

Welcome to Carmel

The Spirit of Carmel Is for Everyone

At our conception, God infuses each one of us with a spark from the living flame of His own divinity, a gift of self. Through this divine sharing, we are destined to become like God. We will never be God, but as adopted children, we will all share His riches.

“We are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16). “In making these gifts, He has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through them you will be able to share the divine nature” (2 Pt. 1:4).

Although everyone carries this divine life within, the degree of awareness varies. The practice of this awareness, living in the presence of God, and the determination to follow a way of life which would foster the growth of the treasure entrusted to us are the basis of Carmelite spirituality. Mary, the living tabernacle, carried Christ physically within her womb; we emulate her spiritually: “Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you since you received Him from God” (1 Co. 6:19).

When the Christ-in-us has developed into our unique reflection of Him, it is born into eternal life. The progress of each soul during its lifetime is determined by its response to the love of God.

The spark is fed and nurtured by the sacraments, especially frequent reception of Holy Eucharist, by practicing the virtues, and by prayer. Through daily prayer, our friendship with Christ ripens into love. As spiritual love deepens and is purified, the soul is gradually transformed into the likeness (having the same qualities) of God Himself, and participates in the actual life and love relationship of the Trinity. “If anyone loves Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We shall come to him, and make Our home with him” (Jn. 14:23).

The Bible and the saints have referred to this indwelling as “spiritual marriage” in an attempt to describe the powerful, transforming love that God has for each individual soul. We are all called to a close relationship with God in love, a divine intimacy, some through a particular vocation such as the religious life or the secular orders. Through our vocation we strive to follow the traditions of our parent order, living a life of prayer for the good of the Church.

In Heaven we will all be contemplatives, and we are all called in this life to some degree of contemplation. The saints were those who achieved the highest stages of transforming union within their lifetime. These states are completely dependent upon the grace of God, the soul remaining receptive and passively cooperative as He completes His work with no interference.

But in the early stages, a certain amount of effort from us is required. "You must understand that this recollection is not something supernatural, but that it is something we can desire and achieve ourselves with the help of God -for without this help we can do nothing" (*Way of Perfection* 29,4). "All the harm comes from not truly understanding that He is near, but in imagining Him as far away" (*Way of Perfection* 29,5).

It is very significant for our spiritual life that Jesus always asked for some small effort from His followers before He performed His miracles. The blind man was told to wash in the pool before he could see, the loaves and fishes had to be brought to Jesus before He fed the multitude, and at Cana, the earthen vessels had to be filled with water, which was turned into wine. God does not transform the world or individual souls through miracles alone. He expects our cooperation. He only asks for works that are possible for everyone-small deeds done with great love. The very simplicity of the deed itself is part of our humbling experience. We are made fully aware that it is not our insignificant actions, but the power of God that is at work in us and in the world.

To be filled with clear water, our earthen vessels must first be hollowed out and emptied through prayer, suffering, and practicing the virtues. We then wait lovingly in the presence of God till, with a glance, He turns the water of our tears into the wine of His love. "Lord you have kept the best wine till now" (Jn. 2:10).

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, so even if it is determined within the course of your formation period that you do not have a vocation to the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, any progress, even the beginning steps on your lifetime journey to union with divine love, is of infinite value. "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'. Let everyone who listens answer, 'Come'. Then let all who are thirsty come: all who want it may have the water of life, and have it free" (Rv. 17).

The Carmelite Charism

The charisms of the various religious orders were entrusted by God to their respective founders after He had prepared them spiritually to receive these graces for the good of the Church and all mankind. These saints were like the founders of dynasties, leaving a spiritual inheritance to be used through the centuries by those who followed. The members of these religious families are enabled in a special way, through their vocation, to draw on these inheritances; but in a larger sense, through the Church the charisms and graces, as well as the examples and teaching of all of the saints, belong to *everyone*. "We are all His children" (Acts 17:28).

The spirits of the religious orders are like fine perfumes. They all have a delightful fragrance, but there is a difference, even though subtle. They all reflect something of the beauty, richness, and diversity of God, just as individual souls do. To recognize the spirit of Carmel, it is necessary to immerse yourself in its heritage and traditions, its saints and their writings. When this distinctive essence is absorbed interiorly, the individual soul then lives the ancient traditions in its own unique way, re-interpreted for today's world, just as the writings of the saints of Carmel

have been translated recently for greater understanding. A French philosopher has cautioned: "If you don't live the way that you believe, then you will begin to believe the way that you live."

Carmel Is the Desert

Inner restlessness is part of the human condition. "Our hearts were made for Thee, O Lord, and they will be restless until they rest in Thee" (St. Augustine). When our body gives us a warning signal we do something about it. When Christ signals us from within, we should give Him our attention. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rv. 3:20).

The Spirit within us yearns to return to its source, our Father. Many people are confused by these inner longings and try to escape through constant noise and activity. In today's world, suicide has even become a frequent means of escape. People often do not realize that their anguish is in the spirit, and that the death of the body will not eliminate their suffering, because the spirit, like God, is infinite. Some people hope that another person will alleviate their longing, and may enter marriage expecting more from their partner than they should, blaming their partner when the inner restlessness returns. But the deepest part of our selves is reserved for God alone. "Even at home, I am homesick" (Chesterton).

Carmel teaches us not to run from these stirrings, but rather to go into the "desert" and face them. A desert place is where we leave all nonessentials behind and spend time in silence and solitude with our divine friend within. Through daily meditation, our friendship with Christ develops into love. All love relationships, if they are to grow, need time devoted entirely to each other. "That is why I am going to lure her. I will allure her. I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart. . . . I will make a covenant. I will espouse you to Me forever. I will espouse you in love and mercy. I will espouse you in fidelity and you shall know [experience] the Lord" (Ho. 2:16). "Be still, and know [experience] that I am God" (Ps. 46:10).

We then strive to carry the spirit of the desert, the interior silence and solitude, the sense of the presence of God, throughout our busy days. Carmel does not emphasize one apostolate, but embraces all apostolates, God's love now influencing all of our activities. "When the active works rise from this, interior root, they become lovely and very fragrant flowers for they proceed from this tree of God's love and are done for Him alone, without any self-interest. The fragrance from these flowers spreads to the benefit of many" (St. Teresa, *Meditations on the Song of Songs*, 7.3).

Carmel is a way of life that fosters an ever-increasing awareness of being united with God in the depths of our being while leading ordinary lives in the world. The Holy Family at Nazareth is the perfect model. Carmel is a way of spirituality that is possible for people in every walk of life. "See, I am doing a new deed, even now it comes to light; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness, paths in the wilds" (Is. 43:19). "They have found pardon in the wilderness.... I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in my affection for you" (Jer. 31:2).

Carmel is solitude but it is also community. The Trinity was the first community. Mary, the first Christian, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, together with the Apostles who had been filled with the Spirit, drew others into the community of the early Church. The Spirit moves within a community. "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know you are My disciples" (Jn. 13:34).

Carmel Is Prophetic

A prophet means a witness. The Prophet Elijah was aware of the divine life within him and his life was a witness to this living God: "The Lord of Hosts lives, before Whose face I stand" (3 K. 17:1). "The message 'My life is consecrated to the glory of God' has in fact become the characteristic of our tradition and of our spiritual attitude. Furthermore, the prophetic spirit belongs to the spirit of Carmel, that is, Carmel bears witness without compromise to the transcendence of God. This is in fact the real meaning of 'prophetic'. In the truest sense, Carmel is prophetic because it stands for the super-eminence of the life of intimacy with God and in this sense we can consider St. Elijah as our patron and model" (Otilio Rodriguez O.C.D, *A History of the Teresian Carmel*).

Before his encounter with God, Elijah had to first experience fully the depths of his weakness and helplessness as part of the purification process. It is one thing to admit our weakness with our intellect; it is another thing entirely to experience it. Elijah was a man like ourselves and became ready to give up. Hiding in fear he cried to God: "Yahweh, I have had enough. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 K. 19:4).

Our weakness draws God to us just as a helpless infant draws the attention of all of the adults around him. The parent runs to the child most in need. When we are aware of our nothingness and emptiness, we are ready to admit our need of God and to be filled by Him. Elijah waited for God in silence and solitude. "He went into the cave and spent the night in it... And after the fire came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak" (1 K. 19:9-12).

The Spirit of Carmel moves down through the Old Testament into the New Testament, in the person of John the Baptist. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, it is written: "Know that I am going to send you Elijah the Prophet before My day comes."

When questioned about this by His disciples, Jesus answered: "True, Elijah is to come to see that everything is once more as it should be; however, I tell you that Elijah has come already [the Spirit of Carmel] and they did not recognize him. The disciples understood then that He had been speaking of John the Baptist" (Mt. 17:12).

"With the spirit and power of Elijah, he [John the Baptist] will go before Him to turn the hearts of fathers toward their children and the disobedient back to the wisdom that the virtuous have, preparing for the Lord a people fit for Him" (Lk. 1:17).

John the Baptist lived the Spirit of Carmel in the desert as a hermit. Through his asceticism and prayer, in silence and solitude, he was gradually prepared for his encounter with Christ. It was his spiritual preparation that enabled John to recognize Christ, for God comes to us in ordinary ways. “John was a lamp alight and shining” (Jn. 5:35). Through John’s light we are able to see God approaching in human form, when the rest of the crowd saw only a man like themselves.

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire” (Mt. 3:12). As the Spirit of Carmel had to come before Christ in the person of John the Baptist, it comes to each soul to help prepare the way interiorly for His coming. By increasing our spiritual awareness, it helps us to recognize Him in ourselves, others, and the ordinary events of our lives. The behavior of the people described in the Gospels is repeated through the centuries. Human beings are still the same. At different stages in our lives we see ourselves as sinners like Dismas or Mary Magdalen, doubters like Thomas, denying Christ as Peter did, and fearful and weak like the Apostles. But we are also the strengthened Apostles, the repentant sinners like Mary, as we sit at the Master’s feet gazing in living contemplation. We agonize with Jesus in the garden, fall many times beneath our burdens, and die to ourselves, to be united with Him in love. Through this transforming union we are brought to fullness of life and our divine potential—the joy and power of the Resurrection. As fire transforms into itself everything that it touches, we become living flames of love.

After his interior preparation, John received the grace of spiritual marriage. “The bride [the soul] is only for the Bridegroom [Christ] and yet the Bridegroom’s friend, [John] who stands there and listens, is glad when he hears the Bridegroom’s voice. This same joy I feel, and now it is complete” (Jn. 3:29). “My Beloved is mine and I am His” (Sg. 2:16).

Carmel Is a School of Prayer

“When you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father Who is in that secret place” (Mt. 6:6). “Make your home in Me as I make Mine in you” (Jn. 15:4). The Teresian Carmelite way of prayer stresses interior communion, an intimate friendship with “Him by Whom we know we are loved.” St. Teresa of Avila writes in her *Way of Perfection*: “I would like to know a way of explaining how this holy fellowship with our Companion, the Saint of saints, may be experienced without any hindrance to the solitude enjoyed between the soul and its Spouse when the soul desires to enter this paradise within itself, to be with its God and close the door to all the world” (29, 4).

Friends and acquaintances often engage in a lot of “small talk”, but when two people have a deep love for each other, it is enough to just be together in silence, sensing the other’s presence. There is no need for words because there are no words. “The love of silence leads to the silence of love” (Elizabeth of the Trinity).

“I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was BURNING WITH LOVE. I understood it was Love alone that made the Church’s members act, that if Love ever became extinct, apostles would not preach the Gospel and martyrs would not shed their blood. I

understood that LOVE COMPRISED ALL VOCATIONS, THAT LOVE WAS EVERYTHING, THAT IT EMBRACED ALL TIMES AND PLACES ... IN A WORD, THAT IT WAS ETERNAL! Then, in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: O Jesus, my Love ... my vocation, at last I have found it ... MY VOCATION IS LOVE!" (St. Thérèse of Lisieux in *Story of a Soul* trans. Fr. John Clarke, O.C.D., p. 194).

The world of the spirit is not bound by the laws of time or space any more than it is bound by the law of gravity. The saints were like time travelers who, through the vehicle of God's grace, moved through time into eternity and returned to chart spiritual directions for those who were to journey after them. Like our earthly travels, no two trips are alike. The road is the same, and the landmarks are the same, but the experiences along the way are different for each soul.

It is reassuring to know that we have the teachings and traditions of the Church, and the ancient heritage of Carmel, to keep us on the right path, for God often draws us to Himself in "a cloud of unknowing," and asks us to take the first steps to Him in faith. Many souls are searching for a deeper spirituality, but are not clear in their minds how God is leading them. It is a lifetime journey, and He reveals His plans one step at a time. If we learn to "listen with our hearts" we gradually come to know God's will for us. In silent, expectant waiting, we try to learn God's plan, not convince Him of ours. "Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet like a child in its mother's arms" (Ps. 131:2). "I sleep but my heart watches" (Sg. 5:2).

Some people give up daily meditation because they "do not get anything out of it." Real love is giving, not getting. We give God the gift of our time daily, unconditionally, to do with as He wishes. "I tell you solemnly, this poor widow has put more in than all who have contributed to the treasury; for they have all put in money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in everything she possessed, all she had to live on" (Mk. 12:43).

We are all busy and our time is precious. Something valuable to us is the only thing worth offering to God, so we give from "the little that we have to live on." We should not fit into our spare time like a hobby, but must rearrange our priorities. "The important thing is not to think much but to love much" (*Interior Castle* IV, 1, 7).

Carmel is Simple

"I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18:3). Children are accepting; they do not judge by outward appearances. In fact, they do not judge. They are free spirits unencumbered by possessions. They are not concerned about their age, or impressing the neighbors. Adults, to save time, learned how to do two or three things simultaneously, being adept at such things as drinking a cup of coffee, smoke cigarette, and talking on the phone, while keeping one eye on the TV. Children are completely absorbed in one thing at a time, able to live fully in the present moment. They are not contemplatives, watching for hours as clouds drift across sky and change shapes, or as ants carry grains of sand for anthill. Children are not worried that they may be "wasting time."

They are able to enjoy simple things, and have a sense of wonder at the beauty of creation. As writers reflect some of themselves in their books the world reflects its Creator. St. Francis of Assisi, in his Canticle to the Sun, felt that he was one with nature because he was one with God. St. John of the Cross sensed the presence of God all around him, and moved by it: "My Beloved is the mountains, And lonely we valleys, Strange islands, And resounding rivers, The whistling of love-stirring breezes, The tranquil night at the time of the rising dawn, Silent music, Sounding solitude, The supper refreshes, and deepens love" (Spiritual Canticle, in the *Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D, and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D.). "The poetry mysticism of St. John of the Cross are dedicated not only to a personal God, but to His sensible presence, perceptible to each of us. This presence animates the entire world created for man" (*Edith Stein*, by Henry Bordeaux).

Children's treasures are simple, a colored leaf or pretty rock, but children would give their most valued possession to one they love, for the nature of love is to give. They are not concerned that they are picking "only weeds," but bring buttercups and dandelions to their mother who treasures them. Children love God without first presenting information to the intellect for a rational explanation. Bishop Sheen once said that we will never reach God with the intellect, for there are boundaries to our knowledge, but love, like God, is infinite. Love goes beyond itself; it transcends. It is a force that propels our hearts toward God. At the sight of his risen Lord on the shore, the Apostle Peter, under an impulse of love, threw himself into the water, he was so impatient to reach Him. "The heart rears wings bolder and bolder, And hurls for Him, O half hurls earth for Him off under his feet" (Gerard Manley Hopkins).

Some people are afraid to let other people get close to them, are afraid to get involved. To care is to make us vulnerable, to risk getting hurt. But like David facing Goliath, we must be trusting enough to lay aside our armor of defensiveness. At a Carmelite Congress, Fr. Anthony Morello O.C.D told us in one of his conferences: "If you cannot be intimate with another human being, you cannot be intimate with God."

The saints were able to highlight points of the Gospels, thus bringing them into focus for the rest of us. St. Thérèse emphasized the "little way of spiritual childhood." She reminded us, like St. Teresa of Avila before her, that God does not ask for great works from us, but only for great love. "Let the little ones come to me, it is -to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (Mt. 19:14).

Children have a sense of humor. Humor comes from the same root word as humility. Proud people are not able to laugh at themselves, or the humor of their situation. While attending a retreat at Peterborough, N.H., we were told by Fr. Brian Hennigan, O.C.D: "Laughter is for those who are free, not imprisoned by institutions or conventions. The martyrs were the great humorists, the clowns." "Here we are, fools for the sake of Christ" (1 Co. 4:10). "The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God" (1 Co. 3:18).

In the business world we may need certain qualities, but they must be left behind as we come before God like trusting children, letting the little child in each of us lead us to the Father. "The calf and lion cub feed together, and a little child shall lead them" (Is. 11:6).

Carmel Is Love

If we sincerely want to change the world, we have to start with ourselves, from the inside out. The strongest man is the one who has conquered himself.

Carmel is a way of life that heightens our spiritual awareness and enlarges our hearts through love. Heaven means “expansion.” The more we love, the more we are capable of love. The command that Jesus left us sounds simple and easy when we read it, but it loses something in the translation when we try to put it into practice: “Love one another, as I have loved you” (Jn. 15:12). This is not a selfish love concerned with getting something, or whether the other person deserves our love. God loves us unconditionally. We must allow God’s selfless love to grow and develop within us, and control and restrict our self-centeredness. “He must increase, I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30). “I live now not I, but Christ lives in me” (Ga. 2:20).

