

The First Steps in Carmelite Prayer

Fr. Marie Pierre, ocd

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Defining Characteristics of Carmelite Prayer



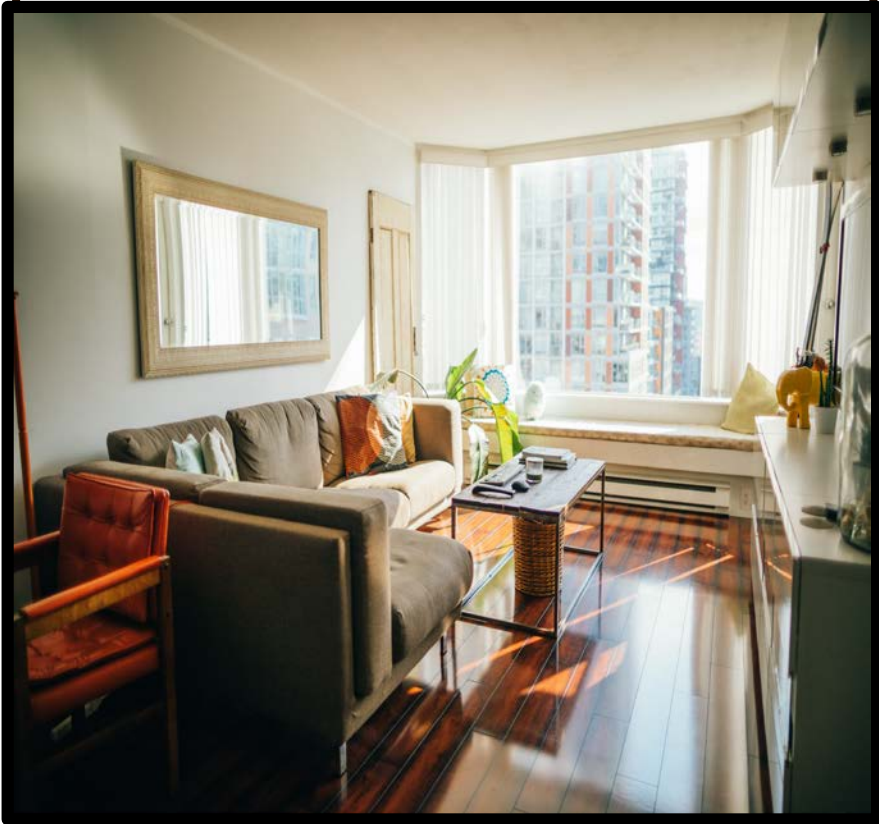
- St. Ignatius & St. Benedict offered **methods** of prayer;
- The Carmel offers a **WAY** of prayer;
- It is a **Direct Path** to the **Heart**;
- What defines Carmel is the belief that **God lives in the heart**;
- Through the Theological Virtues of **faith, hope & charity**, we can reach him there.

Defining Characteristics of Carmelite Prayer



- A Relationship results;
- This Relationship satisfies a person's thirst to be loved by God;
- I find Him within through **faith & love**;
- It is a **leap** into the invisible.

Entering into Prayer



- I go to my place of intimacy;
- A beautiful intimate place where you won't be disturbed & which brings to mind His presence;
- Open the Word of God; light a candle; look at a picture or an icon.

Where to Start



- It isn't easy to recollect yourself or turn with in;
- So maybe a little walk before beginning prayer would help you to detach from the world;
- Relax and get comfortable;
- Your body is your friend. It is an associate.

