

Fr Janu in his workshop, where creating beautiful woodwork creations brings him peace and balance. Image: Diocese of Parramatta.



*A cuppa with the priest*

## Fr Januario Pinto OCarm Parish Priest Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish Wentworthville

STORY CHRISTINA GRETTON

**Fr Januario Pinto (Janu) OCarm, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Wentworthville has mastered the art of living in the moment. Over the course of our conversation, we return to this point, whether we are talking about his work as a priest, the upcoming Diocesan Synod or even advice for our young pilgrims about to head to Europe in the footsteps of the saints.**

Originally from Timor-Leste, Fr Janu joined the Carmelites straight from school in 2004. He arrived in Australia in 2014 to continue his Theological studies at the Yarra Theological Union (YTU) in Melbourne after studying English at the Australian Catholic University.

His first parish placement was in Brisbane before arriving in Wentworthville as Assistant Parish Priest in 2021 in the middle of the pandemic lockdown. In December 2022, he was appointed Parish Priest.

While we sit over a 'cuppa', Fr Janu reflects on his philosophy for life.

*“Just keep going,  
keep planning,  
keep doing and  
keep learning.”*

This approach to his spirituality sees Fr Janu keeping busy serving others, and ensuring there is balance in his life. “We all need to have dreams and plans and goals,” he says. But rather than focus on the goals, he remains focused on the present.

*“It’s important to find God’s  
presence where you are, and  
whenever people need me,  
I will be there.”*

When I ask how he can stay in the present in a busy, stressful world, Fr Janu reveals, alongside hobbies such as photography, fishing and cycling, his great passion. “When I’m stressed, I go to my ‘chapel’,” he says of his woodworking studio metres from his parish office. The cuppa abandoned, we go to explore Fr Janu’s converted garage. Inside, hundreds of pieces of timber that Fr Janu collects when he is out and about are piled alongside two mitre saws, a planer, a table saw, a large workbench and dozens of tools. Everything, says Fr Janu, has been donated or recycled.

On the wall is a picture of St Joseph teaching the child Jesus carpentry skills. As a child in Timor-Leste, Fr Janu’s grandfather taught him carpentry. Now, working with wood brings him peace. Fr Janu makes beautiful timber tables, crosses and other items using a variety of woods. One of his favourite pieces is a small altar used in the Carmelite Community Chapel with an intricate pattern of inlaid wood. The pieces he has used reflect his life in Australia so far. “There’s wood from Glenrowan in Victoria, wood from Brisbane, Tasmanian Oak from the old kneelers in the Wentworthville Church and some Cedar given to me by a parishioner,” he points out.

Fr Janu sees Jesus as someone who also lived in the moment through his availability to the people around him.

*“Jesus was there to listen to  
people. It’s one thing that  
made him famous.”*

“People felt listened to. They could tell him about their grief, or their experience and he was just there with them,” he says. “We are all called to do that in our pastoral ministry,” he says.

*“Listening is healing. When  
people can share their stories,  
it is like a release.”*

The World Youth Day pilgrims will be visiting the convent of Carmelite saint, St Teresa of Ávila. Fr Janu’s advice? “Don’t think too much about the history when you go to a holy place,” he advises. “But think what it is about that saint that you can bring into your own life right now.” †

Fr Janu (left) and Fr Anthony Scerri OCarm in the community chapel with the altar made by Fr Janu. Image: Diocese of Parramatta.



## Parish Profile

# Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Wentworthville

## Grounded in Carmelite Spirituality

STORY MARY BRAZELL

The parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Wentworthville, have been blessed with Carmelite friars since they were appointed by Cardinal Gilroy to care for the parish in 1956. Today, without even knowing it, the parishioners find they are living the Carmelite charisms of contemplation, community and service.

The parish was established in 1946, originally as St Columba's, Wentworthville, which included the nearby areas of Westmead, Pendle Hill and Toongabbie.

93-year-old Fr Anthony Scerri OCarm first arrived in the parish two years after his ordination to the priesthood, when the parishioners were mainly Maltese. Today, the parish has over 72 different nationalities who have "brought a new life into the parish," he said.

"It's one of the most diverse and colourful parishes I've ever been fortunate enough to experience," Parish Secretary and parishioner of 23 years, Paola Yévenes, shared.



A view of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Wentworthville.  
Image: Mary Brazell/Diocese of Parramatta

*“Together, we’ve celebrated countless Masses, assisted each other in improving our parish, grieved together and watched our parish children grow into wonderful leaders.”*

Frank Zammit, a parishioner of 58 years, explained, "OLMC is a vibrant parishioners' second home where we meet, work, gather around the Eucharistic table like a family and we do not rush out after Mass, but stop for a while to chat with the priests and amongst ourselves."

Over the decades, the parishioners feel that the Carmelite charisms have embedded themselves into the parish.

"We know we can find them when we need them. They are always ready to hear us and share with us our sorrows and joys and attend to our spiritual needs," Frank said of the Carmelite priests who have lived and served in the parish.

Paola added, "I think the parish has embraced the Carmelite spirituality even without knowing it. Our parishioners may not be able to list the charisms, but they are living it in what they do."

"Living in the same place you work has made the Carmelites very accessible to our community. Each one is deeply spiritual and faithful to the Carmelite charisms. They have taught me much about finding God in the silence, in the people and even in the soap bubbles in my kitchen sink," she said.

Each priest has brought his own style to the altar, parishioner of nearly 40 years, Cyprian (Skip) Fernandes, said, describing some of the former priests in the community as "much-loved", "sparkling", "delightful", "honest" and "full of energy".



Parish Secretary Paola Yévenes (left), Parish Priest Fr Januario (Janu) Pinto OCarm (second left) and Priest in Residence Fr Anthony Scerri OCarm are seen in the Priory at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Wentworthville.  
Image: Mary Brazell/Diocese of Parramatta

The parish has been very blessed over its history to have been visited by the relics of famous Carmelite St Thérèse of Lisieux in 2003 and again in 2020 alongside the community to remember their call as missionary people.

St Thérèse will be amongst the 12 saints whose footsteps our Parramatta pilgrims will be walking during their pilgrimage to World Youth Day. In celebrating Mass to honour the relics in 2020, Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta, said, "We always carry with us the gift of faith that Thérèse and her parents Zélie and Louis exemplify for us."

The current parish priest, Fr Januario (Janu) Pinto OCarm, may have only been in the parish for a short time, but parishioners appreciate his joyful, can-do attitude.

"Fr Janu showers his youthful energy on all of us and on anyone he meets," Skip described.

"That smile of his is completely infectious," Paola said. "He's taken on this new role which he's never done before and leading with example."

"When he puts his mind to anything, he will make it work. His motto in life is 'just do it' – just get up and do it."

As the Diocese of Parramatta prepares for its first-ever Diocesan Synod, where the voices of

our parishioners will be crucial in directing our Church into the future, the OLMC team encouraged the community to remember their call as missionary people.

"We need to take little, gentle steps here and there that will lead to huge steps later on," Fr Anthony said.

Paola added, "What the Carmelites do really well, in their example, is opening up God and not limiting Him or His love and by being open to other views and opinions." †

## Fr Anthony has a new book!

After years of requests, Fr Anthony has published a book about his life's events and experiences, memories of people and places through the lens of kindness and humour, always mindful of Our Father as friend and companion on his journey.

You can purchase *Carmelite on a Mission* from Carmelite Media for \$US21.90 (\$A33.17), which includes postage and handling from Melbourne, or as an e-book from Apple Books or Amazon by visiting [catholicoutlook.info/FrScerriBook](http://catholicoutlook.info/FrScerriBook)

