

**PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL & ST SIMON STOCK, CARMELITE CHURCH**  
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**21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 21 August 2022**

**The Lord Trains His Children for Love**

This could hardly cross many people's mind, and if it did they would be slow to entertain it for one second – that the suffering we sometimes undergo has a good purpose. We often speak of our Christian life as a journey likened to the journey of the people of Israel – a journey made in and with God. It is not accidental that most of Israel's journey into the promised land was made in the desert. For 40 years, we are told, they wandered in the desert. Within that time, they were to learn a lot about God with whom they had entered into a covenant of loving relationship. Even after they settled in their own land, they were, several times, pillaged by neighbouring nations and twice carried away into exile.

Israel struggled to understand why God who had promised them love and protection would permit their experience of suffering. Like them, we often come to the same question. What is the sense of all the suffering in the world around us, the constant pain, worry, loneliness and frustration? Why does our commitment to the Christian life not shield us from these experiences? The Letter to the Hebrews in our second reading answers this question quite decisively: "Suffering is part of your training; God is treating you as his sons and daughters." Whether we are satisfied with this explanation is a totally different matter. Perhaps some of us with an experience of a punishing (or abusive) father on earth, might even find the explanation offensive if it serves to justify suffering. In that case we might have a repulsion towards such Fatherly God. Another explanation, although no better than this first one, is that our experience of suffering keeps us close to God or brings us back to God. For, in a world without pain, we would hardly ever turn to God. Yet this is not to say that God allows these experiences in order to have us running back to him. Jesus himself went about healing sicknesses, diseases and confronting the structures of suffering and oppression in order to reduce people's pain. And doing that brought about his own suffering and death.

It would appear therefore that God as a loving Father knows that the life to which he calls us as his children – the life of love – is one with which suffering must coexist. Love and suffering are contemporaneous. Jesus pinpointed love as the purpose of our life. In that passage which a question was put to him: what is the greatest commandment of the Law? Jesus answered: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And the second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself." So this is the task of our Christian life. Consequently, to say that we cannot but suffer is to say that we cannot but love. It follows then that explaining suffering as God training us his children is to say that God prepares us for the life of love we must live.

Needless to say we have a natural aversion for the road to suffering although we all appreciate the need to love and be loved. Not even Jesus' own first disciples found it easy to accept. We read Jesus' words in the Gospel today: "Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed." See how he describes it: "the narrow door." Only a few find it. Why? Because it is uninviting and unpleasant. Admittedly, these words were first

spoken of those Jews who refused to accept Christ and excluded themselves from the fold. But these words can also be applied to us as Christians today. Some people imagine they can live a true Christian life without the cross, being content that they have been called to be Christians. These are those who cry “Lord, Lord” without actually accepting the will of God, for God has destined his children to be witnesses of love on earth, and there is no such love without the cross.

Let us heed St Paul’s invitation to see suffering as a privilege of sharing in Christ’s redemptive suffering. By so doing, we bear witness as a Church, as the true body of Christ and the Servant of the Lord. To truly live as God’s children, to truly love will always mean that we embrace suffering.

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## NOTICES

### **Relic Tour: St Bernadette**

In September and October this year, the relics of St Bernadette will journey on pilgrimage to England, Scotland, and Wales for the very first time. This very special once in a lifetime event will provide an opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience the special gifts and charisms of Lourdes, in a church or cathedral near them.

Between September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> the veneration of the relics of St Bernadette will take place at the Cathedral. On that Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the service of Anointing of the Sick will be held in the Cathedral at 2.30pm. **Those in the first batch who requested for an entry ticket to this service of Anointing of the Sick may now collect their ticket from any of the priests in front of the sacristy.**

### **Registration for First Holy Communion**

We are also now accepting registrations for the next group of children to prepare for First Holy Communion. Classes will commence in September. If you have children for first holy communion, please do register them ahead of September. Children must be 7yrs old by 31<sup>st</sup> August. The registration form is on our website [www.carmelitechurch.org/activities/catechism-classes](http://www.carmelitechurch.org/activities/catechism-classes) or simply email [catechism.co-ordinator@carmelitechurch.org](mailto:catechism.co-ordinator@carmelitechurch.org) and request a form to be sent to you. Thanks

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| <b><u>Collections Last Sunday</u></b> | Offering           | £1000 |
|                                       | Gift Aid Envelopes | £144  |

Thank you for your generosity

*Fr. Thaddeus, OCD*