

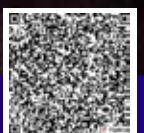
CARMELITE CONTACT

Newsletter of the Irish Province of Carmelites

ISSUE NO.44



Drawn to the Heart of Mercy
An evening of adoration, confession, and prayer





Province of
CARMELITES

EXPLORING CARMEL PARIS & LISIEUX

NORTHERN EUROPE YOUNG ADULT PILGRIMAGE



Details

Who: Young adults (18-35)

When: June 3-9, 2026

Cost: €495



What to Expect

Mass, Prayer, & Adoration

Scripture reflection

Guided visits in Lisieux

St Thérèse's life and family

Workshops & social time



Includes

Direct return flights from
Dublin to Paris

6 nights' accommodation

Full board each day

10kg check-in luggage +
one small cabin item

Meet and journey with other young adults from Northern Europe

REGISTER HERE



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ADVENT RETREAT BRINGS HOPE TO YOUNG ADULTS

In mid-December, Whitefriar Street Church opened its doors through the night to welcome young adults aged 18–35 for the Wait for the Lord Advent Vigil Retreat — a quiet, grace-filled pause in the midst of an often hurried and demanding season. From early evening until dawn, participants stepped away from the noise of daily life to enter into the stillness of Advent, gathering to pray, reflect, and wait together for the coming of the Lord.

Rooted deeply in the Carmelite tradition, the retreat offered a rhythm of prayer that gently carried participants through the night. Times of Eucharistic Adoration, the opportunity for Confession, and the celebration of Holy Mass were woven together with catechesis, Scripture reflection, and thoughtfully prepared homilies. These moments invited everyone not only to learn about the season of Advent, but to encounter it personally — as a time of longing, hope, and waiting.

Central to the vigil was the generous gift of silence. Extended periods of quiet allowed each person to slow down, to listen more attentively, and to

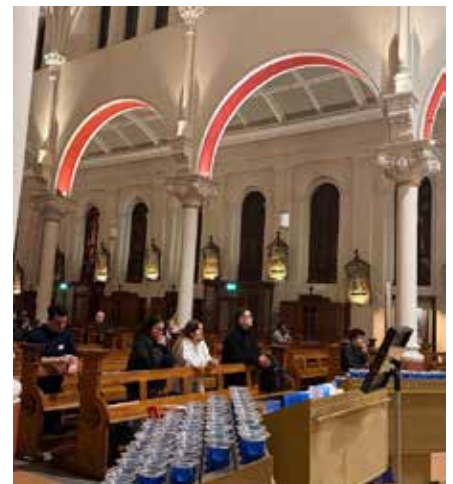
become aware of God's presence in the ordinary realities of their own lives. In a culture that rarely makes room for stillness, many found these silent hours to be among the most powerful moments of the night.

Alongside prayer and reflection, community played an important role. Simple shared meals, conversation, and time spent together created a warm and welcoming atmosphere, where faith could be spoken about naturally and friendships could form with ease.



Praying together through the night in the heart of the city was a striking reminder that God meets us where we are — even in the midst of urban life and busy schedules.

As dawn broke and the retreat concluded with breakfast, participants left renewed and encouraged. The vigil stood as a hopeful sign of a growing desire among young adults to seek God together through prayer, silence, and authentic Christian community during the sacred season of Advent.



Relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux Visit the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception was marked by a spirit of reverence and prayer as the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux arrived for the first day of their visit in November 2025. From 20–22 November, the Basilica was honoured to host the reliquary of this beloved Carmelite saint, welcoming the faithful who came to venerate her relics as part of their national tour across the United States.

The return of the relics to the Basilica carried particular historical and spiritual significance. It marked twenty-six years since their first visit in 1999, when thousands gathered at Mary's Shrine to honour "The Little Flower." This visit took place during the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of St Thérèse's canonisation and coincided with the Jubilee Year, offering pilgrims a renewed opportunity to encounter her witness of faith, trust, and love.

