



**THE MIRACULOUS
INFANT
OF PRAGUE**

JOHN PAUL KIRKHAM

THE MIRACULOUS INFANT OF PRAGUE

John Paul Kirkham

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Introduction

Through Jesus Christ, Son of the Father and “firstborn of all creation”, we live in union with God and with our neighbours in a new way. And so, we share in the mission of the Incarnate Word in this world, and we form the Church, which is in Christ “as a sacrament - a sign and instrument of communion with God, and of the unity of the whole human race.”

(Carmelite Constitutions)

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us” (John 1: 14). We take our honour and devotion to the Child Jesus directly from Sacred Scripture itself. In the Gospels we are reminded of the Nativity, the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem and how in St. Luke’s Gospel chapter 2: 8 – 20: the shepherds were informed on the hillside by an angel *“I bring you news of great joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born for you, he is Christ the Lord”*. The shepherds then went off to see for themselves and ended up glorifying and praising God. And in St. Matthew’s Gospel chapter 2: 1-12 it is recorded how the three Magi (Kings or Wise men) travelled form far to drop onto their knees and pay homage to the infant Jesus.

And there is one more significant event recorded in the Gospel of Luke 2: 21 – 35: The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple which is the rite of the Consecration of the first born when it was left to Simeon the custodian of the temple to recognise at that original sacred altar without any prompting that he was in the presence of the Saviour of the world.

Many of the church’s great saints had a special devotion to the child Jesus and are often carved, sculptured or painted holding Him: St. Francis of Assisi and his origination and recreation of the Christmas crib in Greccio and non more so than St.

Anthony of Padua who is never featured without the little child in his arms or sitting on his knee.

In this book on the Infant of Prague we will follow the historical story accompanied on the journey by some of the most famous and well known saints of the order of Discalced Carmelites from the founding Old Testament inspiration of Saints Elijah and Elisha of Mount Carmel across the centuries using the spirituality of contemplative and meditative words that flow from the Rule of St. Albert, Saints Simon Stock, Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux and in more recent 20th Century times those of St. Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) and Blessed Titus Brandsma, as it is to the Carmelite Religious Order that the Infant of Prague is entrusted.

Some years ago my parish priest at the time who had trained at Valladolid in Spain in the early 1960s would say that it was such a shame that after all of the liturgies at Christmas and then following a short period of the Churches calendar that the nativity crib should be put away for a whole year. The priest who readily admitted to being a close follower of Carmelite spirituality would travel on retreat each year back to his beloved Spain and each time bring back a small porcelain piece of the nativity scene and over the years his personal collection became complete and he would have it permanently on display in the presbytery for guests and visitors to see and the important feature was that the Infant Jesus was there on display each day and everyday as a reminder of His Incarnation.

And so it should be perhaps that the Infant of Prague Himself begins his own story and journey, one that begins amid the arid plains of Spain.

John – Paul Kirkham

The Miraculous Infant of Prague

Christ has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion for the world is to look out; yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; and yours are the hands with which He is to bless us now. (St. Teresa of Avila)

The real story starts many hundreds of years ago when the heathens were waging war on the Christian outposts of the Spanish peninsula. A remote monastery stood along the wayside road between Seville and Cordoba. As the monks prayed in this tranquil surround an army of Moors invaded the monastery and destroyed it leaving it an empty and derelict monument.

A group of monks who had fled and survived the conquering hordes returned much later and resettled into their ruined monastery and slowly over time the buildings were restored. The long hot dusty days passed by and then whilst one of the monks was at work in the monastery flower gardens a beautiful small child came upon him. The little child smiled at him and said "I am Jesus". The monk momentarily looked to the pale blue cloudless skies and in an instant the child had disappeared yet the small boy's face became etched in the holy mans memory.

Years passed, the monastery increased in size and vocations swelled the once quiet cells and cloistered walls. The monk grew old but found it impossible to forget the small angelic child who paid him a visit during his youth. He longed to see the infant's radiant face one more time and began to model in wax the image that so moved him as a young monk. In his twilight years he made many attempts to recreate the child in wax but none of his finished models were quite right until early one morning a clear bright light appeared and the child standing before him said "I

have come to show my self again to you, so that you can finish the sculpture according to my likeness". The old Spanish monk's warm fingers moulded and shaped the softened wax until a perfect identical image was complete.

Early the following morning the monk's brotherly community found him lying still yet smiling in the tranquil repose of death with the beautiful and precious little statue gazing at him as if welcoming one of His brethren through the gates of heaven. His little friend had visited this last time and had taken him home.

Over the following years the statue became revered and honoured by the Spanish people. The statue was also venerated by St. Teresa of Avila (St. Teresa of Jesus) and on her travels she would always carry a small replica with her. It is believed that the original figure was gifted by St. Teresa herself to the Spanish Princess Maria Maximiliana Manriquez de Lara y Mendoza of Borgos as a wedding present at the time she married the Bohemian (Czech) nobleman Lord Vratislav of Pernstein who then brought to Prague the treasured statue. The couple gave birth to a daughter Polyxena who in 1587 married the most powerful bohemian Lord William of Rozmberk and the little wax figure was given over to Polyxena as a wedding present. After twenty five years the marriage ended in her husband's death and Polyxena married for a second time to the Chancellor of Bohemia Prince Zdenek Vojtech de Lobkovice. It was during this marriage and at the age of 43 that a son Prince Vaclev was born to the pious couple whose descendants today are one of the most famous families in the Czech Republic.

Polyxena kept the statue in the royal family chapel of Prague Castle in Hradcany but as old age came upon her and after becoming widowed a second time she decided in thanks for all of God's benefits given during her lifetime to bestow the divine child as a gift to the people of Prague with the name "The Merciful Prague Child Jesus".

In 1628 wrapped in a tiny white blanket the wax figure entered the Carmelite Monastery Church of Our lady of Victories in Mala Strana (the little / lesser quarter of Prague) and Polyxena handed him over to the Prior with the words “I am giving you the most precious thing that I have. Pay honour to this statue and you will fare well”. The little Prague dweller had found a permanent home in the oratory and throughout periods of unrest across Europe and Bohemia there would always be a beacon of hope emanating from His sanctuary. And of Princess Polyxena; after her generous donation of the wax statue died peacefully aged 86.

A time for Miracles and a time for War and Sorrow

At first the little statue was kept in the Monastery Oratory for private devotion by the Carmelite community but then the Prior decided to bring the small wax figure of the child Jesus into the large church that served the parish of Mala Strana in Prague. The local people came first to offer their prayers of intercession for themselves, their families and friends and these pleas to the small smiling child were answered. Reports of the deaf and blind having their hearing and sight restored spread as in the Gospel accounts and the citizens of Prague and the Kingdom of Bohemia flocked to Our Lady of Victories. The sick and lame were healed and the Carmelite monastery church became a place of pilgrimage.

