

NOVENA TO OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

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A Letter from the Prior General for The Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 2017



Dear brothers and sisters of the Carmelite family:

The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is approaching and, like every year, I want to send you an affectionate greeting with my most sincere congratulations. I hope that the feast and all the celebrations of these days (novenas, processions, religious and cultural events, etc.) will be an occasion to honor Mary under this title so popular and endearing and so dear to all of us Carmelites. May these celebrations touch our hearts, inspire our living of the charism, and transform our lives so that we become more and more faithful to the values of the Gospel.

I would like to present again this year the outline of the novena that has been made by the people in charge of the website of our Order, based on texts by writers, mystics, and Carmelite saints. May this novena help us, guided by the hand of Mary, to enter the depth of the mystery of our faith.

This year I would like, in the first place, to remind you that we are commemorating the first centenary of the apparitions of Fatima. For this reason, among other events, the Portuguese Carmelites, in collaboration with our discalced Carmelite brothers, have prepared a Marian congress that will take place in September 2017. Also, various works and articles have been published on the relation of these apparitions to Our Lady of Mt Carmel.

It is well known that, in the sixth apparition, which occurred in October 1917, the shepherds indicated that the Virgin appeared as Our Lady of Mount Carmel who was venerated in her parish (see photo). In 1924, testifying before the diocesan tribunal, Lucia insisted on this and added that "she wore a thing hanging in her right hand" (the Holy Scapular). Likewise, when in 1950, Father Kilian Lynch, then Prior General of the Order, visited Lucia, the seer, insisted that it was the Our Lady of Mt Carmel. Even in interviews with other Carmelites, Lucia emphasized that she was surprised that this aspect had not been emphasized and that devotion to the Scapular of Carmel, inspired by the same apparitions, had not been promoted.



Be that as it may, in this centenary of the apparitions, the Carmelite family renews in some way their Marian devotion and now that the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is approaching, we also ask her to give us a simple, deep faith and a devotion that does not fall into empty sentimentalism or passive affections, but, well rooted in our hearts, leads us to rediscover every day the Good News of the Gospel and encourages us to announce it with courage and authenticity.

Pope Francis, during his visit to Fatima, has insisted on how the values of the Gospel must transform and revolutionize our lives and how the devotion to the Virgin helps us to discover them and live them to the full. Marian devotion, in fact, if it is authentic, makes us more human: "Every time we look at Mary we come to believe in the revolutionary power of tenderness and affection. In it we see that humility and

tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong. "

In this centenary, we also remember in a special way all the sick of the Carmelite family. The Pope had endearing words for them in his visit to Fatima, stating that they were "a valuable treasure of the Church". In this feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel may we be very present to those who suffer any infirmity and may we renew our commitment to help them, accompany them and share with them all the best we have. We pray that far from the "throw away" culture, nor of the selfish comfort, we see that they are really a treasure in our families and Carmelite communities.

Secondly, I would like to point out that this year we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of Blessed Titus Brandsma's death at the Dachau concentration camp and the 50th anniversary of the death of the great Carmelite theologian, Bartolomé F. M^a Xiberta. Both died the same day, on July 26, with a difference of 25 years. The two met in Holland, in 1938, after the expulsion of Fr. Xiberta from Italy by the Fascist government. Father Xiberta would always remember with admiration the Dutch Carmelite.

The two stood out for their great Marian devotion and wrote about the role of the Virgin Mary in the history of salvation. Father Titus insisted that we, like Mary, are called to be "theotokos", bearers of God, who take the Lord to the most needy places. It is a doctrine that connects very well with the Pope Francis' missionary insistence who constantly reminds us of the importance of leaving and going to the geographical and existential peripheries.

Father Xiberta was able to harmoniously combine a very high and speculative theology with his tender devotion to Mary. Those who knew him well remember how he counted the days that were missing to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. He liked to repeat the Marian antiphon, taken from the book of Judith (cf. Judith 15:9), "You are the glory of Jerusalem, you are the joy of Israel, you are the pride of our race." In Mary, a woman of our race and of our people, the whole of humanity becomes evident, giving her primacy in the mystery of salvation.

Here are a couple of examples to illustrate how our brothers lived with depth, doctrinal seriousness, and piety the devotion to Mary in the twentieth century.

Blessed Tito celebrated for the last time the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the *Lager* of Dachau in 1942. Despite his weakness and illness, he did not fail to greet with a handshake the other Carmelites that were there: the Dutchman, Fray Rafael, who accompanied him to the end, and several Poles, among whom was Blessed Hilario Januszewski. It was a strange celebration, but lived, certainly, in an endearing and touching way in those terrible circumstances.

The same day, twenty-five years later, Fr. Xiberta died in Tarrasa, Spain. The last few years he was totally disabled because of a stroke. He hardly articulated any words. Perhaps he was realizing what he had once said about his work as a theologian: "We, poor teachers of theology, must talk about extremely high mysteries, before which it would be best to remain in silent contemplation ..."

