

CARMEL

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IN THE WORLD



CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY TODAY

CARMEL IN THE WORLD is published twice each year and is the magazine for the Carmelite Family, containing information about Carmel's approach to living the Gospel and some of the major figures in its 800-year history. The magazine focuses on Carmelite spirituality and includes articles about Mary, the spiritual life, as well as information about theological and pastoral topics. There is also a variety of articles on Carmelite saints and heroes.

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Cover image: A colorized 1930 photo of St. Titus Brandsma at 49 years of age. This photograph was taken on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. He had been a professor at the Catholic University of Nijmegen for the previous seven years. The colorization was done by Warren J.Borg Ebejer. (Photo courtesy of the Nederlands Carmelitaans Instituut).

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Denying Due Honour and Recognition to God

Benny Phang Kong Wing, O.Carm., is Vice-Prior General of the Order of Carmelites.

Saint Titus Brandsma is one of many outstanding figures in our Order. We shall give praise to God, because as an Order we are blessed, *'especially because of the teachers of the spiritual life whom God raised up in the Order'* (Constitutions 10).¹ Titus is very particular among those giants for us, since he is very close to us living in this era. His era is not widely separated from ours. Therefore, it is not exaggerating if we call Titus a patron for our young generation, especially for those who are interested in studying philosophy and theology.

In this article, I would like to focus on two points. First, I would like to provide an exposition of Titus' life as a student and an academician. Then, I would like to share some thoughts which could serve as *a spirituality of study*.

A Life of an Academician

Initial Formation to Priestly Ordination

Anno Sjoerd was born into a farming family. His health had been fragile since childhood. Therefore, the farming life did not suit him, but rather a life of books and literature. Anno was attracted to prayer in religious life and planned to join the Carthusians or the Trappists, but a matter of health prevented him from joining Orders with a very rigid lifestyle. At the age of seventeen, on September 17, 1898, after graduating from the Franciscan minor seminary, Anno decided to join the Carmelites. This ancient way would later be his way of sanctity.

Since his early years as a young Carmelite, Titus had shown interest in academic studies. As a seminarian, he published his first book, namely an anthology of selected writings of St Teresa of Avila. Teresa was his heroine in Carmelite spirituality since his initial formation in Carmel. As a student, Titus was also the driving force behind a bulletin titled *Neerlands Carmel* (*Dutch Carmel*). During these years, 1898-1905, Titus developed his love for the spiritual heritage of the Order. It seems that he intuitively employed what later in the Second Vatican Council was called *ressource-*

¹ Quotations taken from the updated version of the *Constitutions of the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel* (2019).

ment, that is, a method of studying theology by going back to the past, to the early sources, for better living in the present (*aggiornamento*) and for responding to the future.

Further studies in Rome

A year after his ordination and after his humble work as a young sacristan priest in Oss, on June 17, 1905, the provincial of the Dutch Province sent him to Rome for further studies in philosophy. He studied both at the Gregorian University and the Leonine University, but he received his academic degree from the former. Titus chose to concentrate in studying philosophy, but, perhaps urged by Carmelite zeal, he also did further study on the history of mysticism.

Titus worked hard for his doctoral degree. While doing this, he continued to contribute articles to Dutch periodicals. Unfortunately, he had an enduring ailment, which he had since he was young, which interrupted his study several times and he had to allow himself brief rests. Once, this digestive system illness grew worse to the point that he had to stay in bed. At the same time, he kept working occasionally to finish his thesis. After his thesis was declared ready for a defence, Titus prevailed upon his superiors for permission to take his oral exam for the doctorate. He arose from his sickbed, set out for the Gregorian University while still under a fever. The result was a failure; this was in May 1909.

He returned to the Netherlands empty handed. With the help of his friend and professor, Hubert Driessen, he vigorously reviewed scholastic philosophy during the summer. In October, Titus returned to Rome and this time he left the university with a doctoral degree in his hands. This shows that even ailments of the body could not conquer Titus' spirit of study and how determined he was in achieving his goal, like his heroine, Teresa of Jesus. Unfortunately, we cannot find any traces of Titus' thesis – it has been lost and neither the Gregorian University nor the Carmelite Order have even a single note on it.

