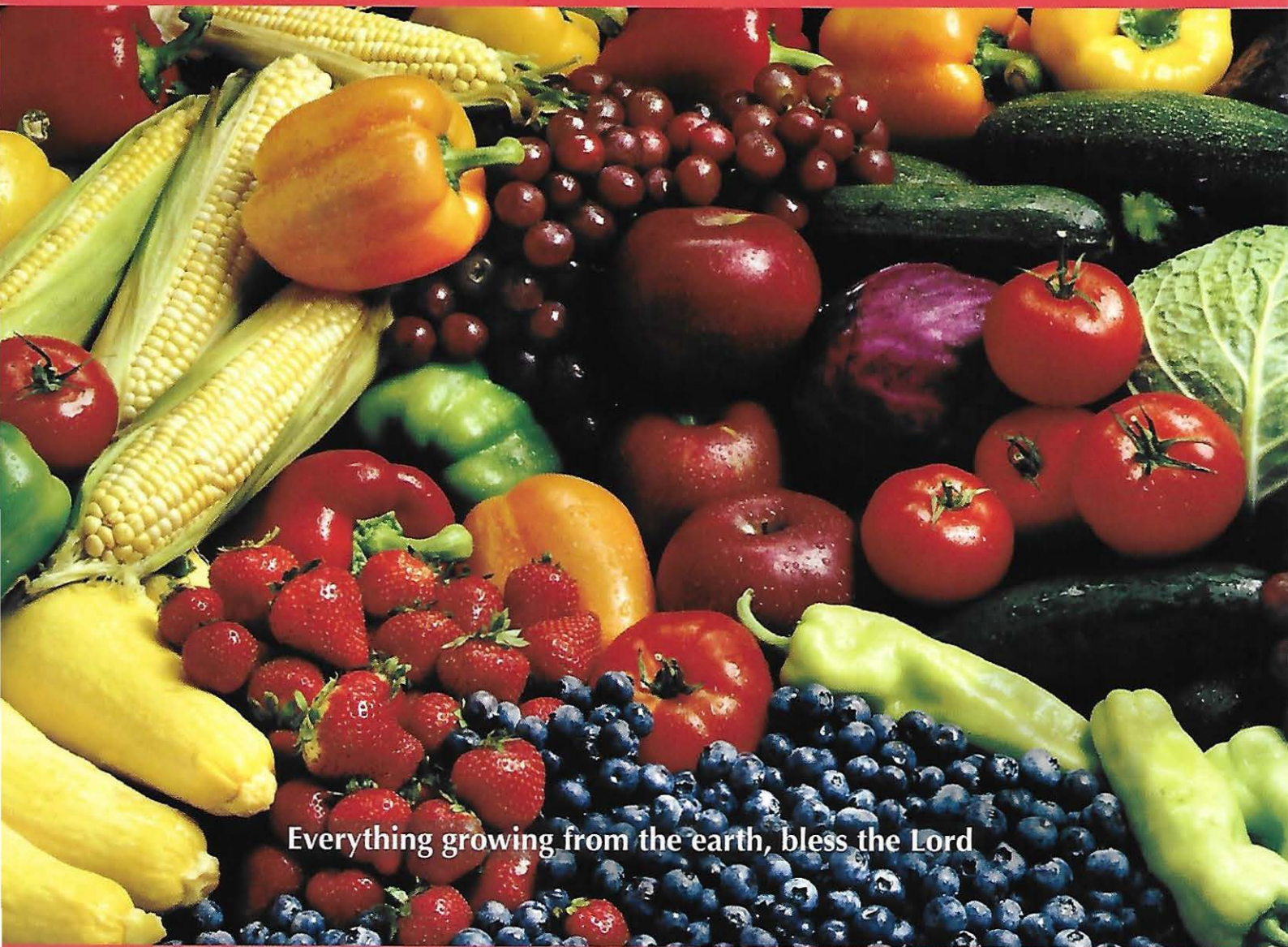


Carmel Clarion



Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord

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The covers of the Carmel Clarion 2016 issues are a theme celebrating the gifts and the beauty found in nature. Carmelites pray for these with gratitude and joy throughout the year.

