



## **Carmelites celebrate big social media milestone**

For a religious order well known for its charism of prayer and contemplation, the Carmelites of Australia and Timor-Leste have made a big splash in social media, clocking up more than 100,000 Facebook followers in less than a year.

Communications Director Fr David Hofman O.Carm says the Carmelites have been surprised and delighted at the growth of their social media following and the opportunities for connecting with people that it presents.

"We are not one of the enclosed Carmelite orders," Fr David said. "We work in a variety of ministries including parishes in Australia and Timor-Leste, and we have a secondary school and the Carmelite Centre here in Victoria, but certainly, our charism is one of prayer and contemplation.

"So the purpose of our outreach on social media is to try and share that spirituality with people. We post prayer and reflections as well as invitations to things we've got going on and we see that as part of our contemplative ministry really."

The Carmelites ran a successful Facebook campaign over Advent and into New Year, which saw nearly 1500 downloads of their *Lectio Divina* resource and nearly 1000 downloads of the Carmelite Liturgical Guide.

Fr David said that from time to time, the Carmelites use the Facebook page to ask people to contribute their prayer intentions, which are then offered at Mass. And invitations to Carmelite events and activities help provide opportunities to meet Facebook followers in person.

Fr David said a particular highlight of the Facebook growth has been the fact that more than 19,000 followers are from Timor-Leste.

"That was a surprise to me," he said. "I hadn't expected it, because getting onto the internet in Timor via a computer is hard.

"But what I hadn't counted on is that almost everyone in Timor has a smart phone, because in a country where land lines are either patchy or non-existent, mobile phones are the only way to communicate. So they're accessing our Facebook page on their phones.

"I think that's great. It's a real point of contact with the people in Timor and much more effective in outreach than waiting for them to come to our webpage."

The Carmelites are trying to use beautiful images and engaging posts as a means of attracting people to their page and say they are grateful for the professional advice and support they've received.

"We started out with around 1000 followers and to see it grow to 100,000 in about 10 months has been really wonderful. We've been surprised and delighted at the connections we're making with people," Fr David said.

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