During his stay in St Albert's College in Rome, from 1905 to 1909, Titus lived in an international community, which exposed him to the internationality of the Order. This encounter fired his missionary zeal. As we know, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Order, particularly the European Carmelites, had just revived their missionary works, particularly to Brazil, and to the lands of non-Christian peoples in Asia. At the same time, St Albert's College, founded in the late nineteenth century, needed good and qualified professors. The college would serve as *Studium Generale* for the

whole Order and Titus would have been a good professor to enrich the academic life of the college.

Titus responded wisely to these important needs of the Order. Showing his availability and generosity to any assignment that his superior would give, Titus wrote to Aloysius van der Staaij, his confrère in the Netherlands, who was worried that Titus might not go back to the province:

You asked if I shall return to Holland. You fear that I won't ... If the superiors thought that I would be useful in Australia, Japan, Russia or in the United States, I am ready to go there in the early morning tomorrow ... Thanks be to God that I belong to a Catholic Order, which in Greek, it means universal.²

However, on October 26, 1909, the day after his final exam in the Gregorian, Titus returned forever to the Dutch Province, obeying his superior.

Returning to Oss

Returning to The Hague, the province assigned Titus back to Oss to teach the Carmelite students. He helped the province to re-establish a systematic course of studies for the Carmelite students of his province, adding weight to the academic life of his province.

Besides these internal affairs of the province, Titus was also deeply involved in what was going on in society. He continued to contribute to journalism, namely by rescuing local newspapers and encouraging cultural activities. Titus also published eleven works on a range of themes from Carmelite ones regarding the study of the works of Bl. Baptist of Mantua, to lessons in the Frisian language. Being aware also of the need of secondary education, in 1919 Titus gave his time to establishing a local secondary school in Oss and, in 1923, a high school in Oldenzaal.

Amidst his apostolic activities, Titus never forgot to be present in Community prayer and even left many meetings in order to be able to attend prayers. This life of union with God was Titus' primary concern from the beginning, and was well expressed in his ideal of Carmelite life as it is written in the *Dictionarie de Spiritualité* under the title of *Carmes*:

Complete dedication to contemplation; it should be interrupted only because of necessity – when there is need to go to men and speak to them of God.

² Valabek, Redemptus Maria, ed.: *Essays on Titus Brandsma: Carmelite, Educator, Journalist, Martyr*. Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2004.

Only charity toward one's neighbour or obedience can be a reason for leaving God for the sake of God. 'Deum propter Deum relinquere.'

This effort to build a catholic school system was not an easy one, since he had to promote Catholicism in Dutch society, which was so strongly Protestant. However, his good intentions to the *bonum commune* of his people and his hard work bore its fruits when, in 1926, the Dutch Parliament made the decision to subsidize Catholic schools. To organize this, the Union of Catholic Schools was founded, and Titus elected as its president; he served this union until his death.

The Dutch Province accepted a mission to the island of Java, Indonesia, from the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, headed by Cardinal William van Rossum, and began sending missionaries there in 1923. Focusing his attention on the academic world did not make Titus overlook the missionary effort of his province and his own missionary zeal. Among intense activities in the academic field, he once again asked his superior to send him to the mission in which his province was vigorously active in Brazil and in Indonesia. Titus' superior again declined to send him abroad because of the concern for his health, and so he was turned down. However, to give this burning missionary zeal a good outlet, Titus organized various gatherings and talks regarding mission, through which he also raised funds. One of the most important events was the Missionary Congress of Oss in 1922, where many Catholics and even bishops participated.

Professor in Nijmegen

Titus' attention combined with his competence in the academic world added to his fame among other catholic educators. He was also contemplating the foundation of a Catholic university, an idea that started to come to fruition when the Dutch hierarchy at that time asked him, together with some other educators, to think about founding a Catholic university.