On the opening morning, Simon Nolan, O.Carm., Prior Provincial of the Irish Province of the Carmelite Order, was invited to offer a reflection. Speaking before the relics, Fr Simon spoke on Thérèse's invitation to draw near to the Lord: "Standing before her relics, we might ask her today: Little Thérèse, teach us to love God as you loved Him. Teach us to find Him in the ordinary. Teach us, with Mary, to lift our eyes with

**COME AND SEE WHAT GOD
CAN DO WITH A SMALL SOUL
WHO TRUSTS HIM.**

ST THERESE OF LISIEUX

childlike confidence. Teach us to laugh a little more, to trust a lot more, and to believe that nothing offered in love is wasted.

Then her visit here will not be only a moment—but a seed. And long after these relics have travelled on, the roses of her 'little way' will keep falling—into

our homes, into our parishes, into our nation. 'Come and see,' Thérèse says. Come and see what God can do with a small soul who trusts Him. May we leave this holy place determined to let Him do the same with us."

As a specially designated national Jubilee site, the Basilica offered pilgrims the opportunity to obtain a Jubilee plenary indulgence under the usual conditions. Following each Mass celebrated during the visit, the Blessing of Roses took place in honour of St Thérèse, recalling her well-known promise: "When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens; I will spend my heaven doing good upon the earth."



BROTHERS RENEW THEIR VOWS IN THE ORDER OF CARMEL

It was a joyful and prayerful day for the Carmelite family on 6 December as Brothers João, Wedson, and Harrison renewed their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the Order of Carmel. The renewal marked a significant moment in their ongoing journey of consecrated life, as they once again entrusted themselves fully to Christ and to the Carmelite way of life.

The vows were received by Simon Nolan, O.Carm., Prior Provincial of the Irish Province of the Carmelite Order. Gathered in prayer, the Carmelite community gave thanks for the brothers' fidelity and generosity, recognising the renewal of vows as both a personal

recommitment and a public witness to the Gospel.

By renewing their vows, Brothers João, Wedson, and Harrison reaffirmed their desire to live lives shaped by simplicity, chastity, and obedience — values at the heart of Carmelite spirituality. Rooted in prayer, fraternity, and service, their commitment reflected the Carmelite call to seek God in the midst of daily life and to serve the Church with humble and open hearts.

Moments such as these serve as an encouragement to the wider Carmelite family and to all who support religious life. They are a reminder that vocations continue to grow through prayer,

discernment, and the quiet faithfulness of those who respond generously to God's call.

The Irish Province gives thanks for the witness of these brothers and prays that the Lord will continue to strengthen them in faith, hope, and charity. May they be sustained by God's grace as they follow Christ more closely, and may their lives continue to inspire others to listen attentively to the voice of the Lord.

The Carmelite community also invites prayers for vocations, asking that many more young men and women may be given the courage to discern and respond to God's call in their lives.



L to R: Bro. João, Fr Simon Nolan, Bro. Wedson, and Bro. Harrison.

THE MEANING OF LENT

By C. O'Donnell, O.Carm.

Most of us will have our own experiences and memories of Lent; many will associate it with giving up things. Later the idea gained currency that it would be better to do things for Lent than to give up things. If it is something specific, like going to Mass or saying some prayers, it may work; but if it is in the form: "I will avoid gossip," then we might as well have no resolution at all.

Lent was originally a time of preparation for Easter and for catechumens a final preparation for baptism. By the 4th century it was forty days, recalling Jesus' forty day fast in the desert (see Matt 4:1-11). To get the exact forty — excluding Sundays — a few days were added on, so that it began with Ash Wednesday.

The idea of giving up something or doing something for Lent needs to be looked at in the wide perspective of asceticism in Christian tradition.

The New Testament

The word "asceticism" is found only once in the New Testament; in Acts 24:16 we have the verb *ascô*, which is translated as "I do my best" (NRSV) or "I train myself" (REB). The reality is not absent; the Christian Church took over the three great Hebrew practices of fasting, almsgiving and prayer (see Matt 6:1-18 with Tobit 12:8).