As John the Baptist recognized divinity looking out through human eyes, we begin to see Him in all of our brothers and sisters - and live accordingly. “A man who does not love the brother that he can see, cannot love God Whom he has never seen” (Jn. 5:20). “We shall be like Him” (1 Jn. 3:2).

The more aware we are of the God within us, the more we are aware that He is in everyone else. We begin to see past the “outer wrapping” to the gift inside that is the real treasure. We experience the oneness of all humanity as children of God, our Father, caring and concerned for the rights of all. Mother Teresa of Calcutta and her nuns rescue the sick and dying from the sidewalks of India because they see Christ in His distressing disguise of the poor. “I tell you solemnly, insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to Me” (Mt. 25:40).

The Beatific Vision will not consist solely of gazing on God for our own enjoyment, but sharing the God-vision, seeing through the eyes of the Beloved the many unique reflections of the Godhead, and loving them as He does. Our heavenly existence has its beginnings on earth. “Life is the childhood of our eternity” (Goethe).

Like the many-faceted mirrored globe that revolves on the ceiling of many parties and dances, flashing back every color of the rainbow from the single light source, countless souls through history reflect something of the grandeur of God. As the father of a large family is not content until all of his children are home, our heavenly Father is the same. “So dear a son to Me, a child so favored, that after each threat of mine I must still remember him, still be deeply moved for him, and let my tenderness yearn over him” (Jer. 31:20). “It is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost” (Jn. 6:39).

Love is forgiving. The teaching of Jesus to forgive our enemies is, at the same time, beneficial to ourselves. When people carry a grudge, the resentment smoulders within them, often bothering them more than the person it is aimed at, for the other person may not even be aware that there is a problem. In practicing detachment, we should first eliminate the unkind words, the uncharitable thoughts and acts that we cling to. “What goes into the mouth does not make a man unclean; it is what comes out of the mouth that makes him unclean” (Mt. 15:11). When we plan on “getting back at someone”, or we constantly criticize and talk about

people, we cause unrest not only in ourselves, but in others when we should be instruments of peace. "Be kind, be kind, and you will be saints" (Pope John XXIII). "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mt. 11:29). "When He appears a second time it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for Him" (Heb. 9:28).

The world is troubled about the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed, this is something that must happen, but the end will not be yet. For nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes here and there; there will be famines. This is the beginning of the birth pangs" (Mk. 13:7). "He overpowered the dragon, that primeval serpent which is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years" (Rv. 20:2).

The final battle is between the forces of good and evil. Through the communion of saints we are communicating with all the souls who have achieved their birth into eternal life and are now participating in the divine nature, loving with God's own powerful, all-embracing love. They are concerned for us as younger brothers and sisters, for they love as the Father loves. As we learn to allow God's will to surface more and more within us, we are tapping this power, drawing on this energy. The growing love of billions of souls on earth, joining with the perfected love of countless souls transformed in God, is an unconquerable force. God is Love, and Love conquers all.

"In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph" (Fatima message) "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!" (Lk. 12:49). The beams of light and love radiate through our souls and outward to the world, to bring God's healing power to earth. "I will pour out my spirit on all mankind" (Jl. 3:28).

In order for the spiritual to operate in the physical world we must cooperate. God respects the freedom He gave us. At Christmas time a father may give his child money to buy the parents a gift. The child is happy to be able to give something to express his love. The parents are touched by the gift, and do not consider that they gave the child the money in the first place, but if the child kept the money for himself, the parents would not be pleased. God has given us free will, and He does not take it back, but given generously, it is an expression of our love. Love is a commitment of the will. "O my Sisters, what strength lies in this gift [of the will]! It does nothing less, when accompanied by the necessary determination, than draw the Almighty so that He becomes one with our lowliness, transforms us into Himself, and effects a union of the Creator with the creature" (*Way of Perfection*, 33, 11).

God awaited Mary's consent that she would become the Mother of Jesus. Even though she did not entirely understand, she took the first steps in faith, and surrendered her will completely through her "fiat": "Be it done unto me according to Thy word" (Lk. 1:39).

As we surrender our will to His, God is able to use us as His instruments. We become more supple and flexible in His hands. "As the clay is in the potter's hand, so you are in Mine" (Jer. 18:6). "It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God" (Jn. 6:45).

"Prepare in the wilderness a way for Yahweh. Make a straight highway for our God across the desert, then the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it" (Is. 40:1). "I

saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband” (Rv. 21:2).

The new Jerusalem is not a geographical place but a spiritual kingdom, a state of being. Each soul is a bride to Christ. “For now your Creator will be your husband” (Is. 54:5). “Like a young man marrying a virgin, so will the One Who built you wed you, and as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so will your God rejoice in you” (Is. 62:5).

The new Jerusalem is each soul individually, and the Church and all mankind collectively. “Jerusalem the holy city, coming down from God out of heaven. It had all the radiant glory of God and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond.... The foundations of the city wall were faced with all kinds of precious stone” (Rv. 21:10, 19).

Like the ants each carrying their grain of sand, we all have a stone to contribute of varied color and brilliance. St. Teresa writes in her *Interior Castle*: “We consider our soul to be like a castle made entirely out of a diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many dwelling places” (1, 1). “Insofar as I can understand, the door of entry to this castle is prayer and reflection” (1, 7).

“You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make His home among them; they shall be His people, and He will be their God; His name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone” (Rv. 21:3). “I saw a new heaven and a new earth” (Rv. 21:1),

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done!

Peggy Wilkinson, OCDS

Discussion points for Welcome to Carmel.

What does the Indwelling mean?

Why did Jesus ask for some effort before He performed miracles?

What charisms do you know for various religious orders? Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits?

Why is the desert imagery helpful?

What is the prophetic character of Carmel?

What is the main characteristic of Teresian Carmelite prayer?

Why is childlike simplicity appropriate for Carmelites?

Will you love God more if you give up all your friends?

What are some effects of giving our will to God?

Devotion to the Church: The Discalced Carmelite's Mission

St. Teresa ended her life saying, "I am a daughter of the Church." The Second Vatican Council has defined the Church in a new way in teaching us that "the Church is the People of God, made one by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Carmel's devotion to the Church, therefore, needs to be thought through anew in the light of this new teaching which we find in the central document of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*. (the Church as the Light of the World, n. 1).

Let us begin to deepen our understanding of the Church by recalling what Jesus taught us about the nature and life of the Church in St. John's Gospel. It is in chapters 13-21 that John tells us how the Church took birth in the paschal mystery of the Lord. Our prayer-life, our knowledge of God (Jn. 17:3), is our growth in the paschal mystery. Chapter 13 is the story of Christ's service and teaching to the Apostles after the Last Supper. Chapter 14 is an introduction to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the new paraclete. Chapter 15, on the vine and the branches, is Christ's own parable on the kind of life, the kind of love, and the kind of friendliness that will be the single outstanding mark of His followers in the new people of God. Chapter 16 is a fuller understanding of the role of the Spirit as guide and witness to the members of the Church, and to the world at large, when Christ will have left the scene. Chapter 17 is Jesus' priestly prayer for the unity of the Church, and then 18 and 19 are the story of His supreme "hour" when He established the Church in His blood, shed for us in redeeming us all from the powers of evil, of Satan, of division, and of manipulation by the likes of Pilate and the high priests of the Jews. Chapter 20 is the story of the return of Jesus after His resurrection, in glory and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to forgive sins, to revive faith and hope, and to tell the whole world, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" -the last beatitude of Christ. Chapter 21 is an addition, after the death of John, about leadership in the Church. Let us take the salient points of this doctrine on the Church.

The Church in the Paschal Mystery of Christ

- I Jesus identified Himself with His church community (Jn. 15: 1-6). What brings the church communities into being is His paschal mystery:
 - 1) in Baptism, those bathed in His mystery inherit eternal life;
 - 2) His greatest gift to His Church is the divine indwelling;
 - 3) His faithful disciples will enjoy an intimate awareness of the presence of Jesus;
 - 4) and enjoy the fullness of union in the vision of God;
 - 5) the primary duty of the disciple is to love as Jesus loved, i.e. in obedience to the Father, even unto death.
- II Disciples "bear fruit" by loving one another and drawing others into this love. (Jn. 15:7-25)

- 1) To be persecuted for Christ's sake is to share in His passion and its mysterious knowledge. "The purest understanding follows the purest suffering" (St. John of the Cross).
- 2) The faith of Jesus gathers together warm affection, loyal justice, humble service and contemplative insight into that love of the Father which is deeper than all its expressions.
- 3) The love of Jesus Christ is the motive power of discipleship.

III The Paraclete is one with us, so He can be of assistance to us (Jn. 14:15-18, 26; 15:26-16:33). The Spirit of Jesus is the spirit of both contemplative prayer and community relationships; indeed, the Holy Spirit is the subsistent relationship of the Father and the Son (St. Thomas Aquinas). He is the bond uniting us to Christ and one another. Therefore,

- 1) Everything which is said of the Spirit is said also of Jesus.
- 2) The Spirit is to be everything to the disciples after the Ascension that Christ was to them before.
- 3) When the Church is disturbed from within, the Spirit acts as a guide; as in the time of Teresa, so also in our own time.
- 4) When the Church is persecuted from without, the Spirit acts as the Witness to: the justice of Christ's claims and the injustice of the world's, through the persecuted members of Christ (Stephen, witnessing to Saul); the sin of *unbelief*, which is sin par excellence in John; the victory of justice, the judgment of the world by Christ, conquering the prince of this world; the power of the justice of God, stronger than death, harder than hell, and a bond of unity springing from the strong unity of the Father and the Son (Jn. 17).
- 5) The Holy Spirit also guides the Church as we probe the deeper meaning of Christ's teaching.

IV The prayer of Jesus (Jn. 17) is the model of prayer for, with, and in the Church. "It is the most extraordinary of prayers, profound in feeling, yet greater than human in mystery and power.... This prayer lifts time into eternity, for it is the prayer of Jesus being lifted up, drawing all men to himself and uniting them to the Father. It springs from the human heart of God." It is his paschal prayer (*Journey*, vol. 33, p. 22).

Unlike the Our Father, this prayer dwells on the period of time before the end, the eschatological times. In St. John, the last times are present now in Christ's paschal mystery. This prayer is effective because Christ is always heard; it is a promise of unity, love, and brotherhood to the Church; and it is an exhortation to us to be faithful to our calling as disciples, pray-ers, and apostles of Christian unity.

Jesus prays for himself (17:1-8), Jesus prays for the disciples at table with him (17:9-19), Jesus prays for us, and for every succeeding generation of disciples (17:20-26).

What does Teresa add to the traditional doctrine of the Church? She accepts it as a dutiful “daughter of the Church”, and she seeks for her sons and daughters to be zealous for the interior and exterior mission of the Church. The interior mission -“for if your prayers, fasts and mortifications are not for the spread of the Church and particularly for the sanctification of priests and theologians, the captains of the Church, know that you are not fulfilling the call to Carmel which God gave to you,” she says in the *Way of Perfection*.

And what does God require of those whom He leads in deepening their prayer-life in the *Intertior Castle*? “It is works, my daughters, the combination of the work and prayer of Martha and Mary, of the active and contemplative lives.” This is the goal of our prayer, the spread of the grace of the Church.

What Does This Mean for Secular Carmelites?

It seems to me that, since most of you are married couples, and all of us are members of the Carmelite community that is characterized by a family spirit, we need to realize that our families are the domestic Church, the basic unit of the mystical body of Christ. The Church is as strong as our families. And one thing that St. Teresa insisted on, which we would do well to revive today, is the spirit of care and healing the wounds of our families and the church at large. Practicality is one of the characteristics of Teresa’s doctrine. Practical devotion to the Church consists in each one of us respecting our proper places in the Church: the husband as the head of the family, the wife as the heart, and children as the beloved but obedient children of the family as Teresa was a beloved but obedient child of Holy Mother the Church. Faith in the authority of the Church was what Teresa proposed. It is the guiding light of her teaching and of that of John of the Cross.

I think that we also have an external witness to bear to the whole Church that we respect the authority of our Holy Father the Pope, our Bishop, and our properly authorized priests and ministers. Proper subordination to the authority of the Church, in a caring, cherishing, curing community will go a long way toward healing the divisions of the Church today.

Cardinal Newman said that the layman and woman have always been the measure of the vitality of the Church; as secular Carmelites, you can possibly do more to provide unity in our local churches. Especially give an example of *brotherhood*. “If your brother has anything against you, go to him and point out his fault, but keep it between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Mt. 18:15). The brotherhood of Christians can be, as in the time of Christ, the single greatest evidence of the love of God in our communities.

What Would Teresa Do If She Were a Carmelite Today?

I have often asked myself that question. My answers are only my personal opinions, but I give them to you as thought-starters:

1. I think she would see that the people of God in the United States had a thoroughly American spirituality, as she developed a spirituality proper to the Hispanic culture of her times, practical and mystical, prayerful and active, humble and yet tenaciously true to her Carmelite identity.
2. I think she would be thoroughly interested in the mission of the Order in the Church today. Father General has written the friars a pastoral letter in this vein. I believe that the cure for atheism is contemplation, deep, practical and thoroughly applied to the whole human race. The reality of God is caught, not taught, and by men and women who live His life, not by those who mouth His words. Teresa put it: "teach more by works than by words." Let us follow her lead. Point to the reality of the living God; unveil His presence to our waiting world by lives full of love and friendship; and such lives are only lived by a deep spirit of union with the Father.
3. Act as good shepherds of your own domestic churches, and aid in the shepherding function of the local churches where you belong. That means to care about our people; to cure our people of their sicknesses, spiritual and physical; to cherish our people, many of whom need special kinds of cherishing, particularly in your own families.

And protect your people. So many lies are rampant today, so many divisions, which are lies lived out; so much rancor and opposition and accusation of the brothers. The father of lies and the accuser of the brothers is having a field day. Protect our people from these insidious traps and occasions of spiritual damage.

Denis Read O.C.D

Discussion points for Devotion to the Church: the Discalced Carmelite's Mission

What were Teresa's dying words?

What is the understanding of the church presented in Lumen Gentium?

What is the role of the Spirit before Jesus' death and resurrection?

What is the Spirit's role today?

What is the interior mission of the Church?

According to Teresa's writing in the Interior Castle, what does God require of these He leads into deeper prayer lives?

Why is faith in the authority of the church the "guiding light of Teresa's teaching and that of John of the Cross"?

Give some examples of Teresa's practicality.

Why is it more important to teach by works than by words? How does this apply to our prayer lives?

The Teresian Charism

Just yesterday I was asked: "What do you mean by the 'Teresian Charism'?" This is exactly the question that someone would ask if he or she were contemplating the possibility of entering the secular branch of Carmel and wondering what exactly is the purpose of this vocation and what is its aim. And this would be a logical question, for the Second Vatican Council told us clearly that all Christians are called to the fullness of charity and to the fullness of perfection in Christian life. If that be so, what more can one aspire to?

Considering what is meant by the charism of Saint Teresa of Jesus, the foundress of the Discalced Carmelite family, I think the following distinctions need to be made:

1. First of all, in biblical language, a charism is a special gift given by the Holy Spirit for the sake of building up the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Hence, when we think of the charism given to Saint Teresa, we are not thinking of the charm and vivaciousness that were outstanding parts of Teresa's character and made her so appealing and attractive to people. This is a natural part of her personality, and few people have

been more blessed in this sense of the term. On the contrary, when we use the term “the Teresian charism,” we mean those special gifts and blessings that God bestowed upon Teresa for the good of the Carmelite Order and, even more so, for the good of the Church.

2. Special mission and vocation: God awakened Teresa to the very special vocation and mission to live the life of contemplative prayer for the greater honor and glory of God, for the salvation of souls, and for the good of the Church. She always claimed that she wanted to live the Gospel in such a way that her Order would grow closer to Christ and imitate Him in every way, but, above all, to imitate His prayerful life of union with the Father.

The Second Vatican Council told us that “the first rule” of every religious order must be the Gospel lived in its fullness. But it also acknowledged that each religious family in the Church will be distinguished by its attempt to imitate a special feature of the life of Christ. No order and no person can fully imitate all the features of the mystery of Christ. Thus, Franciscans strive to imitate more closely the poor Christ; Dominicans especially love the preaching Christ. Where do the Carmelites come in? What aspect of the life of Christ do we strive to live more fully? Following the gift the Holy Spirit bestowed on Saint Teresa of Jesus, Carmelites feel drawn to staying close to and imitating the praying Christ of the Gospels. This is our special mission and our special vocation in the Church.

3. To be more specific and spell out the Teresian charism more carefully, the *Rule of Life* for the secular members of the Order of Carmel is clear and helpful. It reminds the members that the Teresian charism is made up of the ideal for the life of the Order, and the special graces bestowed on the Order, which are embodied in the spiritual heritage of the Order. Since the members must live the Teresian charism, these points are all important.

To elaborate on each one:

The Ideal of the Order: The Order of Discalced Carmelites of

Our Lady of Mount Carmel is part of the mystical body of Christ. By choosing the Blessed Virgin Mary as the mother and patroness of our Order, Carmelites place their whole life under her protection. We take the mystery of her interior life and her union with Christ as our ideal of interior consecration.

Besides the Blessed Virgin, we venerate Saint Joseph as the model of attentive service to Christ, to Mary, and to the Church, as well as the “master of prayer” Saint Teresa recommended to us.

