

Project for the renewal of the Carmel of Lisieux

A place full of graces and memories

The Carmel of Lisieux is one of the most visited spiritual places in France. It is deeply linked to the universal figure of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, proclaimed Doctor of the Church. This place has seen the birth of a striking spiritual path, rooted in the hidden life and radical trust in God. It now encounters a new reality: a path of stripping down and transformation.

Far from being an acknowledgement of failure, this situation calls for a courageous and fruitful response, anchored in Hope.

A project born of listening and discernment

Following the canonical affiliation of the Carmel of Lisieux to the *Thérèse-Élisabeth Federation* of Carmelites of Northern France in July 2024, the *Ad Hoc* Commission, in collaboration with the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux and the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DIVCSVA), conducted an in-depth reflection with the Sisters, federal officials and several experts.

The result was a **project of refoundation**, which is both realistic and hopeful. Its aim is not to save a place at all costs, but to **open it to a new fruitfulness**, in the very spirit of Carmel: silence, prayer, hospitality, service to the Church.

Three fundamental questions must be taken into account:

1. **How can we live a Carmelite religious life to the fullest today**, in the spirit of Carmel, following in the footsteps of its great spiritual figures?
 2. **How can we restore vitality to the historic Building**, so that it remains an inhabited place, full of meaning and mission?
 3. **How can we respond to the pastoral expectations of the pilgrims**, who are ever more numerous, within a dynamic of welcome and evangelization?
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The essential aspects of the project

The project, which could be entitled: “*a contemplative missionary Carmel at the service of the Federation and the Order*”, would be articulated around two complementary axes:

1. A vibrant federal house at the service of:

1. Community affiliated to the Federation: A small, stable community on-site, able to welcome other Carmelites for short-term study or occasional help.
2. Formation: organization of sessions for young professed nuns, vocational weekends, conducted jointly by friars and nuns.
3. Federal Archives Centre: a place of conservation and research, open to researchers.

2. **A balanced openness to pastoral care in connection with the sanctuary**, through the development of the Teresian wing and the enhancement of the infirmary cell, in a process of spiritual sobriety, beauty and prayer.

An act of faith in the future

This project is part of a particular moment in the life of the Church and of consecrated life. We make an **act of faith in the future of Carmelite life**, in fidelity to its contemplative and missionary essence.

We believe that fragility can become a place of grace.

We believe that the Carmel of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus can continue to speak to the hearts of the women and men of this time.

We believe that this Carmel can become a **living sign of hope**: a place of remembrance, formation and spiritual welcome.

Conclusion

This project was born from a lucid awareness of our limited means, but also from a deep desire for missionary conversion.

It is the fruit of collegial and prayerful discernment. It is based on a delicate balance between **tradition and innovation, loyalty and audacity**.

Saint Teresa herself wrote:

“I feel that my mission is about to begin... I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth.”

Through this transformation, **the Carmel of Lisieux would remain faithful to this mission**, allowing itself to be transformed by the call of the Spirit.

In this way, the Carmel would remain a **living place of formation, remembrance and welcome**, at the service of the Church and of future generations.

We entrust the reflection in progress to your prayers,

*Sister Marie-Gabrielle of the Holy Cross,
President of the Thérèse-Élisabeth Federation of Carmelites of Northern France*

Father Miguel Márquez Calle, Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites

Monsignor Jacques Habert, Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux

Father Antoine-Marie of the Sacred Heart, Provincial of the Carmelites of the Province of Paris

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