



## DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



### HOMILY FOR OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL July 16, 2011

The last time that I was in the Holy Land, in 2006, I had the chance to visit Mt. Carmel, again. Perhaps it was because I had been a priest for only 25 years, when I was there the first time (I was in Third Year Theology), that the location made a greater impression on me. Maybe it was because I took with me all the 25 years of priestly ministry and experiences, which had been both blessings and challenges.

From the top of Mt. Carmel one can look down and see the modern city of Haifa, and also have a clear view of the mountains that we call Carmel, and all of the surrounding country: a perspective from "on high" where the height and beauty of God's creation seems to define everything.

As we celebrate once more this great feast day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, in the midst of the summer, cannot we say that today Our Lady of Mt. Carmel can give us a perspective on the rest of our lives? How, from our prayers here and the spirituality of Carmel, we can see life from "On High," and how the presence of God in our lives can, and must, define who we are in this secular age.

What, in this feast day, can define our lives from "On High" today? How about Mt. Carmel itself, where Elijah tried to run and hide in his fear, and yet God found him – that "still, small voice." We cannot run from the Lord as much as we might try. He will find us and seek us out in all moments, good and bad. That "still, small voice" of God is there to give us a perspective, to define our lives.

The first hermits that settled on Carmel took the Mother of God as their patron and protector. The readings for today, then, in honor of Mary the Mother of God, give us another perspective from "on high" for our lives: To praise God in all moments, as in the Psalm response for today that is in the *Magnificat*, or what it must take for us to do the will of God, how we must trust God in all moments. Reflecting on St. John's Gospel for today, all of us, with Mary, must always have the perspective of standing at the foot of the Cross with St. John and Mary, and so define our lives from "On High."

The history of the Carmelite family can give us another perspective – a way to define our lives with the great Saints of their family from over the ages. Such Saints as The Little Flower, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, Blessed Edith Stein (Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), Saint Teresa of the Andes, the Carmelite Martyrs during the French Revolution, Blessed Titus Brandsma, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, and so many others. In the midst of great trials, struggles, darkness and misunderstanding, in the call to conversion and love, they let their lives be defined by a continued life of prayer and faithfulness to their vocations – having experienced the presence of God from "On High."

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All of these men and women had their sayings and writings, which certainly furnish a perspective from "On High," for all who embrace the Gospel by following the rule of Carmel. For priests, for example, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity said that "the life of a priest is like an Advent which prepares the Incarnation in souls." This quote from Blessed Elizabeth's prayer is framed and hanging in my office. And St. Therese (the Little Flower) once said "As we hope in God so shall we receive."

On this July 16, 2011, this feast day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel for this year, may these words of St. Therese be an inspiration for us, and help us from "On High" to define and shape our lives, today and always. May we always be able to hope in God, and so then indeed we shall receive.

+ Most Reverend Bishop Kevin Vann

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