May both Blessed Titus Brandsma and the Servant of God, Bartolomé F. M^a Xiberta, help us to live our Marian devotion with the same authenticity and requirement of life that they demonstrated.

May Mary, the Mother and beauty of Carmel, the star of the sea, guide us in our journey, so that we can respond with creativity and joy in the face of the challenges that arise in our sometimes complex world.

To all of you who are one way or another part of the Carmelite family, I send you my affectionate greeting. Congratulations!

Fraternally,

*Fernando Millán Romeral, O.Carm.
Prior General.*



First Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 7

MARY, WELCOMING MODEL

Listening to the Word: **The Annunciation (Lk 1: 26-38)**



of In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Reflection: The Gospels begin by presenting Mary as a woman who embraces God's plan. In an attitude of prayer, she listens, meditates, consents and answers "yes" to God who calls her. In a word she is welcoming. It is this welcoming that gives birth to Life in her. "And the Word was made flesh."

Prayer: Holy Mary, welcoming woman, lead us to imitate you so that every day we may give birth to Jesus in the situations of life where we find ourselves.

Holy Mary, welcoming woman, teach us to meditate the Word of God like you, so that at every moment of our lives we may welcome it and allow ourselves to be guided by it.

Holy Mary, flower of Carmel, hear our pleading.

My commitment is to read a page of the Gospel and reflect on it to try and discover what God wishes of me in my daily life.

*Flower of Carmel
Vine blossom-laden,
splendour of heaven,
Child-bearing yet maiden,
None equals thee.
Mother so tender,
whom no man didst know,
On Carmel's children
thy favours bestow,
Star of the sea.*



Second Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 8

MARY, WONDERFUL IN HER SERVICE

Listening to the Word: The Visitation (Lk 1: 39-45)



In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Reflection: Soon after hearing the Angel's message, the Mother of the Lord goes to her cousin Elisabeth who is old and expects a child. The Gospel says that she left in a hurry to place herself at the service of the needy. The Virgin does not allow the fact that the hope of Israel will be fulfilled in her "go to her head", but in utter humility she leaves to serve through small and simple house tasks.

Prayer: Mother Mary, expert servant, help us understand that it is only by being each other's servants that we can be true followers of your Son.

Mother Mary, expert servant, enable us to be always available to those whom we meet in our daily life.

Mother Mary, Vine blossom laden, help us compete in being charitable

My commitment is to serve those who are close to me. In imitation of the Virgin Mary, I shall try to serve ever better those who are least pleasing to me.

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Third Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 9

MARY, THE MOTHER WHO CLOTHES US WITH THE SCAPULAR

Listening to the Word: The birth (Lk 2: 1-20)



In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I

bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Reflection: Luke, the Evangelist, relates the affectionate and motherly gesture of Mary who wraps little Jesus in swaddling clothes. A gesture made by every mother as a sign of protection and care. We too are wrapped in swaddling clothes by Mary, our Mother and Sister; through the Scapular she looks after us and protects us. She wraps us so that we may grow strong and robust in the school of her Son.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, you who wrap your Jesus in swaddling clothes, teach us to be always small so that we may "be carried in God's arms".

Virgin Mother, who wrap your Jesus in swaddling clothes, help us to clothe ourselves with your Son, so that each day we may be a sign of God's love.

Virgin Mary, Splendour of heaven, hold us tight under your mantle.

My commitment is to clothe myself with the Scapular so that I may witness, even externally, to my love for Jesus and Mary. Above all, I wish that the Scapular may remind me to live every day in the school of Jesus, after the example of the Virgin.

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Fourth Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 10

MARY, CONTEMPLATIVE WOMAN



Listening to the Word: The visit of the Magi (Mt 2: 1-12)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'"

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Reflection: What would Mary and Joseph have thought when they saw these mysterious men coming from afar to see their little Jesus? And yet, the Son of God became man for all, also for these people who came from "afar". Mary immediately understands and shows Jesus to them too. Mary is the true contemplative, that is, the one who can see reality with the eyes of God. Are we contemplatives? Do we see reality with the eyes of God? Are we capable of giving Jesus to those we meet, those we know and those we don't know, our co-citizens and strangers, rich and poor?

Prayer: Blessed Mary, contemplative woman, teach us to keep in our hearts the situations of every day so that we may then see them with the eyes of God.

Blessed Mary, contemplative woman, teach us to see in the people we meet the face of your Son and not discriminate in any way.

Blessed Mary, child-bearing yet maiden, take us to Jesus.

My commitment is not to judge the people I meet during the day, but to see in each of them the face of the Lord.

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Fifth Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 11

MARY, LADY OF THE OFFERING

Listening to the Word: The presentation at the temple (Lk 2: 22-32)



5 And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast

prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."

