



# Carmelite Highlights

National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel™

## A DAY AT THE NATIONAL SHRINE

by Penny Watkins, T.O.C.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel has many features that are enjoyed and appreciated by visitors. There are feast day celebrations, seasonal celebrations based on the Church calendar, and catechetical classes. One of the most frequent events we share at the National Shrine, and my personal favorite, is the group pilgrimage.

As a Lay Carmelite, I often get to share the experience when a call comes from the Shrine Director, Father Francis Amodio, O. Carm., and he says, "We have a pilgrimage coming, can you do the Shrine tour?" I can't always say yes, but when I do, I love it. Here's why.

Pilgrims to the National Shrine are greeted by Carmelite Friars. They are welcomed into our Shrine Chapel, and the Carmelite experience begins. A continental breakfast is provided while Father Francis gives a brief history of the National Shrine, of the Carmelites who built it, and an explanation of other Carmelite endeavors located on the grounds such as St. Albert's Priory for our retired friars, and Brandsma Priory where our novices live and study.

The Window Tour comes next, and pilgrims experience the more than 800 years of Carmelite history depicted in the magnificent stained glass windows in the Shrine Chapel. As a guide, this is my favorite contribution to the pilgrimages. When we journey around the Shrine Chapel, pilgrims get to know not only our history, but the people who made it as well. Most of the early Carmelites are unknown to our visitors, but it doesn't take long for years of Carmelite spirituality to have an effect. By the time we wander on to our reproduction of "La Bruna," the first painting where Carmelites depicted their devotion to Our Lady, the pilgrims

want more. That's when I get to explain the devotion Carmelites have to Our Lady. The fact that we see Mary not only as our Mother, but also as our sister, seems to be a concept most visitors are fascinated by, and they wonder how they could experience that same thing.

By the time the tour is over, Mass begins. In the Chapel, right in the midst of a visual portrayal of our history, pilgrims experience the ultimate Carmelite devotion—the devotion we have to the Eucharist.

Our Carmelite hospitality continues as we offer pilgrims a hot lunch served by some of our Carmelite friars, and when I'm there, I serve as well. Not to tempt anyone, but one of the specialties of our chef is Chicken Cordon Bleu. How's that for hospitality?

Of course, the gift shop is an absolute must for many pilgrims. Sometimes I pitch in there too. We offer an outstanding selection of traditional items generally found in Catholic gift stores, but the items that express our Carmelite spirituality make our Gift Store special. Our collection of books is unsurpassed in the region, and our Gift Store manager is always willing to process special orders.

Not to ramble on, I have to say that working with the group pilgrimages is special to me. That's probably because I'm a frequent pilgrim to the National Shrine myself. There's not a spot on the grounds where I haven't wandered and/or worked. Our grounds and outdoor shrines are spectacular. Each season offers an outdoor visual display that can often take your breath away. The quiet atmosphere can bring you to stop and pray awhile. That's a great way to spend a day.

## FATHER EMIEL ABALAHIN ORDAINED

by Linda Reeves,  
from *The Florida Catholic*

His family life, a challenge of faith, and work at a Boca Raton parish led to Father Emiel Abalahin's ordination to the priesthood.

The long journey ended July 1 as the Carmelite brother stood before Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito and promised obedience and respect during the celebration of the sacrament of holy orders. Parishioners, religious, friends, family and fellow Carmelites looked on as ancient rituals were performed and Deacon Abalahin became Father Abalahin.

"To see a priest ordained is extra special," said Theresa Leavitt, a St. Jude parishioner. "He is a wonderful young man and is going to be a great priest."

Father Abalahin began serving St. Jude and the church community of 3,700 families in August 2005. At one glance around the church during his ordination, it appeared that the young man has touched a diverse population and many hearts during his short residency.

"He is great with the students of the Newman Club at Florida Atlantic University," said Terence McCorry, director of campus ministry for the Diocese of Palm Beach, who attended the ceremony.

"He has been leading Bible studies and some good theological discussions with the students and has been of great service and a great spirit for us. We are actually hoping that Father Abalahin will come and celebrate Mass with us at FAU," he said.

In addition to ministering to youths on campus, Father Abalahin works with the parish's Life Teen ministry. The St. Jude Life Teen choir sang during ordination ceremonies and teens lined the pews.

His ministry and guidance has also reached out to the Hispanic and Filipino communities, engaged couples preparing for marriage, and the Edith Stein Third Order Carmelites.

Bishop Barbarito began by welcoming the diverse crowd. He acknowledged visiting Carmelite nuns, brothers and priests



*Father Emiel Abalahin kneels before the altar during his ordination to the priesthood ceremonies in July.*

and Father Michael Kissane, O. Carm., prior provincial of the North American province of St. Elias, who took part in the ceremonies and presented the candidate to Bishop Barbarito for service as a priest.

"As always it is a joy to come to St. Jude Parish, especially today for a most happy occasion—that is the ordination of Deacon Emiel for the priesthood, for the Carmelite order and for this parish of St. Jude," Bishop Barbarito said. "We pray for Deacon Emiel in a special way as he becomes a priest this afternoon."

Father Abalahin, 37, was born in San Francisco, the oldest of four children. His three brothers are Elmer, Eric and Edgar. His mother, Amalia Abalahin and late father, Emigdio Abalahin Jr., came from the Philippines.

Father Abalahin admitted that his path to the priesthood has experienced a few twists and turns. At one point, his faith was even challenged.

"I wasn't sure if my faith was really mine or just part of the climate I grew up in," Father Abalahin said. "I was so privileged to grow up in a safe and stable family. We prayed the rosary every night and went to Mass."