Soon however, tragedy would befall the city of Prague as the brutal and ruthless “Thirty Years War” finally caught up and took a firm grip across the length and breadth of Bohemia. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) was a collection of continuous wars fought in Central Europe and it was one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in European history.

The origins of the conflict was complex and initially was fought largely as a religious war between the reformist Protestants and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire, although disputes over internal politics and the balance of power within the Central European Empire also played a significant part. The great consequence of the Thirty Years' War was the devastation of entire regions. Famine, disease and lawlessness ravaged the population of Bohemia and the once rich and prosperous country and its capital city Prague became a place of suffering and desolation where death ruled all classes.

Under German and later Swedish occupation Prague was pillaged and the Carmelite monastery looted and left in a sorry state as the wax statue was pulled off the sanctuary had his arms torn off and was then carelessly thrown out of site behind the altar. The marauding army having stolen all of the Church's valuable gold and silver did not realise that they had discarded the most precious item belonging to the church. Invasion by a succession of different mercenary armies was further followed by the great plague of Prague that tightened its hold and the city became a wasteland of further suffering, disease and mortality. Throughout all of these desolate years the Church of Our Lady of Victories' Mass attendance dwindled to nothing and the once ornate Church eventually fell into a sad ruin and the "little Prague dweller" lay forgotten and hidden under the rubbish and rubble that had fallen behind the altar.

Fr. Cyril

Mikulas Schockvilberg was a young man originally from Luxembourg who joined the Carmelite Order and as a novice and devotee of the Infant of Prague chose the religious name Cyril. Fr. Cyril had been in Prague before the afflictions that the Thirty Years War had brought. The conflict had forced the Carmelites to flee to Munich but during the Pentecost of 1637 after an absence of seven years Fr. Cyril returned to his once home and monastery back in the lesser quarter of Prague.

The sight that greeted him as he entered the once beautiful church of Our Lady of Victories shocked him. A derelict building lay bare by ransack but he had not forgotten his little friend and wondered what had happened to him. Amid the fallen stones and waste Fr. Cyril searched without rest hoping to find the wax statue. After many hours of searching through clouds of dust and debris he caught sight of some torn blue rags that were once a rich embroidered robe and he gently exhumed the child statue. With permission from the Prior the statue was replaced in the Oratory and late one night after all the other monks had returned to their cells Fr. Cyril remaining in prayer in the darkened church heard a child's voice calling "Have mercy on me and I will have mercy on you, give me back my arms and I will give you peace, and the more you honour me the more I will bless you". Fr. Cyril was astonished as he picked up the tiny figure and only then realised that beneath the blue bedraggled cloak the wax hands and arms were missing from the Christ Child's body.

The Church had no funds whatsoever to buy food or candles and let alone anything spare to pay for repairs to a simple wax statue and the new Prior did not believe Fr. Cyril's divinely revealed story. Fr. Cyril took care of the little wax figure, keeping him safely in his cell and praying by night that money may be found to help with the statues restoration. His prayers seemed to be answered immediately when an old

and poorly benefactor came forward with a pot of money that could buy a hundred new statues and despite Fr. Cyril's pleas to the contrary the Prior went ahead and simply bought a new version of the statue of the infant to replace the old dirty broken one. As soon as the new statue was installed on the altar disaster struck; a heavy candlestick toppled over and shattered to pieces the new statue. This was shortly followed by the Prior retiring and transferring to another monastery.

Upon the arrival of a new Prior, Fr. Cyril pleaded his case about repairing the original statue but whilst still less inclined with disbelief asked a test of the infant to help the monastery in some way.

Fr. Cyril maintained a dignified silence and retired as was his usual practice to his cell for the night to pray. He prayed and asked the Blessed Mother of God to intercede on behalf of her Son. He was woken from his deep prayer by a call to go into the Church as a woman wished to see him. From a far corner in the darkened church a mystical glow seemed to emanate from this lady of mystery. He approached her quietly and she handed him a purse brimming with so much money asking him to use it in ways so that the monastery may not suffer and then turning away the female "visitor" disappeared swiftly into the night. Fr. Cyril to the end of his life being convinced would claim this noble lady as being the "Mother of Our Lord".

Still, this money was not allowed to buy new arms and hands but instead to rebuild the church. So much money was flowing into the church and its treasures one by one continued to be restored but not the sad looking little figure that remained in Fr. Cyril's cell. Once again a childish voice called out in the darkness "Place me at the entrance to the Sacristy and you will finally find one who will have mercy on me". As soon as this happened a stranger appeared and immediately offered to pay for the repair of the broken wax figure and finally this offer was accepted by the Prior.

Several artists and sculptors were commissioned one after another in turn but they were more use to working with wood and marble and each time failed in the restoration project. Until one day a young artisan appeared with the looks of only a boy himself, was left to finish what no other could do and within the short space of a day after the monks observed him from a distance kneeling before the Christ Child his little arms and hands were finally back in their original place. As the monks rushed out to pay the youthful young man they found that he had mysteriously flown before showing off his work. And so through patience and humility at long last by honouring Him, countless blessings would now flow echoing the time across many centuries when Elisha on Mount Carmel called upon the people "*Come closer to me*" and they came closer to him and then Elisha repaired the altar of the Lord which had been torn down and broken (1 Kings 18:30). Fr. Cyril in his lifetime would be rewarded with witnessing the many graces to emanate from the infants hands and he lived to the age of 85 dying in the odour of sanctity on February 4th 1675.

The Infant helps those in need

On hearing that the infant had been brought back out of the shadows to his rightful place on the altar the citizens of Prague once again returned to worship in their restored parish church and to place their prayers and needs before the infant Jesus. There are many recorded miracles and events that took place notably the healing of the sick and paralysed, restoration of sight and hearing that brought life back to those in darkness and when time after time Prague again became in danger of being overrun by the plague and further invasion by foreign armies the people begged the miraculous child to protect them and testimony records and accounts show that despite being under siege with no supply of provisions the monastery kitchens never

ran out of food and each day somehow the shelves were always full of provisions that not even the poorest street dweller went hungry and how after much prayer a mysterious messenger appeared before the invading general and asked or somehow “persuaded” him to organise a military withdrawal.

