Carmelite Family Pilgrimage to Spain

Celebrating the 5th Centenary of the Birth of Saint Teresa of Avila

31st August – 7th September 2015
Introduction
2015 marks five hundred years since the birth of Saint Teresa of Avila, Carmelite nun and Doctor of the Church. Many celebrations are taking place around the world to mark this important occasion, and the Carmelite Forum of Britain & Ireland is delighted to invite you to share eight days together in the company of Saint Teresa. Our pilgrimage will visit the places most associated with Teresa’s life and work in the Castille region of Spain: Avila, Toledo, Segovia, Salamanca, and her burial place in Alba de Tormes.

Accommodation
Our pilgrimage retreat will take place at the recently built Carmelite Institute of Teresian and Sunjunastic Studies (CITeS), a purpose-built centre in Avila for study and retreats inaugurated by the Discalced Carmelite Order in June 2008. The majority of our accommodation will be single en-suite rooms. A small number of double en-suite rooms are also available. Please advise when registering if you have special dietary or access needs. For more information about CITeS visit: www.mistica.es

Avila, our base for the retreat, is the so-called ‘City of Knights’ and retains the best preserved medieval fortifications in Europe. It has also been a centre for Jewish and Christian mystical writing for over a thousand years. CITeS itself is adjacent to Teresa of Avila’s first community, the Encarnación (Incarnation Monastery), and commands breathtaking views of the city and the Gredos Mountains.

Transport
The pilgrimage does not include transport to and from Spain. The reason for this is to allow pilgrims the maximum flexibility of where they travel from, and allow them to spend additional time in Spain before or after the pilgrimage if they wish. All pilgrims are responsible for booking and paying for their own transport to Madrid, where a coach will depart from Barajas Airport at 2pm on Monday 31st August. Pilgrims are also free to make their own way direct to Avila if they wish (there are regular trains from Madrid), arriving at CITeS anytime from 2pm on 31st August. There are flights to Madrid from most major airports in Britain (including British Airways/Iberia, Air Europa, Easyjet, and Ryanair from London); please consult the internet or your own travel agent for options. Pilgrims are liable for organising their own visa requirements if not EU citizens.

Pilgrimage format
Each day of the retreat will begin with an optional time of Lectio Divina and silent meditation. Mornings will follow a planned itinerary involving presentations from the retreat leaders and guided visits to a place of interest. The Eucharist and Evening Prayer will also form part of our worship. During our time together, we hope to explore various themes which arise from the writings of Saints Teresa and John of the Cross, whilst placing them in the unique setting within which we find ourselves.
The programme

The proposed programme for the retreat is outlined below. Local circumstances may require adjustments to be made nearer the time, and the organisers reserve the right to make minor changes to the schedule as necessary.

Monday 31st August: Travel to Avila for 9pm dinner at CITeS.

Tuesday 1st September: After Mass there is a chance to visit some of the key sites in Avila, including St Teresa’s birthplace and the first monastery of her reform, San José. Tour and evening meal at CITeS.

Wednesday 2nd September: We make a day pilgrimage to the mystical city of Toledo. Known as ‘The Jerusalem of the West’ and ‘The City of Three Cultures’, for many centuries it was a unique place of interaction and exchange between Eastern and Western culture. To this day the unique blend of Jewish, Muslim and Christian cultures is seen in the literature, art and spirituality inspired by this great city. During our day, as well as visiting one of its remaining synagogues (El Tránsito), we shall visit the El Greco House and Museum, and the Cathedral built on the site of the old city mosque. We shall also be having lunch, and celebrating the Eucharist with the Discalced Carmelite Friars of Toledo.

Thursday 3rd September: We shall again be based in Avila and have time to visit the monastery of the Encarnación which was Teresa’s home for much of her religious life and where we shall celebrate the Eucharist, the Convent of Saint Thomas (centre of The Inquisition), and Avila’s awe-inspiring medieval and renaissance Cathedral.

