

We are blessed to have the wonderful resources of the Carmelite Priory and Bookshop so close by at Boars Hill, Oxford. There are currently 6 Friars based there. The Priory hosts 4 separate Secular Carmelite "communities" of the Order of Discalced Carmelites of which Barbara Thacker, Armelle Belcher, Brian McNamee and Melanie Parris Dollar from our Parishes of Didcot & Wallingford are members.

First and foremost, it is a Catholic Order. Together with the Friars and Nuns, Secular Carmelites are sons and daughters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Teresa of Jesus, following the Rule of St Albert of Jerusalem, committing to a life of prayer in allegiance to Jesus Christ, to the study of scripture and of the Carmelite Saints, and participate in the life of the Church.

Each member inspired and called to a Carmelite way of will begin the journey of discernment. They are supported by a formator who will act as spiritual coach and a source of encouragement and guidance.

Carmelite Spiritual reading is a rich and loving source of nourishment as is the community for sharing faith and learning from each other as each member's spiritual journey proceeds and deepens in love and maturity. Each Community will grow to approximately 13 members and will have chosen a Carmelite name in line with their Carmelite inspiration.

Since Covid 19 lockdown rules came into force the Priory closed itself to all external visitors and the Friars have worked hard to transition all their courses, retreats and talks to digital offerings. The Secular Carmelite Communities have also switched to digital to ensure that their monthly meetings continue to contribute to their spiritual development and prayer benefits that they would do when meeting face to face.

Barbara has been providing Carmelite talks at English Martyrs with 8 parishioners who spent over a year going through Fr. Iain Matthew's 'Impact of God', which is an introduction to St. John of the Cross, Carmelite Doctor of the Church. That finished just before lockdown and the group was about to begin listening to Fr. Matt Blake's CDs on St. John of the Cross' Spiritual Canticle, so that is still to look forward to and all are welcome.

Armelle organised a Mass at St John's by Fr Matthew Blake (Provincial Delegate to the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order) on the feast of St Elizabeth of the Trinity and on Armelle's significant birthday, with talks, a personal witness and celebrations afterwards. About 40 people attended. She also presented a brief introduction on St Mary of Jesus Crucified (also known as Mariam Baouardy and the little Arab).

Link to the Carmelite site: [www.carmeliteprioryoxford.com](http://www.carmeliteprioryoxford.com)