

Who are the Lay Carmelites?



Well, we're a lot like most families!

Some of us are young, some old, and a lot in between.

There are Carmelite Friars [priests and brothers] and lay men and women who follow the Carmelite way in their daily lives [Lay Carmelites] as well as sisters and nuns.



The first Carmelites who came to Australia were two Lay Carmelites, James Dempsey and John Butler. They arrived in 1802 having been transported to Sydney for their alleged involvement in the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

Both became significant members of the fledgling colony. During the years when there were no priests in the Colony, Dempsey's house became the centre of Catholic Life.

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.

St Therese of Lisieux

John Butler was known around Sydney as *The Carmelite*.

The Carmelite Friars have been in Australia since 1881.

Since then we have been supporting people on their spiritual journey in parishes, schools, retreat houses, spirituality centres and in Zimbabwe, Indonesia and now East Timor.

The Carmelite Way is marked by prayer, community and action.

Our relationship with God leads us to build communities of mutual support and inspires us into actions which nurture, support and help people to develop their lives.

We are inspired by the Old Testament prophet, *Elijah*.



In quiet moments, Elijah discovered the presence of God within himself and found the ways to allow God's love to meet concrete human needs.

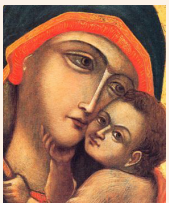
He gave food to a starving widow and her son. He raised a young man from the dead and gave him back to his family. He led the people of Israel to a rediscovery of God in their lives.

Contemplative prayer, in my opinion, is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.

St Teresa of Avila



The Carmelites
Australia and East Timor
community • prayer • action

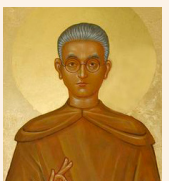


Mary also inspires us as a woman who met the challenges of her life without losing faith in God. She cared for her family, worried about her son, lost him for three days and, grief-stricken, watched him die. She was also there, praying with the disciples at Pentecost – the mother of a new family of faith and love.

Over the centuries many other Carmelites have also inspired us. People like *St John of the Cross* and *Teresa of Avila* who showed us how to search for and discover God's heart within our own.



Others like *Therese of Lisieux* who showed us how to live with simple good-heartedness and generosity.



Closer to our own day *Blessed Titus Brandsma*, martyred in the concentration camp at Dachau during World War II for his stance against Hitler's National Socialism.

Elijah declared at his appearance: "As God lives in whose presence I stand!" This living in the presence of God, this placing himself before the face of God is a characteristic which the children of Carmel have inherited from the great Prophet.

Bl Titus Brandsma

Lay Carmelites are called to live in the presence of the living and true God. They look for every possibility and occasion to reach divine intimacy.

Lay Carmelites are constantly open to a transformation of mind and heart.

Lay Carmelites discover that they are brothers and sisters and bring to all the news that we are children of the one God. They become enthusiastic about the great works God performs.

Lay Carmelites look for hidden signs of God and cultivate the seeds of justice, honesty, sincerity, courtesy and strength of spirit.

Lay Carmelites discover that they, *like Mary*, are called to sing the wonders that the Lord has performed in their lives;

to welcome the Word, to be open to it and to embrace it fully;

that *like Elijah*, they are ready to defend the rights of those who are downtrodden, to leave everything to go into the desert where they will discover the true and living God.

Lay Carmelites live a life of prayer, focused on a personal dialogue with the Lord. They are centred on the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.

"Every Lay Carmelite is like a spark of love thrown into the forest of life: they must be able to enflame anyone who approaches them."

From the Rule of Carmel

- To be a Lay Carmelite is to respond to a call from God. Discernment is important. Is a person's desire to be a Carmelite also God's desire for them?
- Most often, discernment takes place with a Lay Carmelite community, however people who are unable to be physically present at community meetings are able to become Distant Members.
- Within each community, a member is appointed to the role of Formator. This involves accompanying the enquirer in the process of discernment.
- For enquirers who are isolated by distance or other circumstances, the National Formator accompanies the person either by phone, email or post.
- After a period of initial discernment, the enquirer may then request to be received into the Order; after a further time of discernment, the person may then move through the processes of First Profession and Final Profession. This usually takes about five years.

INITIAL CONTACT FOR LAY CARMELITES

Interested in finding out more about
The Lay Carmelites?

Contact Mrs. Christine Wade
chris.chris7@southernphone.com.au

or

Fr Paul Gurr, O.Carm.
cherith45@bigpond.com
Tel: (02) 4236 0310