Reflection: Let us try to stand as spectators at this event: Mary, Joseph and Jesus, a family that goes to the temple to offer the child to the Lord. If we wish to translate this event into our terms, it is a little like a family that prepares to take a child for baptism. We have so often taken part in festivities of this kind. However, let us try to examine the Mother's heart: she wholeheartedly offers to God the child to whom she gave birth. Are we capable of imitating her in our daily life?

Prayer: Daughter of Sion, Lady of the offering, envelop our hearts so that we may belong to Jesus completely.

Daughter of Sion, Lady of the offering, free our hearts so that without any fear we may be exclusively His property.

Daughter of Sion, Mother so tender, make our hearts like yours.

My commitment is to detach myself from something to which I am greatly attached and offer it to someone I particularly do not like. This is so that I may imitate the Mother of my Lord who offered Her Son with a pure heart.

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None equals thee.
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Sixth Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 12

MARY, UNTIRING SEEKER OF GOD

Listening to the Word: The finding in the temple (Lk 2: 41-50)



Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them.

Reflection: Mary and Joseph are distressed at the loss of their son, Jesus. They set out to search for him and find him after three days. In our life sometimes it seems that Jesus hides himself from us and leaves us alone. What do we do? Do we despair? Do we turn towards other goods? Or do we set out in search of Jesus so as not to lose him ever again. Mary and Joseph teach us to be untiring seekers of God, because he has made us for himself and our heart is restless until it rests in him (St. Augustine).

Prayer: Dear Mary, untiring seeker of God, give us the strength you had in seeking your Jesus who was lost in the temple.

Dear Mary, untiring seeker of God, guide our steps so that on life's journey we may always follow Jesus, lighthouse that enlightens us.

Dear Mary, Mother most pure, be our faithful companion on the journey towards Jesus.

My commitment is to pray more in times when Jesus seems to have abandoned me.

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Seventh Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 13

MARY, LISTENING VIRGIN

Listening to the Word: Blessed are the breasts you sucked (Lk 11: 27-28)



As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Reflection: It may seem that Jesus belittles Mary's part, preferring his disciples. But if we read the text carefully we will see that Jesus is really praising his mother. She is the woman who listens to the Word of God and keeps it all the time. She is an attentive disciple who keeps in her heart her Son's words and day after day keeps them. She points the way to us so that we too may imitate her if we wish to be truly her devotees.

Prayer: Beautiful Mother, listening virgin, open our hearts so that we may learn to listen to the words of your Son.

Beautiful Mother, listening virgin, open our hearts and minds that we may learn to listen to the words of your Son and keep them.

Mother so tender, pure of heart, strengthen us in our resolve.

My commitment is to listen attentively to the Word of God when it is proclaimed in church. I also commit myself to listen to God who speaks to me through the people I meet throughout the day.

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Eighth Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 14

MARY, MOTHER AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Listening to the Word: At the foot of the cross (Jn 19: 25-27)



So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Reflection: John tells us that at the foot of the cross, stood Mary and John. Mary, the mother, John, the beloved disciple. The Virgin Mother stands at the foot of the cross to give strength to her Son to fulfil his last hour. This passage of the Bible, dear to the heart of every Carmelite, teaches us that in times of suffering we are not alone, Mary and Jesus are with us. It also reminds us that, by dying, the Lord gave us his mother as a precious gift. Let us try to be grateful to him by the example of our lives.

Prayer: Mary, mother at the foot of the cross, stand by our side in our daily crosses so that, like you, we may stand and accept and offer our sufferings.

Mary, mother at the foot of the cross, open our hearts so that we may welcome you at all times as the gift given us by Jesus when he was dying.

Mary, mother who bestows favours on her children, be our guide in our daily life.

My commitment is to show myself a neighbour to someone who is suffering, physically or spiritually.

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Vine blossom-laden,*

*splendour of heaven,
Child-bearing yet maiden,
None equals thee.
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Ninth Day: Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

July 15

MARY, SISTER IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Listening to the Word: With Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Acts 1: 12-14)



Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away; and when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Reflection: Jesus ascended into heaven and the first Christian community gathers to pray together. Among them is Mary, Mother and Sister. In our assemblies too, Mary prays with us. Let us then make our participation in the Eucharistic mystery, a participation that is full of joy and life; we are not alone. Jesus is with us. Mary, his and our Mother, is with us.

Prayer: Holy Mary, sister in our Christian communities, be our Sister in our daily life and in our prayer.

Holy Mary, sister in our Christian communities, sit by our side and pray with us so that our prayer may be according to the desire of your Son.

Mary, Star of the sea, Mother and Sister in Carmel, gather us closely under your mantle.

My commitment is to contribute to enlivening the Sunday Eucharistic celebration in my parish, so that it may be truly a moment of joy and fraternal prayer.

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