

CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

A call to a life of prayer and intimate union with God

Deacon Rick and Sue Athey, T.O.Carm.

1

Prayer of the Carmelite Family

Tender-hearted God, renew the gift of the Holy Spirit within the Carmelite Family as we seek to live following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Teach us, like Mary to contemplate your wisdom. Fill us, like Elijah, with zeal for Your glory. Inspire us, like Simon Stock, to ponder Your will in times of change. Like Teresa, John, Therese and Titus, may we live always in Your presence, and make us prophets of Your kingdom. May our lives of prayer, community and service be a sign to the world that God lives, in whose presence we stand. This grace we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

2

History of the Carmelites

- Mountains of northern Israel
- Pilgrimages / Crusades
- Living in the caves of Elijah
 - See 1 and 2 Kings
- Dedicated to Mary
- Rule of St. Albert



3

Fled to Europe

- Mendicants – beggars
- New habits
- Struggle to keep “Carmel” within



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CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

- Characterized by an intense thirst for an immediate and direct experience of God.
- Centered on prayer, understood as loving friendship with God, and contemplation as the free gift of God.
- Authentic prayer and contemplation is accompanied by and promotes growth in virtue (both human and theological). This leads to love of God and love of neighbor.
- For St. Teresa of Avila, prayer and contemplation are paramount as we seek God in our lives. As we become filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, God is then able to use us to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's reign on earth.



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CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY (St. Therese)

O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to *Love* You and make You *Loved*, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish Your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory You have prepared for me in Your Kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be a saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg of You, O my God! To be Yourself my Sanctity! Act of oblation to Merciful Love – Offering of myself as a Victim of Holocaust to God's Merciful Love

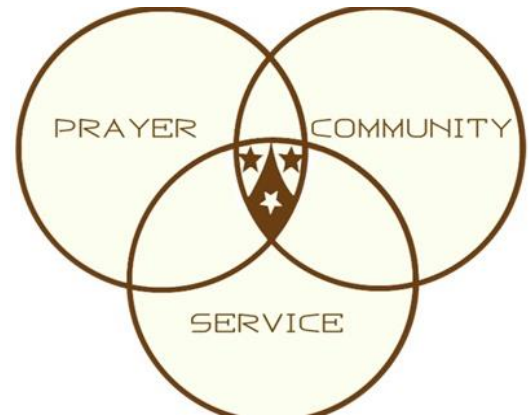


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CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

Three Charisms

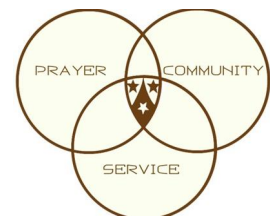
1. Prayer – the challenge of Carmel is to seek God’s presence in prayer while living an active, busy life in the midst of the world. Pope JP II confirms that in Carmel, prayer becomes life and life flourishes in prayer.” (Carmel’s Call, Letter to the Carmelite Order, p. 37)



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Charisms of Carmelite Spirituality

2. Community – “Carmel is not an organization, even a Christian organization, but a Christian community committed to leading an evangelical life. It is one way among many in which Christians can live out their baptismal call to discipleship. Consequently, the Call to Carmel is a vocation. This vocation, like all vocations, requires not only careful discernment, but careful maintenance as the grace of vocation implies a commitment to perseverance in that vocation.” (Carmel’s Call, p. 66)



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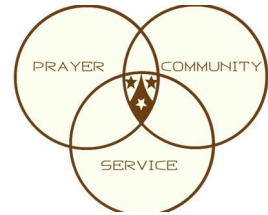
Charisms of Carmelite Spirituality

3. Service – all baptized persons are called to be involved in the mission of the Church. The entire Carmelite family is involved in that mission.