Determination



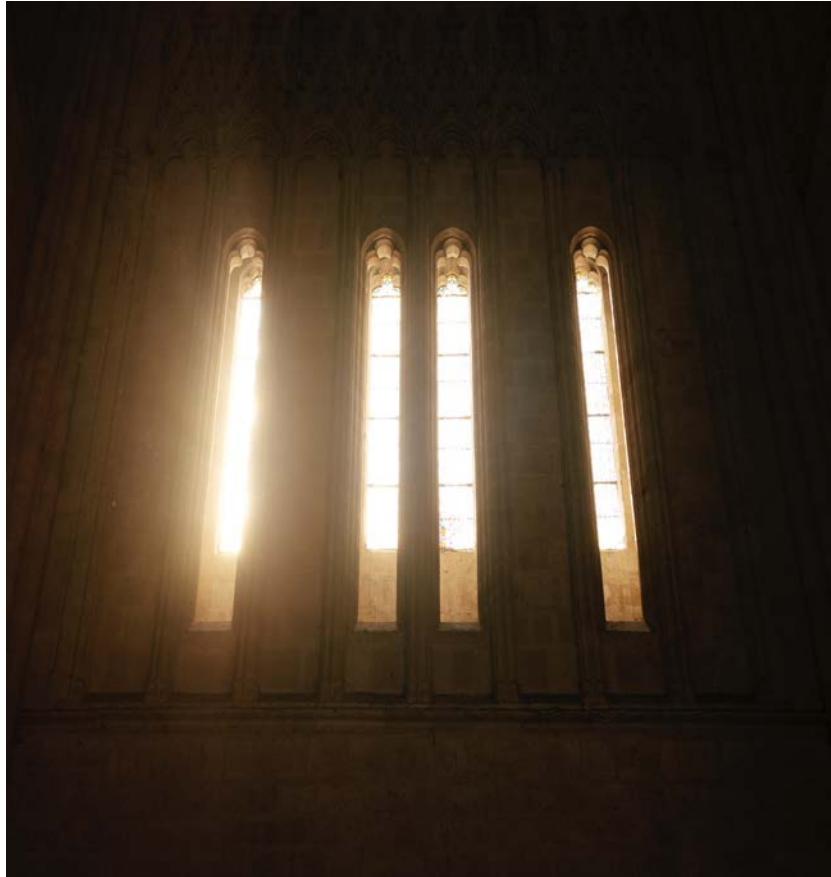
- The beginnings are tough;
- We are acquiring a new habit;
- We need to be determined to persevere in prayer;
- We need to make a firm decision not to give up.

Flexible



- Weekends, vacations can cause a lot of disturbances in our prayer practice;
- It can be difficult getting back into prayer after a break;
- Be who you are without pretense before the Lord;
- Don't try and appear spiritual with the Lord.

Start Well



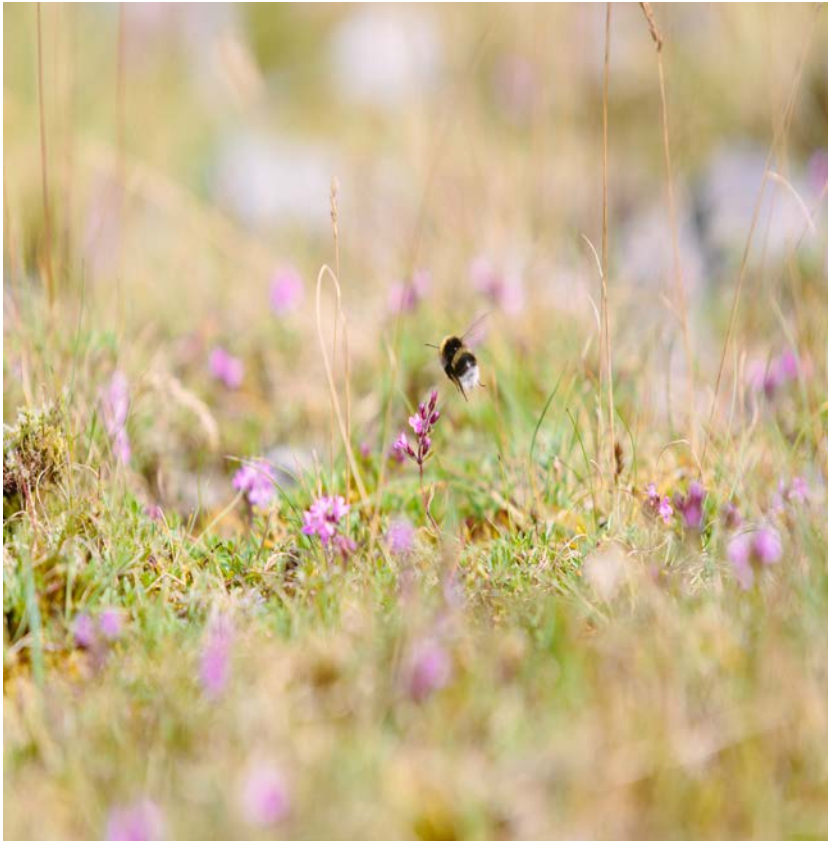
- Turn off your phone;
- Establish a length of time for prayer;
- Call on the Holy Spirit, the Master of Prayer;
- It is He who ushers you into God's world & prays in you.

