



Carmelite Communications

Special Newsletter No. 1 covering the International Student Course

Blessed Titus Brandsma: Carmelite, Professor, Journalist and Martyr Contemplation, the dynamic element that unifies them International Course for Carmelite Friars in Simple Profession 22 July - 5 August 2018, The Netherlands - Germany

DAY 1 - 23 July: Titus Brandsma Memorial Church, Nijmegen



More than 40 simply professed friars gathered with the Titus Brandsma Community for the Opening Eucharist celebrated by Fr Benny Phang (General Councillor for Asia, International Formation Commission), assisted by Frs Raul Maravi (General Councillor for the Americas) and Fr Jan Brouns (Prior Provincial of the Dutch Province).



More photos on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/carmelitesAET

After mass Fr Jan Brouns officially welcomed everyone. He spoke of his hope for all gathered that the course would be a time during which together we could listen carefully for the Word of God present and active in the life of Titus Brandsma. He said, “Listening to the Word of God, as Titus did, will transform us into true Carmelites.”

Fr Benny Phang spoke of the rationale behind the course: “Since the beginning Carmel’s spiritual masters have taught us to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ... this is the very core of our Carmelite formation... a life-long process.”

“It is my hope that you will draw inspiration from Titus’ life and learn through his life what is truly means to be holy in a real sense.”



Benny Phang and Jan Brouns

“This is also a time to meet other brothers and enjoy international brotherhood. Make the most of getting to know other brothers from around the world.”



“May this gathering of the younger generation of the Order, through its shared reflection and prayer grow so that it can enrich Carmelite life in each Province from which we come.”

Benny then briefed the group on the structure of the coming days of the course and the mystagogical approach that will guide the unfolding of the program.

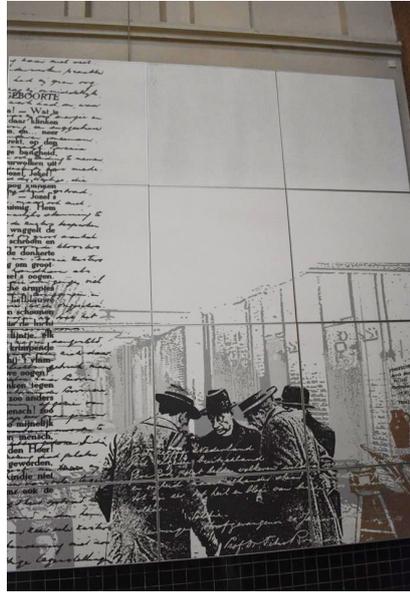
He explained that the mystagogical approach was about giving all participants time to be immersed in the story of Titus, experiencing the places and the stories of his life and having extended periods of personal reflection and small group sharing. It would be a time that he hoped would allow each person to encounter the story of life, death and resurrection present in the life of Titus. He also hoped it would be both inspiring and transforming for us in our own Carmelite journey, leading us on the path of the many Carmelite saints, named and unnamed, who have gone before us.



Following the introductions Benny led an ice-breaker, mixing the groups and facilitating meeting and conversation between the friars. Francisco was front and centre!

Tour of the Titus Brandsma Memorial Church

Participants were led on a tour of the Titus Brandsma Memorial Church. The tour guides unfolded the story of Titus' life and its commemoration in the artworks and architectural designs the Church to memorialise the life of Titus Brandsma. The Carmelites of Australia and the then mission in Timor-Leste supported the renovations of the church and are remembered in Nijmegen with a memorial stone in the 'Carmelite wall' in the Church courtyard - see below: Matthew and Francisco pictured - Matthew pointing to the Australian Carmelites, Francisco pointing to the Timor-Leste Carmelite Mission.





The church has two main areas: the central nave area where liturgies are celebrated and two side aisles separated from the nave by large cabinets. In the aisles there is a display which houses important documents and artefacts about Titus. There are three chapels: Brandsma, Mary and the Tabernacle Chapel. The original sanctuary is home to a cross elevated on the floor. It is surrounded by small crosses commemorating those who have been buried from the Church.



Sr Anne-Marie Bos considered three aspects that were integral to Titus' Carmelite life:

1. **Mysticism and the divine-human relationship:** Titus' passion was to better understand people's experience of God, to speak to people in their own language about God and he believed the mysticism was for everyone not just a select few. Titus understood mysticism as the process of *waking up and becoming aware*, a process that recognised and participated in the embodiment of the divine relationship (i.e. incarnation).
2. **Social Spirituality:** Titus applied studies in sociology to his understanding of how spirituality was lived out socially. Anne-Marie explored Titus' engagement and criticisms of a project to erect a statue of the Sacred Heart in Oss. Among Titus' concerns were how the design of the statue would form understandings of the divine-human relationship (a disembodied heart immediately made the statue artificial and less human). Reacting to an increasing atmosphere that sought to 'ban God from society', Titus sought to emphasise the necessity of love and faith as a social phenomenon and not a private affair alone.
3. **Formation and Education:** Titus believed education was a key to the Carmelite Charism. In order to 'wake up', people needed knowledge and experiences that enabled them to mature in their personal relationship with God.

Matthew Tonini