“The purpose of the Church is to spread the kingdom of Christ on earth so that all may share in that salvation brought about by the Cross. All Carmelites are called to some form of service as this is an integral part of the charism given to the Order by God.” (Phase I Formation Guide)

“Let all you do have the Lord’s Word for accompaniment.”
(Rule of St. Albert)

The service performed is not as important as the Spirit in which we do it. Carmelite ministry is not confined – we are to serve where we are called. (includes both corporal and spiritual aspects of service)



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Elijah and Mary as examples for ministry



- Elijah – *With zeal I have been most zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts (1 Kings 20:10).*
- Mary – accompanied Jesus every step of his earthly life; even to the foot of the Cross.
- Prayer as Ministry – reserved for the cloistered Carmelite nuns and those who are aged or infirm

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CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

• So what is distinctive in Carmel?

- **No 'founder'**
- **Modelled on Elijah and Mary**
 - Mary and Elijah are our patrons or models
- **Inspired by Carmel's saints**
 - Holy men and women who have lived the Carmelite charisms
 - Doctors of the Church
 - John of the Cross
 - Teresa of Avila (aka Teresa of Jesus)
 - Therese of Lisieux (Therese of the Child Jesus)
 - Many other canonized saints, blessed and those who are not canonized



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Mary as our model

"Generations of Carmelites, from the beginnings up to today, in their journey toward the *holy mountain, Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Roman Missal, Collect for the Mass in honor of the the BVM of Mt. Carmel, July 16), have sought to model their lives after the example of Mary. For this reason, contemplation of the Blessed Virgin flourishes in Carmel and in every soul moved by a tender affection towards She who is our most holy Mother. ...

Carmelites justly have chosen Mary as their Patroness and spiritual Mother and keep her always in mind. She who is the Most Pure Virgin and who leads all to the perfect knowledge and imitation of Christ... For members of the Carmelite Family, Mary ... is not only a model to imitate, but is also present as Mother and Sister in whom one can confide."

(Letter of JP II to the Carmelite Family on the 750th Anniversary of the Giving of the Scapular)



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Elijah – Patron of the Carmelite Order

Revered as “Father of all Carmelites” and the ‘first Carmelite’

Only religious order to claim a strong relationship with an OT figure

History on Mt. Carmel – men seeking God in silence and solitude in a location famous for Elijah’s confrontation with the prophets of Baal. All Elijah’s actions were done in the presence of God.

1 Kings 19:10 ‘With zeal I have been zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts’. Adopted as the MOTTO for Carmelites.

Encountered God in silence and stillness - the ‘still small voice’



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The challenge of Carmel is to seek God’s presence
in prayer while living an active, busy life.

Sacramental life – The Eucharist is the chief prayer of every Carmelite.

Liturgy of the Hours – the prayer of the Church

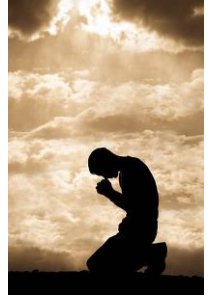
Silent Meditation that leads to Contemplative prayer – called to enter profoundly into this silent prayer rooted in the Word of God.

Each of you is to stay in his own cell or nearby, pondering the
Lord’s law day and night and keeping watch at his prayer unless
attending to some other duty. Rule of St. Albert

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Contemplation

- A term used in many ways
- Different from meditation which is based on the mind/intellect
- Sometimes called “Infused Contemplation” to clarify that it is a gift from God and cannot be forced by our human actions.
- For Carmelites contemplation is not meditation, it is not ecstasy, it does not happen by the person willing it. God gives the person a particular “sense” or experience of God within our soul.
- Contemplative prayer is a *communion* in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, “to his likeness”. CCC 2713



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Carmelite Spirituality Part II

John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila

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BROWN SCAPULAR Catholic/Carmelite Sacramental



According to tradition, in the year **1251** a Carmelite superior general living in Cambridge, England, **St. Simon Stock**, was praying for heavenly intercession for his order, as the Carmelites were facing trials and oppression at the time. On July 16th, 1251, he received a visit from Our Lady in answer to his prayers. He prayed fervently **for her "privilegium", the special protection a lord gave to his vassals.** The lord would protect his life and property, in return for the loyalty of the one making the request. *"My yoke is sweet and my burden is light."* The Scapular represents the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ which Mary helps us to bear.