The years of war had laid waste to the monastery vineyards leaving barren and withered bushes and whilst bread could be baked there was a problem in producing and supplying altar wine for the Holy Mass. On inspection by the brother gardener it was declared that years would have to pass before any grapes could produce wine. The brother went to pray before the Merciful Infant Jesus that the vines could become fruitful. The new spring arrived and as he went out to dig up the old bushes he looked in amazement; the shrivelled and desiccated vines had grown taller and greener. The harvest was rich indeed and from that point onwards Our Lady of Victories had an overflowing supply of home grown wine. Today if you take a stroll behind the monastery you may just get a glimpse of one of the present day sisters taking a contemplative walk amid the rows of tall vines.

The Infant was now at home in his permanent setting and it would become a cause of unsettlement and anxiety if he was to be moved as happened in the case of the Countess Elizabeth Kolowrat who had asked that the statue be brought to her palace to be venerated as she was desperately ill and had lost all vision. She was immediately cured with her sight being restored upon touching the wax child and wished that he stay with her permanently. The countess when fully recovered decided to leave Prague but found that her team of horses were unable to pull and transport her carriage. At once Countess Elizabeth realised that she had been too self centered in wanting the statue all to her self and Fr. Cyril was summoned to retrieve his young friend. It was only when the saintly priest placed him again on his

altar that the Countess found her transport able and willing to continue onwards with her journey. In thanks she donated gold to the infant and the noble family for the rest of their lives generously supported the Carmelites by almsgiving.

It is with thanks to Fr. Emericus who was the Discalced Carmelite Prior that we have such a concise record and testimony of the many miracles and graces that took place in Prague as he took it upon himself to collate a book of these early supernatural events and details of prayers answered before the wax infant in a volume that he published in 1749. One such event took place during the time when the plague was strengthening its grip in the city. Late one night on returning to the Church, the prior noticed a strange glow emanating from the windows high into the night sky. On entering the silent church he thought that perhaps the altar candles had been left alight but then witnessed the globe in the Miraculous Infant's hand emitting a halo radiance of ethereal light in front of which seven figures with shining wings knelt in prayer before the statue. The Prior keeping a night vigil reminded of what those early Gospel shepherds had seen with the angels praising God in the Highest becoming enveloped in the mystical light surrounded by angels and this would be only the first of many visitations to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Victories.

Many people from all walks of life came to the church and would often comment on the little wax figure's expression: "he is smiling, he looks sad, is that a frown," maybe it is a trick of the light or is it just possible that each individual person who kneels before the Son of God sees exactly what is meant to be as the rays of divine love see into the hearts and minds of the faithful.

As affection and adoration continued to spread, Cardinal Ernest Albrecht of Harrach, Archbishop of Prague gave the first ecclesiastical approval to the devotion to the Miraculous Infant of Prague on the 3rd May 1648 when he consecrated the chapel

and gave permission for Mass to be celebrated on the Infants altar. It was confirmed that devotion to the Infant is providential to the spiritual well being of all devotees and on the Sunday following the Easter of 1655 the Infant of Prague was solemnly crowned and proclaimed as King. A golden crown studded with pearls and gemstones was placed on the head and from this point devotion was to the "Infant King". In 1896 Pope Leo XIII confirmed the Sodality of the Infant of Prague by granting a plenary indulgence to the devotion. In 1913 Pope Saint Pius X regularised the membership of the confraternity under the canonical guidance of the Carmelite Order and in September 2009 Pope Benedict XVI made an Apostolic visit to the Czech Republic and visited the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Prague. The Pontiff donated a golden crown with eight shells with numerous pearls and garnets and that is now the crown that presently adorns the statue.

The Infant and his Robes

The statue of the infant is only 18 inches in height and stands on a special pedestal base. The wax figure around a wooden central core is clothed in two white albs and a dalmatic and mantle (priestly vestment or robe) and his golden crown. In his left hand he holds an orb globe surmounted by a cross representing His universal Kingship and his right hand is raised as in a priestly blessing.

The ancient tradition of dressing the statue of the Infant Jesus is intended to bring Jesus closer to the faithful as a real human being. It helps us to experience the closeness of Jesus and to express our love and reverence.

The task of changing the Infant Jesus' robes is entrusted to the Carmelite Sisters of the Child Jesus, who help the Discalced Carmelite Fathers to look after the shrine and the statue.

Just as we see our vested priests at Mass, the robes of the Infant Jesus of Prague are changed so that the colour is in keeping with the liturgical season or feast day.

The main colours of his little robes are:

- **White** – the colour that represents purity and holiness and is used for major feast days, solemnities and the Easter and Christmas periods.
- **Red** – the colour of blood and fire. Used always on the feast and memorial days of martyred saints of the church calendar and also at Pentecost.
- **Violet / Purple** – solemn colour symbolising repentance used during seasons of Lent and Advent and may be used at funerals.
- **Green** – the verdant colour of life and hope used throughout the long periods of ordinary time and is the colour most seen during the church's year.

Three other colours may be used at specified times during the liturgical year:

- **Rose** – which is used on the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) and the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday).
- **Gold** – used at festive times namely Easter and Christmas day.
- **Blue** – that may be used for feasts of The Blessed Virgin

On the Feast day of His Coronation (The first Sunday in May each year) the little statue is dressed in fine royal robes and ermine and taken on procession around the parish streets of Prague's Mala Strana district in joyous celebration when this quarter

of the City of Prague comes to a complete standstill as everyone stops to admire and pay their heartfelt thanks and respects to their Saviour and patron.

The sword of the spirit, the word of God, must abound in your mouths and hearts. Let all you do have the Lord's word for accompaniment. (Carmelite Rule 19 of St. Albert)

The Carmelite Shrines of the Miraculous Infant of Prague

"He who wants to win the world for Christ must have the courage to come in conflict with it."

Blessed Titus Brandsma

Our Lady of Victories: Prague. The beautifully preserved renaissance and early baroque Monastery Church is approached via steps along the main Karmelitska Street which is situated in Mala Strana (The lesser town or little quarter district). Originally it was a reformation church built and finally completed in 1613 by the German Lutherans and dedicated to The Most Holy Trinity. In 1620 after the famous Battle of the White Mountain the Catholic faith was restored to Prague and the church was placed by the Emperor Ferdinand II into the administration of the Order of Discalced Carmelites and on the 8th September 1624 was re-dedicated to Our Lady of Victory and St. Anthony of Padua.

In 1784 the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II asked the Carmelites to leave and the monastery closed down. The church became part of the local parish but still remained open for veneration and pilgrimage to the Infant Jesus even under the much later communist occupation, pilgrims were not deterred from entering.

Over 200 years later on the 2nd July 1993 the Archbishop of Prague expressly invited the Discalced Carmelites to return to the monastery and administrate the church once more. The historic church today is best described as a real working church of the people as it is open all day with free access. The doors open at 8.30 am Monday through to Saturday and close at 7.00 pm, on Sunday's the church remains open till 8.00 pm.