Similarly, we esteem the venerable biblical figure, the Prophet Elijah, contemplating the living God and burning with zeal for His glory. Elijah lived on Mount Carmel and is the inspirer of the Order of Carmel because he lived and bore witness to the presence and power of the living God. The *Rule of Life* sums up all this in the words: “The members of the Order try to live an evangelical life of fraternal communion imbued with the spirit of contemplative prayer, in imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of apostolic zeal according to the example and teaching of the Carmelite saints.”

Graces of the Order: Each religious order is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, and each attempts to live a special feature of the Gospel. We gain a fuller understanding of the vocation of Carmel when we consider the graces given to Saint Teresa. Her life and spiritual experiences were so ordained by God that she became our teacher and the model of our life. Teresa reoriented the life of Carmel toward prayer and contemplation of divine things in a spirit of fidelity to the Gospel. Disturbed by the harm that was being done to the Church and to the priesthood and by the breaches in the unity of the Church, Teresa decided to dedicate her whole life to leading the Order to dedicate its life entirely to the glory of God and the good of the Church, especially of priests and the theologians who work for the good of the Church.

Teresa was aided by Saint John of the Cross, who clearly expressed the spirit of Carmel by his life, achievements and doctrine. Both Teresa and John of the Cross have been officially declared Doctors of the Universal Church as a sign that the contemplative vocation is the most universal and fruitful for

the good of the Church. (Pius XI) In addition, the Church is blessed with two other canonized saints: Teresa Margaret of Florence and Thérèse of Lisieux, better known as the “Little Flower.”

At present, the Order is blessed with approximately 3,500 friars, 10,000 nuns and 53,000 lay members. This shows that the life of Carmel can be lived by the friars, the nuns who live the contemplative cloistered life, and by lay people who live the spirit of Carmel in the world.

Heritage of Carmel: The heritage of Carmel is made up of the living traditions that have come down from the time of Saint Teresa and even beyond. It is the living charism of Saint Teresa and is found chiefly enshrined in her life and writings, and has been expounded in a wonderful way in the life of Saint John of the Cross and in his mystical writings. In our own century, two members of Carmel have been raised to the honors of the altar by canonization. The saintly Teresa Margaret, whose life was hidden with Christ in God, was a perfect reflection of the Teresian charism. The more popular Carmelite, Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, was canonized and her autobiography, *the Story of a Soul*, has helped millions of people.

One of the great blessings of the religious orders is that they have marvelous traditions of holiness that are enshrined in the spiritual writings of their saints. Since these have been approved by the Church and have stood the test of time, we know that we are safe in following them and that they will lead us to Christian perfection.

The Principal Elements of Our Life

All religious must live in “allegiance to Jesus Christ” and follow in His footsteps. Teresa always told us that because in the world there are so many enemies of Christ and He has so few friends, at least those of us who live this life must strive to be His tried and true friends. This is central to our life. We are an Order founded in honor of Mary, and we know that she was

the perfect follower of Christ, the one who loved Him most perfectly and received and lived His teaching more than any other.

The way we strive for union with God is by a way of life in which prayer and the fostering of contemplation are very closely allied. By virtue of our vocation, we are called to prayer, which leads us to filial and friendly conversation with God as a way of life rather than merely in formal times of meditation. We strive to be a witness to the world of the transcendent values of the Gospel, and especially of prayer as it was taught by Christ. Saint Teresa did not only love the words of Christ concerning prayer, but above all, she loved to stay close to the praying Christ. Her favorite scene was that of Christ praying alone to the Father in the garden before His death.

Teresian Lay Communities Today

So far I have tried to explain the Carmelite life to you as well as I can, basing it on the legislation of the Order, especially the *Rule of Life* of lay Carmelites. You will say to me, all that is well and good, but my question is what is the value of joining such a lay Carmelite community? What would it do for me? How would it help improve my life?

One is called to become a lay member of a religious order only if one has been blessed by God with a vocation. “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,” we read in John’s Gospel. And those few words tell us what a true spiritual vocation is—it is a gift of God. If you are called by God, He will give you all the graces and helps needed to live that vocation.

If one has a true vocation, it must be tested for several years before one may make a life-long commitment by the Promises to live according to the evangelical perfections of the Gospel. But one of the advantages of life in a lay branch of the Order is that the members have a fixed Rule of Life which has been approved by the highest authority of the Order of Carmel and also by the Holy See. This guarantees that the Rule of Life fully reflects the traditions and charisms of Saint Teresa and that it

can lead one to the fullness of the life that the Church expects of the sons and daughters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The members wear no distinctive garb, but they all wear the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The scapular, it must be mentioned, is a sign of our consecration to Mary and that we strive in our daily lives to reflect her virtues in our lives for the good of the Church.

The Rule of Life also assures the members of a regular life and of fidelity to the spirit of the Order. Many people today want to live a spiritual life, but often find that they do not know how to organize their lives in a regular way. The Rule of Life helps create a setting of constancy of purpose and of disciplined, orderly living. The Rule is a protection against inconstancy and haphazardness, and assists your concentration on the goal of prayerful union with God. It also helps the members to “carry into the world the distinctive Carmelite witness—to be those who stand for God and for His holiness in this life and who are pledged to a daily life of prayer for the spreading of the kingdom of God.”

In the present distress of the modern world, it is a blessing to be able to get together with others who have the same faith and who believe in the primacy of union with God and the outstanding excellence of a life of contemplative prayer. One strength of the religious orders is that people with the same ideals are able to get together and support one another.

One of the greatest privileges of being a member of the Order of Carmel is knowing that we belong to an Order that has been raised up by God to emphasize the life of the praying Christ and to try to live this mystery of His life. It does not take much imagination to reflect on the evils that are afflicting the world and, at the same time, to reflect on how the world could be improved if people would take time out each day to contemplate the life of Christ and strive to be transformed by His light and love.

Members of an Order are inspired by knowing that they belong to a worldwide Order; that they are struggling in all countries to make this a better world and to bring all to the light and love of the Gospel. And it is also a great source of assurance to

know that the other members of the Order are pouring out their hearts to God on our behalf each day.

Praying With All Our Heart

If one contemplates entering the Order of Carmel, it is important to weigh carefully what you will receive and what you are expected to give. I have already outlined the advantages of what you will receive. Now I want to stress what you must be prepared to do:

Give Your Life to God. You may wonder if that will take you away from your family, your loved ones, your efforts to work for the betterment of this world. No, this vocation will not interfere with that, for since this is what God wants of those whose vocation is to live in the world, the living of the Rule of Life of the lay Carmelites can only strengthen you in your obligations. We are told that “our determined efforts to conform our lives to the challenges of our charism, while gradually extinguishing our egotism and selfishness, will bring us to the freedom of the children of God which is found in the fullness of love.”

There is an old saying of golfers that one hears on the tour: “No guts, no glory!” Christ phrased it differently when He asked us to deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily and follow Him. But this is the way that leads to divine glory.

In an Order, we are expected to live and to love. True love means to love without counting the cost. So when we are expected to pray for the good of the other members of the Order, for the good of the mission of the Order and for the needs of the Church, we are expected to pray for these intentions with all our heart. Thomas Merton gave his last sermon on prayer in India. There he told his audience that one never knows what prayer is truly all about until one prays as though he were praying with his back right up against a wall, as though his very life depended on it, or as though he needed to pray for fear that he would go down for the last time. If you pray for those intentions in that way, there can be little doubt that your Carmelite life will be truly worthwhile and glorious.

One final point: In our prayers as Carmelites, we need to pray not only to Mary but also with her. Father Frederick Jelly, O.P., in a meeting of the Catholic Mariological Society of America, made the point that the Scriptures do not primarily stress that we pray to the Mother of God and to the saints for favors. They encourage this, it is true. But what they stress more than anything else is that we pray with Mary and with the saints to God. Did you ever notice in the Mass that we are told that we have been gathered together as one in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and that we pray to God with Mary, the Mother of God; with Joseph, her husband; and with all the angels and saints. This tells us so much about the beauty and the power of a life of prayer in the Order. We are always aware that she is the mother and the queen of the Order of Carmel. We know that in praying in this way and in living our life in imitation of her, we are merely carrying out her orders in the Gospel when she said, "Do whatever He tells you to do." When the servants did what Mary told them to do, Jesus multiplied the wine and the water. When we pray with her, organize our life so that it has the beauty and strength of her life, we know that Christ will multiply His graces and blessings in our lives and in the lives of our families, and that we will be instrumental in helping the Church and the world today.

I think the whole Teresian charism is brought out beautifully in the words of the Admission to Formation Ceremony. There we read: "You are embracing the ideals of the secular branch of the Order of Carmel, which are based on the charisms and teachings of the Order's founders, Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross. These saints treasured a deep sense of God's love, fidelity to contemplative prayer, the spirit of detachment, and generosity in the practice of fraternal charity and the apostolate."

Teresa knew that if we live this program of life, we will be following Christ perfectly and living in imitation of Mary, the mother of the Order, for the good of the whole Church and of all mankind.

Michael D. Griffin OCD
Washington D.C. Carmelite Community

Discussion points for the Teresian Charism:

- What is a charism?*
- What is the first rule of every religious order? Why?*
- What aspect of the life of Christ do Carmelites try to live most fully? What are some ways we try to do this?*
- What is the ideal of the Order?*
- Which saints are particularly ours?*
- What are the major graces given to Teresa and, through her, to us?*
- What are the principal elements of the life of a lay Carmelite?*
- What is a vocation?*
- Why must I wear the scapular? Why can't I wear a real habit?*
- What does the Admission to Formation liturgy say about the Carmelite spirit?*

Saint Teresa and the Vocation to a Life of Prayer

Prayer is at the heart of the Carmelite vocation. When people think of Carmel, the very first thing that comes to their minds is an Order that is devoted to prayer and penance for the good of the Church.

Prayer is fundamental and essential to the vocation of Carmel because we have been so taught by Saint Teresa who was, in the words of Pope Paul VI, “the reformer and foundress of an historical and eminent religious order, a prolific writer of great genius, a teacher of the spiritual life, and an incomparable contemplative who was tirelessly active.”

When Pope Paul VI conferred or rather, as he himself said, “acknowledged St. Teresa of Jesus' title of Doctor of the Church,” he spelled out in clear words the secret of her greatness as a saint and as a teacher. I think the words of the great Pontiff on the occasion of her being declared a Doctor of the Universal Church are so important that I would like to repeat them fully. In this way you will be able to see the role she enjoys as a teacher of the ways of prayer. These are the Pope’s words:

Teresa’s doctrine speaks of these secrets, which are the secrets of prayer. This is her doctrine. She had the privilege and merit of knowing these secrets through experience. That experience was lived in the holiness of a life consecrated to contemplation and simultaneously committed to action. It was an experience that was suffered and at the same time enjoyed, in the pouring out of unusual spiritual charisms.

Teresa possessed the art of expounding these same secrets, to such a degree as to place her among the great spiritual teachers. It is not in vain that the saint’s statue, which is here in this basilica because she was a foundress, bears an inscription that describes her very well: *Mater Spiritualium*.

St. Teresa’s prerogative of being a mother, a teacher of spiritual persons, had already been acknowledged—we might say by unanimous accord. She was a mother who was full of entrancing simplicity, a teacher who was full of marvelous depths.

The tribute of the tradition of the saints, of theologians, of the faithful and the learned, was already assured her. Now We have confirmed it. We have taken care to see that, having been adorned with this magisterial title, she may have a more authoritative mission to perform in her religious family, in the praying

Church and in the world, through her perennial, ever-present message--the message of prayer.

This is the light which is today rendered more lively and penetrating, and is reflected over us by the title of Doctor just now conferred on St. Teresa--the message of prayer! It comes to us children of the Church at a time marked by a great effort at reform and renewal of liturgical prayer. It comes to us who are tempted by the great noise and great business of the outside world to yield to the frenzy of modern life and to lose the real treasures of our souls in the effort to win earth's seductive treasures.

It comes to us children of our time just when we are losing not only the habit of conversation with God, but also the sense of the need and duty to worship and call on Him. The message of prayer comes to us as song and music of the spirit, which is imbued with grace and open to the conversation of faith, hope, and charity. At the same time, psychoanalytical exploration is breaking down that frail and complicated instrument that we are, in such a way that all that can be heard is not the sound of mankind in its suffering and its redemption, but rather the troubled mutterings of man's animal subconscious, the cries of his disordered passions and of his desperate anguish.

The wise Teresa's sublime and simple message of prayer exhorts us to understand "the great good which God does to a soul when He disposes it to practice mental prayer with desire ... because in my opinion mental prayer is nothing else but a friendly way of dealing, in which we often find ourselves talking, in private, with Him who we know loves us" (*Life*, 8, 4-5). This is, in summary, the message to us from St. Teresa of Jesus, Doctor of the Church. Let us listen to it and make it our own.

Problem Today - People do not pray as much as they used to, said Pope Paul VI, and they have more problems in this area of life. In fact, many people now claim that they do not need to pray that much, for they are united with Christ and hence all that they do is done prayerfully. What better thing can one do than to be charitable to one's neighbor? Hence if we live to help others and to do good for them, we do not need to engage in formal prayer. That in itself is prayer and the fulfillment of the demands of the Gospel.

I have to admit that this is a strong argument. But I wonder what Saint Teresa would make of all this? What would she say? In reading her works I know exactly what she would say to all of this. She would say that she strongly disagrees with this line of thinking, that it is just the opposite of her own personal experience.

She would especially disagree because for her prayer was a way of seeking Christ, of growing in friendship with Christ and of keeping Him company. Obviously, she would agree on the importance of doing good to others, and of living the precept of charity toward our neighbor as we have been taught. But Teresa, from her own experience, would insist that prayer is a direct way of seeking Christ, of cultivating our friendship with Him and of developing our companionship with Him.

Teresa spent much time in prayer and was aware that prayer had brought her to a state that she was more directly aware of Christ, of what He had suffered for her and of His love for her. She knew that we were made for interpersonal communion with God, we were made, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, to be aware of His love for us, and we are summoned to reciprocate His love. For Teresa, “prayer is nothing more than a friendly conversation with the God by whom we know we are loved” [Life, 8,4-5]. The love of God comes first, and before all else we must respond to His love and take our delight and express our gratitude to Him for this love. Then, we must reach out to our neighbor. But if we do not find God first, we will not and cannot find God in our neighbor.

Companionship With Christ - The secret of Teresa in teaching us about prayer is that she is able to lead us to create the right kind of atmosphere for ourselves so that we can truly pray. Teresa reminds us that as we seek to be alone to pray properly, that we need Someone to be with us. What better companion than Christ who taught us how to pray the “Our Father”? She says that if we look to Him, consider how much He loves us and that He taught us the Our Father, we are bound to succeed in prayer. If you can stay close to Christ, strive to develop a companionship with Him in prayer, you will be all right. Teresa would have us meditate on the various scenes of the Gospel, for she found that what is in the Gospel is more precious than anything else that has ever been written. She also knew that in meditating on the Gospel, the truths contained therein will carry over into life. When I begin to image for myself the scenes of the Gospel, scenes that tell me of the divine love, they will affect and change my life, bringing into it a divine way of thinking and of acting.

And that brings me to the point that Teresa loved to stress. The purpose of prayer, for Teresa “is not to think much, but to love much.” It is love that changes us! It changes us from our ordinary way of thinking and loving, and makes us appreciate more the love that God has for us. It also makes us want to reciprocate God’s love.

For example, when I meditate on the scene in Matthew’s Gospel of Christ walking on the water toward Saint Peter in order to calm his fears and doubts, I am reflecting on a powerful scene. I can easily see myself in this picture, and I can see that often I am filled with spiritual fears and doubts. Furthermore, I can see myself, like Peter, in need of the presence of the Lord and of His personal love for me. Another point: I can see that often it has happened in my life that when I take my eyes off Christ and just feel sorry for myself and consider my own misery, I

begin to sink beneath the waves, I just get deeper into my own misery. But what a difference when I keep my eyes fixed on Christ, when I look to Him for my salvation. Then I know that Christ is the most wonderful friend in my life, then I see that with Him I can do all things and that, without Him, I can do nothing but sink back into my own powerlessness.

Scenes That Teresa Liked - Most willingly does Teresa share her experiences with us. And when speaking of prayer, she tells us that the scenes of the Gospel that she liked most to meditate upon are the scenes where Christ is alone and in need of human companionship. Examples of this are the times when the Lord prayed alone in the garden and when he was scourged at the pillar. Then Teresa could see that Jesus wanted our companionship and she knew that the Lord would welcome her and never desire to send her away. These are good scenes for all of us to remember and to meditate upon.

Prayer and the Virtues - The purpose of prayer, in the mind of Teresa, is not just to bring about nice and consoling feelings. Prayer, according to her experience and way of thinking, must do more --it must bring about the practice of the virtues in our lives.

When I meditate on the Gospel and consider the ways that I have offended the Lord, the result should be that I resolve to practice the virtues that will be pleasing to my dearest friend, Christ. I may see that I have not been nearly grateful enough for all that the Lord has done for me, and hence I must practice gratitude more and more. Or it may be that I am aware of the love that Christ has for me and for all mankind, and now I see that I must love my neighbor as Christ has loved me and as Christ has commanded me to love all others.

Just Look at Him - One of the favorite expressions of Teresa in the context of prayer is to remind us that if we do not know what to say to Our Lord in prayer, all we have to do is "to look at Him." It reminds us of the Psalms when we ask God to gaze upon us, or let His divine countenance shine upon us. And we are asking that we can gaze upon the face of the Lord for all eternity. It is love that will make us gaze upon the Lord. What does it mean to gaze upon His face? Gazing means to look with eagerness and studious attention; it implies fixed and wondrous attention, almost meaning that we are so enthralled that our mouths are left wide open with amazement. The wondrous attention that we feel is a sign that we are gazing lovingly upon the face of Christ and upon the scenes of the Gospel.' I think this is just what Teresa is saying to us about prayer.