The New Testament will not, therefore, allow us to dismiss asceticism. Not only the teaching of Jesus, but the Apostolic Letters all point to significant areas to which we must attend. The Pauline letters move from doctrinal considerations to practical morality and asceticism in his letters (e.g. Rom 12-15; Gal 5-6; Phil 4; Col. 3-4; see the whole of James). In these teachings we find both positive and negative advice: there are good things to be done and evil things to be avoided.

Asceticism and mysticism

The scholastic period saw the emergence of much writing in the early vernaculars which we would today perhaps call ascetical or mystical. There are two

aspects to our spiritual journey, the ascetical which is associated with struggle—struggle to do right and avoid what is harmful; and mystical which is more about receiving from God.

It is in the context of this controversy and of contemporary unease about asceticism that the writers of the Carmelite school would seem to have a significant contribution to an ongoing debate.

The Carmelite Rule

The Carmelite Rule is among the briefest of the great rules. It is just over 1,500 words. The hermits living on Mount Carmel asked the local bishop, St. Albert of Avogadro (ca 1150-1214), then Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, for a rule or way of life sometime after 1206. These hermits lived in separate cells but were gathered into a fraternity by the Rule of Albert.

The Carmelite Rule consists of twenty-four short paragraphs dealing with the basic structures of the settlement on Mount Carmel, with liturgical and personal prayer, and with regulations concerning fasting, silence, work and spiritual warfare (based on Eph 6:10-18). A remarkable feature of this Rule is the number of times that the legislator inserts moderating clauses that allow exceptions depending on circumstances. The prior is appointed "by common consent;" places are to be "suitable and convenient;" refectory reading is prescribed if it "can be done without difficulty;" there is constant prayer, "unless there is another duty;" goods are to be distributed "according to need;" daily Mass is enjoined if "there is no difficulty." In the two paragraphs on fasting and abstinence there are eleven exclusions with the reminder, "necessity overrides every law."

Other ascetical norms are about work and silence. The very last words of the Rule are "See that the bounds of common sense are not exceeded, however, for common sense is the guide of the virtues." The author is strictest not on fasting or other practices, but about work, serious and continual work: "earn your bread by silent work; this

is the way of holiness and goodness; see that you follow it." The broad and compassionate tone of the Rule has in a profound way left its mark on Carmel.

Asceticism in the Carmelite school

When we look at the writers of the Carmelite school, we can certainly be struck by their insistence on the need of asceticism. Faithful to the genial spirit of the Rule mainstream Carmelite writers do not advocate extreme penances. Moreover, they are much more concerned with purity of heart, the aim of asceticism and with freedom from sin and destructive attachments or passions. A phrase typical of Carmelite spirituality is *vacare Deo* (empty or surrendered to God).

Lenten themes

In the next six weeks there are seven themes that continually emerge in the prayers and readings for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

**PENANCE IS BEING ALERT
TO OUR FAILINGS AND
A WILLINGNESS TO DO
SOMETHING ABOUT THEM.**

Lent is a time for penance. We need to be prepared to what we do not feel like doing. There are certain features of our lives, of our personalities that we would be better without. Some of these are quite simply sins. We go astray in many ways, and strangely the smaller the faults, the more difficult it can be to eliminate them. Penance is being alert to our failings and a willingness to do something about them. The second theme is conversion. This means turning away from what is sinful or dangerous. The other side of conversion is a third theme of returning to God. We should view our behaviour and our lives in the mirror of the teaching of Jesus. Fourthly, we have to have an attitude to our failings and sin. This is sorrow. A feature of contemporary society is the lack of sorrow for evil-doing. Sorrow for sin and for the evil in our lives is essential

for spiritual health.

However, these four themes of penance, conversion, returning to God and sorrow for sin are not fully within our power. The Christian view is that we cannot really do much that is of value except with God's help. Hence the fifth theme is redemption: God saves us. He will not do it without our co-operation. The redemption we need arises from the sixth Lenten theme, the passion of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to save us; he taught and healed, before dying for us. Contemporary spirituality neglects too much the Cross of Christ; the Stations of the Cross are not nearly so popular today. The seventh Lenten theme is baptism. The weeks of Lent are a final preparation for the sacrament. Baptism brings us into the family of God, with relationships to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism then brings us into the Church, the Christian community, with an obligation to love and serve. Finally, baptism draws us in imitation and discipleship of Jesus.

