



## **HISTORY OF THE APOSTOLIC CARMEL CONGREGATION**

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The Congregation of the Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel is an Indian Congregation which took its roots in the year 1870 in its Foundress Mother Veronica a holy and dedicated woman, who was divinely inspired to reach out to many girls of her day.

We draw our inspiration from Christ, who willed the total development of every person, as also from our Foundress, Mother Veronica.

**Carmel Convent School, Chandigarh, founded on July 16, 1959, is one of the institutions conducted by the Apostolic Carmel Sisters.**

One small seed thrown in the rich soil of India and destined to grow, was the beginning of our Congregation. It was founded in Bayonne, France on July 16th, 1868 by Mother Veronica of the Passion and established in India on November 19th 1870.

Sophie Leeves, her former name, born on 1st October 1823, was an English Lady, daughter of Marina Leeves and Rev. Henry Daniel Leeves, a military Chaplain to the British Ambassador, posted in Constantinople.

She was well educated and an extremely versatile women. Besides being a writer, she was also an excellent musician. She knew several languages – Latin, French, Italian, German, Greek, in addition to her own mother tongue, English.

She had everything but was not truly happy. She was searching for the truth and she found it in the Church. She had deep faith and believed that God would heal the wound she had caused her widowed mother, in His own time and in His own way.

She was still searching – a far higher destiny awaited her. She had a call to give herself totally to the service of God. It was the beginning of a dialogue between God and her, that was to become increasingly urgent. She joined the Congregation of the sisters of St. Joseph of Apparition, on 14th September, 1851, in Athens, Greece. As a nun, Sophie received a new name – Sister Veronica of the Passion.

Her benevolent disposition and wideness of heart which is Sophie's character, as well as her fiery, arduous perseverance in the face of difficulties, her love for the poor and above all her

deep faith in God, she had inherited from her parents. She was attuned to God – carrying out His will, joyfully and at any risk.

She was a strange destiny, God had developed her character through initial interaction with His Providential and supporting Love. He had led her through a series of crisis until through her had fulfilled His plan of a Carmel – “A Carmel for the Missions.”

There are moments when the plan of God and searching of human beings converge, and such a thing happened with the meeting in Calicut, in Kerala, India, in 1862 between Sister Veronica and Father Marie Ephrem, a French Carmelite. He invited these Sisters as there was a void felt of good Catholic schools for the Education of youth. It was this that determined the foundation of our Congregation through the instrumentality of Mother Veronica.

Having worked in several schools in Europe, as a Sister of St. Joseph, she was sent to India, Calicut, in 1862. Her teaching apostolate here, was richly blest. She showed a special love for the less fortunate. She wanted all – the rich and the poor – to enjoy the “goods of the lands” – God’s gift for His people.

She learnt Malayalam, eager to fit herself to give an all round development to the girls in this new field of labour where Malayalam was the chief language.

The school progressed rapidly. Many Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Parsee families sent their children to this school where all distinction of caste and creed was forgotten.

It was while here, that she heard another call-a call to enter “Carmel”. Relying on God and empowered by Him, she surmounted all difficulties, ridicule and insults and in 1867 she went back to France to start the foundation of Carmel. She faced all the challenges never giving up hope in God and in 1867 she started a small house in Bayonne, France and there the Apostolic Carmel was born. She trained a batch of three Sisters and sent them to India.

As with other works taken in faith, once again the History of the Apostolic Carmel proves the truth of the Biblical maxim : “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Jn. 12: 24

The house in Bayonne had to be closed. But this closure gave the A.C. a singular characteristic-making it completely indigenous.

It was on 19th November 1870, that the three Sisters landed in Mangalore and started the St. Ann’s School for girls. Mother Veronica had fulfilled the purpose God had for her – “A Carmel for the Missions.”

She had yet another call – a call to the cloistered Carmel. Truly she could say she lived up to her maxim. “Obedience is my life.”

For the next 33 years of her life, until her saintly death on November 16, 1906, she continued to water the tiny plant, that was transplanted to India on November 1870, with her prayer and sacrifices.

She left to the Congregation she founded her spirit: a personal surrender to God's all sufficing love and the profound urge to respond to Him in Apostolic work. From the beginning, the Apostolic Carmel has striven to keep alive this spirit – excellence in Education and other Works of Mercy, her love for the poor, her simplicity, contentment and joy. The education of “girls of all classes and creeds” has been a challenging enough mandate.

The same charism i.e. God's all sufficing love and zeal that attracted our Foundress and kept alive by her, drew all of us to the same Congregation.

As her true daughters, while our Education is directed towards the total development of the person we too are primarily concerned with instilling Gospel values in those we educate and forming responsible citizens in the country who are ready to take their place in social, political and cultural life with selflessness and zeal. Our special focus will be the formation of committed people who are filled with a sense of mission to their country and to the world.

With this in view, the Apostolic Carmel provides a suitable catechesis for their Christian students in all their schools and colleges and other institutions and value education for their non-Christian students which forms a compulsory part of our curriculum. This does not in any way, interfere with the religious beliefs of other denominations.

Mary, the Queen and Beauty of Carmel, is our Patroness. Like her our call is primarily to belong to Him, to be immersed in Him, and it is His overflowing love that urges us to be completely available to the world by reaching out in self emptying love. It is He who empowers us to take up this challenge. This conviction gives meaning to all our striving and urges us to go forward putting our trust in the Lord of hope, to be an Apostolic Community, a sign that proclaims and at the same time lives the message that God is the Supreme value in our lives.

Today, the sisters cater to the needs of children in high schools, teacher training institutions, degree colleges and technical schools, all of which are conducted both in English medium and Regional languages. They also run creches, children's homes, hostels and boarding houses all over India, in Sri Lanka, Kuwait, Pakistan, Africa, Bahrain, Rome and Tanzania.

The Educational institutions of the Congregation of the Apostolic Carmel, a Catholic Minority (under Article 30 (1) of the Constitution of India) cater to the educational needs of Catholic children. However, they are also open to children of all classes and creeds

### **Carmel Convent Chandigarh**

Started on July 16,1959, Carmel Convent Chandigarh has a spacious campus with well planned buildings and playgrounds. The school is recognized by the Directorate of Education of the UT administration. It is affiliated to the Central board of secondary education.

## **Objectives**

### **Our aim is to form integrated women:**

- Capable of responding to life's challenges with joy and a deep faith in God.
- Their choices and decisions are guided by right values.
- Enriched by our cultural heritage.
- Committed to the service of our people.