We are blessed with Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall.

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From the Provincial Delegate

While Christ alone has redeemed us, Mary has always been seen as a loving mother and protector. She has shown her patronage over the Order of Carmel from its beginnings. This patronage and protectoin came to be symbolized by the brown scapular, the essential part of the Carmelite habit. Mary is the masterpiece of the Blessed Trinity who united her to itself, bringing the feminine to its greatest possible realization inher. The scapular is a symbol of filial and grateful recognition of the mission the Most Blessed Trinity willed to confide to Mary in the history of salvation (from Catechesis and ritual).

St. Therese, who wanted to preach about Mary, teaches us that our Marian devotion must be based, not on conjecture or pious legends, but on the gospels themselves. If we follow her advice then the first time we encounter Mary is at the moment of the Annunciation. Here she assumes a contemplative stance before God. She has no agenda on her own. She is listening, receptive and open. In faith she will surrender to God's mysterious will.

We will next see her at the moment of the Visitation. She goes to help her cousin Elisabeth in her need. We see Mary putting love into practice. At the wedding feast of Cana, Mary recognizes the needs of

the couple and presents them to her Son. Because of her intervention he performs his first miracle and his disciples begin to believe in him. This is what she still does for us. She brings our human needs within the scope of her Son's saving power.

We will next find her at the foot of the cross. Never could she have known that her fiat would bring her there. She comforts her Son in his greatest anguish and shares in the mystery of his saving Passion. We pray she will be with us too at the hour of our death.

Mary is gathered together with the apostles in the upper room and prays for the gift of the Spirit that will bring us the church into existence. She continues to intercede for us even now.

We Carmelites, honor Mary under the title of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. It is not the geographical place that motivates us. Rather we seek to live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ in the company of Mary. It is the intimacy, the closeness that Jesus and Mary experience that we hope to share.

Fr. Salvatore, O.C.D.



Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Flowers for a lady/woman underscores something special in a relationship. But if someone chooses to identify a flower with a woman special to him it is something else altogether. And yet, Carmelites have been doing just that for well over 600 years.

The *Flos Carmeli* hymn is a sort of theme song for Carmelites identifying the object of their sustained affection for Mary, their *Star of the Ocean/Sea* who blooms like a beautiful flower atop Mt. Carmel the cradle of their Order.

This praise of Mary, Flower of Carmel was first published in 1369, less than a century after the extinction of their mother house in 1291 when Saracen or Muslim forces took over the Holy Land completely. Such a theme song is not unlike some we know from other climes: two come immediately to mind, one from the United States, another from Ireland;

*There's a yellow rose in Texas that I am goin'
to see, and Rose, rose, rose of Killarney sure
I love you.*

Though in the case of our *Flos Carmeli* hymn, this is not simply another Marian Order's preference for a song like *Bring flowers of the rarest, bring flowers of the fairest, from gardens and hillsides...* No, the verses we use to honor and praise our *Lady of the Place* of Carmel—a very ancient designation of Mary's presence to the hermits in that original monastery high

above the Mediterranean Sea—contain and express a bias embraced by all Carmelites, namely, that their life of dedication is likened by them to a struggle up, an ascent of Mt. Carmel, not unlike the way *Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel*.

Such a struggle nests in the history of ascetical efforts by the hermits on the heights where their Order was born, then thereafter wherever they went to resettle and serve the people as mendicant friars. Their song can help us both celebrate Mary and re-dedicate ourselves to the effort component of our ongoing history.