These seven themes found in the Lenten liturgy can give us a new vision of ourselves. Once they are pointed out, then we can hear them with new ears: penance, conversion, returning to God, sorrow for sin, redemption, the passion of Jesus and baptism will feature in the prayers and readings, with ever new lights and insights.

The Lenten trilogy

Over the centuries the Church has simplified the Lenten observance to three: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Prayer is coming before God in our creatureliness, in our beauty and our disfigurement to seek a relationship with our Father, with Jesus our brother and Son of God, with the Holy Spirit who gives life to all our activity. Without reflection and prayer, our Lent will not go anywhere.

Fasting is a most ancient form of penance and can serve as a symbol of what we are determined to do or avoid in Lent. What should we do for Lent? Which is better to give up something or to choose something to do? It depends. When we look at the various areas of our spiritual lives, we will see where our weaknesses are, and then we can choose what is most beneficial for our spiritual growth.

Finally, almsgiving is the aspect of penance that invites us to look after those who are poor in any way. We are familiar with giving money for charity. We may not have much money and may not be able to give much to charity, it is important to give at least a little. But there is something that all of us have to give, which is our time. I know that people say that our society is time poor. Yes. But all could give some time to others. It might be as little as an hour or two per week that we commit to some needy people, to an organisation of group that serves the community or Church.

So this Lent invites us to look at our lives, to see what our weaknesses are. Then we can engage in the three classical forms of penance: prayer, fasting and almsgiving in accordance with our possibilities.

Light from St. John of the Cross

The areas that need attention in our lives are matters that damage us and hurt others. It is only by changing our attitudes and lives to God's way that we find a new peace, a fresh beauty in ourselves and others. The most accurate doctor of spiritual disease is probably St. John of the Cross, a Spanish Carmelite mystic who died in 1592.

He examined the human condition and realised that we have two sources of weakness and sin in our lives – feelings and the dispositions of our minds.

**IT IS ONLY THROUGH AN EVER
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Feelings are facts. They may be positive or negative. The main ones are fear, joy, anger and hope. When these are rightly aligned, then our lives can easily be in order. But whereas we need to pay attention to our feelings, they are not always reliable guides. Indeed emotional maturity is marked by the ability to act irrespective of feelings. Pupils need to study whether they feel like it or not. John of the Cross teaches very clearly that our feelings must not determine how we live.

The other problems arise from the way we think, the way we desire, the

way we remember. Each of us values being in control. But our thinking can so often be askew. We don't get the whole picture. The cure for our intellects is faith. God's word leads us into areas of truth that are beyond our human capacity. We are invited to walk in faith and to set aside selfishness in order to love God and to love others.

The third problem arises from memory. We are very often in slavery to memory. Hurts can linger for years. In addition memory may cripple us, as when we do not want to face what is new. St. John of the Cross points us in the direction of hope. Hope is for the future; it is not limited by the past. Christian hope is assurance that God will be with us in the challenges of the future.

The most important teaching of John of the Cross is, however, that we cannot get right by ourselves. Not only do we need grace for every spiritual advance, but there are serious limitations to what we can do even with normal grace. The further stage comes only when we really surrender to God's will, when we lay ourselves open to his healing. It is only through an ever greater yielding to God's love that we will come into wholeness.

Within the Carmelite tradition, asceticism is not a value sought for itself. The demanding but balanced asceticism of the Rule is presumed, and there are only occasional passing references to disciplines or instruments of penance. One could signal three major contributions of the Carmelite school today in the study of mysticism. Firstly, they have a wholesome doctrine of the Cross, which they speak more often about than about ascetical practices. Secondly, the great Carmelites are supremely focussed not on themselves but on God. The path to God is through unselfish loving. Thirdly, they have realism about the human condition, which contradicts the superficial optimism of much contemporary spirituality. Though human nature is good, and creation is to be celebrated, sinful and selfish tendencies lurk deeply within us, so that union with the all-holy God requires profound purification or healing. Some contemporary denials of the need for asceticism can forget that the Paschal Mystery into which we are being inserted is a journey from Calvary to Easter to Pentecost.