Start Well



- Make the Sign of the Cross;
- An Examination of Conscience;
- An Act of Contrition.

Go into the Depths



We go within, putting our external senses on 'stand-by'

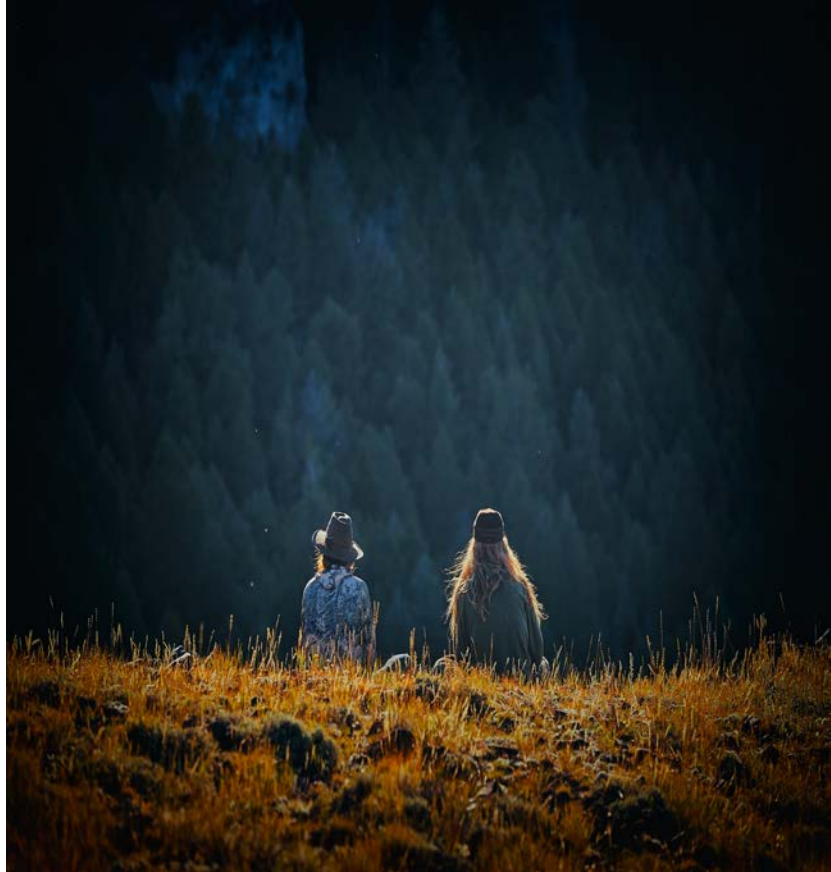
'Bees that go back into their hive as soon as the Queen has gone in'
(senses=bees)

Go into the Depths



- The King is calling;
- I learn to see with the '**eyes of my heart**' & open them with love;
- I unleash all of **my faith**;
- I open to His presence;
- He is there **waiting for me.**

Go into the Depths



- I am there keeping Him company;
- It isn't about thinking a lot but about loving a lot;
- Anything that allows me to love I do that!

Eyes of Faith



- To see with the eyes of faith means to activate the 'on' switch on a machine.
- It is a new way of seeing. It is the look of **faith & love**.
- Open to the presence of Christ. Faith is capable of this.
- Faith & love as St John says are the **guides of the blind**.

Recollection



- Talk to Christ about where you are, what you are going through;
- Praise & adore Him;
- Silent prayer allows a lot of freedom;
- Just be yourself !

End of Prayer Time



- Offer your prayer time up peacefully;
- Place it in the hands of the Virgin Mary;
- Return to your active life, leaving your prayer time in place.