Scapulars have been worn by monks since the 6th century as a sign of their devotion to Christ, and protection of their habits while they work. The brown scapular is a miniature representation of the scapulars worn by the Carmelite Friars.

The **Brown Scapular is a sacramental**, second only to the rosary in historical significance for the laity. It signifies **our devotion to Mary**, our mother, and is a **visible sign of her protection**. It is not a magical charm, a guarantee of salvation, or an excuse for not living a life of Christian piety and remaining in a state of grace.

Those who wish to wear the scapular should be **enrolled** in this in a rite performed by a priest or deacon found in the Book of Blessings. The person who wears the scapular is blessed as a scapular wearer. New scapulars do not need to be blessed as the blessing remains with the wearer.

Until the past generation or two most clergy wore the brown scapular. Many Catholics were enrolled in the Brown Scapular Confraternity at the time of their first communion. Pope St. John Paul II never took his off, even when he had surgery after being shot, and attributed Mary as the one who saved his life.

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Carmelite Spirituality is best seen in the lives of Carmelite saints

- Three Doctors of the Church (masters of interior prayer)
 - Teresa of Avila – first woman to be named a Doctor of the Church
 - John of the Cross – Mystic and Poet
 - Therese of Lisieux – her little way of childlike trust in God
- Many saints have reached the highest levels (mansions, castles) of intimacy with God known as spiritual marriage but few have been given the graces necessary to write about their experience. This is the legacy of our Carmelite Doctors of the Church. (It is typical that those reaching spiritual marriage or the 7th Interior Castle do not have the words to describe their experience because it is beyond words, just as God himself is beyond our description or understanding.)

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SPIRITUALITY OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

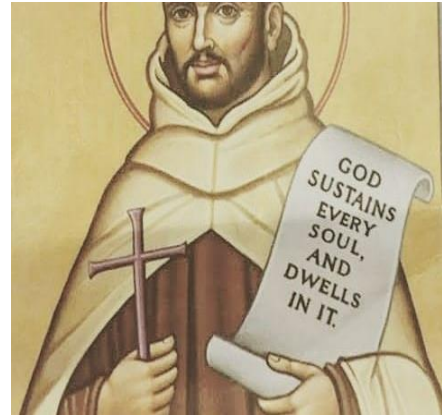
1542-1591 Spanish Carmelite Priest, Poet, Mystic, Doctor of the Church

Major works include: *Spiritual Canticle*, *Dark Night of the Soul*, and *Ascent of Mount Carmel*

Asked by Teresa of Avila to help reform the Carmelite Order back to its original rule.

John was the spiritual director for the nuns of the reformed communities. His writings were meant to assist the nuns as they deepened their relationship with God and moved toward spiritual union.

He is a **patron saint of mystics, contemplatives, and of Spanish poets.**



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SPIRITUALITY OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

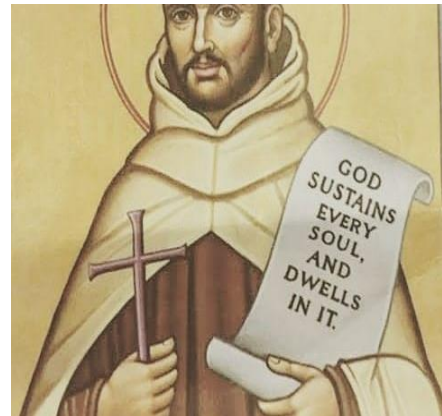
John was born into a poor, working family. His father died when he was young and his mother placed him in a Jesuit orphanage. He was found to be bright and witty and was sent to a university where he excelled in his study of philosophy and theology.

He entered the Carmelite Order, but was not content with the practices in the order. He considered joining the Carthusians, until he met Teresa of Avila who asked him to help her reform the Carmelites.

His fellow Carmelite brothers did not agree with his desire for being reformed. They took him captive, treated him badly, kept him locked in a small dark room for many months.

In this dark place he found a deeper relationship with God and began many of his written works.

He eventually escaped and was able to be a spiritual director to some of the monasteries that Teresa of Avila founded.



