

but as we learn to trust God more and more, we start to willingly let go of the things that have held us back!

St. Thérèse prefers the image of an "elevator" that she described as the arms of Jesus carrying her up easily to the top. But we can so often resist Him when He comes to carry us in our weakness and times of failure, wanting to do everything our own way.



On a mountain journey, the company of friends can be a great help. They encourage us in our moments of weakness and struggle, and the laughter and chat helps us to cover the distance quickly and easily. The community life of Carmel is essential for helping each one on her spiritual climb of Mount Carmel. Mary, our Mother, above all, accompanies us and helps us along our pilgrim way.

If you are looking for the greatest challenge of your life—I would like to invite you to join me on the Ascent of Mount Carmel. It is a richly rewarding and wonderful journey—but not many are called by God for this challenge and are also willing to make the effort. Are you being called? Will you take up God's challenge?



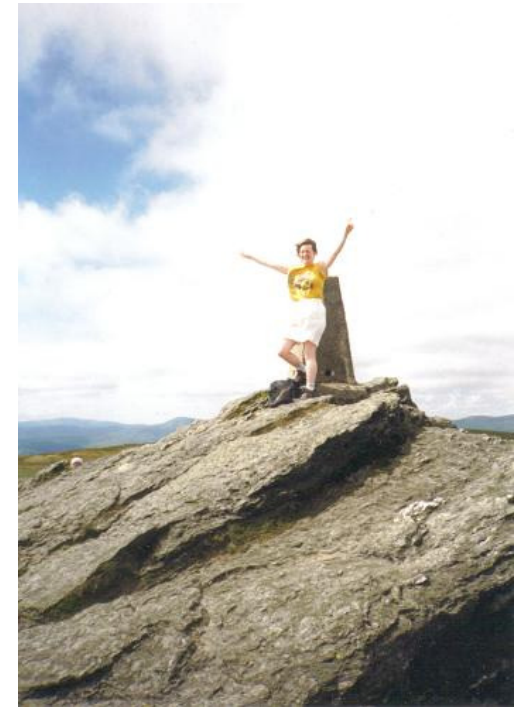
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Are you ready for God's challenge?



The ascent of Mount Carmel...
by a Junior Sister

Before I entered the Carmelite Monastery in Kilmacud in 2006, I used to do a bit of hiking and mountain climbing in Wicklow. I loved the exhilaration of reaching the top of a peak, after a difficult climb, as you can see from the front image of this leaflet!

Mount Carmel is a range of hills on the western edge of the Holy Land, overlooking the Mediterranean. It is renowned for its beauty. The Bible tells us that St. Elijah went there to pray to God, and to fight against the prophets of the false god Baal. In the 12th century, a group of hermits gathered to live there in the spirit of Elijah in prayer and solitude. Eventually they gathered together into a community, and became the first Carmelites. They looked to Mary as their inspiration in living a life dedicated to Christ, and built a little chapel in her honour in the midst of their cells. They gradually grew in number and spread throughout Europe and the world, attracting many men and women to their spirituality and life of prayer and contemplation.

When I was 31 years old, I discovered that God was challenging me to climb Mount Carmel—not in a physical sense, of course, but in the same way that so many other people do, by becoming a member of the Carmelite Order!



Mount Carmel

Climbing Mount Carmel is a journey of self-discovery—an inner journey to discover the reason for my existence, God's plan for me. This climb will take a life-time, but on the way there are many little peaks, bringing the same sense of excitement that I used to experience on a physical climb. There are also valleys on this journey; it can be difficult at times, and there can be a temptation to give up and come back

down the mountain—but like any climb, the risk and the effort brings a rich reward as you journey higher and see the marvellous vistas spread out before you! In the spiritual journey, these vistas are seen as an ever deeper awareness of God's love, of a sense of the wonder of His creation and an appreciation of the great gift of our humanity created in His image and likeness. In our moments of solitary prayer in Carmel, we marvel at the privilege it is to be on this spiritual journey.

When I used to set off mountain climbing, I would prepare a back-pack with what I would need for the day—raingear, map, lunch, first aid kit, etc... In the Carmelite life we travel with the Word of God as nourishment and the example of our Carmelite Saints in their many writings as guide books.

Every day in Carmel we meditate on the Word of God. It brings us strength and inspiration during our daily routine.

St. John of the Cross teaches that to reach the top of Mount Carmel we must detach ourselves from everything—this is a life-long challenge! Imagine climbing a mountain with no footholds or grips—