In 1923, this dream became a reality as Titus facilitated the birth of a new Catholic University of Nijmegen. It is now famous and is known as *Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen* and today has about 20,000 national and international students. Here, Titus taught history of philosophy and history of Dutch mysticism. His deep interest in mysticism can now be found in his translated essays on the mystical heritage of the Netherlands in a book titled *In Search of Living Water* (Peeters, 2013). With the university a reality, Titus suggested establishing a new Carmelite Community in the city. Thus, the foundation of the Nijmegen Community began under his direction in 1927 at the Kronenburgersingel.

To honour his wholehearted works for the university, Prof. Brandsma was elected *Rector Magnificus* of the university in the academic year 1932-1933. On the occasion of his investiture as the rector of the university, and on the anniversary of its foundation on October 17, 1932, Titus delivered an excellent discourse entitled *Godsbegrip (The Concept of God)*.

This discourse showed to the public the profundity of his thought as both philosopher and theologian. It also showed how inculturated he was in his Dutch culture when he analysed '*the dominant concept of God in the history of our national culture*'. Prof. Brandsma showed his concerns for the development of the time where the image of God turned out to be obscured. He attempted to provide an answer to it from a Christian viewpoint. According to him, the recent crisis was a spiritual one – a society which was developing by '*denying due honour and recognition to God*'. He employed a Carmelite term in naming the crisis '*dark night*'.

We live in a time of great confusion in the realm of thought. The most contradictory systems are paid homage as truth and defended with passion by recognized scholars. However, the most appalling contrast, I find, occurs in thought about God. Besides the great – happily still the overwhelmingly great – majority which has conceived a very definite idea of God and worships him with reverence, there exist – the press and statistics have established the unvarnished truth – hundreds of thousands, nay, millions (I shudder to name such large figures, but there are millions) who find no justification for their concept of God and, not satisfied with denying his existence, wage a battle full of passion and hatred to banish every thought of God from society.³

Prof. Brandsma did not merely work in the university. In his spare time, because of many requests, he travelled to the United States and around Europe to give talks or conferences. In 1929, Prof. Brandsma travelled to Spain and, among other appointments, he visited Carmelite places, particularly the ones related to St Teresa of Avila. He visited those places with passion, since Teresa was his heroine. These visits helped him to write more deeply about Teresa of Avila, which he was only able to do from his prison cell in Scheveningen.

In 1935, the Prior General, Hilary M. Doswald, O.Carm., asked him to give talks to the friars in the United States. Consequently, Prof. Brandsma travelled to Washington, D.C., and gave his first talk in the Catholic Univer-

³ Titus Brandsma: *The Concept of God*. Discourse given on the Occasion of his Investiture as *Rector Magnificus* of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, on the Anniversary of its Foundation, October 17, 1932.

sity of America, then continued his journey to Chicago, Middletown, and also to Niagara Falls, Canada. Impressed by Brandsma's lucidity, the Prior Provincial published his talks in English entitled *Carmelite Mysticism, Historical Sketches* (Chicago, 1936). This book was later re-edited under the new name of *The Beauty of Carmel* (Dublin-London, 1955) and translated into Italian under the title *Bellezza del Carmelo* (Roma, 1994). During this studious visit, captivated by the beauty of the gigantic falls of Niagara, Prof. Brandsma gave thanks to his Creator, writing:

I, personally, meditate rather about what lies behind this beautiful phenomenon: not only eye and ear here fascinated, but much more my intellect, which ponders the beauty of nature, the immeasurable potentialities of the water, but I see God at work in his creation, in his revelation of love.⁴

Prof. Brandsma's devotion to Mary was profound. He insightfully elaborated the first ecclesial title given to Mary, namely, *Theotokos* (God's bearer). The Carmelites, as the brothers of Mary, need to follow Mary by being receptive to God's presence in us, in order that we could bring God to others. He wrote:

In Mary we see the most beautiful image of our union with God. She, the bride of the Holy Spirit, teaches us how we also, though not in the fullness of grace but in a wider sense, must be brides of God, the Holy Sprit; how his overshadowing power must make us also conceive God, in order that he be born in us, united – also in us – with human nature, our human nature.⁵