CARMELITE COMMISSARIAT RETREAT IN ZIMBABWE: RETURNING TO THE SOURCE

From Sunday, 7 December to Friday, 12 December 2025, members of the Carmelite Commissariat in Zimbabwe gathered at Prophet Elijah Priory for their annual retreat, held under the

theme "Returning to Mt Horeb – Returning to the Source." The week offered the community a precious opportunity to step back from the demands of daily ministry and to renew their lives of prayer, fraternity, and service.

Set aside as a sacred time of silence and reflection, the retreat created space for the brothers to listen attentively once again to the voice of the Lord.

The retreat was facilitated by Fr Foto, a diocesan priest from the Diocese of Masvingo, who guided the brothers in reflecting on contemplative listening, faithful discipleship, and perseverance in vocation. Drawing on Scripture and lived pastoral experience, Fr Foto encouraged the community to attend carefully to God's presence, particularly

in moments of stillness and simplicity.

Throughout the week, the brothers entered deeply into shared prayer and personal meditation, while also strengthening the bonds of fraternity that sustain religious life. Meals, informal conversation, and time spent together as a community complemented the quieter aspects of the retreat, reminding participants of the importance of mutual support and encouragement on the Carmelite journey.

This annual retreat proved to be a valuable moment of renewal for the Commissariat. By returning to the essentials of their calling, the brothers were refreshed in spirit and united in hope, ready to continue their mission with renewed faith and commitment.



Commissioning of Altar Servers at Whitefriar Street Church

At the 4 p.m. Mass on Sunday, 18 January, the Carmelite community gathered at Whitefriar Street Church for the commissioning of altar servers — a moment of prayerful commitment and encouragement for those who serve at the altar. The Mass was celebrated by Simon Nolan, O.Carm., Prior Provincial of the Irish Province of the Carmelite Order.

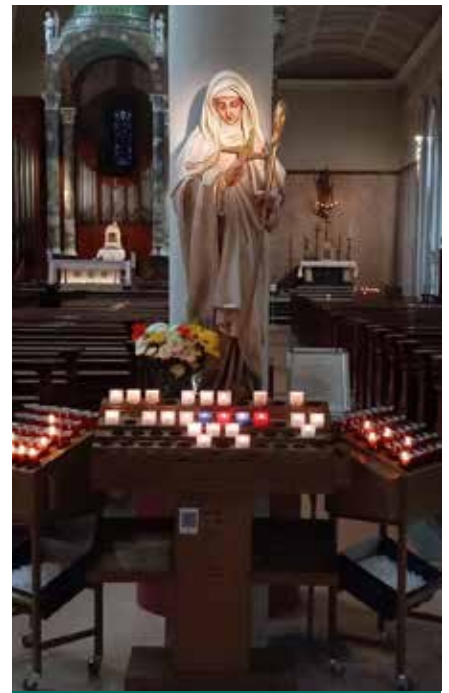
In his homily, Fr Simon reflected on Saint John the Baptist as the one who points beyond himself to Christ. He reminded the congregation that this is the task of every Christian, and indeed of every ministry within the Church: not to draw attention to ourselves, but to direct hearts towards Jesus. This call to humility and faithful witness provided the spiritual focus for the commissioning that followed.

During the Mass, six altar servers were formally commissioned and enrolled as members of the Guild of Saint Simon Stock. Their commissioning marked more than the taking on of a practical role; it signified a commitment to serve with reverence, attentiveness, and faith, quietly assisting others to recognise the presence of the Lord in the liturgy.