To appreciate this better there are several verses really worth mentioning. After the first strophe ends with the beloved title *Star of the Ocean/Sea*—as I just stated from the most ancient edition—in the second strophe, used by us Discalced Carmelites especially, we first hear the psychologically sensitive admission that the Carmelites are really in need of help: "...strengthen, help us / so feeble, so forlorn / great protectress." *Feeble* and *forlorn*—the alliteration is a poignant indication of how the petitioners are having, sometimes, a hard time and so they ask for protection. At any time, in any age the attempt made by devoted Christians like those who follow the Rule of Carmel can bring with it a certain degree of friction. But some definite spiritual realism shows thru here. And there is placid trust in Mary their great protectress. Their need opens

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the door to reliance on her as one who will surely protect them.

As we move on to strophe 3, however, we get a yet more stirring picture as we hear (the entire set of) verses:

*Be our armor;
Valiant for Christ when war
Rages around us,
Hold high the scapular,
Strong and saving.
In our stumbling
Guide us on God's wise way,
In our sorrow,
Comfort us as we pray:
Rich your mercy.*

The *armor* word evokes the epoch in which the original Carmelites inhabited the Mount—Crusaders were all around them in the Latin Crusader Kingdom, even if there was a mix among the hermits: surely a lot of penitents were on hand, those who went out to the Holy Land to atone for serious sins as well as some Crusaders who did not want to risk the return trip to their homelands in far-away Europe (aboard such fragile ships and against adverse forces such as enemy fleets).

Regardless, reliance on the scapular is present—*Hold high the scapular*—but this is a reliance that still does not preclude the possibility of *stumbling* nor feeling *sorrow*. Those words strike a note of humility in the latter verse: we are all that but we also go on (in the final two lines) to expect to find in Mary comfort and *rich...mercy* or commiseration.



This somewhat martial coloring to the hymn evokes that other term that the Carmelites on Mount Carmel used. As mentioned earlier they referred to Mary as the *domina loci* or the *Lady of the Place*. She was co-ruler of their property along with Jesus their liege-Lord to whom they offered, in the words of their beautiful Rule, *allegiance*. All of them, penitents and ex-Crusaders gave allegiance to an other-worldly sovereign and his queen.

Let us today, *per Mariam ad Jesum*, through Mary to Jesus, rededicate ourselves by a renewed sense of allegiance to Jesus. By doing so we do the best thing we can to honor and please her since she is totally at His service. We go on wearing our scapulars; we might offer an occasional flower to the Flower of Carmel, but we must never forget that it is a dedicated lifestyle that makes her happiest and we are only too happy to have the Eucharist of her Son available to us to serve as the gage, the effective sign of our Carmelite fidelity. We continue it now by professing our faith in His great work of salvation for us.

John Sullivan, O.C.D.
Washington, DC

The Gentle Presence of Mary

One hears it said occasionally that Mary is neglected in the Church today. There are certainly fewer manifestations of devotion: one thinks of May devotions in the past, as well as processions, popular novenas in churches, family Rosary and other indications of veneration and respect. Certainly there is a lesser quantity in devotional exercises than when I was a young Carmelite before Vatican II.

The Council itself is often blamed, wrongly indeed, for this fall-off. But it left us rich Marian teaching, later supplemented by two important papal documents on Mary: Paul VI "To Honour Mary" (*Marialis cultus*, 1974) and John Paul II, "Mother of the Redeemer" (*Redemptoris Mater*, 1987). So we are not lacking Church teaching of high quality about the Mother of God.

Recovering Mary

Yet unease remains. Shouldn't we be doing more? But more *what*? Perhaps the word "more" is not helpful. In devotion and spirituality quality is nearly always more important than quantity.

The worst way to start an evaluation of our Marian attitudes would be to indulge in big guilt feelings. If we have failed, then we can confidently rely on the Lord's mercy and on Mary's understanding of our frailty.

I can recall the years after the Council when many people, myself included, somewhat lost an earlier contact with the Mother of God. The older devotions no longer seemed attractive and nothing replaced them. Then I was asked to lecture on Mary and to teach Mariology at the Milltown Institute. That meant some serious thought and study. But it was



largely thinking at this stage: it was necessary to examine and grasp Church teaching and to impart it; I had to ensure that students could say the right things about Mary in examinations and essays.