Prof. Brandsma also contributed important entries to two well-known references: *Dictionarie de Spiritualité* and *De Katholieke Encyclopedie*. Altogether, he published some 800 books and articles. These successes in Brandsma's academic life were not without disruptions. His old illness reappeared now and then in the midst of his work, and it culminated in 1937 when the sickness forced him to rest until springtime of the following year. This, however, was a blessing in disguise for him. It gave Titus a calm and quiet time to reflect on his life and the situation surrounding him. Europe was under a gloomy sky: Germany became more radicalized under the Nazi regime; Russia was still suffering under extreme dictatorship; The ideals of democracy in France and England were fading; Spain was occupied by civil war; and Italy was attacked by a terrible warmongering fever. However, the mind of this suffering professor was still very lucid and sharp.

⁴ Valabek, *Essays on Titus Brandsma: Carmelite, Educator, Journalist, Martyr*, p. 22.

⁵ Titus Brandsma: 'Mary's Motherhood of God, Leading Idea of the Mystical Life' in *Carmel in the World*, Volume LVI, N. 2. Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2017, p. 85.

Prof. Brandsma was not an armchair theologian or an ivory tower philosopher who was only expert in words, words and words. He united himself with the suffering of his people. This is the reason why his intellectual works touched the real life of the people. The Dutch people now started to suffer from the invasion of the German Nazis and their foreign and absurd ideology. In his writings and lectures, Titus was strongly critical of National Socialism, racism, and instigations as he exposed their danger to society. He gave lectures throughout the country, sent his articles to *De Gelderlander* and *De Volkskrant*, and several times he spoke on KRO, the Dutch Catholic radio station. He contributed positive views on society by promoting peace and encouraging people to maintain hope and positivity in the midst of World War II. On many occasions, he discussed unemployment and emphasized the importance of education to increase the development of his people.

He zealously opposed and condemned the seeds of anti-Semitism and Nazism. In line with his works in the educational field, in 1941 Titus resisted the removal of Jewish children from Catholic schools. He decried to the directors of the Catholic VHMO (preparatory secondary and higher education), '*The Catholic Church does not make any differences regarding sex, race and people*'.⁶

Further, in collaborating with Archbishop De Jong, he also blocked the advertisements of the Dutch Nazi Party (NSB) in Catholic newspapers as ordered by German occupiers. In this same year, he completed a tour of Holland to convince the Catholic press to resist the NSB and their political jargon. Fearlessly he encouraged the press to take the right side, writing:

*If you still want your paper to be called a Catholic paper, then this sort of article has to be refused, no matter what the consequences may be for the paper or even for yourself. We cannot do otherwise ... We are not sure yet if those responsible will resort to violence. However, in case they do, remember, God speaks the last word and He rewards His faithful servant.*⁷

In the following year, he undertook a second tour of the country, this time he also visited the bishops of all dioceses to obtain their personal views regarding the press.

Prof. Brandsma's words and actions were huge obstacles to the NSB, which made an angry SS-Hauptscahrführer Hardegen write to his superiors:

⁶ Miguel Arribas: *The Price of Truth: Titus Brandsma Carmelite*. Darien: Carmelite Media, 2021. pp. 113-114.

⁷ Valabek, *Essays on Titus Brandsma*, p. 26.

*Brandsma and Archbishop De Jong are the driving forces which sabotage our efforts to influence the Dutch people by means of the press. The measures taken by the German authorities in this field are seriously disturbed by the underground activity by Prof. Brandsma. He is a dangerous man. His work is designed to oppose the standing of the German Reich and that of National Socialism as well as to undermine the unity of the Dutch nation as we see it.*⁸

Titus kept on this path, although he could envisage the consequences of his actions endangering his own life. Nevertheless, as a true disciple of the Crucified Lord, Titus had no fear. As a result, on January 19, 1942, at the age of sixty, the NSB arrested and imprisoned Prof. Titus Brandsma. Thus, his professorship in Nijmegen University also ended, but nobody could stop his spirit.

Now, after briefly reviewing the academic life of Blessed Titus Brandsma, I would like to draw some insights and inspirations that give meaning to our lives here and now which are focusing on study, either philosophy or theology.