His Loving Eyes Are Upon Us - Again and again, Teresa comes back to this ideal that the loving eyes of Christ are always upon us. Because of this, Teresa has much peace and joy, and feels confident and courageous. The loving eyes of her Lord give her more life, more joy, and make

life fully alive and beautiful. In prayer, Teresa merely wants to respond to the loving gaze of Jesus and allow His love to fill her with new levels and depths of love.

The greatest thing in the world is not to be able to love God, but to know that we are loved by Him. This is the miracle, the thrill of it all. "God so loved us that He sent His only Son for our salvation." And the Son so loved us that He willingly laid down His life for us and with the Father sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in our souls. Truly, in this way, the loving gaze of the Lord is upon us.

How to Meditate on the Love of Christ - In the *Way of Perfection*, Teresa several times tells us what mental prayer is all about. For her it means to think of how much God loves you, how little you deserve this love, but how much He suffered for you. When you think in this way of the person of Christ, then you are surely engaging in mental prayer. Let these thoughts melt and break your heart, she often tells us.

Remember that for Teresa, prayer does not consist in thinking much, reflecting much, but it consists in loving much. When these thoughts about His love for you, your unworthiness, and the many things He suffered for you, when these reflections lead you to love the Lord more, when they make you want to serve Him more and sacrifice yourself for Him, then you are praying in the sense that Teresa is describing.

I must always keep in mind that ideas are cheap. It is not difficult to think out new and deep ideas. Anyone can do that. But love is different, then I must commit myself, then I must be prepared to lay down my life for the Lord if the occasion were to present itself.

The Power of Prayer - Since you are only aspiring at this point to enter the secular Order of Carmel, you are asking yourselves, no doubt, what is the reason that Teresa insisted so much on prayer? You are also asking yourselves, how can prayer save the world? How can it make it better?

These are good questions. And Teresa would remind us that there is only so much we can do in this world. We cannot enter every cause, even if we wanted to. But all we need to do is to look at the Lord praying for Saint Peter, and praying also for all of His apostles. And we can see that if our prayer life is united with Christ, if it is suffused with His love, that it has the power to change the world. It is a very quiet apostolate, it does not make much noise, but we know that it is love that changes the world. And one of the ways of growing most rapidly in love is through the practice of prayer. In prayer we are one with Christ, we are filled with love. We put aside our egotism and selfishness and let ourselves be filled and guided by the love of the Lord. In union with Him, all prayer is valid and is heard. In fact it is heard because we are one with the Lord. Hence Popes have called the contemplative life, the life that seeks to enter more directly into the love of God, "the most universal and fruitful of all apostolates in the Church." There is no surer way to the heart of God, and there is no more efficacious way of helping the Church and others.

Prayer Is Friendship With Christ - In the *Life*, Saint Teresa gave us a classic definition of prayer. She says that “prayer is nothing more or less than a friendly encounter with a God by whom we know we are loved” [*Life*, 8, 4-5]. But why does Teresa define prayer in this way and then never again give this definition? This is in the part of the *Life* in which Teresa is lamenting the time in her life when she gave up mental prayer. And then from her own experience, she exhorts her readers never to make such a mistake. She encourages us to pray regularly each day because prayer is taking Christ to be our Friend. And that is absolutely true. If you pray each day, you will be striving to make Christ your best friend, to allow His friendship to enrich your whole life.

But Teresa stresses that the essence of friendship is to make sure that our will is one with that of Christ. Bringing our wills into conformity with the will of Christ is the very essence of friendship. Once again, she assures us that prayer is not a practice to make us feel good, to give us spiritual comfort and consolation. But prayer is designed to make us draw closer to Christ, to bring our wills into conformity with His divine will.

Mary and Prayer - When Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross begin to think of the perfect model of prayer, of whom do they think? The Blessed Virgin Mary, the perfect Christian and the perfect follower of Christ. When you strive to grow in prayer, she is the one to whom you must always look to follow the perfect model.

Carmelites have always done this. Hence in the *OCDS Constitutions*, 29, we read:

In the interior dynamism of following Jesus, Carmel contemplates Mary as Mother and Sister, as “the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord” and, as such, a model for the life of the members of the Order. The Virgin of the Magnificat proclaims the break with the old order and announces the beginning of a new order in which God casts the mighty down from their thrones and exalts the poor. Mary places herself on the side of the poor and proclaims how God acts in history. For Secular Carmelites, Mary is a model of total commitment to God’s Kingdom. She teaches us to listen to God’s Word in Scripture and in life, to believe in it in every circumstance in order to live its demands. All this she did, without understanding many things; pondering all in her heart (Lk 2:19, 50-51) until light dawned through contemplative prayer.

Taking Mary as our perfect model we are bound to succeed in our efforts to draw closer to Christ in prayer.

Never Give Up Prayer - If there is one point in the Teresa’s life that we can all identify with it is the period of her young adult life when she was confused about prayer. She had learned the

secret of success in prayer, but after some time she felt she had too many faults and then she concluded that she ought not be a hypocrite any longer. So she gave up prayer for a while, until, by the grace of God, her confessor convinced her to take up this practice so necessary for the Christian life.

Teresa tells us that this was the worst mistake she ever made. She acknowledges that whenever she was faithful to prayer, all went well. Even if she did wrong, she quickly repented and began to make progress again. But the more she allowed herself to be deceived into giving up prayer, the more her spiritual life deteriorated. This is the great lesson that so many have to learn from Teresa. What would she tell you? What advice would she give you? She would say to you: “No matter what, never give up prayer. Keep on praying and you will soon come to the port of salvation.”

Teresa’s definition of prayer is classic in the annals of Christianity. Teresa tells us that “in my opinion, prayer is nothing more or less than a friendly conversation with the God by whom we know we are loved.” Whenever you are doing this, you are praying.

It is interesting that Teresa gave us this definition in the *Life* in a special context and for a special reason. Teresa gives us this special definition at the point in her life when she was returning to prayer and encouraging all others to do the same. She exhorts us to return to prayer if we have ever abandoned the practice. And her reason is clear, prayer is “taking Christ to be our friend.”

Giving up prayer, for her, is like giving up on making an effort to deepen our friendship and companionship with Christ. But above all, in her definition, she stresses that He first loved us, and that in prayer we are fundamentally responding to His love, trying to allow our hearts to be enflamed with His love.

I often think that by the experience of Teresa, I am always able to see clearly the importance of prayer. I try to identify with her, and I can see in my own life (as I am sure you can see in your life) that when I am faithful to prayer, all goes well. As usual, Teresa is right. “The chief mischief,” she goes on to say, “consists in taking our eyes off of Christ.” In prayer we show that we appreciate the eyes of Christ that express His love for us, and we in turn keep our eyes fixed on the one who loves us. We try to bring our hearts and minds into harmony with Him, and this is the very essence of friendship with Christ.

It doesn’t take much imagination to be convinced that this world could be a better world, and that many of its problems could be greatly reduced if we all did one thing--if we were faithful to prayer, if in the words of Teresa, “we took Christ to be our friend”. Soon the world would be filled with more peace and love and joy. May Teresa obtain for us the grace to be faithful to this practice.

Michael D. Griffin OCD

Discussion points for St. Teresa and the Vocation to a Life of Prayer:

What is St. Teresa's message?

Why did Pope Paul VI think this is especially valuable during our time?

What is Teresa's famous definition of mental prayer? How have you experienced this in your own prayer life?

What is the proper atmosphere for prayer? Why does this help? Why does reading the Gospel aid meditation?

What does Teresa mean when she says "The purpose of prayer is not to think much, but to love much?"

What were Teresa's favorite scenes to meditate on?

Why did Teresa insist on prayer? What place do Mary and Joseph have in Carmel?

What does Teresa teach us about giving up prayer?

Secularity and the Lay Carmelite

In the last chapter we were looking at the specifically spiritual dimensions of the life of the lay Carmelite. Perhaps we seemed to have left behind the ordinary things of the world and the ordinary cares and problems that weigh so heavily upon mankind. But, of course, the impression is readily cured when we look at the more practical aspects of life, and that is exactly what we plan to do in this chapter.

The true measure of holiness is often best found in the ordinary aspects of a saint's life. It is safe to say that most people seem to admire many of the simple aspects of Saint Teresa of Jesus. The Saint of Avila had her head in the heavens, but her feet were planted squarely on this earth. Thus she does not appear to be unreal, but rather the kind of person who understood and lived the same kind of life that everyone else on this planet must live. Only such a saint could tell us that "God moves among the pots and pans."

How different are the ideas of many who think that being religious or devout means being exempt from the duties demanded of all. Their ideas are somewhat like those described by one of the Cardinals at the Second Vatican Council. He said "for many of them, being a Christian consists in living in the Church as deluxe passengers on a cruise ship, without any other concern than keeping well and getting the most benefit to their health. Their Christianity becomes a 'comfortable' one that is held only as a tradition and as a kind of inheritance." The Second Vatican Council vigorously reacted against such a mentality as being opposed to the strong roots of Divine Revelation.

Ordinary Things of Life - Experience shows that when people want to make progress they immediately elevate their expectations, wanting to think of a form of life that is anything but ordinary. In fact they become oblivious to the simple duties and obligations of life. Nothing is more pleasing than such a vision. But in reality this vision is not true to life; it is only part of the truth. Carried to its extreme it can make one lose the common touch and ultimately become untrue to life itself.

Hence I want to raise some issues that need to be faced and seriously discussed before you consider taking the step of entering the Carmelite Order as one of its secular members. The main issue that needs to be honestly faced is the matter of secularity and your life, or we can term it the "secular" dimensions of your life. It is helpful to keep in mind that the goal of entering the Carmelite Order as a secular member is not to become a mini-monk or a semi-nun. Quite simply, you are to remain who you are, and you are not to seek to evade your responsibilities and duties of life. Actually one ought to enter an order so that one can better fulfill one's obligations and duties, not to flee or be liberated from them.

From the outset it would be a serious mistake to be seeking a false identity. Thomas

Merton, the American Trappist, warns those who seek a false identity that they are seeking a way of life wherein they will not even be recognized by God Himself, because God did not call them to such a life. But in embracing all the dimensions of your life, you will be able “to grow in wisdom and grace before God and man.”

A Word About Secularity and Secularism - When one comes to a religious order, even in the secular branch of the order, it must be evident that God does not want just a part of your life, but that God wants the entirety of your life, your complete life. He does not seek your heart only when you pray or attend devotional exercises. He seeks your whole life, for He wants to give Himself entirely and without reservation to you.

Immediately we notice that the word “secular” is a very ambiguous word and needs to be clarified. “Secular” has reference to the present world and the present conditions of the world. In this sense we find the word acceptable. But the problem arises when we try to determine when God is being left out of the picture and when God is being excluded from the lives of men and women.

Thus the word “secularism” has been defined as “the separation of God from His creation and the denial of His presence in the world, if not His existence. The secular city is the world of men and things moving on without Him, doing without religion. Secularism as a world view and as a way of life denies the immanence of God and His existence as well as man’s religious nature. Secularism denies both the hidden presence and action of God and the cosmic or world influence of Christ. This leads to desacralization and denies two basic truths of the Christian faith: the Creation and the Incarnation. It is secularism that the Church roundly condemns.

Not to be confused with secularism is secularity. Quite simply secularity stresses the benefits of the secularization of many areas of human life. This is now almost universally recognized in all civilized countries. Religious secularity considers such an outlook to be compatible with faith in God, and Christian secularity finds it favorable to the message of the Gospel.

The Second Vatican Council endorses such a view when it fully recognizes that the secular dimensions of life have their own autonomy. These are the words of the Council: “If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator.” (*The Church in the Modern World*, #36).

Experience shows that it is not good to have people who want to be “too” spiritual, for that often means they are getting away from the natural and ordinary things of life, and much of the beauty and charm of life comes from a proper appreciation of the simple things. Those who try to escape or bypass these things turn out to be flat, a little aloof, and even a bit boring. Sometimes, in an extreme case, nature can take its revenge and the person may even display

sourness of disposition. At any rate, he or she will not reflect the joy of God the Creator and Redeemer.

The Gospels and Simple Virtues - When I go to the Gospels, how refreshing it is to contemplate some small but important virtues in the life of Jesus. For example, when the Lord celebrated the Last Supper with His apostles, it is evident that one of the apostles was to perform the simple service of washing the Lord's feet as well as the feet of the other apostles. This service was rendered at such a gathering. But the Lord, noticing that no one else had done this, takes it upon Himself to wash and kiss the feet of His apostles. And how many times the Lord takes time out to listen to the cares and problems of His apostles. He was always at their beck and call. He did not think such humble services beneath His dignity.

Or again, how beautiful it is to think of Mary, the Mother of my Lord. She was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit of God and becomes the Mother of the Lord. And the Scriptures tell us that "immediately" she goes in haste to visit her cousin who was soon to bear a child. One might think that in becoming the mother of the Lord she would expect people to wait on her hand and foot. Certainly, it would appear that Elizabeth should be forced to visit Mary. But so sensitive was Mary to the need and possibility of helping her cousin that she hastened to visit her.

The Saints - I often marvel that the canonized saints apparently could have been stricter with themselves, could have practiced greater austerities. This is a theoretical opinion, of course. But we see that they were led by the grace of God to practice virtues in a very simple but attractive way, a way that deeply touches our hearts.

Saint Thomas More is a good example of this. He did live a comfortable life, he did provide amply for the needs of his family. And he loved to be with them, and in his letters to his children it is marvelous to see how he allows them to banter with him, not keeping aloof from them or trying to lord it over them. So gentle was he that when he went to the scaffold, he went with a smile and even asked the executioner to spare his beard as it never did anything to anyone.

Saint John Kemble, one of the martyrs of England and Wales canonized a few years back, shows us a priest who was eighty years old when he was led to the gallows. He was a diocesan priest, not a monk or a member of a religious order. Truly he was loved by all because of his gentleness. When asked if he had one final request before his execution he asked for a small glass of sherry and a pipe full of tobacco.

The lessons of the Scriptures and those we learn from the lives of the saints are precious teachings to us, and they remind us that all aspects of our lives are important. Strictness, aloofness from others, these are not the principal elements of holiness. Holiness is doing all

things, and especially the small and ordinary things, for the love of God and with our hearts filled with His love.

Practical Issues to Be Faced - If I were thinking of becoming a member of the secular branch of the Discalced Carmelites, I think there would be many practical problems in the area of secularity and my ordinary life that I would have to face. The following are but a few:

1. What does my family think of this move on my part?

A move such as that of entering a religious order can easily cause uneasiness on the part of spouse or children. And I would not want to lightly take it for granted that they will understand and not mind. Hence this matter should be discussed with them. This is a general rule, perhaps there might be exceptions, but I would not think they should lightly be omitted.

One should keep in mind that previously all the members of the secular branch of the Order took vows. But the Order decided that the word "vows" seemed to be too monastic and hence capable of being misinterpreted. The Order did not think that it was previously harmful for the members to make vows, but it thought that at the present time, it would be better for all to make promises and only after three years of living their Definitive promise can they make vows. I think this move is reassuring to some of the members of the family and hence very helpful.

When one is contemplating this vocation, it is easy to be filled with enthusiasm for the recently found graces of this vocation, but in charity you must consider the feelings as well as the rights of the other members of the family. Hence their consent should ordinarily be sought.

For example if I was a married man and my wife came home to tell me that she was to enter a secular Carmelite Community, I am sure that I would have many questions. I might easily wonder exactly what she had in mind. I could reasonably wonder if she were "renegotiating the marriage contract," perhaps making restrictions on what she promised on our wedding day. And I am sure the children would have questions about this matter.

I think we are dealing with a situation that is somewhat parallel with that of the married deacons. It is my understanding that when they are in training, they must get the consent of their spouse to be ordained deacon. And with great reason, for the Sacred Orders that they are to receive cannot interfere with their primary obligations and duties to their wives and families.

2. Time for my family

If one decides to enter the secular branch of the Order, there is a question of the time that I must give to my family. Does it follow that if I decide to go to Mass each day I will not be available to make breakfast for the family? Is my own sanctification so important that I

can neglect my own family? There may be ways of working out an agreement so the family will consent and not feel neglected. But this issue should be faced before taking joining the Secular Order and making promises in the Order.

3. A stricter way of life

As I enthusiastically plan to embrace the task of possibly fasting on certain days or of practicing poverty according to the, *Constitutions* I must be careful not to put any burdens on my family. If I want to fast, I must not force them or try to get them to do the same.

4. Will I be the “better than thou” member of the family?

It is always possible that I may have one thing in mind, but it is perceived quite differently by my family. I may think it is a wonderful idea to enter more fully on a spiritual journey, but I must be careful that I do not hurt my family. I must discern the issue with circumspection so that I do not merely aspire to achieve a moral superiority over the rest of the family.

A Good General Rule - If you feel called by God to enter the Order of Carmel as one of its secular members, that is a wonderful grace. But this grace must be handled very gently. If it is, you will do more good for your family, but if you do not go about this in the right way, you may alienate your family’s respect and love.

Hence a good rule to follow is this: I must be determined that in entering the Order of Carmel, I want to live this life in such a way that I will be able to strengthen my ties with the members of my family. As is brought out in the Gospel, I want to be able to love them more and serve them more generously. I must keep asking God for the grace to pray for my family, not as if I assume that I am the superior one in the family, but so God will give me the grace of being more Christ like toward them, by growing in love and service.