Difficulties



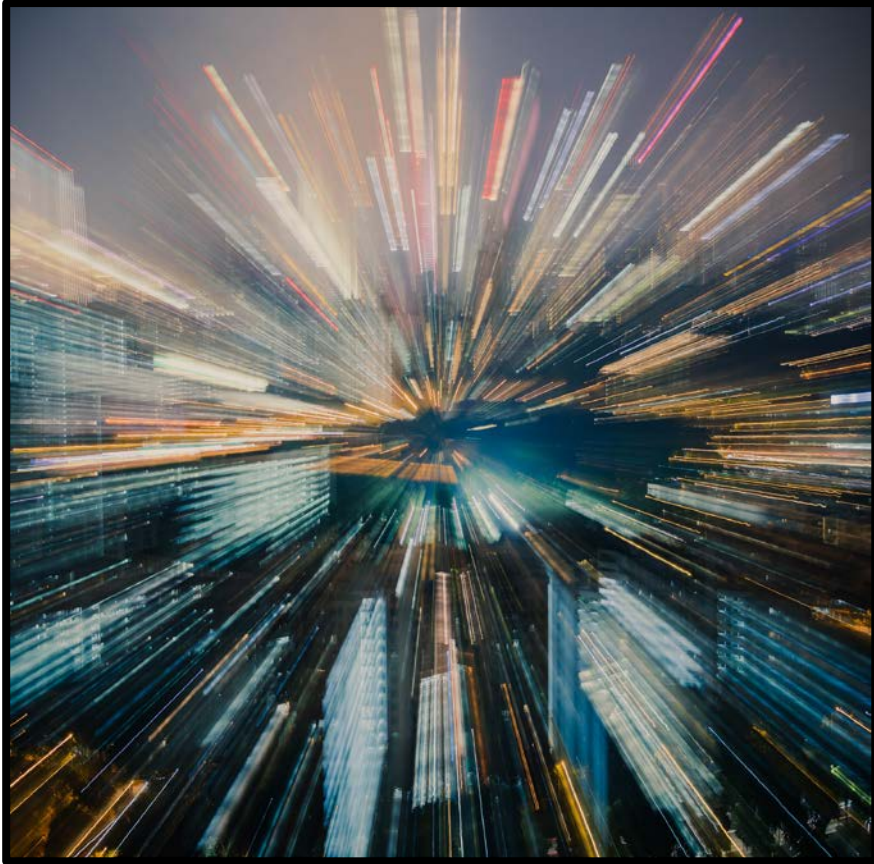
- Let's be truthful, it is hard to pray & persevere in prayer!
- It's important not to judge our own prayer, only God can judge our prayer;
- If there is **love**, there is quality in prayer!
- We can't base our prayer on **feelings** or impressions.

Difficulties



- It is good to ask ourselves questions about our prayer life, to get training or to have a spiritual director...
- Let's not **judge** what is **DIVINE**- what has to do with the Holy Spirit, what is invisible to us.

Distractions



- Distractions seem to bother us the most;
- It is to return to the surface,
- It is departure from our deepest self;
- It happens fast as our imagination is in perpetual motion.

So then what?

Distractions



- To return to this mysterious contact with Jesus you can repeat a word or a phrase that allows you to call Christ....
- Just come back to the heart to heart talk with Jesus.
- Jesus, I love you, Have pity on me!

Distractions



- Look at a picture, a little reading, meditation, a prayer said slowly;
- Another tactic is the tactic of love, use the thought to come back to Jesus by praying for the person who came to mind;
- If the same distraction returns continually you may need to do something about it.

Difficulties



- Look at my prayer and my life,
- If my prayer is difficult & laborious, maybe my life is scattered with a lot of idols, attachments, futilities, entertainment.
- Prayer is a sounding board for my life;

Difficulties



- Little by little my life will be evangelized by my prayer;
- If life becomes too complicated, look at my prayer life;
- As my life is purified & simplified, my prayer becomes simpler & more harmonious and peaceful.

Difficulties



- Sometimes I get bored in prayer. All the saints had this experience, it is normal;
- Don't pay so much attention to what you feel;
- What's important thing is to be with Him, exposed to His brilliance, **catching His rays** so to speak.

Difficulties



- It's important thing is to persevere in this act of love;
- Don't take back this time!
- A struggle in prayer is the struggle in a life that wants to be in keeping with the **Gospel**;
- It is a resurrection, the birthing of a new life; of becoming a child;
- A life of prayer is a **blessing**;

Difficulties



- Difficulties are a grace,
- Welcome this poverty of heart;
- In humility we cry out to the Lord:
It is so difficult to pray,
to recollect oneself,
to talk to Jesus!