Two Fundamental Pillars

The ideal of Christian life can be summarized in the twofold commandment to love God and neighbour (Mark 12:29-31). This is also the Carmelite ideal, expressed in the inseparability between contemplation and action: *'Carmelites live their life of allegiance to Jesus Christ in a contemplative attitude exercised in a life of prayer, fraternity and service in the midst of the people'* (Constitutions 14).

Titus did not only write well about this Carmelite ideal, but most importantly he lived it well. Leaving God for the sake of God, *Deum propter Deum relinquere* was his definition of a Carmelite lifestyle as shown above, which he lived in his own life. He was very fervent in personal and community prayer, and this made his high apostolic activity contemplative. He always talked about God. There was not a single moment in his apostolic life when God's name was forgotten. This is a living example of a perfect *vita mixta*, that is, keeping contemplation as a priority which flows into the actions, as it is written in our Constitutions: *'The practice of contemplation is not only the source of our spiritual life; it also determines the quality of our fraternal life and of our service in the midst of the people of God'* (18).

⁸ Anne-Marie Bos: 'Titus Brandsma: Challenged by His Times' in *Carmel in the World*, Volume LVI, N. 2. Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2017. p. 98.

When he taught in the classroom, he had to leave the God he found in the community chapel, to meet God again among the students, *Deum propter Deum relinquere*. When he delivered his message among the intellectuals of the university, he strongly reminded them that their society had failed to give 'due honour and recognition to God', *propter Deum*. When he had to travel around the country supporting and convincing people from different walks of life, he always used God's name so that God would not be forgotten, since Titus knew that *Deum propter Deum relinquere*. His prophetic works against Nazi ideology showed concretely that 'work has a spiritual meaning within our journey towards union with God and builds up the Kingdom' (RIVC 44).⁹ The extremely poor conditions in his prison cell and the horror of the Dachau concentration camp, compared to the convenience of living in the Community, did not make him forget that *Deum propter Deum relinquere*.

In other words, with his life Titus showed that

our seeking the face of God and our openness to the gifts of the Spirit make our Carmelite fraternity more attentive to the signs of the times sensitive to the seeds of the presence of the Word in history that comes also through our vision and evaluation of what is happening in the Church and in society (Constitutions 18).

Titus showed that in his life and ministry that priority and balance were in beautiful harmony, as our *Ratio* says,

A healthy balance of prayer, work and time for rest will help us to remain always and everywhere with all our being focused and centred in God's transforming love so that we may better recognize and follow His will for us' (RIVC 44).

Titus must therefore have found a synthesis of those two seemingly opposing elements: his manifold activities and the call to quiet and contemplation. He is a true Carmelite.

A Multifaceted Person

Titus was a multifaceted person. Like a diamond, he had many different features in his life. First of all, he loved the Order by being a good student who did his best to study the spirituality of the Order. He was obedient and happily accepted his first assignment as a sacristan right after his ordination as a priest. He was obedient in accepting to do further study

⁹ *Ratio Institutionis Vitae Carmelitanae* (RIVC) is a manual of life long Carmelite formation process, into a more profound journey of transformation.

in philosophy although he knew that he was quite independent in his thought. To satisfy his passion for the spirituality of his Order, he also studied the history of mysticism. He earned a doctorate in philosophy, but at the same time he did not mind if he had to leave his academic career to go to the missions, particularly in Indonesia. He was an intellectual with a burning zeal for mission *ad gentes*.

Titus was obedient when, against his longing, the province asked him to go back to Holland and assigned him back to teach in Oss. He took this assignment seriously by reviewing the programme of study and creating a better one in his province. He was also generous in sharing his thoughts on the betterment of basic Catholic education in Oss and worked hard to establish it. When he again asked his superior to send him to the mission and was rejected for the second time, he channelled his missionary zeal by giving talks on mission and raised funds for it. He reacted positively to an assignment that was contrary to his will. This disclosed his maturity.

