



Mount Carmel Retreat Centre enters exciting new phase

The Discalced Carmelite Friars of the Australian Province and Youth Mission Team (YMT) Australia are pleased to announce that YMT Australia will take over the management and operations of the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre at Varroville south-west of Sydney.

The arrangement will come into effect from January 2020. It means that the centre will continue to offer the highest quality facilities for retreats and group conferences for schools, parishes, youth groups, corporate groups, and other special interest groups, as well as offering the Carmelite Retreat Program throughout 2020 and beyond.

“We are grateful for the willingness of YMT to keep the ‘Mount Carmel’ name and to continue the annual program of Carmelite retreats in close collaboration with the friars,” said Father Bernard Hancock OCD, regional vicar of the Discalced Carmelite Friars.

“Thanks to their support, the friars will now be able to focus on what they do best, which is to provide encouragement and spiritual direction to those who are struggling in their lives and faith, and who can benefit from the Carmelite tradition of ‘seeking the face of the living God’.”

The retreat centre has operated for more than 50 years, providing an annual program of retreats based on Carmelite spirituality. These retreats have been an essential means of spiritual renewal for many individuals and groups.

Many say that Mount Carmel, as the centre is affectionately known, is a peaceful haven for experiencing intimate friendship with God in the company of St Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross, St Therese of Lisieux and other saints along with the order’s patron, Mary, the mother of Jesus.

In recent years many retreat centres have found it necessary to open their doors to a wider range of conference uses, to try to address increasing costs and dwindling attendances at retreats. Mount Carmel has been no exception. The friars for most years have been subsidising the operations of the retreat centre from other resources, and in recent times this situation became unsustainable.

In this environment the Friars and YMT came together to consider whether they could collaborate in the management and operation of the centre.

YMT Australia is one of the country’s leading Catholic youth ministries and has ministered to hundreds of thousands of students through the provision of its high school retreat and school holiday camp programs over the last 34 years.



In addition to its important ministry to young people, YMT has extensive hospitality management experience, having developed and successfully operated The Venue Conference Centre in Wollongong for the last 15 years.

Steve Toohey, national director of YMT Australia, said that “YMT is delighted to be working in close partnership with the Friars and we look forward to continuing to deliver the wonderful experience that current groups identify with staying at Mount Carmel as well as welcoming many new groups to the Centre”.

With YMT Australia managing the retreat centre, the Mount Carmel Priory at Varroville will continue to be the home of the friars and their headquarters in Australia.

For more information:

Fr Bernard Hancock OCD, Regional Vicar, Discalced Carmelite Friars,
bernwh@yahoo.com.au

Mr Steve Toohey, National Director, YMT Australia, steve.toohey@ymt.com.au