Finally, I would not like my vocation in Carmel to disrupt the love and harmony that is central to my married life and to my family. Hence this must be thought out carefully, and an agreement reached that respects the wishes and feelings of all. If I want to join a Carmelite Community that takes a good part of one Sunday per month for its meeting, I want to make sure that my family does not feel left out or neglected. And if I want to pray each day, do my spiritual reading or recite the Liturgy of the Hours, can I do this in such a way that I will not grow apart from my loved ones? After all, these are responsibilities that I embraced with the graces of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and I cannot fail to honor these commitments.

If you sincerely are seeking God’s will and if God is truly giving you a vocation, be sure that these things can be solved. But you cannot just take them for granted; instead, you must work through them. This may be inconvenient, but it can only make your vocation stronger.

The Documents of Vatican II - If you are looking for more information and discussion on the point of secularity, you can find a wealth of information in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Look at the chapter on the laity in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, and you will also find much enlightenment in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. And, of course, the decree on *The Apostolate of the Laity* will provide plenty of inspiration.

The Council had in mind that we must consecrate all dimensions of our life to Christ and the aims of His divine Kingdom on earth. This means that we must use all the time and talents that God has given us. It also means that we must constantly be seeking to grow in our skills and talents so that we can be effective instruments in His hands.

Michael D. Griffin OCD

Discussion points for Secularity and the Lay Carmelite:

What is deceptive about making progress by raising expectations?

What is false identity?

What are secularity and secularism?

Give several examples of everyday virtues in the Gospel lives of Jesus and Mary.

Do you believe that love, not strictness, is the essence of perfection? Which is harder to practice?

The Christian Decision-Making Process

Experience shows that decision making is a difficult matter. It reminds me of an old cartoon of a man who is speaking with his psychiatrist and saying: "Life would not be difficult if it were not for the need to make so many decisions." We laugh at such humorous insights, but we all know that there is a grain of truth in the matter.

Perhaps I can illustrate the Christian decision-making process for you as it was done by a woman who was about to join the secular branch of the Order some time ago.

She had to be out of town a good deal during that year because of her work. And on one occasion, she wrote me the following letter trying to arrive at a decision she would be comfortable with. The letter read, in part:

Dear Father Michael,

The last time I spoke with you about my vocation, I thought all my problems were solved. It seemed that all I had to do was to be ready for the ceremony at the next meeting of the Secular Order of Carmel. But now I find that I have run into a number of problems and I have become a little bit discouraged.

I think the problem can be stated in a few words by saying that my husband is upset with my decision to enter the Secular Order and my youngest daughter is not as close to me as she formerly was. Perhaps it is all due to the fact that this has been a hectic year and I am forced to go on many more trips for the company I work for. But, at any rate, after this trip I will not need to travel again for some time and thus I will be able to be with the family more. Incidentally, we begin our family vacation in a week.

Since I will only be in town for a day before going on vacation, I just hope that I can come to see you about these matters so that I can come to some kind of decision, if possible, before the next meeting.

Sincerely,
MCV

The Meeting - When Marie returned from her trip, she came to see me and we went over the problem more carefully. But one thing was immediately clear: she wanted to do something about her problem, she did not merely want to discuss it for the sake of getting sympathy. This was an excellent beginning. In the following paragraphs, I will go over a few of the things that were touched on in the meeting and how she proceeded to make her decision.

Vocations Baffle Others - After listening to her problem, I told her that I felt I understood a little on the basis of my own experience. I told her that when I was very young I decided to go away to the seminary to begin studying for the priesthood. When I first began to think seriously

about my vocation, I was naturally enthralled with the prospect. I often went over in my own mind the goal I was reaching for and the good that I thought I could do in the future. And each time I thought of my vocation, the thought became more thrilling.

Some time passed and when I thought the right moment had come, I discussed the matter with my parents. I was surprised that they did not immediately share all my enthusiasm. In a reasonably short space of time, they did agree to let me go away to the seminary. Naturally, I was a bit puzzled by all this - as was many a young man - that it takes parents time to come around to the idea of a vocation to the priesthood.

Actually, it is not as surprising as one might think. After all, when one receives a vocation one thinks about it a long time, prays over the situation and in this way removes all obstacles that may stand in the way. And only afterward do we share these ideas with others. They are dumbfounded because they did not have any warning. Let us remember that it takes time for them to think this through for themselves. This is only natural. We also see the same thing in families when a couple announces their intention to get married. Isn't it true that they are often stunned that their announcement does not meet with immediate approval? Later, when they have worked through the process of winning the approval of their parents, they discover that it takes a bit of time and a good deal of effort before all is successful.

Yes, vocations may fill those who have them with a great deal of light and joy, but the same vocation may seem strange and baffling to others when the idea is first presented. So, my advice to you is to be patient, and all will turn out all right, if it is the will of God.

Why? Why? - As we try to convince others of our vocation, especially our own family, it may happen that we will become a bit frustrated if they do not immediately offer us their sympathy and approval. We may find ourselves saying: "Why can't I do this when I think it is the right thing for me to do?" Or, "Why can't I do something spiritual, something that I feel is important to me?"

Did you ever notice that in a state of frustration we use arguments of that sort? But it is important to note that "why" questions are generally self-centered questions. They may be the way you feel, but questions of this sort frustrate and anger others in times of tension and stress. It is much better to keep away from them and just try to show that your decision can be in everybody's best interest. After all, in stress they are thinking of their interest, and this is only natural, hence it is no time for you to present your case and show only what is in it for you. The Gospel is right in telling us to "be as wise as doves but as prudent as serpents."

How to Handle Stress - Some time back I had to conduct a course that was titled "How to Handle Stress." It was given at the Adult Education Program of the Catholic University of America. It was not the greatest course ever given, but the students found it helpful in many ways. Some took the course because they faced a great deal of stress in their jobs, another lady found that it was stressful for her to drive to work on the Beltway each morning and evening, and there was a man who did not like to speak out at business meetings, but had an important job for an international agency for feeding the poor of the world. Common to all these

problems was a need to have a better understanding of what was causing the stress in their lives. They were able eventually to solve their problems (only you can solve your problems, a teacher can only offer guidelines and encouragement) when they were able to do three things:

- (1) First, they had to learn to identify the cause of their problem, thus obtaining a better understanding of what was causing so much stress in their lives.
- (2) And secondly, they had to identify the emotions that were underlying their situation and causing so much anguish. For example, if one finds a job very stressful, it is also necessary, even more important, to know what kinds of feelings are being experienced. Are you getting angry? feeling frustrated? becoming quarrelsome with fellow workers? What precise feelings do you experience and why are those feelings so discomfiting to you?
- (3) And finally, it is important to see the larger picture of your lives and why it is important to learn to reduce the stress and learn how to live with those unpleasant feelings. Thus the man who found it difficult to speak up in meetings eventually learned that if he did not do this it could easily be interpreted as lack of interest or even hostility. This, in turn, could prevent him from utilizing his great talents and being given promotions in his job.

Decision-Making for the Carmelite - The Carmelite aspirant whose letter I quoted above was a good example of one who truly wanted to make an intelligent decision. I told her that her letter showed that she wanted to take charge of her life and that she had done something important. She had gotten down on a piece of paper what she thought was the essence of her problem and where she experienced a conflict in her home life. Just doing this much put her on the road to an early solution to her problem.

But then I told her that it would be a good idea for her to try to identify the emotions and the feelings that she experienced. Furthermore, it would be a good idea for her to identify the exact emotions and feelings of her husband and children. It is not enough to say “they are upset” or “they don't like the idea.” This may be true, but we do not know exactly what these statements mean. And if you do not know exactly what they mean, you are not in a position to solve your problem. This lack of clarity can only complicate your situation further. The woman agreed to try to identify the feelings and emotions her husband and children were expressing.

Next the woman agreed to the need to take a look at the wider picture of her life. Many times when we experience conflict, we can get bogged down. We may even overlook the wider issues of life, the more important issues. Thus for this woman, her love of God, her deep attachment to her faith and her belief in her vocation to the secular branch of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel were important interests to her. And, of course, her love for her husband and her children was of paramount importance. This was the wider picture of her conflict, and

it was precisely because she had such deep love for all these that she found herself in an emotional bind. It is not unusual when there is such high and intense love and dedication that there can easily be conflicts and tension. But I also stressed that these problems are more easily solved, because there is more love and good will.

The Way of Life - One of the great features of being a member of the Secular Branch of Carmel is that the Order provides you with a way of life. Experience proves that many people go through life without any direction or aim. Hence, while many want to live a spiritual life, their lives lack shape and form. There is no organization. Hence they find themselves going nowhere. But secular Carmelites do not have that complaint because their way of life is comprehensive and specific. Secular Carmelites tell me that the more they understand of their way of life the more they love it.

Stress Because of Good Things! - We instinctively feel that stress comes in life only when things are going wrong. Am I right in surmising that this is how most people feel? The fact of the matter is that good things can sometimes cause *us* more stress than unpleasant things. If someone is contemplating a marriage, this can be very stressful. Or if a young couple is having their first baby, this is a great blessing to them, but it can be most stressful. So it is not true that only bad things cause stress.

Do you remember when we said that when you experience God calling *you* to Carmel you are filled with joy and delight? This is good, but it is the goodness of your vocation that can also be the occasion of misunderstandings on the part of others.

What Do the Rule of St. Albert, the Constitutions and the Statues Say? - If I were a married man or woman and my spouse announced love for and intentions to enter a secular Carmelite fraternity, I am sure that he or she would not find it all crystal clear as to what he or she was up to. And most spouses would feel the same way, unless they were totally indifferent to the matter. I am stressing here that serious misunderstandings can be entertained by the husband, wife or family.

One might wonder what this evangelical life is all about. Does it mean that the husband or wife will have a different understanding of any type of conjugal intimacy as a result of this step she is contemplating? Does poverty mean that he or she will adopt a totally new life style? Will he or she be more interested in his or her new group than he or she is in his or her own family? These are real questions; this is not just a make-believe situation. They must be faced with good will.

We Must Deal With Our Problems - Problems do not just go away. We must do something about them. I remember going to Father Kenneth OCD one day with a problem I had in my ministry. I said the situation was unpleasant, but that I was doing my best and coping with the problem. He told me "Remember there is a difference between coping with a problem and dealing with a problem." If you cope with your problem, you may be doing the right thing or the wrong thing. For example, if a lady is having problems with an older son at home, she may cope with her problem by arguing with the boy, or she may choose to ignore his activity altogether. Neither solution may be helpful, but she is coping with her problem.

On the other hand, if she wants to deal with her problem, then she will seek an appropriate solution. She will not ignore it, or just hope that it will solve itself. No, she will face up to the problem and its meaning, and not give up until she has found the correct solution that serves the interests of all concerned.

Give Reassurance - I told Marie not to be surprised if her husband and children come back again and again regarding this matter. You may think that it is enough to speak with them once, but it can easily happen that from time to time they will want to discuss the matter further.

It must be understood that it would be advisable to give your husband or wife as much information concerning the Carmelite Secular Order as possible.

In all probability he or she is still feeling uneasy, anxious or disturbed about the matter. Thus he or she is in need of reassurance. More than anything else he or she need to be told that the new step one is taking is not going to interfere with the marriage nor does it signify that one will become so engrossed in this Carmelite vocation that one will neglect him, her or the home.

You may put his mind at ease by going a step further. You can tell him or her how much your marriage means to you and hence invite him or her to let you know if at any time your Carmelite vocation appears to him or her as a threat to the marriage or your home. You may say to him or her: "I have thought this over carefully and I am taking this step with the determination of making sure that it does not interfere with our marriage. In fact, if anything I am determined that it will strengthen rather than interfere with our marriage." Then you may continue, saying: "I really would appreciate it if you would feel perfectly free at any time to tell me whenever you notice that I am neglecting the home in any way because of my Carmelite vocation. And I want to stress that I really mean this, because my marriage and my home are everything to me." Reassurance of this type is exactly what your husband, wife or children are seeking.

Assume the Responsibility - In the case of such a problem at home, always remember that you must assume the responsibility. It is basically your problem - just because you are contemplating a step that you intend to be for the greater honor and glory of God does not mean that all others are to ignore this move or not to do anything about it. The candidate must assume the responsibility of dealing with the problems that arise. This may be a bit

burdensome, but it most surely will strengthen your vocation. It will not weaken it. I am thinking at this point that often it happens that many marriages fall apart and many homes dissolve because no one wants to deal with the situation. Many a man could have saved his home and marriage if he had chosen to deal with and was willing to work through the problem occasioned by his love for his job and career. Often such a husband will not face up to the damaging effects his job and career are working on his marriage. He cannot just assume that his wife and children must put up with the situation and be glad that he is paying all the bills. He must do more than that. He must take into account the needs of all in the family. If he chooses to truly assume responsibility, he can work it out that all will feel reasonably satisfied.

Christian Decision-Making - Up to this point, we have been going over the basic elements for making a decision. Now we come to the most important part-the question of what really makes a decision a Christian decision?

If you are seeking to be united with Christ and do all together with Him, then you will be choosing only what fulfills this purpose. This is what I mean by a Christian decision. Hence, Marie, if you first of all unite yourself with Christ consciously before speaking with your husband wife or children and ask for the grace of engaging in this discussion only to please your Lord, you are on the right track. But also remember to unite your husband, wife or your children to the Lord so that they will receive the light and love of the Lord and the reassurance they seek.

This may be the point that is most overlooked. People often pray that they themselves may have the strength and the confidence that they need, but they forget to pray for the other persons involved. But when we do pray for them, it is amazing how much freer we feel, how much more willing to work for the best interests of others. If we don't do this, not only are we not making a full Christian decision, but we are locking ourselves into a situation where we will primarily be seeking our own good, and only our own good.

A Demanding Process - As you can see, this whole process is a long one, and it can be very demanding in terms of time and patience. But the important point is that it works. You truly seek the honor and glory of God in this way, you take care of your own true needs, and you honestly seek the needs of all others.

These are the steps that need to be followed in this crisis of life, but the same steps are to be followed in all life situations. Unfortunately, more people never make any Christian decisions of this sort. Hence they do not integrate many of their situations into their Christian life.

If you have trouble in your own life in convincing your husband or family, it can well be that you are going through the trial-and it is a real trial-that will enable you to make sure that all your decisions are truly made in a spiritual way. The work may be great, but the rewards will be

even greater.

My Carmelite Background - I know what is on your mind, Marie. I know you are asking yourself just why I am so sure of myself. You want to know what makes me so confident.

The secret is to be found in my Carmelite background. My life in the Order of Carmel has taught me many things, chief among them that all that I do I want to do in union with Mary, the Virgin and Mother of Carmel. Instinctively I go to her, also to Saint Joseph and the saints of the order. You see, we have a tradition of not only praying to them for our needs, but even more of praying with them in all that we do. That must account for my confidence and assurance. And the longer you are in the Order, you will see yourself doing this instinctively and you will not only feel assured yourself, but you will bring loving assurance to others.

Conclusion - Marie, I am very conscious that we are running out of time. But before we conclude this, it might be well to quickly and briefly summarize all that we have said. Let's put it this way:

1. First of all, when God gives you a vocation, there are also initially problems that accompany it. Mary herself had a problem of convincing Saint Joseph. She had to be patient; she had to wait; she had to trust in God for help.
2. Getting your problem down on paper can be most helpful. In that way you can see your own problem, the feelings this is eliciting in you, and you can also take time to clarify your thinking about the problems and feelings that are disturbing the other members of the family. As I said, you received the calling from God first, hence you were given an opportunity of working through your own thoughts and feelings. Now you must give others equal time and equal opportunity to work through conflicting and disquieting feelings.
3. Always remember not to lose sight of the larger picture. In your case, the larger picture includes the honor and glory of God, and your own personal needs as well as the needs of the other members of the family. You must pray that you will be true to all these concerns. Then you will not be talking at them but will be lovingly discussing the matter with them. It will be loving dialogue, not anxious monologue.
4. Make sure you are willing to work through and work out your problem in a truly Christian way. The Christian decision-making process may take time and effort, but it assures fairness and charity toward all: to God, to self, and to family. But it is a Christian decision process when you first of all unite yourself to God and ask for His help, and then intend to remain united with Him and also wish to unite the others to the light and love that the Lord alone can give. After that, be sure that you will say the right thing. When you are lovingly united with Christ and

when you lovingly unite others with Him, you will deal with the matter in a way that reflects the love of Christ. You cannot fail. Trust me.

I see that the hour is up. I will be praying with you, Marie, that all goes well. If you do as so many Christians have done before you, you can be sure that all will go well. As I said, my years in the Order have convinced me that if you also ask Mary and Joseph and the saints of the Order to pray with you, you will see that this trust is not disappointed.

Michael D. Griffin OCD

Discussion points for the Christian Decision-Making Process:

What are the three steps recommended for handling stress?

What are some common emotions involved in the decision to become a Carmelite?

How would living the Rule of Life change my daily life with my family?

What is my attitude about this? Am I open to the will of God? open to my family? hostile? defensive? superior?

How much do I pray? Am I faithful to prayer? Have I put all of this into the heart of Jesus?

Am I including Mary and Joseph and the saints of the Order in the solution?

Spiritual Preparation for Being Received into the Order

When you have completed the six instructions of the ascension classes, you are ready to be clothed with the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This is an important step in your vocation, and hence it requires some serious spiritual preparation.