On entering the church the visitor will be struck by the ornate décor and brilliance of light striking the gilded gold of its various altars. Those altars to the right of the nave are dedicated to Saints Joachim, Ann and St. Joseph. The breathtaking red and grey Middle altar is the one dedicated to the Infant Jesus where he is found vested for the liturgical day in his glass case under the Holy Spirit hovering as a dove. The left of nave has its altars dedicated to the Carmelite saints Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St Simon Stock and Our Lady of the Scapula. The church's main altar is built as a large victory arch with the Prophets Elijah and Elisha standing at each side; and the large painting above and behind represents the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The church art and statues recall the history and major saints of the Discalced Carmelite Order that was founded on the tradition of the Old Testament prophets Elijah and his disciple Elisha and their connection with Mount Carmel in Palestine. From Elijah, Carmelites learn to be people of the desert, with a heart undivided, standing before God and entirely dedicated to His service, uncompromising in the choice to serve God's cause, aflame with a passionate love for God.

The Religious Order was born out of the very early Christian hermits who took for their way of life the inspiration of Elijah and Elisha and that of the the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God to whom eventually the Carmelite order was dedicated. In the year 1209 the Rule of St. Albert was adopted and the Carmelites were forced out of Palestine due to unrest, persecution and constant enemy attacks. The Order came to Europe as mendicant friars (out of necessity having to beg and live off the charity of others) and they arrived in Prague during the middle of the 14th Century.

Of the great Carmelite saints featured in the church: *St. Simon Stock*. Born in Aylesford, Kent in 1165 and from the age of 12 became a hermit living inside an old

tree trunk. He joined the mendicant Carmelite friars and later became their Prior General founding many monasteries in England and throughout Europe. He is most famous for as tradition widely records that the Blessed Virgin Mary presented him with the brown scapula and the words *“This shall be the privilege for you and for all the Carmelites,”* she told him, *“that anyone dying in this habit shall be saved”* and the child Jesus is often portrayed in the Mother of God’s arms with the brown scapular in her other hand. Simon Stock died aged 100 years in Bordeaux, France.

St. John of the Cross: John was born at Fontiveros, Spain in 1542. He entered the Carmelites and began to live a very strict way of life. Later he was persuaded by St. Teresa of Avila to begin along with others, the discalced reform within the Carmelite friars; this would throughout his life bring him much hard work and many trials. He died in Ubeda in 1591 after a life of holiness to which his many mystical and spiritual writings give witness. He was canonised in 1726, and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1926.

St. Teresa of Avila: Teresa was born in Avila, Spain in 1515. She entered the Carmelites and lived a devout life of prayer that led to many mystical experiences and the writing of well known spiritual books. With St. John of the Cross she assisted in helping to reform the Carmelite friars. She died at Alba de Tormes in 1582 and in 1970 was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI.

St. Therese of Lisieux: One of the most famous saints of “modern times”, Thérèse Martin was born in Alençon, France in 1873. At the young age of 15 she entered the Discalced Carmel of Lisieux where she lived as Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. Her simple life of humility and great devotion to the infant Jesus is recorded in her own words in the spiritual biography “The Little Way of Spiritual

Childhood” commonly known as “The Story of the Soul”. She died young on September 30th 1897 and was canonised in 1925 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1997 by Pope John Paul II and is the patron saint of the missions, aviators, florists, illness and the co-patron of France.

Surrounded by such holy saints, Church Masses are served at regular times each day and of the many Sunday Masses the 12 noon Mass always celebrated in English. With many groups of pilgrims visiting you may find further devotions and Masses at other times throughout the day during the week.

To the right of the main altar is the entrance to the Church shop and a spiral stone staircase that leads up to museum which is free to visit. On display there are sacred vessels and objects but by far the most popular items are many of the historic embroidered “costume” robes used to dress the wax infant that have been made over the last few hundred years from all corners of the world. The vestments have been made or commissioned by pious pilgrim groups or by individuals in thanks for graces received through prayers. The dressing or changing of the royal robes is the responsibility of the Carmelite sisters of the child Jesus who also assist the Discalced Carmelite fathers in administering the holy site of the pilgrimage shrine and parish.

To the left of the main altar or alternatively entrance via the repository is the large sacristy and centre for the African Missions. This apostolate is a major part of the ministry of the Czech and Italian Carmelite fathers and brothers and is officially recognised as the “Mission of the Infant Jesus”. The Carmelite charism combines prayer, community and service and it is this combination that forms part of the mission in the Church and the world today. In Service which is mission or apostolate

the Carmelite friars open themselves to be in God's hands in the world in responding to the needs and pleas of the poor and marginalised. The Prague and Arenzano (Italian) Carmelites work in the Central African Republic (formerly known as Biafra) one of the poorest regions in the world today and apart from making the Gospel known throughout the remote regions are responsible for providing education, healthcare and helping sustain farms and olive plantations which in turn provide work and income for those who in the past only knew disease and poverty. It is in this section of the church where you will find a friendly priest sitting at his tiny desk writing away at the many letters to benefactors or simply welcoming each visitor with a smile and some warm words and getting to know you. And it is here that you can learn about and observe displays on the African Mission and obtain prayer cards, booklets and the Mission of the Infant Jesus magazine in a large selection of the world's languages.

A short walk from the Church of Our Lady of Victories is the peaceful green garden at the base of Petrin Hill that is accessed by foot or funicular rail carriage. The Seminary Garden and orchards behind the Carmelite monastery and church that forms part of the public gardens has a wide array of fruit trees that when in season offer their colourful deserts to any visitor as all are allowed to take and eat.

The Church of Our Lady of Victories in Prague is linked to the second famous Discalced Carmelite Shrine Church, that of the large Basilica of the:

Santuario di Gesu Bambino in Arenzano, Italy. This Ligurian coastal town is easily accessible lying but a short train ride to the west of the City of Genoa. The Monastery and Church was founded in 1889 by Fr. Leopoldo Beccaro upon his

return from the missionary spreading of devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague in Kerala, India.

English Shrine of the Miraculous Infant of Prague: In Great Britain there are at least two parishes dedicated to the Infant of Prague at Syston, Leicestershire and Bestwood in Nottingham and wherever a Carmelite Church or parish exists you will always discover a statue of the Prague Child. The National Shrine of the Miraculous Infant of Prague is based at the Whitefriars Carmelite Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Faversham, Kent. The Infant's shrine can be found in a side chapel facing the altar to the left. The statue in the chapel came from Prague and was made by the Czech sculptor Jaroslav Krechler and is a near as perfect copy of the Prague original. As a little King he is wearing the Bohemian royal crown and his royal vestments are copies of the 16th Century robes and were made by the convent sisters in Mala Strana and likewise are changed once again according to the liturgical days of the church calendar.