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Spirituality of John of the Cross

- JPII wrote his Doctoral Thesis on John of the Cross and said: “St John of the Cross did not write his works with a view to the investigations of scholars or those in higher studies; they are written for the purpose of directing contemplatives toward union with God.”
- The Christian life can be divided into active and contemplative
- The action to serve one’s neighbor, charity, is the active life.
- The direct search for the love of God, directly seeking intimacy with God, is the contemplative life.

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Spirituality of John of the Cross

- Saint John of the Cross emphasizes the **nearness of God**, who is “nearer to us than we are to ourselves.” In *The Spiritual Canticle* he makes this point in a strikingly beautiful way:
- *“Oh, then, soul, most beautiful among all creatures, so anxious to know the dwelling place of your Beloved so you may go in search of him and be united with him, now we are telling you that you yourself are his dwelling and his secret inner room and hiding place. There is reason for you to be elated and joyful in seeing that all your good and hope is so close as to be within you, or better, that you cannot be without him. Behold, exclaims the Bridegroom, the kingdom of God is within you [Lk. 17:21]. And his servant, the apostle St. Paul, declares: You are the temple of God [2 Cor. 6:16]. It brings special happiness to a person to understand that God is never absent....”*

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Spirituality of John of the Cross

- **Mortification**, also called abnegation, renunciation, sacrifice, detach the soul from created things, frees the soul's capacity to love from every obstacle that prevents its impulse to God.
- "Hence, we call this nakedness [this mortification of appetites] a night for the soul, for we are not discussing the mere lack of things; this lack will not divest the soul if it craves for all these objects. We are dealing with the **denudation [emptying] of the soul's appetites and gratifications**. This is what leaves it free and empty of all things, even though it possesses them. Since the things of the world cannot enter the soul, they are not in themselves an encumbrance or harm to it; rather, it is the will and appetite dwelling within that causes the damage when set on these things" (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, Book One, Chapter 3).

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Spiritual Principles of John of the Cross

- **Detachment**, where we begin to control our desire for things that are stunting or limiting our true moral and spiritual development, eliminating anything which is immoral, and strictly limiting things which are harmful because they keep us away from other activities which are far more humanizing and God-directed.
- **Dark Night** where God then allows a profound period of spiritual aridity to beset the believer, the ultimate purpose of which is to effectuate an even **more powerful purification of our inordinate passions and desires**, especially as these vices begin to manifest themselves on a spiritual level (as in craving for spiritual delights and pleasures).

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Spiritual Principles of John of the Cross

- “At the time of the **aridities** of this sensory night, God makes the exchange we mentioned by **withdrawing the soul from the life of the senses and placing it in that of spirit** — that is, he brings it from meditation to contemplation — where the soul no longer has the power to work or meditate with its faculties on the things of God. Spiritual persons suffer considerable affliction in this night, owing not so much to the aridities they undergo as to their **fear of having gone astray**....The attitude necessary in this night of the senses is to pay no attention to discursive meditation since this is not the time for it. **They should allow the soul to remain in rest and quietude even though it may seem obvious to them that they are doing nothing and wasting time**....Through patience and perseverance in prayer, they will be doing a great deal without activity on their part....They **must be content simply with a loving and peaceful attentiveness to God**, and live without the concern, without the effort, and without the desire to taste or feel him. **All these desires disquiet the soul and distract it from the peaceful, quiet, and sweet idleness of the contemplation** that is being communicated to it” (*The Dark Night*, Book I, Chapter 10).