He did not hesitate to lend his hands to work outside his Order by helping the government to build a new Catholic university. He spent his time and effort for the betterment of the Church, particularly in Catholic higher education. When the time had arrived for him to teach, to share his knowledge on philosophy professionally, he always gave this teaching a Carmelite touch by reasoning about God along the way. The history of mysticism was also part of his professional sharing of thought. During these highly academic activities, he still thought about building a house of study and, finally, made it a reality in Nijmegen.

The objects of his writings were also varied, covering many themes, but at the same time was deeply rooted in his academic career as a philosopher. His talk *Godsbegrip*, on the occasion of his investiture as *Rector Magnificus*, displayed well his expertise in philosophy. At the same time his theological reasoning was also deep, enriched by his deep passion for God. We could call him a very spiritual philosopher, a philosopher who truly loved wisdom (*philein*: to love, *sophia*: wisdom), since he knew well and loved the source of all wisdom – God.

'Fr. Titus was a philosopher and a mystic', said Joannes Cardinal Willebrands in his sermon on the occasion of the celebration in Nijmegen of the thirty-fifth anniversary of Titus's death: 'This was so in virtue of his position as professor at the University of Nijmegen and, if it is permissible to say so, by means of the grace of God'.¹⁰ The Cardinal praised Titus as a polyhedric person. He, therefore, was not a blinkered or narrow-minded specialist. He

¹⁰ Valabek, *Essays on Titus Brandsma*, p. 68.

was a multifaceted intellectual. His life could be an excellent example and a very rich inspiration for students of philosophy and theology. Perhaps only such a person could better understand God who is richly complex in his simplicity. He is the one who could approach God's grandeur and multifaceted mystery as it is depicted beautifully by C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*:

A world of one dimension would be a straight line. In a two-dimensional world, you still get straight lines, but many lines make one figure. In a three-dimensional world, you still get figures but many figures make one solid body. In other words, as you advance to more real and more complicated levels, you do not leave behind you the things you found on the simpler levels: you still have them but combined in new ways – in ways you could not imagine if you knew only the simpler levels.¹¹

Learning from a True Theologian

I would, therefore, like to call Titus a *theologian*, not in an academic sense, but in the primary sense of *theology*. This word is derived from *theos* and *logos*. We know that *theos* means God, but we often misinterpret *logos* as science, like when we talk of other branches of science such as biology, psychology, sociology, etc. In the first sense, however, *logos* is not science. According to the Greek lexicon, *logos* has several meanings, except science; these are: word, discourse, teaching, the thing spoken of or talked about, anything reported in speech, etc. For example, in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, *logos* is connected to the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18). *Logos*, therefore, in the first sense, is word. Thus, theology in the first sense can be understood as *a talk or a discourse about God*.

The question then is: who could give a proper discourse or a talk about God? Only they who have experienced him in his life, and not necessarily the one who earns an academic degree in theology. They are the mystics, the saints, most probably the hidden ones, far from publicity. This is the reason why in the Eastern Church tradition the saints are called *theologians*, e.g., John the Theologian (St John the Evangelist), Simeon the New Theologian. They do not confer this title on those who have earned an academic degree from a university. Titus proved through his life and teaching ministry that he is worthy of this title.

¹¹ C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*. Harper Collins e-book, 1980. pp. 161-162.

Theology flows from contemplative life

Titus was a contemplative person. Prayer was a must in his life. We have seen that he was always present at Community prayer, even in the midst of his tight schedule of teaching. This simple prayerful attitude nourished his personality to become a contemplative person – the one who seeks God in the depth of his life. *'The door to this castle is prayer and reflection'* wrote Teresa of Avila in her *Interior Castle*.

This rendered his teaching ministry fruitful: when he left the community chapel, he brought God with him and saw his presence in the classroom among the students. For Titus, prayer filled every moment of life since God dwells in it. We find among his notes these profound words: *'Prayer is life, not an oasis in the desert of life'*. We may better understand this quote by reading his *Godsbegrip*, which states: *'This indwelling and impact of God must not merely be the object of intuition, but must manifest itself in our lives, express itself in our words and deeds, irradiate from our whole being and in our actions'*. Is not this comparable to the experience of St Teresa of Jesus when she said, *'God walks among the pans to help your interior and exterior duties'* (Book of the Foundations, 5:8). Therefore, teaching for him was a sharing of the experience of God.

