'You are here to kneel/Where prayer has been valid'.

The institute has also built a very large church dedicated to St Emerentiana, a martyr from the early Church. The young saint is worthy of an article in her own right. Father Marie-Eugène always felt that St Emerentiana was given to his institute by St Thérèse of Lisieux. The mention of this saint might feel very remote to us Secular Carmelites here in the United Kingdom, yet in medieval times there was a devotion to this saint and martyr. In Sherborne, in the Diocese of Plymouth, there is a medieval chapel dedicated to her. The Catholic parish church was given an image of her in 1891 and remains there to this day. The feast day of St Emerentiana was an important enough date for it to be mentioned in the Sherborne Missal which dates from the fifteenth century and can be viewed in the British Library.



(Sherborne Missal. Photo credit: British Library)

I hope this article conveys some aspects of the life of Blessed Marie-Eugène and how he is a real spiritual father to so many of us, both within Notre Dame de Vie and those of us who are called to be Secular Carmelites. There are very clear parallels between the community he founded and our very own experience of Carmel; even the relatively unknown St Emerentiana seems to draw close to us here in the United Kingdom. The members of Notre Dame de Vie are happy for us to visit their retreat houses, the closest being near Calais. They extend a hand of friendship to all Secular Carmelites and see us as their sisters and brothers in Carmel. I can certainly testify to the enduring quality of their kindness, patience and sincere spiritual friendship.

Christian Kendall-Daw