Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church  
Carmel Valley, California

**Brief History**

The origins of our parish are as humble as the birth of Christ. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church began in the heart of Carmel Valley Village in a local barn. Until 1947, Catholics from the area went to Carmel Mission or other nearby churches to worship and celebrate Eucharist. Some dedicated Catholics, including Charlie Allaire, Leo Weber and Mary Lou Berta asked Msgr. Michael O’Connell, the pastor of Carmel Mission to send a priest here to celebrate Mass. When the pastor heard how many Catholics lived here, he decided to have a priest each weekend celebrate Mass. But there was no church… and so the first Mass was celebrated at the De Amaral barn.

In the same year, under the leadership of Msgr. Michael O’Connell and his Associate-Pastor, Fr. Kelly, efforts were made to find some property and to raise funds for a church. The three-acre site on El Caminito was purchased for a permanent church and included an old stable which was known as the Lang dairy farm. The barn was transformed into a church using only volunteer labor supervised by Harry Downie, the Curator of Carmel Mission.

Part of the barn was also used as a temporary rectory.

At that time, part of the interior featured an elongated trough where cows drank their well-water. The church was fairly small and could accommodate fewer than a hundred worshippers. The first Mass in this newly transformed barn/church was celebrated on Pentecost Sunday, 1947.

Four years later, in December, 1951, the first priest was appointed in residence and on March 11, 1953, the
parish of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was formally established by the Bishop of the Diocese of Monterey-Fresno, A.J. Willinger and served 65 local Catholic families.

A separate rectory was later built and the entire property landscaped. The original priest’s quarters (rectory) became the parish hall. Fr. Ignatius Loughran was appointed Administrator and later Pastor of the newly established parish.

In 1972 the church was enlarged and remodeled with a new redwood structure which involved extending the original foundation. Under the guidance of architect Ron Cantrell of Sacramento, the parish hall was renovated, a kitchen added and, in 1972, the redwood building was completed. During the building process, Masses were held in the non-denominational Carmel Valley Community Chapel.

On July 1, 1973, a special Mass and reception was held to thank the Community Chapel congregation for their help and hospitality.

The new church building and facilities, including the towering wooden cross, was rededicated by Bishop Harry Clinch on Saturday, December 1, 1973. Fr. Douglas Keating, the pastor, and Fr. Ignatius Loughran, a former pastor, concelebrated the solemn Dedication Mass.

Some of the new church revisions included the addition of two statues on either side of the altar. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Joseph are hand-carved of linden wood from Italy. The Blessed Sacrament Chapel (where our current tabernacle is located) was added as well. The mosaic icon of “Our Lady of Perpetual Help” was designed by local Carmel artist Geza St. Galy. The icon is located on the wall to the right of the tabernacle and close to the perpetual candle. The redwood church structure receives sunlight through the added windows and a skylight above the altar. The window behind the organ (where the holy oils are, on the right side of the church) was remade from a former door of the original church.

In February 1987, Frank & Neeta White donated the Carrara marble statue of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Carved in Italy, the sculpture is set on a masonry pedestal by Angelo de Maria in front of the church.

Fr. Scott McCarthy created a unique design for sanctuary accoutrements. A beautifully handcarved altar, lectionary and presider’s chair were built by John and Patricia Shubeck. He also purchased the house and property adjacent to the current rectory and church (7 El Caminito) with the intent of building a new church.
In 2008, Fr. Joe Occhiuto repainted the interior of the church; he also added storage sheds and divided the office area into three usable spaces. In June 2009, two parishioners, Antoinette and Tom Cox, painted the mural featuring the angels bearing incense behind the tabernacle.

In January 2010, Fr. Emil Robu installed new woven tapestry Stations of the Cross. Made in Italy, the stations are 15” x 22” each and were blessed on Ash Wednesday of the same year.


In 2011 the rectory received new double pane windows and its interior was painted. In 2012 the entire parking lot was repaved and the grounds were landscaped and upgraded. In 2013 the exterior of the church and all facilities were painted. Courtesy of a very generous donor, just before Ash Wednesday of the same year, a beautiful paved patio was installed in memory of John Francis Sweeney. We also added two additional sliding doors to the parish hall.
In 2014 plans are underway to reroof the church and install a new awning between the church and hall.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, pray for us!

**Succession of Pastors:**

1953 – 1958  
Rev. Ignatius Loghran

1958 – 1961  
Rev. Timothy Cummins

1961 – 1967  
Rev. James Voylko

1967 – 1969  
Rev. Vincent Cowan

1969 – 1974  
Rev. Douglas Keating

1974 – 1992  
Rev. John McSweeney

1993 – 2004  
Rev. Scott McCarthy

2004 – 2009  
Rev. Joseph Occhiuto

2009 – present  
Rev. Emil Andrew Robu