



Dear Rev. Fathers and Brothers,

Once again we celebrate the , amidst the continued uncertainties and anxieties created by the pandemic COVID-19. It is indeed a blessing for us to be the members of the religious congregation which is dedicated to Mary, who sought God's will in profound silence and serenity. It is a blessing to be the members of a great religious tradition living the life of prayer and contemplation, inspired by the life and spirit of Prophet Elijah and be the successors of the hermits who lived in the caves of Mt. Carmel, in silence and solitude. We are Carmelites. It is a deliberate choice by God and by us. In His loving Providence, God has chosen us. As Prophet Jeremiah puts it: "Into the land of Carmel I have brought you to enjoy its fruits and its blessings" (Jer

2:7). The Feast of our Mother of Carmel is a time for us to count this blessing!

Though we are not in a festive mood, the very celebration of this feast is an occasion for us to recall and to reflect upon our Carmelite DNA and to reinterpret it in the contemporary context. What does it mean to be a Carmelite? Carmel is a symbol- a symbol of interiority, symbol of a life totally dedicated to the Lord through contemplation and action. The Carmelite DNA consists of living our fidelity to Jesus and serving Him faithfully through a commitment to seek the face of the living God through prayer, community building and service. As Carmelites we are supposed to be to be contemplatives: God-seekers - friends of God who are open to God's transforming action in our lives. Our mission in life is to know and love God, and to make God known and loved. This sends us out to evangelise and share the Good News of Christ, that God loves humanity with a deep passion and compassion. The happy blending of contemplation and compassion is the hallmark of our great heritage and that's what we need to rekindle in us today.

Mary, from whom we inherit the Carmelite DNA, teaches us that we need to have the interiority of life where we try to "treasure everything in heart", even the things we can't comprehend. Through this interiority, her life was always in perfect union with God. She had no other will in life than the Will of God. Mother Mary, the great Carmelite also teaches us that we need to make objective analysis of the events of life in our pilgrimage of faith. The question asked by Mary at the time of Annunciation, "How can this happen?" (Lk 1:34) was not a question of unbelief but of faith affirming through reasoning. As a contemplative, Mary always kept a servant-like attitude in fulfilling the will of God. It was an attitude of radical availability to God's will, without counting the cost ("Let it be done to me as you say" [Luke 1:38]). St John of the Cross points to Mary as the prime example of someone utterly responsive to the Spirit, free of her own agenda. Mary's contemplative life teaches us that Holiness begins and ends with love. Mary's life is a testimony of love- the love that bears everything and cares for everyone. She stands tall as a model of humane and tender love which surpasses all the attacks of the "virus of indifference." She reminds us that as true contemplatives we need to have a tender and compassionate heart. Mary's contemplation was not merely a passive enjoyment of spiritual privileges, but an active engagement on

behalf of those in need with a compassionate heart. Her presence at Elizabeth's house, Cana, and even at Calvary is a continuing lesson for us in blending contemplation and compassion happily in our consecrated life. Finally, Mary's life is an eternal inspiration for us in our attempts of community building and in the enhancing of fraternity. It was her presence that kept the coward and shattered disciples in serenity and fraternal communion after the earthly sojourn of Jesus. She points out how effectively the fellowship of the followers of Christ can infect the joy of the Risen Christ.

We, the Carmelites are called to imbibe this DNA and to re-live it to "the ends of the earth (Acts1:8)" according to the signs of the times. The happy blending of contemplation and compassion may be the best antidote for the wounded world of today. As the entire world continues to pass through a huge human social crisis, let's be a contemplative fraternity with a healing touch to the sick, the hungry, the abandoned, the despised, and the little ones. Like Mother Mary, let's listen to God with an open heart and let's listen to the world with a compassionate heart.

As we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, let's rededicate our beloved congregation to the Mother of Carmel.

Happy Feast to all of you! May God bless you!

Yours fraternally in our Lord,

Fr Thomas Chathamparampil CMI
Prior General