I would like to suggest that you spend some days in prayer, possibly making a novena or a triduum to prepare for the big day. When a person makes a novena, it means that for nine days one is praying to the Holy Spirit for the help and assistance that are needed to take the important step seriously and reverently. Personally, when I make a novena, I feel like one who is under a doctor's care for those nine days, but of course in this case I am under the special care and guidance of the Holy Spirit. I remind myself that Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit so that He can lead us into all truth. The Holy Spirit will not just make us remember the words and the teachings of Jesus, but the Scripture tells us that He will lead us into those truths.

But in your case, you are preparing to take a very important step in entering the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. You

are praying that the Holy Spirit will enlighten you so that you can embrace this vocation with all the love and generosity that you are capable of. What will you be praying for in this novena or triduum? Or, more precisely, what should you be praying for? All you have to do is to reflect on the ceremony of the clothing of the aspirant with the habit of the Order and you will be able to see what God will want you to think about and above all desire.

Here is the actual ceremony for *The Admission to Formation*:

ADMISSION TO FORMATION

1. *This ceremony should not take place during the celebration of Mass so that greater significance may be given to the Promise and the Vows which are normally to be made during Mass.*
2. *Holy water, an aspersory, and a large Brown Scapular should be conveniently placed.*
3. *The priest will use a white stole.*
4. *The aspirant(s), accompanied by the Master of Formation, comes forward and stands before the priest:*

Master of Formation:

Father, the members of the Fraternity of . . . present . . . for reception as a candidate for Formation.

Aspirant: (If more than one Aspirant, one is chosen to speak for all)

Reverend Father, my brothers and sisters: Drawn by God's grace and mercy I (we) come to ask you to teach me (us) the following of Christ and the life of prayer and self-denial in the service of the Church and of all mankind. Help me (us) learn the Rule and the Spirit of Carmel, the observance of Christ's Law, and perfect love.

5. *The priest briefly addresses the aspirant(s) in these or similar words:*

You are asking to undertake the pursuit of evangelical perfection under the guidance and spiritual direction of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers. You are embracing the

ideals of the Third Order which are based on the charisms and teaching of the Order's founders, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. These saints treasured a deep sense of God's love, fidelity to contemplative prayer, the spirit of detachment, and generosity in the practice of fraternal charity and the apostolate. May the Blessed Virgin Mary be for you the model of your dedication to God; and may she watch over you always.

6. *The priest then blesses the scapular(s) as follows:*

Priest: Let us pray: O God, you clothed your Son with our mortal flesh in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary; bestow a rich blessing upon this (these) scapular(s). Grant that (name(s)) may wear it as a sign of consecration to the Mother of God and grow in the likeness of Christ Jesus her Son.

All: Amen.

7. *The priest then sprinkles the scapular(s) with holy water and, with the help of the Master of Formation, places it on the aspirant(s).*

Priest: The Carmelite Third Order cordially welcomes you as a candidate for Formation. May God strengthen you with his grace and may Christ be your teacher and light.

For the sake of clarity, I would like to summarize the chief truths and lessons that are proposed to the beginner. They are:

1. I come to ask that I be taught how to follow Christ more generously and courageously; and I also ask to be taught to live a life of prayer and self-denial in the service of the Church and of all mankind. Your intention is to grow in the fullness of Christian love, hence you are seeking to learn more about the Rule and the Spirit of Carmel for this very purpose, for these are based on the Law of Christ.

2. The priest, in the name of the entire Order of Carmel, reminds you that you are committing yourself to pursue the perfection proposed by the Gospel under the guidance of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers.

He will also remind you that you are embracing the ideals of the Secular Order of Carmel and that these ideals are based on

the charisms and teachings of Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross, the founders of our Order. What were the ideals proposed by these saints and that you now seek to embrace with all your heart? The following words say it all:

a) These saints treasured a deep sense of God's love, fidelity to contemplative prayer, the spirit of detachment, and generosity in the practice of fraternal charity and the apostolate.

b) Mary is now proposed as the model of all Carmelites. The ceremony continues: "May the Blessed Virgin Mary be for you the model of your dedication to God; and may she watch over you always."

c) The scapular. The official part of the ceremony consists in being clothed with the scapular of Our Lady. These are the words used in the blessing of the scapular: "Grant that he (she) may wear it as a sign of consecration to the Mother of God and grow in the likeness of Christ Jesus her Son."

The ceremony concludes with the priest welcoming you to the period of formation. He asks that God "will strengthen you with his grace and that Christ may be your teacher and light."

Conclusion — I think that if you are spending a number of days to prepare for this ceremony and if these are the issues that you are concerned with and placing before the Lord, then you may be sure that you are going to be prepared properly when the day arrives. The grace and love of God will always be with you.

Michael D. Griffin OCD
Washington D.C. Carmelite Community

Aspirants Knock, Seek, and Ask Questions

Aspirants approach Carmel with great eagerness, wanting to know “all about the Order.” They ask: What is the Secular Order all about? Is it for me? How do I go about becoming a member? What will be expected of me?

Following are some of the questions that aspirants ask most frequently, with brief replies.

Q: What is the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites?

A: The Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites is an association of lay members who embrace a vocation to pursue Christian perfection, in the world, according to the spirit and ideals of the Discalced Carmelite Order. The emphasis is on (1) vocation, (2) living in the world, and (3) following the spirit of Carmel, namely, striving for close union with Christ through interior prayer.

Every Secular Order is part of a religious parent order. Its authenticity derives from the canonical approval of the Holy See, and its members are directed to a way of life by a rule which also is approved by the Pope.

The Secular Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was founded by Bl. John Soreth, General of the Carmelites, and approved by Pope Nicholas V in 1452. Soreth drew up the first rule of the Secular Order, following the broad outlines of the rule of St. Albert, the Rule given to the original hermits on Mt. Carmel in the 12th Century. The emphasis of the Rule is continual prayer. When the Discalced Carmelites became a separate order in the 16th century, following the Teresian reform, they were also given the right to have their own secular order.

Q: Is the Secular Order *really* a part of the Carmelite Order?

A: The Constitutions of the OCDS state unequivocally that the Secular Order is “an integral part of the Carmelite family; its members are therefore sons and daughters of the Order.” In other words, we are as truly Carmelite as the fathers, brothers, and nuns of the Order, sharing with them a common vocation of prayer and the pursuit of holiness. As members of the same order, we have a special claim on the rest of the Order for spiritual help and guidance. We, in turn, support the friars and nuns by our prayer spiritual activity.

Q: Why is the Order called “Discalced”?

A: “Discalced” literally means “without shoes.” The term was commonly used in religious

parlance at the time of St. Teresa of Jesus to indicate an order which had reformed itself and adopted a more dedicated and austere form of life. Members of these orders either went barefooted or wore some form of open sandals.

In Teresa's reformed convent of St. Joseph's, which she founded on August 24, 1562, the nuns wore strap sandals, and thus came to be known as "Discalced Carmelites."

Q: What are the requirements for admission to the Secular Order?

A: The OCDS Constitutions state that "any member of the Church, who is called by the Lord, is free from impediments, and conscientiously accepts his own vocation and the Rule and Constitutions offered by the Secular Order, can apply to a fraternity." Local Statutes also impose minor requirements.

I would say that, above all else, the individual should have a strong attraction to the spiritual life proposed by the OCDS Rule and Constitutions; that is, a vocation. This should be coupled with availability of time to spend with the Lord on a regular basis. Also, there should be indications that the person is seriously considering a lifetime commitment.

In general, an applicant must be at least 18 years of age, be a practicing Catholic in good standing in the Church, and may not be a member of another secular order. If one does belong to another order, a letter of release must be obtained before consideration is given to one's application.

Anyone interested in the Order is expected to attend several preliminary meetings to learn the obligations of a Secular Carmelite and to test one's interest in pursuing the proposed vocation before making formal application for admission.

Q: Why can't a person belong to more than one secular order? If one is good, wouldn't two be better?

A: A vocation to a secular order is a call to a distinctive way of life. Since no two orders have the same goals, objectives, or obligations, a person would be torn between two demands for a complete commitment.

Q: What are the obligations of a Secular Carmelite?

A: The Secular Carmelite assumes three principle obligations: (1) To recite the Church's Divine Office: Morning and Evening Prayer (Lauds and Vespers); and, if possible, Night Prayer (Compline) before retiring. (2) To spend at least half an hour each day in silent mental prayer. **Mental prayer constitutes the very essence of Carmel.** (3) To wear the brown Scapular of Carmel, the habit of the Order, as a sign of dedication to Our Lady's Order. For a good reason, the Scapular may be replaced by the Scapular Medal.

The Secular Carmelite is also urged, as far as possible, to assist at daily Mass; to have a special devotion to Mary; to undertake spiritual reading, especially the Bible and the Carmelite writings, on a regular basis; to practice fraternal charity and participate in the

Church's apostolate.

An important requirement is faithful attendance at the monthly community meeting, where one's vocation is nourished through study the Teresian tradition of the Order.

Q: Why should I become a Secular Carmelite? Can't I be just as good a Christian without joining an order?

A: It is not necessary to join an order to strive for, and advance in, holiness. Every Christian, by virtue of his Baptism, is called upon to do that. However, it is not easy to make progress on our own. We need a proved plan, as well as frequent inspiration and prodding to persevere and to advance. We need, so to say, professional help. That's where a religious order is so important. Religious orders have been nurturing the spiritual life for centuries. They give us the benefit of this heritage that produced saints throughout the ages. It is important, of course, to affiliate ourselves with an order we are strongly attracted to. The spirituality of Carmel is rooted in the Gospel, drawing souls to God through a life of quiet, contemplative prayer. The rule of the Order has but one purpose: to outline a way of life centered on intimate friendship with Christ.

Q: We all have our favorite morning and night prayers. Why can't we say them, instead of the Divine Office?

A: The Divine Office is the official prayer of the Church. It contains the inspired prayers and readings of the Old and New Testaments. We come to these prayers not to find favorites, but to grow closer to the mind of God -- to pray the way God wants us to pray; to say the very prayers that Our Lord himself prayed. The content of the Office brings about a spiritual development and maturity that cannot be found elsewhere. In addition, it brings us into a unity of prayer with the entire Church. The purpose of the Office is the sanctification of the day. Morning Prayer (Lauds) is principally a prayer of praise, recited as soon as possible after rising. The theme of Morning Prayer is set by the opening words: "Lord, open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise." Evening Prayer, or Vespers, sanctifies the closing hours of the day and is recited in the very late afternoon or early evening, when the day is drawing to a close. Although all the Hours are ideally prayed in common, this is particularly true of Vespers, which commemorates the gathering of Our Lord and his apostles at the Last Supper. Night Prayer, or Compline, sanctifies the final hour of the day and should be prayed just before retiring. Night Prayer is not mandatory for Secular Carmelites but it is highly recommended. It prepares us not only for sleep but also for death. It is the Night Prayer of the day and of life itself.

Q: The very words "mental prayer" and "contemplation" frighten me. They sound so exalted and difficult. I wonder whether mental prayer isn't beyond me.

A: Mental prayer is sublime, but it is not unattainable. St. Teresa of Jesus tells us that mental prayer is nothing more than conversation with one who loves us. What do those in love say to each other? How do they behave? They react according to the measure of their love. First one brief word, then another, and another ... until words become inadequate and even unnecessary. It is joy just to be in each other's presence.

So it is also with the One who loves us more dearly than any human being possibly could. And He inflames our hearts to return that love. In the words of St. Augustine, our hearts remain restless until they finally rest in Him.

Instead of binding us to formulas and to words framed by others, mental prayer sets us free to pour out our heart in its own song of love, and then to rest contentedly, clasped in the loving embrace of the Lord.

Perhaps mental prayer would be easier if we realized that true praying is not making oneself audible; it is making oneself attentive. God knows much better than we ever could what we are, what we need, what we wish to say to Him. The important thing is for one to hear what He has to say. Or perhaps He, too, may be content just to rest quietly with us for the few minutes of daily mental prayer.

Q: What is the difference between the Promise and the Vows?

A: The Promise is a commitment to seek perfection through the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience, and the Beatitudes, according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites. Upon completion of the two-year formation period, and with the approval of the local Council, the candidate makes a temporary Promise for the period of three years. At the end of that time, one's makes the definitive Promise.

Three years after having made the definitive Promise, a member may request permission from the local Council to take the vows of chastity and obedience. These vows are interpreted in the same way as the Promise, except that they add the merit of the virtue of religion. They constitute a more complete offering of oneself and therefore entail a greater moral responsibility.

The imposition of a time interlude between making the Promise and taking the vows reinforces the seriousness of the step by which one commits oneself even more deeply to one's Carmelite vocation and to the observance of chastity and obedience. This should be the preeminent motivation impelling one to consider taking the vows.

The vows neither add to nor detract from our standing as full-fledged members of the Order, that is acquired by virtue of the Promise. In fact, our Order is the only one that allows the laity to take vows; members of all other orders only make the Promise.

In summary, the Promise, and to an even greater extent the vows, establish a fixed and permanent commitment to strive for evangelical perfection according to the ideals of

Carmel as embodied in the Constitutions. Should a member leave the Order, he is automatically released from the Promise and the Vows.

Q: I know all about Carmel, and I am convinced that I have a vocation to the Secular Order. Why can't I be received immediately?

A: Knowledge alone is not sufficient for reception or profession as a Secular Carmelite. The purpose of the period of aspirancy, and even more so the years of formation program, is to help us translate knowledge into practice, to transform one into genuine Carmelites. It is not enough to have Carmel in our head; it must be in one's heart and in every aspect of one's life. In addition, one's vocation is only a nebulous thought or aspiration until it is transformed into reality with the approval of the Order, through the Council.

Such a serious vocation calls for humility, acknowledging that there can be a wide gulf between knowledge and practice. One needs all the time and help one can get to assimilate knowledge and to personalize the spirit of Carmel in one's life. Actually it is a lifetime job.

Even the Little Flower, who was already well on her way to sainthood, had to wait longer than the normal period of novitiate before making profession. This was a disappointment to her too, yet she recognized that it was more pleasing to God to submit to His will than to serve Him as a professed nun.

Q: What is the significance of the Carmelite coat of arms?

A: The first thing about the coat of arms to catch your eye is a mountain and three stars. The brown mountain, of course, denotes Mount Carmel in Palestine, where the Order came into being, but it also symbolizes the sublime charism of the Order: aspiring to union with God through prayer and contemplation. The lowest star, in silver, represents the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Star of the Sea. Two upper stars, in gold, represent the prophets Elijah and Eliseus, the Fathers of the Carmelite Order. These three stars point to the Marian character of the Order and to its Elijan origins even before the birth of Christ.

The three stars also represent the three epochs in the history of Carmel: the first, the prophetic era, from the time of the Prophet Elijah to the time of John the Baptist; the second, or Greek epoch, when the Order spread throughout the East and the West, from the time of John the Baptist to that of Berthold, the first Latin General of the Order; and the third, from Berthold to the present.

Above the shield with the mountain and three stars is a five-flowered crown, surrounded by twelve stars, symbolizing Mary, since Carmel is her Order. Over the crown is an arm brandishing a flaming sword, signifying the fiery spirit of Elijah, burning with zeal for the Lord his God. A scroll contains the motto of the Order, taken from the words of Elijah: ZELO, ZELATUS SUM, PRO DOMINO DEO EXERCITUUM ("With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts").

A cross on the summit of the mountain was added in the sixteenth century, by St. John of the Cross, as the distinctive mark of the Discalced Carmelites.

Q: Would you tell us about St. Teresa and her reform of the Carmelite Order?

A: It would take volumes to do justice to the holy Mother of our Order and to her work in reforming the Order. Anyone who is interested in Carmel should read some of the books that have been written about her, particularly her own writings which are a perpetual monument to her immense spirituality, especially her autobiographical *Life, The Way of Perfection, The Foundations*, and her masterpiece, *The Interior Castle*.

Teresa, the third of twelve children, was born to an affluent Spanish family on March 28, 1515 in a small village about thirteen miles from Avila. She was reared in a strict religious home atmosphere. Her mother died when she was 14. On November 2, 1535, at age 20, Teresa de Ahumada y Cepeda joined the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in Avila. Her entrance into Carmel marked the beginning of a new era for the Order.

Soon after profession, while recuperating from a serious illness, she came upon the book, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet*, which opened up new vistas into mental prayer. This she later defined as “an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with Him by Whom we know ourselves to be loved.” Thus was sown the seed that would eventually flourish into a life of intense prayer, a profound yearning for union with God—a legacy which she was to bequeath to the Church through the Carmelite Order.

Convent life at the Incarnation was not all it should have been. Intended as a place for solitude and silent prayer, the convent had become a veritable social center, to the detriment of the spiritual advancement of the 180 nuns. At the age of 38, Teresa, experiencing a “conversion,” withdrew from these social activities, opened her soul to God’s graces, and found herself favored with extraordinary gifts of mystical prayer.

On August 24, 1562, after many years at the Incarnation, Teresa responded to divine inspiration and founded the convent of St. Joseph’s in Avila where a small group of nuns, limited to not more than 13, would undertake the strict observance of the primitive, unmitigated Carmelite rule. There was strict cloister, with almost unbroken silence and extreme poverty. The nuns’ habits were of coarse material and they wore sandals, the reason for their being called “discalced” (literally, without shoes).

Teresa’s intention was to found only one convent, where she could live a genuinely contemplative Carmelite life. However, about four years after the establishment of St. Joseph’s, she was again moved by the Holy Spirit not only to found additional convents for nuns, but also to push the reform to include the friars.