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Spiritual Principles of John of the Cross

- Among the effects of the passive night of the senses on the soul, Saint John of the Cross mentions the following: **“The love of God is practiced, because the soul is no longer attracted by sweetness and consolation, but by God only. . . . In the midst of these aridities and hardships, God communicates to the soul, when it least expects it, spiritual sweetness, most pure love, and spiritual knowledge of the most exalted kind, of greater worth and profit than any of which it had previous experience, though at first the soul may not think so, for the spiritual influence now communicated is most delicate and imperceptible by sense”** (*Dark Night of the Soul*, Book I, Chapter 13,
- Prayer, which consists essentially in **an affectionate colloquy with God**, kindles divine love in the heart, where mortification has prepared the place, **If we detach our heart from created things, it is not simply to place it in a void, but to fill it with love.**

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Spiritual Principles of John of the Cross

- John is considered the Doctor of the Union with God. When we seek God (active), God draws us to himself (passive).
- “Arise, then, beautiful soul; since you now know that your so-desired Beloved dwells in your heart, endeavor to be well hidden with Him, and in your breast embrace Him and you will feel Him with tenderness of love” (Canticle I, 10)
- John sees the consolations of this life as obstacles on the way to God. We must despoil ourselves of the attachments and appetites of this world, and seek only the Love of God and uniting our will with His.

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Spirituality of Teresa of Avila

- 1515-1582 Spanish Carmelite, mystic, reformer, Doctor of the Church
- Interior Castle, Way of Perfection, Book of her Life, several others
- First of ten children. Her mother died when she was fourteen
- At age 21 she ran away from home and entered a Carmelite convent in Avila, the convent of the Incarnation, with 180 nuns.
- While she was in prayer one day Christ told her that He wanted her to found a monastery under the patronage of St. Joseph.
- She went on to reform the Carmelites, established many new monasteries, and drew up new Constitutions for the reformed order.

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Spirituality from Teresa's Interior Castle

- **The soul.** Saint Teresa of Avila begins her famous book about the soul's progress in prayer and virtue by lamenting how little effort many people make to care for their immortal souls. She states that "faith tells us that we possess souls" made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, we should take time to consider the "soul's great dignity and beauty," and to "carefully preserve the soul's beauty." (Intr. 11; IC 28-29)
- **The castle metaphor.** Teresa envisions the soul "as if it were a castle made of a single diamond" in which there are seven mansions (each mansion containing many rooms). The outer walls of this castle constitute the human body. Outside the castle there are many "venomous creatures" who represent the attraction of sin which the soul is now trying to overcome. Those outside the castle are paralyzed by sin. (IC 28)

30

Spirituality from Teresa's Interior Castle

- It is through prayer that we enter the castle
- In the Interior Castle, St. Teresa identifies seven stages of prayer, or Castles, of which the first three are the prayer in the ascetical phase (self denial and spiritual discipline) of the spiritual life. The last four stages of prayer, from the fourth to the seventh mansions, represent the various degrees of mystical prayer progressing towards the highest castle where there is a spiritual betrothal (mystical espousal) and the transforming union or mystical marriage which is the highest state of prayer that can be reached in this life on earth

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Spirituality from Teresa's Interior Castle

- **God dwells in the soul.** A central concept of Teresa's spirituality is the realization that God is immanent – that is, He dwells within the innermost mansion of the human soul (thus, using Teresa's image of the castle, He dwells in the seventh mansion). "All harm comes to us from failing to realize that God is near." For "the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Scripturally you are the temple of God where he dwells on Earth.
- **The soul's mission.** The soul can journey within these mansions to unite itself to God, so as to plant itself, like a tree, in the "living waters of life." This *journey to God is the soul's essential mission*. Even in this lifetime, the soul can make it all the way to the seventh mansion where it is completely united with God. This journey is completed in Heaven where the soul experiences the beatific vision. (IC 33)

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Spirituality from Teresa's Interior Castle

- **The soul's enemy: mortal sin.** If we knew how much damage one mortal sin does to the soul, Teresa believes we would go to the "greatest trouble imaginable" to avoid committing such a sin. "No thicker darkness" clouds the soul than mortal sin: it produces nothing but "misery and filth," bringing "endless and eternal evils in its train." (IC 33-34)
- **The journey begins with forgiveness.** We need to "beg" God to "deliver us" from such evil, and to redeem ourselves "in the blood of Christ," so as to "remove the pitch which blackens the diamond." (IC 35)

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Spirituality from Teresa's Interior Castle

- **We enter the castle through prayer.** Escaping the "snakes and other poisonous creatures" that live outside the castle, and redeemed by God's boundless mercy, the soul enters the castle through prayer. "Souls without prayer are like people whose bodies and limbs are paralyzed." (IC 31)
- **Union with God** is our goal. God dwells in the seventh mansion where we can become united with God, forsaking all human attachments, and seeking for our soul to rest there, drawn there by God, not merited by our own effort but as a gift from the God who loves us.