In June 1938 the Archbishop of Southwark gave ecclesiastical permission for the foundation at Faversham of the Confraternity of the Holy Infant of Prague, and it is officially affiliated to the Arch-confraternity of the Merciful Child Jesus of Prague in the Church of Our Lady of Victories. The Confraternity exists to promote the love and veneration of the Holy Name of Jesus, and by God's grace to establish his reign in the hearts of all through faith, hope and love. The Church in Faversham is also the National Shrine of St. Jude the Apostle that contains some of his relics. For information and how to enrol as a member of The Society of The Infant Jesus, contact details of the Shrine in Faversham can be found in the *useful information and contacts section*.

The Carmelite Friary at Aylesford in Kent has also in its quiet Cloister Chapel which is reserved for private prayer and reflection a statue of the Miraculous Infant of Prague whose robes are also changed according to the liturgical season and it is quite fitting that his calm little riverside chapel should be next to the beautiful Flower of Carmel Stained glass window with its reminder of St. Stock's great hymn of prayer *Flos Carmeli* reminding us that God became human as a Child in Jesus.

Flos Carmeli (Flower of Carmel)

13th-century hymn to Our Lady attributed to the Carmelite St. Simon Stock

Flower of Carmel, tall vine, blossom-laden;
splendour of heaven, child-bearing, yet maiden;
none equals thee.

Mother so tender, whom no man didst know,
on Carmel's children thy favours bestow;
Star of the Sea!

Strong stem of Jesse, who bore one bright flower,
be ever near us, and guard us each hour,
who serve thee here.

Purest of lilies, that flowers among thorns,
bring help to true hearts that in weakness turn
and trust in thee.

Strongest of armour, we trust in thy might,
under thy mantle, hard pressed in the fight,
we call to thee.

Our way, uncertain, surrounded by foes,
unfailing counsel you offer to those
who turn to thee.

O gentle Mother, who in Carmel reigns,
share with your servants that gladness you gained,
and now enjoy.

Hail, gate of heaven, with glory now crowned,
bring us to safety, where thy Son is found,
true joy to see.

V. Holy Mary, Mother of Christ, hear the cry of your servants.

R. And bring down heavenly aid in answer to our prayer.

A Pilgrim in Prague

"If anyone comes to me, I want to lead them to Him."

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

Prague or *Praha* claims to be the jewel of all European capitals and this is no exaggeration. Despite a turbulent history especially during the 20th century, of foreign invasion, occupation and over 40 years of enforced communism, visually little has changed over many centuries and its medieval architecture. Charles Bridge with its many sculptured saints, the city's cobbled streets, narrow lanes and hidden parks are there for the pilgrim and discerning tourist to explore in relative comfort as much of the historic city quarters are traffic free and remain the realm of the pedestrian and after visiting the Miraculous Child Infant of Prague there are many places in the city that can be recommended to visit.

St. Vitus Cathedral: Prague is overlooked by the largest castle in the world that dominates the skyline. From within the castle grounds rising to immense heights are the towering spires of St. Vitus Cathedral, the Czech Republic's largest church. This elegant gothic structure soars above the castle ramparts and contains numerous chapels, frescoes and tombs. The cathedral origins date back to the year 925 and has been developed much over the following centuries up to and including some 20th century very striking and colourful art deco stained glass windows created by Alphonse Mucha (founder of the Art Deco movement) in the North Nave. The building was finally completed in 1929 in time for the Jubilee of St. Wenceslas. The cathedral is home to Bohemia's crown jewels but the pilgrims and tourists flock to the tomb of St. Wenceslas Duke of Bohemia and martyr. St. Wenceslas was murdered by his brother Boleslav in 930 and the popular Christmas carol recalls his strong faith and concern for the poor. His final words were "Brother, may God forgive you". His

feast day is September 28th which is now national public holiday in the Czech Republic.

St. Vitus who was martyred under the Roman Emperor Diocletian had some of his relics gifted to Prague in 925 and these have since become a sacred treasure along with those of St Adalbert, the first Czech appointed Bishop and martyr.

The fourth saint who rests in the cathedral in a beautiful ornate tomb is that of St. John Nepomuk (Nepomucene) 1345 – 1393 who is the national saint of the Czech Republic and became the first martyr of the Seal of the Confessional after being tortured - put to death and thrown off the Charles Bridge into the River Vltava for failing to reveal to the authorities the secrets of the confession of the Queen of Bohemia.

In the castle grounds which itself is the size of a small village or enclave is the Romanesque Basilica of St. George which is the oldest surviving 10th century church building in the precinct and houses the tomb of St. Ludmila, grandmother of St. Wenceslas. She lived in the 9th century, in difficult times marked by the clash between the new religion of Christianity and the original religious customs. She was one of the first to be baptised in the year 873 by St. Methodius and the service of God and the poor was her joy.

In the Old Royal Palace you will find the All Saints Chapel that contains the tomb of St Prokop (Procopious) a Benedictine monk who fell in love with solitude and chose to live in a cave by a river. According to legend, St. Prokop had such power over evil spirits that he forced them to plough the fields. For this reason he is often depicted with the devil in chains at his feet.

A tip for pilgrims: As a significant shortcut by foot to St. Vitus Cathedral and the castle thus avoiding a long uphill walk, take the steps *Zámecke schody* off Mala

Strana Square. For those unable to navigate the steep inclines towards the castle district the number 22 or 23 tram will take you there directly alighting at Prazsky Hrad.

Loreto Convent: Most visitors after visiting St. Vitus head straight off back down to the city to find rest away from the overflowing crowds but just a short, flat walk from the castle area is the Loreto Convent: *Loretanske namesti 7* in the Hradcany district.

Pilgrims have been coming to this pretty baroque shrine since 1626 the heart of which is the Santa Casa a replica of the Nazareth home and Holy House of the Virgin Mary complete with a linden wood statue of Our Lady of Loreto and that by its recorded writings contains a beam and several bricks from the Loreto shrine in Italy. The convent is also the home to the Church of the Nativity of Our Lord that contains the complete bodily remains of Saints Felicissimus and Marcia on view in glass cases.

A cloistered courtyard with its fountains of the Resurrection and Assumption has many chapels branching off and provides cool shade on a hot day. The museum treasury is home to many important sacred vessels and vestments notably a diamond Viennese monstrance with 6200 precious stones dating from 1699.

The convent is famous for its 17th century carillon (Bell Tower and Bell) that rings out a melody, its tune each hour as a reminder to pray and keeping its smooth continuous ebb and flow of time.

