

# Dear Brothers and Sisters



One of the greatest spiritual writers of our time was Carlo Carretto. He was 78 years old when he died in 1988 - on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, 4th October.

As a young man in Turin, he was a very militant member of "Azione Cattolica". His zeal even came to the attention of the Pope who invited him to work in Rome!

In 1954 this great activist stunned everybody by burning his diary and his address book, before setting off for the Sahara Desert where he joined the Little Brothers of Charles de Foucauld.

For ten years he lived the desert life of silence, solitude and prayer, before returning to Italy and settling in Umbria where thousands of people sought his counsel and direction. His books on prayer and contemplation, which have helped so many people - perhaps his most famous being "Letters from The Desert"- continue to be published and read today.

In 1984 he wrote his "Spiritual Testament", which ends with an extraordinary "love letter" addressed to the institutional Church. In this letter he says:

*"How much I criticize you, my Church, but yet how much I love you!*

*You have made me suffer more than anyone.  
And yet I owe you more than I owe any other person.*

*I should like to see you destroyed. But I need your presence.*

*You have caused me so much scandal. And yet you alone have taught me to understand the true meaning of holiness.*

*Never in the world have I seen anything more obscurantist, falsier, more hypocritical, more compromised.*

*Yet never have I touched anything more pure, generous and lovely.*

*Countless times I have wanted to slam the door of my soul in your face; yet every night I pray to die in your arms.*

*No! I cannot be free of you; I cannot leave you, for I am one with you - even though not completely one.*

*But if I leave, where should I go? What would I do? Build another Church?*

*But I cannot build another Church without the same defects. Why? Because they are MY defects too.*

*And again, if I were to build another Church, it would be MY Church and not Christ's Church..."*

Carlo Carretto experienced the Church as he experienced himself: flawed, yet divine, able to reveal the amazing love and mercy of God, and able to obscure it and destroy it too.

He lived in a Church that did not always radically live the Gospel it preached. And the same reality he discovered in his own life too.

Perhaps this is your experience also? Perhaps you could write a similar "love letter" too? Remember this when you hear the Gospel at Mass today.

*Fr. Sean*