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Spirituality of Teresa of Avila

Nada te turbe (Let nothing disturb you) is attributed to Teresa, having been found within her breviary:

Let nothing disturb you.
 Let nothing make you afraid.
 All things are passing.
 God alone never changes.
 Patience gains all things.
 If you have God you will want for nothing.
 God alone suffices.

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Carmelite Spirituality

- The fundamental idea of Carmelite Spirituality is that **God desires a relationship with us**, there is a divine invitation. John says "if anyone is seeking God, the Beloved is seeking that person much more" (LF 3:28)
- Our response to this invitation is Prayer.
- Carmelite spirituality is meant for all. It is a way of following Jesus Christ and walking the path of the gospel characterized by a passionate thirst for an immediate and direct experience of God. It is a spirituality which is centered on prayer, understood as **loving friendship with God** made stronger through many **intimate conversations with the One we love**, and **contemplation as the free gift of God who draws us to union with Him**.
- **The formula for Carmelite spirituality is simple:**
- **Go to your cell, a quiet place, where you seek to be with God.**
- **Take time to be with the one who deserves all of your love.**
- **Have an intimate conversation, Listen to God, join His Will with yours.**

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Models of Carmelite Prayer

- Elijah, the biblical model for the Carmelites, the outspoken prophet in defense of Yahweh against the false gods promoted by the Baal priests, who prays and God answers by bringing down fire from heaven. Elijah, who was fearful and ran away, nourished by angels, and found God in a still small voice, alone, in a cave.
- Mary, who said yes to an angel from God, devoted her life to God's Will, who became the Theotokos – mother of God. Mary who raised up Jesus as a human son and suffered with Him in his journeys and teaching and crucifixion. Mary who sits at the right hand of her divine son in heaven and intercedes for us in our prayers as our mother. Mary, our protector as indicated in her mantel, the Brown Scapular, that we wear.

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Carmelite Spirituality – Part III

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Laity can live the Carmelite Spirituality

- Desire for a deep intimate relationship with God
- Drawn to a life of prayer for priests and for the world
- Great love for the Virgin Mary
- Both branches include the laity
 - Lay Carmelites aka 3rd Order Carmelites (Ancient Observance)
 - Secular Carmelites (Disalced Carmelites)
- Lay communities for both branches in Colorado Springs
 - Periodically open to accept those interested into the formation process

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Summary of Carmelite Spirituality



- Unlike many other spiritualities or religious groups, in Carmel there is no founder or set practice of ministry.
- Carmelite spirituality is based upon God dwelling within our souls and us working to do those things that draw us closer to union with God.
- Carmelite spirituality uses the model of Elijah who listened to God, did what God asked of him, and retreated to silent places to be with God.
- Carmelite spirituality is also based on Mary, our spiritual mother. She gave her complete Yes to God, never wavering in her total love for Him. She is our example of following God our whole life, loving him in our neighbors, and being totally devoted to God.

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Recommended Reading to get started

- Teresa of Avila -*Interior Castle, Way of Perfection*, and more
- Therese of Lisieux – *Story of a Soul*
- John of the Cross – *Spiritual Canticle, Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, and more
- Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection – *Practice of the Presence of God*
- *Union with God According to St John of the Cross* by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene
- *Fire Within* by Fr. Thomas Dubay
- *Hidden Mountain, Secret Garden* by Anthony Lillis

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CARMELITE SAINTS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

- Teresa of Jesus (Avila) (Doctor)
- John of the Cross (Doctor)
- Therese of Lisieux (The Little Flower) (Doctor)
- Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) (Martyr)
- Titus Brandsma (Martyr)
- Mary Magdalene de Pazzi
- Albert of Jerusalem
- Angelus
- Simon Stock
- Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection



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