Friday 4th September: We will visit the fairytale city of Segovia, including the tomb and priory of St. John of the Cross, where we will celebrate the Eucharist. There will be the opportunity to visit the Plaza Major, Cathedral, Alcázar palace, and the world-famous Roman aqueduct.

Saturday 5th September: This is designated as a ‘Desert Day’ for personal silent reflection to allow time to absorb the peace and serenity of Avila at our own pace. Breakfast and lunch will be in silence.

Sunday 6th September: Our final excursion will take us to Salamanca, the celebrated centre of medieval learning. As well as enjoying the beauty of the old and new Cathedrals, we will tour the university and visit the Carmelite friars (currently the centre of the Ancient Observance’s European novitiate). After lunch we travel to Teresa’s final resting place, Alba de Tormes, to visit the saint’s shrine and the church museum.

Monday 7th September: The pilgrimage-retreat ends after early breakfast and prayer with a coach available at 10.00 for those requiring transport to Barajas Airport, Madrid.

Pilgrimage leaders

Fr. Kevin Alban, O.Carm., is a friar of the British Province of Carmelites with particular expertise in the history and spirituality of Carmel. He is a teacher and spiritual director.

Johan Bergström-Allen, T.O.C., is a Lay Carmelite, Communications & Outreach Manager of the British Province of Carmelites, and founding Board Member of the Carmelite Institute of Britain & Ireland.

Fr. Liam Finnerty, O.C.D., is a friar of the Anglo-Irish Province of Discalced Carmelites. He has a particular interest in formation, and is Chair of the Carmelite Forum of Britain & Ireland.

Professor Peter Tyler, is professor of Pastoral Theology and Spirituality at St. Mary’s University, Twickenham, London. He writes and lectures extensively on the subject of the Spanish mystics and their relevance to contemporary life.

Julienne McLean is a registered psychotherapist in private practice. She lives in North London and has published Towards Mystical Union: A Modern Commentary on Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle.
Registration
Due to the seat limitations of the coach and in order to maintain the intimacy of a retreat, places are limited to 45 pilgrims. Booking will open on 1st April 2015. Since the primary purpose of the Carmelite Forum of Britain & Ireland is to offer formation and foster friendship between the various branches of the Carmelite Family, registration will initially be open to professed members of the Carmelite and Discalced Carmelite Orders (friars, nuns, sisters, tertiaries/seculars, and members of institutes affiliated to the orders). From mid-April places will be open to any member of the public on a first-come, first-served basis. A waiting-list system will be operated if necessary. Booking will close on 30th June 2015. Demand is expected to be high for this pilgrimage, especially in this ‘Teresa 500 Year’. Other pilgrimages to Spain organised by various groups, including one organised by our partner group in Ireland, are advertised on our website: www.teresaofavila.org

To download the registration form for this pilgrimage, please visit our website: www.teresaofavila.org

Cost
The cost of the pilgrimage is £575.00 which covers return coach transport from Barajas Airport in Madrid to CITeS in Avila, full board accommodation at CITeS, and excursion costs (transport, meals, and entrance fees). It does not cover your own transport to Madrid, nor personal expenses. The price is set in British Sterling, but in the (we hope unlikely) event of major fluctuations in the exchange rate with the Euro, the Forum reserves the right to issue an additional levy up to £150.00. Full payment is required at the time of booking, however cheques will not be banked until a place has been confirmed. In the event of places being unavailable, cheques will be returned to the issuer. Please make cheques payable to Annette Goulden.

Health, Liability, and Insurance
The Carmelite Forum of Britain & Ireland does not operate as a travel agent or tour operator, and is not liable for any claims made upon it. From collection at Madrid Airport or on arrival at CITeS, the tour operator is CITeS; at all other times you are responsible for your own travel. You are advised to have your own travel insurance, and to bring an EHIC European Health Insurance Card. Please note that the pilgrimage will require a certain amount of walking and physical fitness; anyone requiring wheelchairs or specialist medical equipment is welcome to join us, but is required to make their own arrangements as we cannot guarantee assistance.

For further information please contact:

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The registration form for booking will be available on our website from 1st April 2015. Please visit www.teresaofavila.org to download.