

Learning more about the Carmelite tradition

There are a number of excellent books that provide a more detailed introduction to the history of the Carmelite Order and its spirituality. See for example:

Steven Payne, *The Carmelite Tradition*,
Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011

Wilfrid McGreal,
At the Fountain of Elijah: The Carmelite Tradition
London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999

Both these books and many others can be obtained from the Carmelite Book Service:

Carmelite Book Service
Boars Hill
Oxford
OX1 5HB

www.carmelite.org.uk/Books.html

The Carmelite Friars at Aylesford Priory in Kent, and the Discalced Friars at Boars Hill in Oxford, both run retreats, workshops and study days in Carmelite spirituality throughout the year.

For more information contact:

The Friars,
Aylesford Priory
Kent, ME 20 7BX
www.thefriars.org.uk

The Carmelite Priory
Boars Hill
Oxford, OX1 5HB
www.carmelite.org.uk/Oxfordret.html

What is the Carmelite Forum?

This leaflet is produced by the *Carmelite Forum of Britain & Ireland*, a joint initiative of the Order of Carmelites and the Order of Discalced Carmelites.

Members represent groups living or interested in Carmelite spirituality in the twenty-first century. These include nuns, friars and lay members of the two Carmelite Orders.

Throughout 2014 - 2015 the Forum will be celebrating the 500th anniversary of Teresa's birth.

Planned events include:

Opening Mass:

**Carmelite Priory,
Kensington**

Wednesday 15th October 2014, 7pm

Academic conference:

***Teresa of Avila 1515 - 2015:
Mystical Theology and Spirituality
in the Carmelite Tradition***
St Mary's University, Twickenham

**18 - 20th June 2015
www.smuc.ac.uk/inspire**

Pilgrimages:

**National Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, 11th July 2015
Avila, 31st August - 7th September 2015**

Closing celebration:

**Aylesford Priory, Kent
Saturday 17th October 2015**

For more information visit:

Website: www.teresaofavila.org
Email: info@teresaofavila.org
Facebook: [teresa500](https://www.facebook.com/teresa500)
Twitter: [@carmeliteforum](https://twitter.com/carmeliteforum)



WWW.TERESAOFAVILA.ORG

Teresa 500

The fifth centenary celebrations
of the birth of St Teresa of Avila
2014 - 2015

3. Teresa and the Carmelites

The Carmelite Forum of Britain and Ireland

When Teresa of Avila founded the first monastery of her reform in 1562 she was seeking a return to the simple life of prayer and solitude established by the hermits on Mount Carmel nearly four hundred years earlier. Throughout her life, Teresa retained a huge respect for these first Carmelites, and encouraged her daughters to take them as their model and inspiration.

All of us who wear this holy habit of Carmel are called to prayer and contemplation... we are descendents of those holy fathers on Mount Carmel

Western pilgrims probably first settled near the spring of Elijah on Mt Carmel sometime after 1191. They lived in small beehive-like cells, occupied in solitary prayer for the most part of the day, but coming together for meals and communal prayer services. Seeking to establish a more regulated form of religious observance, the hermits requested a rule of life from St Albert, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, sometime before 1214. Their stay on Mount Carmel, however, was to be short-lived. With the increasing instability of the region, the hermits began migrating to Europe from about 1238, settling wherever they were given land to establish a community.

The transition to the West was not easy; the hermits' life-style, diet and even mode of dress were unsuited to the conditions they found in Europe. As they sought to adapt, the Carmelites gradually adopted the mendicant lifestyle of the Dominican and Franciscans; living in towns and cities, travelling and preaching the Word of God. The new Carmelite friars, however, never forgot their roots on Mount Carmel, and even today Carmelite spirituality constantly looks for inspiration to the mystical mountain with its close associations to Elijah and the Virgin Mary.

Elijah

In Teresa's time, there was a belief that the Order had originally been founded by Elijah on the mountain as a school of prophets for his disciples (I Kings 18, 20-40). The Carmelites were thus believed to be one of the oldest religious orders, having occupied Mount Carmel since Old Testament times. Although this story is now known to be nothing more than a pious legend, Elijah continues to be a strongly influential figure for Carmelites and is celebrated as a saint by the Order.

Carmelites look to Elijah as an exemplar of the dynamism between action and contemplation. Elijah is actively engaged with worldly events, yet retires to the desert for periods of prayer and contemplation. Above all, his experience in the cave at Horeb shows that God only fully reveals himself in silence and stillness (I Kings, chapter 19). The Carmelite motto continues to recall the words of Elijah at that time.

With zeal I have been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts

Mary

From the earliest days the hermits felt a deep devotion to the Virgin Mary; it is known that in the first century there was a chapel dedicated to her on Mount Carmel, and after the move to the West they quickly became known as the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. As patron of the Order, Mary still inspires Carmelites with her example of pondering on the Lord's ways in her heart (Luke 2.19). Carmelites regard themselves not only as under Mary's patronage, but also as wearing her habit. A popular legend tells how Mary appeared to the Carmelite Prior General, Simon Stock, in 1251 giving him the brown scapular and promising her protection to all those who wore it. Teresa herself regarded it a great privilege to be clothed in the habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Teresa's teachings add a new dimension to the already rich heritage of Carmelite spirituality and through the years many Carmelites have been inspired by her.

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

Following Teresa's injunction that the Lord walks among the pots and pans, this seventeenth-century lay brother developed a profound spiritual teaching of the practice of the presence of God. Amid his daily work in the kitchens of the Paris Carmel, Lawrence practised prayer as a humble and loving conversation with the one in whose company we can continually delight.

Do that which best stirs you to love!

Thérèse of Lisieux

When Thérèse's parents named her after Teresa they could hardly have known the influence she was to exert on their youngest child. Thérèse quickly grasped Teresa's teaching of prayer as an apostolic task, carried out in the heart of the church for the good of the church. Thérèse's *Autobiography of a Soul* has influenced thousands of Christians who seek to follow her 'Little Way'.

Titus Brandsma

With a special love for Teresa and with Elijah's prophetic spirit, the Dutch Carmelite Titus Brandsma vigorously denounced National Socialism and was instrumental in advising the Dutch Catholic Press to resist printing Nazi propaganda. This stance cost him his life; he was killed at Dachau in 1942 having endured weeks of cruel torture in the so-called hospital wing of the camp.

Edith Stein

Born into a Jewish family, Edith converted to Catholicism after reading Teresa's *Book of her Life*. It is said that as she finished the text she exclaimed, 'This is truth!' Like Teresa, Edith's deep sense of the apostolic nature of a life of prayer led her to understand the relevance of her contemplative vocation in a time of conflict and suffering. She was arrested in 1942 and died at Auschwitz.