St. Teresa has the distinction of being the only woman to reform a male religious order. In this work, she was blessed with the support of a young friar, John of the Cross, 27 years her junior. While she had the genius for organizing the reform and the winning personality to obtain the necessary permissions and donations, John of the Cross was the embodiment

of total commitment and fidelity to the original Carmelite ideals. He was a tower of dedication to a life of asceticism, detachment and profound mysticism.

Teresa's reform flourished, but conditions at her former convent, the Incarnation, were in a steady decline. As a solution, the apostolic visitor ordered Teresa to return to the Incarnation for three years as prioress. She was deeply concerned that the nuns would regard the appointment of a Discalced nun as a personal reproach. After a troubled beginning, it required all of Teresa's prayers, persuasion and personal charm to win over the nuns.

Teresa realized that to bring about a real change at the Incarnation she needed the help of an exceptional spiritual director for the nuns. She decided it would be John of the Cross, and she told the nuns: "I am bringing you as a confessor a priest who is a saint." John arrived at the Incarnation in 1572, when Teresa's term as prioress still had two years to run. Those two years were the only time in their lives that the holy parents of the reform had any sustained close association, and they both benefited greatly from the experience.

At the end of three years, Teresa left the Incarnation and continued the work of the reform. Finally, having completed the foundation of her seventeenth convent, at Burgos, Teresa, exhausted and suffering from terminal cancer, started back to Avila so that she could die at her beloved St. Joseph's. However, her physical condition was deteriorating rapidly, and she was exhausted by the time she arrived at her convent in Alba de Tormes. Despite the solicitude and care of the nuns for the Mother of their Order, Teresa died at Alba two weeks later, on October 15, 1582 at the age of 67.

Teresa of Jesus was beatified in 1614 and declared a saint in 1622. In 1970, she had the distinction of being the first woman to be named a doctor of the Church, bearing the title MATER SPIRITUALIUM - Mother of Spirituality.

Marie Janinek OCDS

Opposition - How Do You Cope?

Imagine yourself just getting home from an especially moving Carmelite retreat. The talks were just great. You've been warmly reassured about your Secular Carmelite vocation, you had some very moving consolations, and you're just bursting to share this all with your family.... But instead, you get ice water on all your joy. First opposition, then heat instead of light, and finally pain and heartbreak. Or if you're more lucky, only a cold indifference.

This is one of the most difficult problems Secular Carmelites have to face, opposition, and it's fairly common. It may come from a husband or wife, or parents, or children, or even someone at church. Since they see our Carmelite vocation only from the outside, it remains a complete mystery to them, a very powerful part of our lives they just don't understand. And any mystery we can't share can easily become a source of irritation, or jealousy, or hostility. Even the thought of this opposition is enough to bring an unpleasant feeling to anyone who has to cope with it. But how CAN you cope?

The basic message is all there in the Gospels, in Christ's example and words, but it's hard to sort it all out. Your emotions tend to blind you. Is it your duty to make your opposition see, like Jesus and the blind man, to straighten out this sometimes stranger who's so close to you? Or should you try to do as Jesus did at the Last Supper, to take off your shirt (your garment of ego and pride) and wash his feet instead? This is a difficult path to walk; but surely it was God, who loves you, who put your feet on it -- and asks you to walk this way.

If you try to avoid this kind of problem by cutting yourself off from the one who causes it, you may also be avoiding God's will. When Peter tried to tell Christ he was wrong to think about suffering, Jesus rebuked him sharply "Get behind me . . . , you're not thinking as God thinks, but as man thinks."¹ It's awfully hard to see at the time, but God uses these conflicts and trials to make us grow. The one who inflicts them is, unwittingly, one of the tools God uses to shape us, to make us pliable, and open, and humble.

Our vocation can be a painful one. St. Teresa and John of the Cross both said that it's not possible to grow spiritually without suffering. But we don't always recognize these trials for what they are. We're stuck in the distorted childhood idea that the only *real* suffering is to be burned at the stake, or to wear a hair shirt. But this opposition, like loneliness and emptiness, is a very real suffering: not the kind we'd ever choose for ourselves, but a better kind. A spiritually mature person would even be able to thank God for these things. Who is more intimate with Christ than one who suffers with Him?

If we want to become like Christ, we have to remember that He too suffered a great deal of opposition. Not only from the religious leaders of that day, the Scribes and Pharisees, but also from acquaintances and friends in His own hometown, and even from His own family and relatives: "When his relatives heard of this, they set out to take charge of him, convinced he

was out of his mind.”² “Going from that district, he went to his hometown ... and began teaching in the synagogue ...Where did the man get all this? they said. And they would not accept him.”³

So if Jesus was opposed by so many of His contemporaries, and St. Teresa was opposed by the authorities in her own Order, and the ones at Rome as well, should we expect to be treated with all possible respect?

So How Do We Respond?

Most of us like to see ourselves responding to opposition like Walter Mitty in one of his daydreams: like a brave captain going down with his ship; with the water just starting to lap about our feet; calm, dignified, spiritual, and noble. But it usually isn't that way at all. We're more likely to be at the center of a great emotional storm: angry, hurt, weak, confused, and filled with inner turmoil. We also have to fight the temptation to “get even,” or to use some other more subtle form of retribution.

Opposition is very hard to handle; how can you fight with a storm and expect to win? But there are a few things that can help.

1. We have to begin by being totally honest. We must be willing to see our own flaws, and be open to the elements of truth in what the other one says. Neither of these virtues come quickly or easily.
2. Try to pray during the “storm,” and afterward. Use only a very short phrase, or even one word alone, like “Jesus.” And don't ask for God's help in beating down your opponent. God loves him too. Just ask for God's help.

This brief prayer, repeated at intervals, will help you make a stand in a truly spiritual direction, at least in the depth of your existence. This stand may seem insignificant, and seem to have no immediate effect on your behavior or feelings, but it will mean that at least one tiny part of you belongs to God, and not to your raging emotions. Very gradually over a long period of time, this stand, your commitment to God in stress, will grow.

3. Try to “respond,” not react impulsively. If you respond to a remark, you try to distance yourself from the first impact of the insult. You weigh the situation. What made him so angry with me? Is he tired? Disappointed? Did he have a bad day? Maybe I irritated him. Perhaps I was overbearing. Would it be wise to answer impulsively, or should I wait and respond when he feels less irritated? As a result of these questions, I gain insight into this person and situation, and I may grow to a wise response.⁴
4. Remember that you're human, and chances are that you'll fail miserably as far as being noble is concerned. Admit this to yourself, and commend your weakness to God. Then

always think in terms of starting over again. As St. Anthony of the Desert said, "Progress consists in making new beginnings."

5. Try not to plan your strategy of conflict. Let the Holy Spirit work freely and don't get in His way. What seems like a defeat to us is often a victory.
6. St. Thérèse of Lisieux admits in her autobiography that she had a very bad temper. You might want to imitate one of her solutions to opposition and conflict. When she was just about ready to explode and couldn't hold back any longer, as a last resort, she always ran. "I did not have enough virtue to permit myself to be accused without saying a word. My last plank of salvation was in flight.... No sooner thought than done. I left."⁵

Try also to keep the correct attitudes, or outlook, toward him. We tend to fall into the trap that our ego sets for us in many ways:

- Be sure you're not being overbearing. Don't preach at him. This is usually only your own pride swelling up and making noises at you. Jesus sent us to serve, not to straighten others out (except by our loving example)."When I am willful and noisily busy about my holiness, I am unable to listen to either the egocentric rumblings within me or the silent voice of grace at the core of my being. I lose sensitivity to this voice. Nor can I listen quietly to the subtle message of the situation. My willfulness chains me to only one thing, my idealized self-image of religious perfection."⁶
- Don't cut him out of your life and affection because of your powerful "religious" interests. In time, selfless (not selfish) love conquers all.
- When the storm subsides, always remember to forgive him, both inside in your attitudes and outside in the way you respond to him. Remember what Jesus said when Peter asked if he should forgive the one who opposes him up to seven times. "No. Not seven times, but seventy times seven times."⁷

Jesus also said "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." We forgive one another's trespasses, or sins, by being open to one another; by being willing to hear, believe, and respond to the truth in what someone else says, even if what he says is temporarily made obscure by anger or harshness.

- Finally, be aware that, as strange as it may sound, this is part of your purification. If you try to respond correctly, it will bring you closer to God and to His "Suffering Servant."

Remember the fable about the lion with the thorn in his paw, and the young man who pulled it out? The lion was converted by this kind act from an enemy to a loving friend. So can it be with you and the one who opposes you. If he just can't feel secure with this overpowering interest of yours, your loving responses will show him that you love him unconditionally. This is the total love Jesus asks us for. We, especially, should try to hear him.

All of us are a lot more sensitive and vulnerable than we appear to be on the outside. Think

of the one who opposes you like our four-footed friend in the

Prayer of the Porcupine

*Lord,
let them know my protection is also my isolation.
Help them to look beyond my appearance.
I am truly soft underneath.⁸*

What If It Interferes With My Vocation?

Another very puzzling question that can cause you a great deal of distress is “What can I do if this opposition interferes with my vocation?”

Obviously, to be a Carmelite, you must be able to find the time in your life to pray and to live the Carmelite way of life. Fortunately, when God gives a vocation, He also gives us the means and the grace to follow it. But He doesn’t say it’ll be easy. God uses the storms and conflicts in our lives to make us grow spiritually. As St. Teresa says “Everything is a grace to him who loves God.” Or should we say “everything *can be* a grace, if you make use of it properly.”

To say that you should pray about this opposition is so obvious that it sounds silly to mention it. But too often we don’t think about it in the right way. We shouldn’t be praying so much for the opposition to be taken away, but so we may be able to find and follow God’s will in it. We may have a lot of “inner fences” (wrong or harsh attitudes, pride with a tendency to dominate, etc.) that need mending, and God may be using this opposition to point them out to us and repair them.

Be sure also that you respect the beliefs of your opposition. There is probably a certain amount of truth in what he says; in your quieter moments, look for it. Many of the saints were purified of imperfections in just this way by harsh novice masters. The harshness isn’t good of course, but the purification is. And don’t expect to see the whole truth (and what *he* sees) quickly; it’ll take a long time.

And finally, if you have these proper attitudes, there are a few practical things you can do too.

First, try to keep a low profile. It’s important that you live the Carmelite way, but it’s not important that you be *seen* saying the Office or at prayer, etc. If your beliefs and way of life antagonize someone close to you, make that part of your life as invisible as you can to him. He’ll be moved much more positively if, instead, you try to stress the things you share in common. Hopefully, in time, he’ll begin to see that your Carmelite way of life is making your love grow instead of being a threat to him.

Try to use those times of the day and the week that he and the world around you don’t

want for your prayers and your Office. There's even a sense of poverty in your use of these castoff pieces of time, and also sacrifice. If it's difficult to find a time for prayer, how about early in the morning before anyone else gets up, as Jesus did. "In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there."⁹ Your lonely place might be your own living room, or just a quiet corner somewhere.

Or you could pray during the night. Maybe you're awake or up briefly sometimes during the night anyway, and a night-time vigil, when the world all around you is silent, is an excellent time for prayer. The silence itself makes you feel closer to God, and the distractions and cares of the day seem far away. Maybe you can make up for the lost sleep with a new habit of getting to bed a little bit earlier, or a short nap at some other time of day.

These are not the only private times available, of course. Only you can find all the quiet times in your own life. There may be regular times when you have your home all to yourself, or a coffee break you can give up for some quiet time by yourself at work, or even a church that you can stop in when you're out shopping or on the way home from work. Look carefully for these times—Our Lord is waiting for you there. Let your silence melt into His silence, and your love melt into His love.

You might also have trouble getting to the meetings. If this is the case, the first thing to always keep in mind is "don't worry about it." Leave it in God's hands. This too may be part of your purification, and the sacrifice it entails may even be a big spiritual help to you in the long run. Tell the President or the Spiritual Director of your Chapter about this, gently, without bitterness or harshness, so they understand why you can't always be there. And if you have to stay away almost all the time, have them list you as an Extended Member. Again, don't worry. God can see your spiritual path, even when you can't. Trust Him.

And finally, if you can't share your spiritual ideals at home, it's important that you share them regularly with your fellow Carmelites. If you can't get to the meetings, write or phone one of your Carmelite brothers or sisters regularly. You don't have to say anything profound; just making the contact and saying a few words lets you know that the rest of us care, and this will make a big difference to you. Care and support are part of the gift you received with your Secular Carmelite vocation. Just ask, and you'll receive.

Some Closing Thoughts

It's a constant temptation, but don't judge the one who opposes you. Look at what you've been given:

Our Carmelite vocation is a gift, pure and simple. It asks us for a profoundly personal response to a divine call, a response that leads us ever more closely to a total commitment to God, who also commits Himself to us. Be aware of this tremendous gift, a personal call to divine intimacy, and be aware that most of the others you meet don't have it. In my poorness and yours, and with all our faults, we never earned it. And for all we've been given, it's so easy to find others with little or no formal religion at all who are so much kinder and more charitable

than we are.

The one who opposes you may have had a difficult time earlier in life that halted his religious and person-to-person growth before it was able to fully mature. He may need a great deal of love and tolerance, a loving person who, with great resources of love and infinite patience, can make up for what he missed and give him the help he needs. He may try your patience in unreasonable and even mean ways, and make you suffer because he is so distrustful of the love and care of people, and has never once in his life experienced that someone else can care for him unconditionally. Only when he really experiences that he is still accepted, faults and all, will he be able to go beyond himself to a real, giving love and tolerance.¹⁰

Continue loving, despite differences. The love will gradually bring you and him closer together in areas where there is a difference. If he sees this love on your part, he will be changed, *but only in his own time*. We all can only grow and flourish in the atmosphere that love provides. St. John of the Cross said “Where there is no love, put love, and you will find love.” We are all called to love and serve others with Christ, in a life of prayer, sacrifice, and divine intimacy. Shouldn’t we begin with this one who opposes us, and still is so close?

Remember that the truly religious man or woman is not the willful, ethical superman, but the humble shepherd of the sacred. This is what you and I are called to. It is our job to sanctify our little piece of the universe, not by conquering it, but by guarding its sacred dimension. As the shepherd peacefully tends his flock, so should we see the divine presence in all the people, things, and events in the world around us.¹¹

It is our place to see that this vision of the divine doesn’t perish. May we do it well. May our lamps remain lit, and our love light up the dark places in the world around us. May we learn to be patient, and humble, and begin in that hardest place of all: at home, with those who are closest to us.

Epilogue

“They Come From Everywhere”

*Lord, why did you tell me to love all men?
I have tried, but now I come back to You, frightened.
Lord, I was so peaceful in my house.
I was sheltered from the wind, and the rain, and the mire.*

*But You found a crack in my defenses, Lord.
You made me open my door just a little bit,
and like a cloudburst full in the face,
the cries of men awoke me; like a gust of wind,
a friendship shook me; like a ray of sunlight,
peeping unexpectedly between the shutters,*

*Your grace had disturbed me -
And I left my door ajar ..¹²*

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Prerequisites of a Life of Prayer

Prayer, like any communication, requires certain prerequisites and attitudes if it is to be fruitful and stimulate a deeper sense of presence between God and the one praying. The fundamental prerequisites of a life of prayer are humility, detachment and love of neighbor; the attitudes of prayer are patience, gentleness and perseverance.

To call humility, detachment and love of neighbor prerequisites for a life of prayer almost implies that these virtues be present before one is able to live that kind of life. In reality it is our prayer life that makes us aware of our need to grow in these virtues. In the following scripture passage from St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus assures us that our heavenly Father communicates best with those who are aware of their sinful nature and weaknesses.

Two men went up to the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee with head unbowed prayed in this fashion: 'I give you thanks, O God, that I am not like the rest of men - grasping, crooked, adulterous or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I pay tithes on all I possess.' The other man, however, kept his distance, not even daring to raise his eyes to heaven. All he did was beat his breast and say, 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Believe me, this man went home from the temple justified but the other did not. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled while he who humbles himself shall be exalted. (Lk. 18:9-14)

Although it may seem at times that our efforts are being directed toward only one of these virtues, humility, detachment, or love of neighbor, growth in one very often means growth in the others as well. In the *Way of Perfection* St. Teresa tells us: "I cannot understand how there could be humility without love or love without humility; nor are these two virtues possible without detachment from all creatures." So although we discuss these virtues individually it is important to remember that they are not acquired in that way.

In the beginning of my prayer life I was unaware of meditation as a form of prayer. I relied on formal prayers, the rosary and similar forms, to communicate with God. It was through spiritual reading, mainly St. Teresa, that I became aware of meditation and the importance of reflecting on my human experiences in the light of Christ's humanity. St. Teresa states that "meditation is the basis for acquiring all the virtues." She even goes so far as to say that "to undertake it is a matter of life and death for all Christians."

Susan Muto in her book *The Journey Homeward* speaks to us in a similar way of meditation:

Seeing simply and hearing attentively are attitudes that ready us as spiritual readers for our homecoming to the Father. To come to a deeper understanding and living of his Divine Word, we need also to develop a third attitude, and that is the capacity to dwell repeatedly on Holy Scripture and the writings of spiritual

masters. The words contained in these texts manifest a mysterious depth dimension due to the fact that they express certain basic themes of spiritual deepening. Such themes as growing in simplicity, listening to the Father's will, self-emptying in humility and detachment - and many more that we could mention -- are key themes in the repertoire of Christian teaching and call for repeated reflection. They are like home ports to which we return after stormy explorations on other seas.

