



Podcast: Our Lady of Mount Carmel - A Gift from the Holy Land. Feast 16, July 2021
Mgr Daniel McHugh

Journey of Faith - Life from Holy Mass - with Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Hello, I am Monsignor Daniel McHugh.

In my role as Co-Ordinator Ethnic Chaplaincies I am of course interested in the special spiritual and pastoral support we give to people who have migrated from other lands and are now living among us here. When deciding to prepare a Podcast on the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel I was conscious of the Catholics who are part of the Palestinian Diaspora. We don't have a Chaplaincy for them, though we support them at home via Friends of Holy Land and other charities engaged with the Middle East. Haifa, a retired Jordanian Doctor, tells me a lot of Israeli-Palestinian Christians left home in 1948 and again in 1967. A number came to the UK and settled in different parts, especially London. Peter Rand of Friends of the Holy Land knows a number here, especially those involved in support for small business back home, like those selling olive wood carvings crafted in places such as Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Maybe the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel can be an encouragement to us to see what spiritual and pastoral support may be offered. We are conscious on this Feast of how much Mount Carmel has given to us. Long before the time of Our Lord, it was the place when Elijah the Prophet, renewed the Faith of the people of Israel who had fallen away from their commitment to the One God, attracted by the false gods of the land of Canaan. It was such a special and beautiful place made holy by Elijah, that at the time of the Crusades many Knights and Dames went there to pray, and some remained behind in the caves forming groups of monastic hermits with a particular devotion to Mary as their patroness. This was about 1155, and it is from these beginnings that the Carmelite Order grew. Their rule was written by St Albert, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and approved in 1226.

It was interesting to me to read of the present Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Pizzabella recently leading the annual May Pilgrimage from Haifa nearly to the Stella Maris Monastery (the headquarters today of the Carmelites) on Mount Carmel, above the Grotto of Elijah. Despite present restrictions on movement in Israel, these long traditions continue, though in reduced numbers with the Lebanese unable to participate.

It was in the 13th century that the original "hermits" were forced to leave Mount Carmel and they began to spread across Europe.

In 1254 St Simon Stock from England became Superior General of the Carmelite Order: he founded many communities, especially in University towns such as Cambridge, Oxford, Paris and Bologna. His lasting fame came from an Apparition he had in Cambridge on July 16, 1251. In it Our Lady appeared to him holding the Brown Scapular

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in one hand. Her words were: "Receive my beloved Son, this Scapular of thy Order; it is the special sign of my favour..." The Church has approved 18 different kinds of Scapular of which the best known is the Brown Scapular of Mount Carmel. Some religious wear a scapular over their habits, and lay people wear a modified form under their clothing as a sign of devotion to Our Lady and her maternal protection.

In 1631 the Discalced branch of the Carmelite Order returned to the Holy Land. Today, many make a visit to Stella Maris and Mount Carmel part of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: Frederick Slater a Knight of the Holy Sepulcher tells me a visit to Mount Carmel is often included in their Pilgrimage to the Holy Land; there, like the early hermits they remember the quiet presence of Mary with us. For those who wear the Scapular it is a reminder of her presence wherever they go.

This is a prayer they are known to say:

"O beautiful flower of Carmel, most faithful vine, splendor of heaven, holy and singular, who brought forth the Son of God, still ever remaining a pure virgin, assist us in our necessity. O Star of the Sea, help and protect us. Show us that you are our Mother. Amen"

The reading is from a Mass of Our Lady, John 19:25-27

The prayer is the Collect for the Mass for Our Lady of Mount Carmel

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