Drawing on the Carmelite tradition, Fr Simon recalled Saint Simon Stock and the gift of the Scapular, given through Mary as a sign of protection

and a life lived close to Christ. As the altar servers received the insignia of the Guild, bearing the words *sub tuum praesidium* — “under thy protection” — the congregation was reminded of Mary’s gentle role in the life of the Church. Like the saints, she never draws attention to herself, but always leads us to her Son.

The celebration concluded with a prayer drawn from the Carmelite liturgy for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel: “Draw us after you, O Virgin Mary. We shall follow in your footsteps.” It was a fitting prayer for those newly commissioned, and for all present — a reminder that Mary remains a sure guide, leading us to Christ and drawing us ever closer to where we are meant to be.



Feast of St Brigid

On 1 February, the Church in Ireland marked the feast of Saint Brigid, patron of Ireland and one of the great saints of the early Irish Church.

Saint Brigid was often associated with the reed cross — a simple sign of faith woven into everyday life.

Pictured here are the restored statue of Saint Brigid at Whitefriar Street Church and the altar of the Carmelite Church in Kinsale adorned with her reed cross.



Prayer, Witness, and Unity in the Diocese of Meath

Recent weeks have marked two significant moments of prayer and reflection within the Diocese of Meath, highlighting both the enduring gift of religious life and the ongoing call to Christian unity.

On 8 February, the Cathedral of Christ the King in Mullingar hosted Solemn Vespers to give thanks for the contribution of religious communities throughout the diocese. The prayer was presided over by Most Rev. Tom Deenihan, Bishop of Meath, with a reflection offered by Fr Michael Troy, O.Carm. In his address, Fr Michael spoke movingly of Mary as the model of hope for today's religious life, acknowledging both the external and internal challenges faced by religious communities — "secularism, materialism, a loss of faith in transcendence," as well as "lack of vocations, ageing, illness and closure."

In this context, he pointed to Mary as "a radiant model of hope and fidelity," whose life proclaims that "God's word can still take flesh in those who say yes to Him."

Drawing on the witness of saints such as Louis-Marie de Montfort and Maximilian Kolbe, he reflected on how Marian devotion sustains perseverance and strengthens hope even in the darkest circumstances. "Hope," he reminded the congregation, "is not merely a feeling but a way of living rooted in trust and love."

Fr Michael concluded by encouraging religious men and women to live Mary's hope today and to echo her words: "Let it be done unto me according to

your word." In doing so, he said, their very lives become a proclamation that "God is faithful," and that those who trust in the Lord "will never be disappointed."

Earlier in January, attention had turned to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, observed from 18–25 January under the theme: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling" (Eph 4:4). In Moate, the Carmelite Church hosted an ecumenical gathering during the week, where Revd Philip McKinley delivered an address encouraging prayerful dialogue and deeper relationships between Christian communities.

Together, these moments in Mullingar and Moate served as powerful reminders that unity and witness are nurtured through prayer — whether in thanksgiving for the faithful service of religious communities or in the patient, hopeful journey toward the unity for which Christ himself prayed.



Feast of St Antony, Abbot

Each year on 17 January, the Carmelite Church in Moate welcomes people from across Ireland for the Feast of St Anthony Abbot and the traditional Blessing of Animals.

On the feast day, pets, farm animals, and produce were brought for blessing, as the community reflected on the witness of St Anthony, often called the Father of Monasticism. His life of prayer, humility, and trust in God continues to inspire a way of living that bears fruit not only for ourselves, but for the world around us.

Through his intercession, we pray for God's blessing on our families, our animals, and the land that sustains us — and for this cherished tradition to remain a source of grace for generations to come.



FROM BABYLON TO ZION

Psalm 137 and the Journey Home

By Fr Vitalis Chiromba, O.Carm.

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.” (Psalm 137:1)

Among all the prayers of the psalms, few carry the weight of sorrow like Psalm 137. It is not a hymn of triumph or a song of praise, but a lament rising from wounded hearts. It is the cry of a people who have lost their home, their freedom, and, above all, their intimacy with God. Along the foreign rivers of Babylon, Israel sits in silence. Their harps hang unused on the trees. Their songs die in their throats. It is the sound of exile.