The Strahov Monastery: Just around the corner from the Loreto Convent in *Strahovske nadvori 1/132* is the Premonstratensians Strahov Monastery founded in 1143. Also known as the Norbertines or White Canons this is their oldest foundation in the world and is a centre for learning, culture and education.

Central to the site and grounds is the beautiful Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption where the solemn sacred liturgy of the Eucharist (Holy Mass) is celebrated each day. On the main altar, in a gilded brass sarcophagus, the body of the founder of the Premonstratensians and later Archbishop of Magdeburg St Norbert lies buried in an ebony coffin. His relics were translated to Strahov by Abbot Kašpar Questenberg in 1627, and in 1873 they were transferred from the main nave of the basilica to this chapel, where today they rest near the Eucharistic celebration.

The monastery in making its spiritual mission widely available has on display many religious paintings in its galleries and within its library (the largest in the country) there is housed over 130,000 volumes of which 2500 were published before the year 1500 plus you will find a repository of many thousands of manuscripts.

Pilgrims and visitors are well catered for as there is a large refectory and restaurant that serve a variety of fine local Czech dishes and delicacies and its unique three types of St. Norbert's beer (light, amber and dark) that are still brewed on site and of which the brewing process may be viewed.

The monastery gardens provide a spectacular panoramic view over Prague and the descent from the gardens down the streets of *Uvoz* and *Nerudova* bring you gently back into Mala Strana – *Lesser Town or the Little Quarter*, the quaint and quiet district of Prague that with its peaceful riverside gardens and promenades was home to Franz Kafka and his atmospheric writings.

The Church of St Nicholas: the most famous Baroque church in Prague and one of the most valuable in Europe stands in the centre of the Mala Strana Square. The impressive copper cupola (dome) is 20 metres in diameter and almost 80 metres high making it the tallest interior in Prague. With its ornate columns, pilasters and cornices of stucco the church ranks second only to St. Vitus Cathedral in terms of

the finest religious architecture in the city and dominates the skyline of the Lesser Town. A gold plated statue of St. Nicholas is above the main altar and as the church today is used mainly for music concerts and recitals it is fitting that a fresco of St. Cecilia adorns the ceiling by the organ loft.

The bell tower as high as the dome was in the past occupied by a watchman who observed the surrounding areas watching out for fire but as a footnote of a reminder, during the cold war communist regime the tower was a secret observatory point for the State police. From this point they could monitor the entrances, exits and gardens of neighbouring embassies of western countries.

From Mala Strana the only way across the river is by the Charles Bridge that drowns under the sheer weight of tourists – unless you are crossing early after breakfast or late at night. After swimming against the waves of tourists and day trippers, a respite can be found at the “Old Town” side directly opposite the bridge in the Jesuit **Church of San Salvatore** where you may find yourself the only person sitting quietly yet only seconds away from the busy road and shoppers outside.

The Churches of Our Lady before Tyn and The Virgin of the Snows: The high twin towers of Our Lady before Tyn dominate the Old Town Square and have so since the 1400s. Tourists tend to cram into the gated porch and full access is allowed only for Mass and Sacred liturgies. There is a daily Mass at around noon time so it is advisable to check the church notice board in advance. A good walk along more winding pedestrianised cobbled streets and pavements will bring you to *Jungmannovo namesti* and the **Franciscan Church of Our Lady of the Snow**. The church dates back to 1347 and is gothic in style. The Communists shut down the church in 1950, and so the lovely structure sat in silence for 40 years, until

reopening. The Franciscan gardens provide a true haven in the midst of the bustle of the “New Town” district.

Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul

In the 10th century, 70 years after the establishment of Prague Castle, a church and fortified trading post were built on a cliff top overlooking the Vltava River, on the heights of Vysehrad.

In 1085, Vratislav II, a prince of Bohemia's founding Premyslid dynasty, built a castle here and Vysehrad, or the "Castle on the Heights", became the stronghold of Prague. This lasted 40 years, before his successors returned to Prague Castle, and the city developed around that area instead.

Although not much remains of the castle today, Vysehrad Park none-the-less makes a pleasant short excursion out of the hustle and bustle of Prague's city centre. Few areas of Prague are as quiet and peaceful as Vysehrad and visitors can enjoy pleasant walks through the landscaped gardens and admire fine views over the Vltava River from the remains of the castle walls.

Within the walls and gardens lies the impressive twin spire Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul (Petra & Pavla) at *Stulcova, Praha 2 - Vysehrad*. This Basilica like its counterpart St Vitus took 900 years to complete. On the altar of the third chapel on the right is a rare panel of Our Lady of the Rain and legend has it that the painting was made by St Luke himself and in periods of draught, people came to the painting to pray for rain. The original Romanesque crypt was built as the burial church for its founder and the first king of Bohemia, Vratislaus II, who was also the first to be buried here in 1092. The tombs of a number of members of the royal dynasty are also located within the church.

Many of Prague's great artists, writers, musicians and politicians lie buried in the cemetery adjacent to the church notably are found the graves of Dvorak, Smetana and Mucha (founder of Art Deco) and from this area the views at sunset can be spectacular too.

No visit to the city would be complete without St. Agnes of Prague and her convent of the Poor Clare's founded in 1234 often called the "Assisi of Prague" and is regarded as the first gothic building in the whole of Bohemia situated *in Anezska 12/ u Milosrdnych, Praha 1*.

Providing contrast to the sacred sites, Prague due to its 40 years of suffering under a communist regime (1948 – 1989) has some things to see that offer some contemporary reflective meditation. The John Lennon Wall located at *Velkopřevorské náměstí* (very close to Our Lady of Victories), Malá Strana is a wall owned by the Holy Order: Knights of Malta. The wall continuously undergoes change and the original portrait of Lennon is long lost under layers of new paintings. Even when the wall was repainted under communist authorities, on the next day it was again full of paintings, poems, graffiti and flowers. Today, the colourful if sometimes garish wall represents a symbol of youthful ideals such as love and peace.

Affixed all over Prague on metal railings and bridges you will observe hundreds of padlocks which are put there by couples who then throw the key into the water as an act to symbolise their everlasting love.

At the far end of Wenceslas Square in front of the National Museum a memorial cross lies flatly undulating as though it has melted into the pavement commemorating the spot where the young student Jan Pallach sacrificed himself by self immolation in protest on January 19th 1968 as the Soviet regime invaded to quell

the emerging Czech Prague Spring; All of which is a poignant reminder to the fragility of existence and how so much has changed so quickly in so short a time.

