

PART I

Mary, Mother of God, and the Carmelite Order

Every Christian, every Catholic, can have a relationship with the Blessed Virgin. We honor Mary as the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. We recognize her unique role in the redemption her son brought to men. We love Mary and we try to imitate her virtues of faith, purity, humility and conformity to the will of God.

In Carmel we develop an additional bond with the Blessed Mother, an attenuated relationship that has many dimensions. This is apparent from the very moment that we seculars become members of the Order by making the Promise because the very next thing we say, the very first words we say as Carmelites are these: ***I confidently entrust this, my Promise, to the Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel.***

If a child or a dear friend brought something to me that was very precious to them and asked me to look after it, they know that I would. On the other hand, if I was to go to the mayor of Washington DC and ask her to look after something special of mine, the mayor would think I was a little crazy, and would certainly never agree. The difference of course is rooted in the relationships involved. Those who know me and love me are sure that they can entrust their special things to me because of our mutual relationship, grounded in trust and proved by actions and behavior.

So how can we be so sure of our relationship with her that the first thing we do as brand-new Carmelites is to entrust our Promise to the Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel? And not just entrust our promise – **but to confidently entrust it.** How do we know that as Carmelites we have a trusting, loving relationship with the Blessed Mother? How do we know that as Carmelites she will know us, she will recognize us, and she will take responsibility for that which we entrust to her?

Understanding that it in no way diminishes or lessens her love for each one of God's people, let's explore this particular relationship between the Blessed Mother and Carmel, set the landscape and identify some of the modalities involved in **Part II.**