Yet this psalm is more than a memory from Israel's past. It is also the story of every human heart that has wandered far from God. During Lent, the Church invites us to recognize that exile is not only geographical or historical; it is spiritual. Whenever we forget God, compromise with sin, or grow careless in love, we too drift from Zion. We too experience an interior captivity. Psalm 137 thus becomes our own prayer.

Israel's sorrow in Babylon was not merely homesickness. It was the deeper ache of conscience. They had tasted the bitterness of their own choices. Sin, which once appeared attractive and liberating, had led only to bondage and loss. Freedom turned into slavery, fruitfulness into barrenness, and joy into sorrow. This is always the deception of sin: it promises life but delivers emptiness. What seems sweet soon becomes bitter.

Yet hidden within their sadness is a sign of hope. They wept because they remembered. A heart that grieves its distance from God is not yet lost. The true believer cannot sin comfortably; there is always an interior unrest, a holy dissatisfaction. God loves us too deeply to let us feel at home in Babylon. Like a wise and loving parent, He allows us to experience the consequences of our choices - not to condemn us, but to awaken us. Even discipline can be mercy when it leads us back to Him.

What wounded Israel most was memory. They remembered Zion, the holy city, the temple, the presence of the Lord. They remembered what it meant to belong to God, and so they wept.

Memory, in the spiritual life, is sacred. The Carmelite tradition speaks of recollection, of living in the loving awareness of God's presence. Forgetfulness marks the beginning of spiritual decline. When we forget what God has done for us, how He has protected, guided, forgiven, and sustained us, our hearts slowly grow cold. Carmel calls this the loss of interior awareness.

Each of us carries a personal salvation history. There have been moments when grace was unmistakable, when God's hand held us firmly, when we knew we were loved. If we lose the memory of those moments, we begin to live like everyone else and blend into the spirit of the world. Like Israel asking for a king “like the other nations,” we grow tired of being different. Yet to belong to God is precisely to be set apart. Our baptism marks us as His own. We are not made for Babylon; we are made for Zion.

Exile also brought shame. Their captors mocked them: “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” What had once been sacred was turned into entertainment. Sin not only wounds us personally; it weakens our witness. When we fall, the name we bear - Christian - is also wounded. Love makes us sensitive to this. We avoid sin not simply out of fear of punishment, but because we do not want to hurt the One who loves us. The saints understood this well: their greatest sorrow was not failure itself, but the knowledge that they had wounded Love.

Perhaps the most striking image of the psalm is the silent harp. The instruments were still there, but the song was gone. Only the free can truly sing. Praise flows naturally from a liberated heart, yet sin suffocates song. Prayer grows heavy, worship becomes mechanical, and joy quietly fades. Many carry this hidden sadness without understanding its cause. The music of the soul has grown faint.

Lent gently asks each of us a simple question: what has taken away my song?

The question is not meant to accuse, but to invite us home. God never leaves His people in exile forever. The road back begins with repentance and opens into mercy. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Lord restores what sin has stolen. He does not merely erase guilt; He renews the heart and teaches it to sing again.

The mercy we receive must become mercy given. Forgiveness is the true sign that grace has taken root. Without it, we remain trapped in resentment and old wounds. With it, healing begins. Forgiveness is not weakness but strength born of love. Even ourselves we must forgive, trusting God's mercy more than our regrets.

For Carmelites, Lent is above all a return to the interior cell of the heart, where God waits in silence. It is a season of recollection, quiet prayer, and faithful presence. In that hidden space, God gently heals our forgetfulness and restores our joy.

Psalm 137 asks each of us a personal question: have I lost my song? Whatever has silenced it, the Lord remains near, knocking gently at the door of our hearts. If we open to Him this Lent, even just a little, He will lead us from exile to home, from silence to praise, from Babylon to Zion. Our lives will once again become what they were made to be: a song of gratitude rising to God. May this holy season teach us to remember, to return, and to sing.



Cover image from a 'Night of Mercy' evening at Whitefriar Street Church.



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