Heading down the Main pedestrian street of *Karlova* everyone will eventually wind down to the large, beautiful medieval Old Town Square in the centre of Prague. Each person passing by will always stop to admire the Astronomical clock installed in 1410 making it the oldest working example in the world. The “entertainment” starts on the hour (9.00 am – 9.00 pm every day). The figures representing Vanity, Usury and Greed stand by below when the life size faces of the twelve apostles each in turn make an appearance through the open windows whilst the bell chimes are rung frenetically by a skeleton offering a timely reminder of memento mori.

Prayers and Devotions to The Miraculous Infant of Prague

There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Two Carmelite saints historically associated with the Holy Infant of Prague, St. Teresa of Avila born in 1515 who lived a life of prayer and wrote many spiritual works said *“For though we are always in the presence of God it seems to me that those who practice prayer are present in a special way, for they see that He is watching them”*. And St Therese of Lisieux left us her simple definition: *“Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God”*.

At anytime we can place ourselves before the child Jesus as a way of praying mentally or meditatively. Place yourself in one of the Nativity scenes. Read the Gospel accounts of St. Luke 2:1 – 20 and St. Matthew 2: 1 - 12 and quietly shut your eyes and imagine you are in the scene, you could be one of the main characters or simply an onlooker.

What do you do? What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? How do you feel?

Prayer of Father Cyril OCD

O Infant Jesus, I run to You,
begging You through Your Holy Mother
to save me in this need
(you may name it here),
for I truly and firmly believe
that Your Divinity can defend me.

Full of trust I hope in You
to obtain Your holy grace.

I love You with all my heart,
I am painfully sorry for my sins
and on my knees I beg You,
O Little Jesus, to free me from them.

My resolution is to improve
and never more to offend You.

Therefore, I offer myself to You,
ready to suffer everything for You
and to serve You faithfully.

I will love my neighbour as myself
from my heart for the love of You.

O Little Jesus, I adore You,

O Mighty Child, I implore You,
save me in this need

(you can mention it here),

that I may enjoy You eternally,

with Mary and Joseph see You
and with all the angels adore You.

Amen.

Rosary Chaplet to the Child Jesus often called “The Little Crown”

Jesus himself taught the Venerable Margaret of the Most Holy Sacrament, a French Discalced Carmelite (died 26 May 1648 in the Carmel in Beaune) to pray this short rosary. He asked her to make it known among the faithful and promised special graces, above all purity of heart and innocence, to all who carried the chaplet on their person and recited it in honour of the mysteries of his holy childhood.

This chaplet of 15 beads consists of three Our Fathers in honour of the Holy Family, and twelve Hail Mary's in memory of the twelve childhood years of Jesus Christ. The chaplet can be recited in the following way:

Begin with: Holy Infant Jesus, bless and protect us or Divine Infant Jesus, I adore Your Cross, and I accept all the crosses you will be pleased to send me. Adorable Trinity, I offer you for the glory of the Holy Name of God all the adorations of the Sacred Heart of the Holy Infant Jesus.

Say three times: And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and the Our Father.

Then twelve times: And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and Hail Mary.

At the end, you conclude with Glory be to the Father... and Holy Infant Jesus, bless and protect us

Novena Prayer to The Infant Jesus of Prague

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of The Holy Spirit

O Jesus, You said “Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you”. Through the intercession of Mary, Your most Holy Mother. I knock, I seek and I ask that my prayer be granted.

(make your request)

O Jesus, You said “All that you ask of the Father in My name, He will grant you”. Through the intercession of Mary, Your most Holy Mother, I humbly and urgently ask Your Father in Your name that my prayer be granted.

(make your request)

O Jesus, You said “Heaven and earth shall pass away but My Word shall not pass away”. Through the intercession of Mary, Your most Holy Mother, I am confident that you will answer my prayer.

(make your request)

Litany of the Miraculous Infant of Prague

(For private devotion only)

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Christ hear us.

Christ graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven **Have mercy on us.** *

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *

God the Holy Spirit. *

O miraculous Infant Jesus, *

Infant Jesus, true God and Lord, *

Infant Jesus, whose omnipotence is manifested in a wonderful manner, *

Infant Jesus, whose wisdom searches our hearts and minds, *

Infant Jesus, whose goodness continually inclines to aid us, *

Infant Jesus, whose providence leads us to our last end and destiny, *

Infant Jesus, whose truth enlightens the darkness of our hearts, *

Infant Jesus, whose generosity enriches our poverty *

Infant Jesus, whose friendship consoles the afflicted, *

Infant Jesus, whose mercy forgives our sins, *

Infant Jesus, whose strength invigorates us, *

Infant Jesus, whose power turns away all evils, *

Infant Jesus, whose justice deters us from sin, *

Infant Jesus, whose power conquers hell, *

Infant Jesus, whose lovely countenance attracts our hearts, *

Infant Jesus, whose greatness holds the universe in its hand, *

Infant Jesus, whose love-inflamed Heart kindles our cold hearts, *

Infant Jesus, whose miraculous hand raised in benediction fills us with all blessings *

Infant Jesus, whose sweet and Holy Name rejoices the hearts of the faithful, *

Infant Jesus, whose glory fills the whole world, *

Be merciful, spare us, O Jesus.

Be merciful, Graciously hear us, O Jesus.

From all evil **Deliver us, O Jesus #**

From all sin, #

From all doubts of Your infinite goodness, #
From all doubts of Your miraculous power, #
From all lukewarmness Your veneration, #
From trials and misfortunes, #
Through the mysteries of Your holy childhood, #
We sinners, Deliver us **Please hear us** ^
Through the intercession of Mary, Your Virgin Mother,
and Joseph, Your foster father, ^
That You would pardon us, ^
That You would bring us to true repentance, ^
That You would preserve and increase in us love and devotion to your sacred
infancy, ^
That You would never withdraw Your miraculous hand from us, ^
That You would keep us mindful of Your numberless benefits, ^
That You would inflame us more and more with love for Your Sacred Heart, ^
That You would graciously deign to hear all who call upon You with confidence, ^
That You would preserve our country in peace, ^
That You would free us from all impending evils, ^
That You would give eternal life to all who act generously toward You, ^
That You would pronounce a merciful sentence on us at the judgement, ^
That You would in Your miraculous image remain our consoling refuge, ^
Jesus, Son of God and of Mary,
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Jesus.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Jesus.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us, O Jesus.

Jesus hear us.

Jesus graciously hear us.

Our Father

Let us Pray

O miraculous Infant Jesus humbly before Your sacred image, we ask You to cast a merciful look on our troubled hearts. Let Your tender Heart, so inclined to pity, be softened at our prayers, and grant us that grace for which we ardently implore You. Take from us all affliction and despair, all trials and misfortunes with which we are laden. For Your Sacred Infancy's sake hear our prayers and send us consolation and aid, that we may praise You, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

Amen

Nihil Obstat: BERNARD O'CONNOR, Diocesan Censor. Imprimatur: DANIEL MANNIX, Archiepiscopus Melburnensis. Melbourne, 8/1/1963.

