

**Visit of Fr Provincial, Rev Fr. Victor Mallia, OCD**  
***Homily to the Secular Order Carmelites***  
***at St. Clement's Church, March 24, 2007***

It is so nice to be back with you and it is indeed a joy that I can share with you this experience as we are all preparing ourselves for the great Feast of the Church, Easter - the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Even when we look at Jesus, the way we look at Him, the way Jesus is presented to us in the Gospel, we find that there is a certain amount of contradiction in Jesus. Indeed, He Himself told us that many will lose heart and won't listen to Him anymore. People react differently to the person of Jesus Christ and we see that in today's Gospel. It was like that in the past, it is still like that in the present. Some people are attracted to Jesus, and others are put off, not because of His personality, but rather because of the demand which He puts forward for His disciples in order to be His followers. If we want to be His disciples, if we want to be His followers, well then, we cannot just simply walk after Him in our own way, we have to follow Him in His way, in His way according to His direction and guidance.

It often comes to my mind what the great Indian political leader and spiritual leader Mahat Magandi once wrote. He said that he admired the figure of Jesus Christ, he even believed in Jesus Christ, but unfortunately, he could say the same about Christians because they preach one thing, and do or live another. This is what we have to be constantly aware of, that we bear true witness to Jesus Christ in our lives.

It is hard to be neutral about Jesus. You can't just take Him or leave Him. Just a few weeks ago Fr. Dominic sent me a link via e-mail that told the story of this scientist who claims that he has unearthed the tomb of Jesus, with the remains of Jesus and the remains of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Mary Magdalen, John the Evangelist, the children of Jesus, and so forth. It is total rubbish. I don't know how people still come up with this kind of argument. I don't know how they expect to be believed when they have no real proof. It is similar to the DaVinci Code. Everyone has heard of the DaVinci Code. Many have read the book, and perhaps many more have gone to the movies and seen the picture. When I was asked would I go to see the picture to check out for myself what was in it, I said "No, I am not going to waste my time or money on something which I know is not true. I don't want to make people rich by trying to ridicule my faith, my religion." Yes indeed, brothers and sisters, I think we ought to be strong in our faith, after all it is a question of faith.

St. Thomas Aquinas, the great theologian wrote "faith is the mental disposition through which eternal life starts up in us causing our mind to ascend to what it does not see." It is easy for me to accept the fact that I am here with you this morning. I can see you. I greeted you and you greeted me. We have been together for well over an hour now. You see, that is easy for me to accept, but faith is not that. Faith is letting the mind ascend to what I cannot see, and the truth about Jesus, or the true Jesus we can find in the Bible. He is the one and only - there are no other Jesus'. Therefore we should continue to work hard to make Him known, loved and accepted by humankind as the real and only Saviour of humankind. In particular, this is our mission as Carmelite Seculars. I think we are the people who can give true witness to the presence of the real Jesus in our life, in our community, in our society - and in the world over.

It is beautiful this morning to see - we are gathered here together as a Carmelite family. We are a very international lot, so many different faces, so many different colours, so many different tongues, yet we are all united in Him. He is our focal point. Why? Because even our Carmelite Rule focuses our attention on the figure of Jesus Christ.

It is interesting, we are a Marian Order, an order of Mary, dedicated to Our Lady of Mt Carmel, but at the same time our Carmelite Rule doesn't mention Mary even one time. It is a short Rule, but it does not mention Mary, at least not by name, not even once. It focuses our attention on the fruit that came out of Mary's womb, that is, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And this is where we have to come in. Living according to our Carmelite Rule, means following Jesus Christ, and putting Him at the centre of our lives in a way that our whole life revolves around Him.

Whenever we celebrate His mysteries - now especially that we are coming to the climax of this central mystery of our Faith. What is the Mystery of Faith? Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. That is the central mystery of our faith. Now that we are coming to the celebration of that mystery - it is even more important that we make Christ the focal point of our whole Carmelite life. We should not be afraid to give witness to Christ.

Many times Jesus tells His disciples or His visitors "Do not be afraid". But they have persecuted Him and even killed Him. We shouldn't expect a better lot for ourselves if we are going to preach Him, if we are going to bear witness to Him, but still, be strong in faith, be strong in your conviction that He is the only answer to all the troubles and the ills of this world we live in. Our goal should be to grow in faith every day, and we grow in faith every day by living our faith every day. We live our faith every day not simply by going to Mass and saying our prayers, but by ministering to others, by being of service to others, by not being afraid to accept responsibility for the service to others, especially in our own communities. That is living your faith every day. It is not easy. Well, Jesus never said it would be easy. He always said that whoever wants to follow Him would have to take up his cross every day. So following Jesus means taking up the cross every day. Sometimes the cross is small, but at other times you find that the cross is too big to carry, too heavy to carry. Still, remember that you are not alone, He is with you.

Let me remind you of something I told you when I was with you for the Congress in October, 2005. I quoted a little saying that we have in the Sacristy, and now I have put it up in my Parish Office as well which goes like this: "STOP TELLING GOD YOU HAVE BIG PROBLEMS - TELL YOUR PROBLEMS YOU HAVE A BIG GOD". That will make all the difference, but before you say that, believe it and it will work wonders. It did for me, and I am sure it will for you as well.

I would like to round off this reflection with a quotation from our beloved sister St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein. Reflecting on faith she wrote "To be sure, a life built on faith should be the fruit of religious formation. Faith however, is not a matter of imagination or pious emotion, but on the contrary, it is an intellectual recognition and a voluntary acceptance by the will. A complete development of faith is one of the most profound acts of the individual, one in which all his powers become achieved." Let us continue our celebration dear brothers and sisters by asking God to give us this kind of faith, so that we will never be afraid to make known, and to attract others to follow Him by our example and also by being true, good witnesses to this beloved Master of ours. With that, on my behalf, and on behalf of all our Province I wish you and all your families a very Blessed and Happy Easter, and may God bless you.