Difficulties



- I become poorer not richer;
- This struggle isn't natural, it's supernatural;
- I can't do it alone, it is a gift from God;
- It is great that I can't do it alone,

Difficulties



- Happily I can't manage on my own, happily !;
- Prayer is God praying in me!
- All my struggles force me to cry out:

‘Lord, help me,
teach me to pray,
bless me with the grace of prayer”

Difficulties



- Prayer is a long birthing process;
- We move from autonomy, pride, self-sufficiency;
- To having God as our reference point;
- To dependence on Him.

Difficulties



- His grace, strength, patience, love, joy are presents He wants to give me;
- If only I open my hands...empty hands;
- If only I ask, need, empty myself of all of my false riches.

Link between Prayer & Life



- Let life enter into your prayer.
- Be yourself, talk about your Christian Catholic life to God.
- My life is meant to be evangelized and to become more harmonious through my life of prayer.

Practice the virtues per
St. Theresa



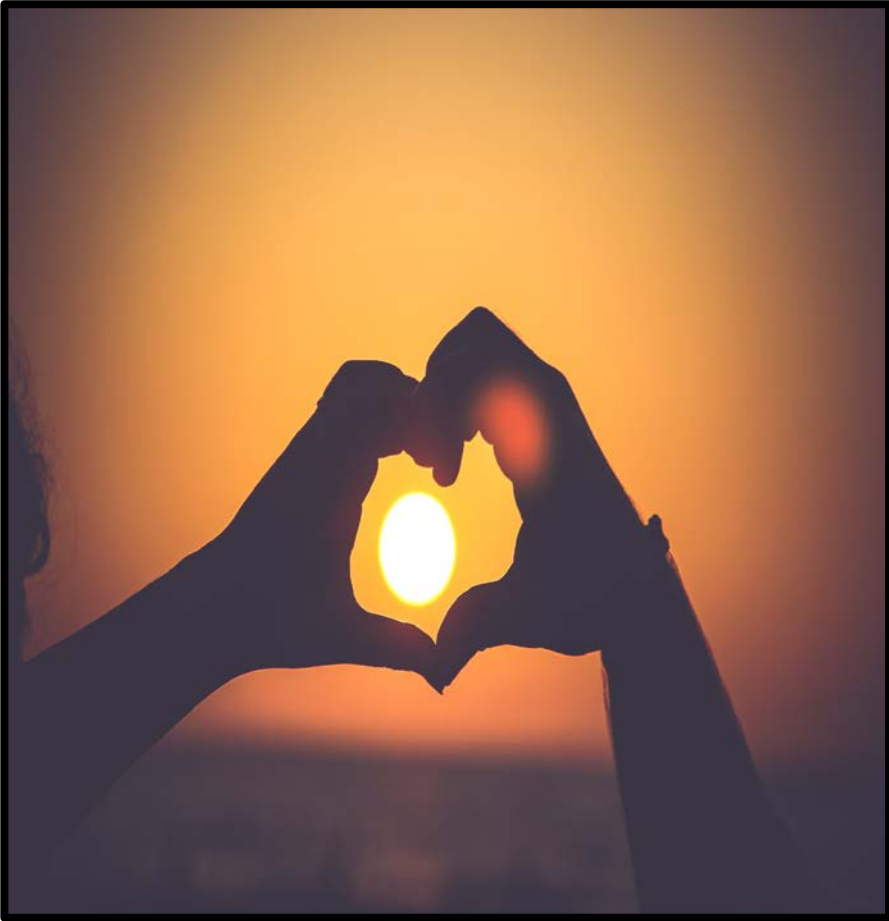
- **HUMILITY:** relationship with God;
- **CHARITY:** relationships with others;
- **DETACHMENT:** relationship with the world or detachment.

Personal Mystery



- A life of interior prayer has to be fed;
- It continually sends us back to fraternal communion;
- Fraternal Communion is the meeting of Christ in the Sacraments in community with the faithful!

Goal of Prayer



- Regularly cultivated prayer will introduce **habitual recollection** into our lives;
- Our prayer leads us into silence, interior silence;
- A loving silence is the only language that pleases Him;
- A **silent love** says John of the Cross.

Unification



- Carmel always orients God;
- To God's proposition of union;
- I am made to become one with God;
- To be transformed by Him in love.

Conclusion



- A life of prayer is a passage into a new life,
- We stay for God not for his consolations;
- It's good to be together in prayer is a new way of being together;
- Where **love is first** we will find a way says St. Teresa of Avila.