Regarding this, one of the witnesses for his beatification gave a personal recollection on her encounter with Prof. Brandsma:

He always had plenty of time for visitors and never gave one the impression of not being welcome. He always succeeded in listening patiently and sent one off with the feeling that he had been the one to enjoy himself.¹²

Titus found God's presence in this person and attended him wholeheartedly, as if in a prayer.

It might be because – to use C.S. Lewis' understanding of theology found in *Mere Christianity* – Titus was really aware that academic theology

is [only] like the map. Merely learning and thinking about the Christian doctrines, if you stop there, is less real and less exciting than the sort of thing my friend got in the desert. Doctrines are not God: they are only a kind of map. But that map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God – experiences compared with which any thrills or pious feelings you and I are likely to get on our own are very elementary and very confused... Neither will you get anywhere by looking

¹² Valabek, *Essays on Titus Brandsma*, p. 81.

and then was not obligated (cf. Act 15:1-21). This was the beginning of the success of the evangelization of the people living under the Hellenistic culture. The successful story goes on throughout the history of the Church: the proclamation of the Good News was always followed by inculturation.

Prof. Brandsma must have learned well from this history. Consequently, he made himself available for international duty, to go outside his culture, as we have seen from his letter to Aloysius van der Staaij. Once he finished his studies in Rome, knowing that he had to go back to the Netherlands, he started to dig out the wealth of the mystical heritage of his people. Now we can read the excellent essays that he wrote in *Search of Living Water: Essays on the Mystical Heritage of the Netherlands*, published by Peeters and Edizioni Carmelitane in 2013. And again, his *Godsbegrip* showed us his excellent efforts of inculturation in the Dutch realm by analysing *'the changes of the concept God has undergone in our country'*. Doing this, Titus foreshadowed the awareness of inculturation, which we expressed more clearly only in the twenty-first century in our RIVC (nos. 48-51).

We must learn "to 'leave the sacred precincts' and 'go outside the camp' in order to proclaim 'in the new marketplaces of the world' that God loves humankind with an everlasting tenderness." Naturally, each situation requires a response that is appropriate to local needs and demands. Our lifestyle and our spirituality must be translatable into attitudes and actions capable of communicating our Carmelite spirit through an ongoing effort to inculturate our charism and the Gospel message. Moreover, every culture into which we integrate ourselves will enrich both our own understanding of the Gospel message and of our charism, and the means which express them; for as we evangelize, we are in turn evangelized. As we take Christ to others, we encounter Christ present in them (RIVC 48).

Titus' life and works serve as strong critiques to us. From our beginning in the Order, we need to keep asking the questions about the inculturation of our theology and even our Carmelite charism. This is not optional! The Order is still awaiting academic and spiritual works intensively coloured by the beauty of inculturation particularly from Asia, America, Africa, and Australia. Our European brothers and sisters have been contributing so much across the centuries. Perhaps, it is not only an academic work, but also a deep-rooted-in-the-cultures Carmelite way of life. *'We are heirs to a great missionary tradition, opening our Order to new cultures and ideas, places where the "seed of Carmel has been planted." The harvest is rich!'* (RIVC 50).

Theology is pastoral

Perhaps we have heard complaints from some students, saying, 'I'm not talented in academic fields, neither in philosophy, nor in theology. I just want to be pastoral'. These students put philosophy-theology and pastoral ministry in juxtaposition, as if they are contradictory. It would be an insult to the people of God, if being pastoral means to lower the standard of the excellence of philosophical and theological studies.

Theology is always born from a real-life experience, thus, being pastoral does not mean that we need to downgrade the academic quality of study. Let us see how alive the Gospels and letters of St Paul are. How deep they are immersed in the particular problems of the people they addressed. These holy authors wrote to the churches or communities that they themselves visited, lived with and loved. Let us also keep in mind that the Fathers of the Church were all pastors. No great theologian in the history of the Church was an armchair theologian, similarly, no great philosopher was an ivory tower philosopher. An old Latin idiom applies here: *non scholae, sed vitae discimus* (not for school, but for life, we learn).

