

Today is the Optional Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Mount Carmel, or *Har Karem'el* in Hebrew, translates as the 'garden' or 'vineyard' of God.

The order of the Carmelites traces their origins to the Old Testament prophet Elijah. The recorded history of the contemporary order go to the 13th century where a small group of Christian hermits lived lives of penance on Mt. Carmel.

The center of their eremitical life was a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

When the violence of the conflicts during the Crusades forced them to leave the Holy Land, they ended up in Europe, where they were known simply as the "Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The English referred to them as the "white friars" because of their white habit and cloaks.

We heard in the first reading one of the stories of the prophet Elijah.

In response to the evil King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel because they had turned from God to pagan practice, Elijah prophesied a draught. After challenging and defeating the 450 prophets of the pagan God Ba'al, Elijah prophesies the end of the drought ... which is manifested in the small cloud "*rising from the sea*" which brings forth - almost immediately - a mighty storm ... ending the three-year drought.

The Carmelites have a history of finding "good things in small packages" ... based on this particular Scripture of one small cloud ending a 3 year drought. And indeed, God works great deeds with the humble and lowly. Those who are little in the eyes of the world.

Perhaps one of the more popular and well-known Carmelite saints is St. Therese of Liseaux, the Little Flower who lived an unknown life in France, and is more well-known after her death for her "little way."

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us remember that God works with small things ... namely us ... and brings about great things through His grace acting in us. May the intercession of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and all the Carmelite saints help us to persevere in living our Christian life ... and through the life of grace may we bring about great things for the Kingdom of God.