Consecration to the Holy Child of Prague

O Divine Child Jesus, only-begotten Son of the Father, You are the true light that enlightens everyone coming into this world. It is through You that I am, it is through You that all things have been made, and without You nothing would be. It is therefore just that I devote myself to You without reserve.

In gratitude for all the love with which You love me, I devote to you all the love my heart is capable of. I ardently desire to love you still more, to offer You a heart less unworthy of You. Accept this ardent desire, O amiable Child-God, and kindly bless it.

You have suffered for us and have borne Your infirmities, in order that we might one day deserve to be associated with Your eternal happiness. I want to unite my sufferings to Yours, so that You may give them merit and they may be sanctified. As You have been weeping for me, because of my sins, help me by Your grace to weep for them myself.

I also devote to You all my joys. I only have the ambition and the will to seek those pleasing to your service, by the practise of the virtues taught in the mysteries of Your Divine Childhood. I beg You to help me by Your grace to acquire the gentleness, the humility, the childlike simplicity, the filial confidence and the perfect obedience, of which you give me such a splendid example.

May I progress in holiness and one day possess the rewards promised in heaven to those who practise the lessons of your Holy Childhood. Amen

Prayer of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the Infant Jesus of Prague

O my Lord Jesus,
we gaze on you as a baby
and believe that you are the Son of God,
who became man
in the womb of the Virgin Mary,
through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Just as at Bethlehem,
we too, with Mary, Joseph,
the angels and the shepherds,

adore you and acknowledge you
as our only Saviour.

You became poor
to enrich us with your poverty.

Grant that we may never forget the poor
and all those who suffer.

Protect our families,
bless all the children of the world,
and grant that the love you brought us
may always reign amongst us
and lead us to a happier life.

Grant, O Jesus, that all
may recognise the truth of your birth,
so that they may know
that you came to bring
to the whole human family
light, joy and peace.

You who live and reign
with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

A short simple prayer to the Infant Jesus

Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to you.

Little Jesus thank you for bringing us safely through this day (this night). Help us to bring Your smile of friendship, Your love, the Good News and Your healing into the lives of those people we meet and those in need.

Infant Jesus shower us with Your blessings that we may worship You in tranquillity and peace and be permanently dedicated to the service of Your Kingdom. Amen.

Prayer recited every evening at the Infant of Prague Pilgrim Shrine at Arenzano

O Holy Infant Jesus who shed Your blessings on whoever invokes Your name, look kindly on us who kneel humbly before Your holy Image, and hear our prayers. We commend to Your mercy the many poor and needy people who trust in Your Divine Heart.

Lay Your all powerful hand upon them and help them in their needs. Stretch forth Your hand upon the children to protect them; upon our families to keep them in unity and love

Lay Your hand upon the sick, to cure them and sanctify their suffering; upon those in distress, to console them; upon sinners, to draw them into the light of your divine grace; upon all those who, stricken with grief and suffering, turn trustingly to You for loving help.

Lay Your hand also upon all of us and give us Your blessing. O little King, grant the treasures of Your divine mercy to all the world, and keep us now and always in the grace of your love. Amen.

Useful Information

I am indebted for the help and access to Carmelite resource material from the General Curia of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in Rome:

Curia Generalizia dei Carmelitani
Via Giovanni Lanza, 138
00184 Roma, Italia.
Website: www.ocarm.org

And Fr. Anastasio Roggero OCD for his Missionary inspiration, kindness, humour and welcome given to me in Prague in researching this book.

Prague - getting there; arrivals to the Czech Republic capital enter via Prague's Vaclav Havel International Airport, which lies 15 km to the North West of the city. There is no rail connection from the airport to the city and to avoid having to travel a very cheap but convoluted system: public bus then metro then tram then walk for some it may be advisable to use the official fast and efficient Airport Express Bus or use a taxi or pre-booked minibus airport transfer to your hotel or residence.

Prague International Airport Official Website: www.prg.aero

Czech Tourist Board Website: www.prague.eu

Despite its popularity Prague is an inexpensive city and public transport trams, eating / drinking out are far cheaper than in the UK.

Our Lady of Victories for the Infant of Prague is open all day and is free but many of Prague's churches and holy places have a mandatory admission charge or may have full access only for participation at Mass or other liturgies.

Our Lady of Victories which is the Church of the Monastery of the Infant Jesus of Prague. The address is: Infant of Prague, Karmelitska 9, 11800 Prague 1, Czech Republic, EU. The Church is served by 5 trams in Prague: numbers 12, 15, 20, 22 & 23.

Website: www.pragjesu.info

The second main European Carmelite Shrine of The Miraculous Infant of Prague is the Basilica Santuario di Gesù Bambino di Praga dei Frati Carmelitani Scalzi, Piazzale S. Bambino, 1 - 16011 Arenzano, Italy. Website: www.gesubambino.org.

The British Shrine of The Infant of Prague is situated within the National Shrine of St. Jude, Apostle and Martyr and the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Whitefriars, 34 Tanners Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 7JW. Website: www.carmelite.org

Aylesford Carmelite Priory, Kent: Website: www.thefriars.org.uk

Where Art & Books Collide

About the Writer - John Paul Kirkham

John Paul Kirkham is a poet, photographer and writer living in the city of Liverpool and is the author of many books including the well known anthology of poetry "*In Violet*" and is the official biographer of Saint Clare of Assisi and Saint Gemma Galgani.

John Paul studied in the 1970's at the John Laird School of Art in Merseyside leading to a long career as a photographer firstly in forensics (yes the scary stuff of "*Silent Witness*") then general press, running a studio, advertising, documentary film making and managing Britains largest private photographic and film archive. John Paul notably spent twelve years on Kensington Palace's royal photographic rota with HRH Diana - Princess of Wales and over the years has featured on television, radio and as a real life character in Blake Morrisons book of stories "*Too True*"

If you would like to know more and to access the poetry, photographs and books then please take a look at www.johnpaulkirkham.simplesite.com

About the Front Cover Artist - Jan Kalinski

The celebrated artist Jan Kalinski is based in the south of England among Kent's leafy lanes. Jan spent many years teaching drawing and painting in Western Canada and works in oils, acrylics and digital mediums.

In 1992 Jan was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) resulting in permanent numbness of his fingers. He can no longer hold a fine pencil or write his own name but will not let go of a paintbrush and his work today continues to be stunning as ever. Take time to visit his website and picture gallery at www.jankalinski.art