There is an image that one encounters in the Charismatic Renewal: a drainpipe carrying water gets wet. One cannot teach about Mary over a long period without being affected, without evaluating one's own personal position.

Carmelites and Mary

At the same time I was investigating the Carmelite tradition about Mary. For centuries we had been secure in our devotion to Mary through the Brown Scapular. But the Carmelite heritage was much richer and many studies began to appear on Mary and Carmel. There are five truths about Mary in the Carmelite Order, not all equally emphasised in any particular century. They are not exclusive to the Order, but they show its preferences in reflecting on the Mother of God.

Mary is *Mother*. Carmelites took up this Church teaching with great enthusiasm. But they added another word, so that "Mother and Beauty of Carmel" became a preferred name for her.

Secondly, Mary is also seen as *Patron* of Carmelites. This is a medieval concept that implies a two-way relationship between lord and servant: the lord

protected his servants; they in turn looked after his interests. Such a concept fitted admirably the Carmelite vision of Mary as one whom they loved and served, and who in turn protected them.

Again, Mary is also *Sister* of Carmelites. The idea of Mary as Sister is found also in the first millennium, and it was introduced in papal teaching by Paul VI. When we speak of Mary as Sister, we are reminded that she too is one like us, is a daughter of Adam, and that she had to walk the same path of faith, hope and love as all others. The Carmelite idea of Mary as Sister can also have something of the idea of an elder, caring sister who looks after the rest of the family. We can look up to our Sister and accept her guidance. At different times we may be more drawn to the idea of Mary as Sister, rather than as Mother. Both are legitimate, but we should not deny the validity of a title that may not attract us at a particular time.



Fourthly, Mary is the *Most Pure Virgin*. This title, very common in Carmelite saints and writers looks especially to Mary's purity of heart. She retained God's word in her heart (see Luke 2:19.51) and she served him with an undivided and pure heart. Mary is finally the *Model* for Carmelites. We can look

at what she did. But we have to go deeper. It is not just a matter of doing what Mary did, but having her attitude in all our thoughts and actions.

Presence

A renewed devotion to Mary is not primarily a matter of saying more prayers to her. It implies a relationship with her, which will be established by prayer and reflected in imitation. There is a huge difference

between knowing about a person, and really knowing them. Renewal in our Marian life is not a matter of prayers or information, but a loving knowing.

Such a knowing loving, or loving knowing, lies behind the idea of presence. In a letter to the two branches of the Carmelite Order (O.Carm. and OCD) Pope John Paul spoke of the "tender and maternal presence of Mary" which we seek by wearing the Brown Scapular (Letter, *Il provvidentialz evento*, 25 March 2001). We know that we are always in the presence of God, who sustains us, keeps us in being. But we may not be alert to this presence as we go about our daily lives. It is good to stop occasionally and reflect that we are always in God's presence.

The gentle presence of Mary is found in her caring for all the Church, in her continuous prayer for us, "now and at the hour of our death" (*Hail Mary*). We can become aware of her presence if we think of her now and again, speak to her, ask for her guidance, consider how she would act in the circumstances in which we may find ourselves. We can go further and enjoy and relax in her presence.

There is a saying "Never enough about Mary" which is often ascribed to St. Bernard (d. 1153), but in fact came centuries later. It is a principle that needs to be carefully understood. We do not need more dogmas about Mary, or necessarily more prayers, celebrations or titles. We can never, however, sufficiently praise God for the wonders of his grace and love in the Mother of his Son. We can never thank her enough for her motherly care for us. We can never love her enough. As we think of her gentle presence, we are only beginning our future life in which with her we will eternally praise the Trinity.

Christopher O'Donnell, O.Carm.

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It is time to walk
Es tiempo de caminar



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