Titus' life as philosopher and theologian showed this. His excellence in studying philosophy and theology did not alienate him from the life of the people and proved to be fruitful for his pastoral ministry. He gave his best to the Lord and to his people, *Deum propter Deum relinquere*. He revised the study programme of his province, he helped the people to establish elementary schools and then a university, he raised funds for missions, he wrote simple articles to help people understand the Carmelite scapular, and he worked hard against Nazi ideology. He made use of his expertise to help people.

He was not a parish priest, but certainly he lived in the midst of his lambs, got his hands dirty to help them, and thus he smelled like them. He prefigured the wish of the future Pope Francis:

Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ ... I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security (Evangelii Gaudium 49).

Titus' advice to Carmelite students is perhaps well represented in Carl Gustav Jung's advice to his young colleague:

The man who wants to understand the human soul will learn practically nothing from experimental psychology. He should put away his textbooks, stop acting like a scholar, get up from his desk and go out into the world

*with a heart of flesh and blood. Let him feel the terror that stalks the prisons, refugee camps and hospitals, plunge into the squalor of inner cities, houses of prostitution and dives. Let him visit the rich in their mansions and go down to the stock markets. Then let him attend socialist meetings and religious revivals, go into the churches and watch the sects at their orgies. Once he has experienced in his own body love, hatred and every form of passion, he will come home with a richer knowledge than any textbook could give him; for those who are ill he will be a physician, a man who truly understands the human soul.*¹⁵

Prof. Brandsma got his hands dirty through pastoral activities. He heard and carried out his Master's command to 'Feed my sheep' (John 21:16). Regarding this, several people who experienced his pastoral touch testified that¹⁶

His great love for God expressed itself in love for neighbour. All are in agreement that he showed great love for his neighbour and that he repeatedly put into practice the teaching, "Love knows no limits" (Brocard Meijer).

If he could do something for another, he did it. This is why he was loved by everyone, because he had a good word for everyone. Love of neighbour was his most conspicuous virtue (Gatske Brandsma).

He was exceptionally affable to the students (Christine Mohrmann).

He was courteous with everyone, even with non-Catholics... even with members of the Gestapo (Peter Verhulst).

Prof. Brandsma's teaching activity was ended by the Nazis. However, it certainly was not terminated by his detention and imprisonment. He continued his 'professorship' to many people in prisons with his letters and prayers, in the concentration camp with his generosity to his inmates, and this grew even louder by his martyrdom. The echo of his sanctity still teaches us even now. He is a true theologian, a man who was able to talk about God properly with his words and deeds. He is a true professor, who taught his disciples with his words, but more importantly, with his deeds to the point of shedding his blood. He is a true theologian and professor, since he took seriously that his life was a life of *in obsequio Iesu Christi*.

To close, let us read afresh in the light of the life of Blessed Titus Brandsma the homily of Karl Rahner delivered on the memory of St Thomas Aquinas, the Doctor of the Church:

¹⁵ Servais Pinckaers: *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995. p. 77.

¹⁶ See Valabeek, *Essays on Titus Brandsma*, pp. 156-165.

*One becoming priest must be a theologian.
Not a schoolboy who snakes his way through examinations,
because otherwise one won't get ordained.
We don't need to be theological geniuses.
But we have to be human beings and
Christians who love theological knowledge,
who are there for it with mind and heart.
For us there can in the long run be no really spiritual life
without an intellectual life.
In theology we have to allow ourselves to be challenged
as whole persons with all we are,
with mind and heart, with the whole weight and seriousness of
existence in our times, with all the experience of our lives.
Not only what is written in schoolbooks belongs to theology.
Just as [Titus Brandsma] Thomas did, so must we.¹⁷*

¹⁷ Albert Raffelt, ed.: *The Great Church Year: The Best of Karl Rahner's Homilies, Sermons and Meditations*. New York: Crossroad, 1999. p. 317.