Receiving training in the computer

field, he launched a career in the world of computers and landed a position as a government defense contractor relocating to England. Wrapped up in his career, he slipped away from the church and stayed away for three years.

"I wasn't sure I believed in all that my faith asked of me," he said. "I always knew there was a God, but I wanted to know who He was. When I came back to church, I found that God was much more than I ever expected. It's all process."

The priest, who speaks English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and French, began studies as a seminarian for the Diocese of Leeds, one of 22 dioceses in England and Wales, located in northern England. He also studied at Gregorian University in Rome, where he earned a bachelor's degree in sacred theology in 1999. He sees his calling to the priesthood as a lifelong response that finally came to fruition.

"Once I was in seminary, I realized that I seemed to be speaking in a language different from most of the other seminarians," Father Abalahin said. "My spirituality reflected a strong sense of community and I soon realized I was speaking like a Carmelite."

In January 2002, he entered religious life as a Carmelite brother and began religious studies at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, where he earned a master's in theology. He pursued Carmelite studies at Washington Theological University, where he graduated in 2004.

Bishop Barbarito's homily focused on

the family and he talked about the duties of the priesthood in service of the church.

"Emiel, you will stand among God's people as one born into the family of the Trinity to be a sign that God is real, that God is alive, that God is the God of life," Bishop Barbarito said. "You will stand among God's people celebrating the sacraments, preaching the word of God and handing out the good news that God is the God of the living. Deacon Emiel, we support you. We pray for you. We stand by you."

Father Kissane said a few words and announced that Father Abalahin will continue serving St. Jude Parish.

"Father Emiel's ordination is a double delight for me," said Father Michael Driscoll, O. Carm., pastor of St. Jude Parish, a parish that is run through the assistance of Carmelite priests, brothers and nuns. "This brilliant, gifted young man has not only been ordained to serve God as a priest, but his first assignment is to remain here as parochial vicar at St. Jude where we continue to grow so rapidly."

At the close of ceremonies, Bishop Barbarito thanked all in attendance and all who helped to organize and carry out the ceremony. He thanked the choirs in attendance: Life Teen choir, St. Jude choir and Coro de Jovenes Hispanos de San Judas, a Hispanic group.

When asked about goals, Father Abalahin quickly responded, "My goal as a priest is to walk with my sisters and brothers toward our Father in Christ as all come to

## SHRINE UPDATE - NEW PROVINCIAL OFFICES AT THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL

*by Father Paul, O. Carm.*

Sunday, November 19, 2006, was the long-awaited day when, at last, the Carmelite Province of St. Elias dedicated a new home for the Provincial Offices. Very Rev. Michael Kissane, O. Carm., the present Prior Provincial, led a gathering of friars, friends, neighbors, benefactors and supporters in blessing and dedicating a permanent place for administrating the work of the Province.

The new building is located next to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The property has been in the

hands of the Carmelites since 1917. During the ceremony, Fr. Alfred Isacson, O. Carm., the Provincial Historian, recounted how this new building occupies the site of what was previously called the "White Building" or the "Red Building," depending on the prevailing whim of the painter. This former building had been used over the course of years as a novitiate, dining hall, kitchen, gathering place and chapel before it was demolished in the late 1970s.

Meanwhile, the Provincial Offices had been moved a number of times over the years, from the "Motherhouse" at 339 East

*Continued...*



*The new Donor Recognition Wall.*

28<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, to the Marian Center next door to an apartment complex in Maspeth, Queens, then to St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Brooklyn, New York. Then Very Rev. Matthias DesLauriers, O. Carm. sought to make use of the property at St. Albert's and had the former school building renovated to house offices, along with a residence for our retired friars, and to become the new setting for the National Shrine. Beautiful as the offices there were, however, it soon became clear that there simply was not enough space to handle the needs of the Provincial Administration. In order to allow the operations of the Development Office and the Shrine to grow, Very Rev. Mario Esposito, O. Carm. decided, as a temporary measure, to use rented quarters as the site for the offices. During the late 1990s, there was an effort to build a place on the property at St. Albert's, but there simply were not enough funds then to complete the work.

With the completion of this new building, there is now a good working place for the Prior Provincial and the Provincial Secretary, along with the Provincial Procurator (our Treasurer), the Director of Finance and the Vocation Director. Adjoining the offices in this building is

### *National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Regularly Scheduled Events*

#### **Monday - Friday**

Mass, 11:30 a.m.

#### **Saturday**

Confession, 11 a.m. - noon

#### **Sunday**

Mass, noon

For more information on Days of Prayer or bus trips, call (845) 343-1879 or email [nsolmc@warwick.net](mailto:nsolmc@warwick.net).

the Development Office, which now has a well-designed place to handle all its operations and mailings.

Also during the dedication ceremony, Fr. Francis Amodio, O. Carm., the Prior of St. Albert's Priory, spoke of how the retired men living there remain very active in their prayer life, asking for God's blessings upon not only the Province and its works, but also upon all those who have supported and helped the Carmelites over the years. With the grace of God and by the generous help of so many good people, the friars have been able to minister from St. Albert's in many different ways. Since many of the now-retired men had studied or taught at St. Albert's when it was a minor seminary, it seems that their living there now brings to full circle a life of prayer and service.

Thanks to so many good people, the Province now has a good place to coordinate all its efforts to make God better known and loved. May God bless all of you forever!

**Carmelite Highlights** is published by the Carmelite Friars of the Province of Saint Elias to provide information for those interested in Carmelite ministries and spirituality. Communications should be referred to:



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