Because of St. Teresa's message that "meditation is the basis for acquiring the virtues," I read over the written reflections and prayers that I have compiled during the years that I have practiced meditation. It is amazing to me how often these meditations centered on the virtues and in particular the virtues we are considering as the fundamental prerequisites for prayer: humility, detachment and love of neighbor. St. Teresa refers to these prerequisites as the foundation for prayer.

Jesus tells us in St. Luke's Gospel that

Any man who desires to come to me will hear my words and put them into practice. I will show you with whom he is to be compared. He may be likened to the man who, in building a house, dug deeply and laid the foundation on a rock. When the floods came the torrent rushed in on that house, but failed to shake it because of its solid foundation. On the other hand, anyone who has heard my words but not put them into practice is like the man who built his house on the ground without any foundation. When the torrent rushed upon it, it immediately fell in and was completely destroyed. (Lk. 6:47-49)

The virtues make up the foundation upon which our prayer life builds and grows, and meditation, especially on the Gospels, continuously strengthens and deepens that foundation.

Several years ago a meditation on this particular scripture passage prompted me to write the following statement that I will share with you now as we begin our discussion of humility. It is humility, our submission to the will of God, that sets the foundation for our faith. The degree to which we are willing to submit to our Father's will for us will determine how solid our foundation will be and just how strong a torrent our faith can withstand.

Jesus withstood the torrent of death itself because out of total love He submitted to the will of His Father. For St. Teresa humility is truth. It is the rock upon which our life of prayer is built. She says "The truly humble person must be content with the path along which God leads him." So in order to acquire humility we must strive constantly to align our wills with God's will for us. As we all know, being content with the path along which God leads us is not always so easy.

To help us understand this concept a little better St. Teresa in the *Way of Perfection* refers to the scripture story of Martha and Mary: She relates:

St. Martha was a saint, even though they do not say she was contemplative.

Well now, what more do you want than to be able to resemble this blessed woman who merited so often to have Christ our Lord in her home, give Him food, serve Him, and eat at table with Him? If she had been enraptured like the Magdalene there wouldn't have been anyone to give food to the Divine Guest. Well, think of this congregation as the home of St. Martha and that there must be people for every task. Let them recall that it is necessary for someone to prepare His meal and let them consider themselves lucky to serve with Martha. Let them consider how true humility consists very much in great readiness to be content with whatever the Lord may want to do with them and in always finding oneself unworthy to be called His servant. If contemplating, practicing mental and vocal prayer, taking care of the sick, helping with household chores, and working even at the lowliest tasks are all ways of serving the Guest who comes to be with us and eat and recreate, what difference does it make whether we serve in the one way or the other?

Thus as regards humility we must not only seek God's will for us, but to be properly disposed for prayer itself we must be content with the path He has chosen for us. If we approach our prayer in a spirit of humility God is then able to communicate to us the truth of who we are, opening us up to grow more into His image and what we are meant to be.

In the beginning when my prayer began to affect my life, I looked upon detachment solely in relation to persons or things of a material nature. Having a right attitude about the things I have was not too difficult because I knew they were God's gifts to me. In light of God's love for me, somehow, the material things I had did not seem as important as they had been before I began actually living in response to God's love.

Detachment from people and particularly persons close to us, family and friends, is not so easily understood or acquired, especially if many years have been spent building relationships on our own. It takes time with Jesus, time spent in meditation and study, reflection and just being with Him, in His presence often, for our friendship with Him to reach the point of complete abandonment and trust. When this happens a natural response is a rather confused feeling or fear that we have become less loving or sensitive to others in our life.

Knowing our dependence on God lessens our dependence on others and should actually free us to build even deeper, more loving and sensitive relationships. Susan Muto in *The Journey Homeward* expresses what I am trying to say here so much better when she quotes Saint John of the Cross and remarks:

In one of his Sayings of Light and Love, St. John states, 'If you purify your soul of attachment to and desire for things, you will understand them spiritually. If you deny your appetite for them, you will enjoy their truth, understanding what is certain in them.' He seems to say that if we detach ourselves from things for their own sake and from our desire to possess them as sources of ultimate

fulfillment, we will come to understand them spiritually, that is, as manifestations of God's creative Word. The benefit of detachment is better seeing. We become centered in God's truth as Creator instead of losing ourselves in the created. Centered in Him, we sense His presence in all things. The created leads us to Him instead of snatching us from Him.

We might also say that these same insights regarding detachment apply when speaking of things of a spiritual nature, special gifts from God or consolations. These things also are given to us by a God who wishes to draw us to Himself. However, concentration on or attachment to these gifts keep us from being united with Him.

St. John of the Cross in his *Maxims and Counsels* gives us this advice regarding detachment and a life of prayer:

Preserve a loving attentiveness to God with no desire to feel or understand any particular thing concerning him. Be interiorly detached from all things and do not seek pleasure in any temporal thing, and your soul will concentrate on goods you do not know. Love consists not in feeling great things but in having great detachment and in suffering for the Beloved. Detached from the exterior, dispossessed of the interior, disappropriated of the things of God—neither will prosperity detain you nor adversity hinder you. The soul that desires God to surrender Himself to it entirely must surrender itself entirely to Him without keeping anything for itself.

Although acquiring detachment as we have discussed it is a long and sometimes painful process, it is necessary if our love for God and neighbor is to grow. St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians tells us most beautifully about the virtue of love and its importance to living a life of prayer. "Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect." (Col. 3:12-14)

When St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians about love he says: "Now I will show you the way which surpasses all the others. If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries; if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Then St. Paul defines love for us. "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure." (1 Cor.

13:4-7)

Over and over again in the Gospels Jesus tells us of the importance of love of neighbor, be he our enemy or our friend. Not only does He tell us but His entire life becomes the example of how we should love one another, the ultimate example being His death, the total giving of His life out of love for us.

Our love of neighbor seems to grow as our love for God grows. St. Ignatius Loyola points out in the *Spiritual Exercises* that love is shown more in deeds than in words, and that genuine love involves a mutual exchange of gifts. Thus we will know that our prayer life is genuine and fruitful if we find ourselves sharing with others the love God gives to us, for Jesus has told us “Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me”; and “this is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another.” (Jn. 13:35)

It is certainly not difficult for us to understand that love of neighbor is a necessary virtue for us to have if our prayer is to be fruitful. Hurting relationships not only provide distractions in prayer but disturb the unity and inner peace necessary to pray effectively. St. John of the Cross in his *Sayings of Light and Love* tells us, “At the evening of life, you will be examined in love. Learn to love as God desires to be loved and abandon your own ways of acting.”

Jesus certainly knew that this kind of unconditional love would not be easy for us to acquire. This is why He speaks to us so often of forgiveness and calls us to share His life. And this is why, as was true with humility and detachment, and as St. Teresa has said, time spent with Christ in meditation is the best way of growing in all of these virtues.

In the scripture passage from St. Paul to the Corinthians, we learned that we can do all kinds of things that may be good but if they are done without love they are nothing. Earlier when discussing humility we learned how important it is for us to be content with the path God has chosen for us. Our attitudes about the things we do certainly affect the outcome and this is true when we pray as well. A person who fails to develop the attitudes of patience, gentleness and perseverance in respect to his prayer will not only fail to develop these virtues in other areas of his life but will probably not last long as a person of prayer either.

When most of us first realized the call to a life of prayer, the time spent in prayer itself was probably the high point of our day. Concern about proper attitudes for prayer probably never entered our minds because distractions were few and God's gentle presence made us wonder why some people even talked about having to persevere in prayer. It wasn't long, probably only a matter of months, before we began to realize that prayer, like loving, is not always a matter of good feelings.

When we first experience dryness in prayer our acceptance may not be the greatest. Maybe we're even tempted just to give up. These feelings are normal and admitting that we have them is probably the first step in acquiring the patience we need to go on.

As a piano teacher I experience a very similar pattern in the beginner students that I teach.

During the first few months of lessons the enthusiasm exhibited is terrific. Just being able to put a few notes together is so pleasing that having to encourage the students to practice is simply not necessary. Within a few months the initial enthusiasm begins to wane; maybe they're not progressing as fast as they would like to, or playing baseball takes up their practice time, or it just doesn't seem to be as much fun as it was previously.

So as a teacher I try to explain to them what is happening, I encourage them to practice some each day whether they feel like it or not and assure them that what they are currently experiencing is natural and not to give up.

Actually the role that I play as piano teacher is similar to the role that a spiritual director plays for one who is serious about his prayer. A spiritual director becomes a guide, someone to encourage me, someone to tell me when I'm off key, and this is especially important in the beginning of our prayer life.

Developing patience in prayer takes time and is a virtue not acquired all at once, but is one we grow in as our prayer matures. Some of the things in prayer that test patience are dryness, lack of consolation or feelings, distractions, an inability to meditate and accept just spending time being in God's presence.

These things are not placed in our prayer to hinder our progress but that can happen if we lose patience with ourselves and God when they are present. Once again I find myself thinking about St. Teresa's words that we must be content with the path along which God leads us. Reflecting on God's patience with us as His creation seems to help me at times when I find myself being tempted in this virtue. Also the patience Jesus displayed with the friends He loved so much and the Jewish religious leaders of His time encourages me to reach out to Him when I find my patience wearing thin.

As with the prerequisites for a life of prayer (humility, detachment and love of neighbor) the attitudes for prayer itself (patience, gentleness and perseverance) also affect one another and thus they grow together. For one to acquire patience in prayer a spirit of gentleness must be present. If we are hard on ourselves and make too many demands, expecting perfection before we're ready, we will easily become impatient with ourselves.

A gentle attitude helps us to see our weaknesses and accept them as God does. Anyone who has experienced God as Father in his prayer knows that our God is a gentle God. Although we say He is a God of power and might we also know that He does not rule us with an iron fist and never forces His will upon us. Instead He invites us through our prayer into a loving relationship with Him. The reason most of us have difficulty with acquiring a gentle attitude is that we do not love ourselves enough. We have a difficult time accepting ourselves as we are and this attitude is contrary to gentleness.

How did Jesus handle the people in His life who were uncomfortable with themselves: Mary Magdalene, who wept at His feet, the woman at the well, or Peter who denied knowing Him three times? Jesus' acceptance of these people as they were and the gentle way He entered

their lives changed each one of them. He does the same for each one of us every time we come to Him in prayer just as we are.

Lord,
You want me to learn from you
Gentleness of heart.
No matter how I fail you,
Your gentleness never fails me.
You are slow to anger;
Your kindness is without limit.
You tell me not to be distressed,
To make your gentleness my own
So that my soul may find rest.
Give me the wisdom to make time in my day
For a gentle nursing of my soul.
Free me from arrogance,
From goals too sublime for me.
Still and quiet my soul
As a mother quiets the little ones on her lap.
Free me from the need for achievement.
Make my life less forceful, more gentle,
Centered in you alone.
Let the splendor of your presence
Light up my everydayness.
Make me a smooth channel for the outflow
Of your Divine Will in this world.

In this prayer by Adrian Van Kaam in *Spirituality and the Gentle Life* we pray “Make our lives less forceful, more gentle, centered in you alone.” Forcefulness is another attitude that is destructive of gentleness. Sometimes as parents we have to decide whether we want our children to do a certain thing because it is what we want or because it is the right thing for them to do. In prayer if we force our way of praying on God, always telling Him this and asking for that, we fail to listen to what He has to say. A gentle presence in prayer is a listening presence that opens us to the revealing truth of God’s will for us.

If our prayer is sincere and a gentle spirit is acquired, the fruits of this transformation evidence themselves in our relationships with others. Acceptance of oneself and one’s weaknesses leads to this kind of attitude with others and thus we find ourselves loving people more for what they are instead of for what we would like for them to be, and learning how to love unconditionally begins to take root in us.

A year ago I attended a workshop entitled “Sacraments for Little People.” Those present spent the better part of an afternoon experiencing ways of making the sacraments more meaningful. At one point we were asked to write on a piece of paper one word that would describe a way in which we would like to change. The papers were collected and redistributed. We were asked to keep the paper we were given and pray for the person whose paper we had. For a long time I prayed for someone to grow in humility. On my paper I wrote “gentleness.” At the time I was not aware of all I was asking for. A year has passed and the Lord continues to show me ways to grow in this virtue.

Perseverance in prayer is certainly closely related to patience, for if we are lacking in patience we set limits on our perseverance. All of us experience, at some time or other in our life of prayer, the temptation to stop praying. Long periods of spiritual dryness, too much concentration on how we’re progressing or failing in a virtue we thought we had acquired, all lead to disappointment that if not channeled properly into a humble acceptance of our weaknesses can lead to a desire to give up our prayer.

Although all of us would like to attain the perfection the Little Flower did in just a few short years, for most of us a lifetime is needed for the transformation we seek. Jesus was thirty years old before He began His public life. I’m convinced He spent those years maturing in His spiritual life in much the same way we mature through our prayer. Time spent with the Father led Him to the knowledge of who He was. If this is true Jesus becomes the greatest witness to what real perseverance is. To live out His life in union with His Father’s will meant going contrary to the religious leadership of His day. Although he must have persevered in His prayer during those years in Nazareth, during His public life complete trust was certainly the fiber of His perseverance.

Both in the life of Jesus and His Mother, we know there were times when they didn’t understand all that was happening to them. Had they not trusted they would never have persevered, and it was their prayer that ingrained this trust. When we have reached the point in our spiritual life of experiencing dryness or other things we cannot fully understand, then we know we have begun to grow. God permits us to stand on our own two feet for a while, supported only by the faith that He has rooted so deeply within us. Actually what God is saying to us is that our love for one another has matured and grown enough to blossom forth in trust.

In order then to persevere in prayer we must accept all things that God sends our way in the same spirit of thankfulness and trust.

In conclusion I have only one suggestion -- that we continue to do everything in our power to build our friendship with the person of Jesus. Reading and reflecting on scripture and the spiritual masters, frequent reception of the sacraments, and building Christ-centered relationships are all ways to keep Him alive and growing in each one of us. If we concentrate on building our friendship with Jesus, I’m sure our heavenly Father will grant to us all the things we need to make that friendship perfect.

By Marilyn Zwick

History of the Order

The Order of Discalced Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (OCD) sprang from the 16th-century reform inaugurated by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. The Discalced Carmelites, whose mode of life was a return to the observance of the primitive Carmelite rule, had their origin in Spain, but soon spread to Italy, the rest of Europe, and the missionary lands.

Reform Movement. Five years after Teresa of Avila had successfully launched the reform of the Carmelite nuns, she obtained permission, in 1567, from the prior general of the Carmelite friars, Giovanni Battista Rossi (1507-88), for the foundation of two monasteries of men who would follow the primitive rule. She acquired a small piece of property at Duruelo, a place equidistant between the Spanish towns of Salamanca and Avila, and there on Nov. 28, 1568, the first monastery was officially started. The original community comprised only three members: Joseph of Christ, a deacon; Anthony of Jesus, who had resigned as prior of the Carmelite monastery at Medina del Campo to become the new prior at Duruelo; and John of the Cross, then a young priest ordained

only a year previously. Soon new members joined the reform in great numbers; some came from the Carmelite Order itself, while others were new recruits. Under the sponsorship of Philip II, king of Spain, the Discalced Carmelites enjoyed an instant popularity and new monasteries were rapidly founded. By the time of Teresa's death (1582), there were 15 monasteries.

Teresa of Avila's purpose in sponsoring the reform of the Carmelite friars was to reestablish Carmelite objectives and disciplines that had become weakened over the 2 preceding centuries. The official mitigations in the rule allowed by Eugene IV in 1432, as well as the other unofficial mitigations of the pre-Tridentine era, were eliminated. Perpetual abstinence from meat and the yearly fast from September 14 to Easter were reinstated, and more time was given to the exercises of the spiritual life, particularly mental prayer. Members of the reform were originally called Contemplative Carmelites, but soon became known as Discalced Carmelites, because of their custom of wearing sandals. The older group hence came to be known, by way of contrast, as the Calced Carmelites.

Despite its rapid development, the reform movement was involved in severe difficulties at the outset. The initial permission for the reformed monasteries was granted by the prior general on the condition that the new monasteries be founded only in the province of Castile in Spain and that the whole reform movement remain within the original Carmelite Order. The movement remain within the original Carmelite Order. The discalced, however, began to found monasteries outside Castile, and there developed a desire to separate themselves from the original order. The difficulty between the calced and the discalced was based on the dual ecclesiastical jurisdiction that regulated the activities of the reform. Philip II, intensely interested in the regulation of the religious orders of Spain, had obtained from the Holy See apostolic visitors for the various orders. The visitors appointed for the Carmelites, Pedro Fernández de Recalde (d. 1580) and Francisco Vargas, both Dominicans, possessed more authority over the order than the general himself. The difficulty was compounded in 1573 when Vargas delegated his faculties to a young Discalced Carmelite priest, Jerome Gratian. In 1574 Gratian received even wider

faculties from the Apostolic Nuncio, Niccolò Ormaneto (d. 1577). In this peculiar jurisdictional arrangement, the discalced made new foundations with permission granted by Gratian. Primitive systems of communication and the uncertainty of both parties regarding the exact nature of Gratian's faculties produced a tense struggle.

At the general chapter conducted at Piacenza, Italy, in 1575, stern measures were adopted to curtail the activities of the discalced and limit them to a few monasteries in Castile. It was during the execution of these decrees that John of the Cross was apprehended by the calced friars in 1577 and imprisoned by them for 8 months in the monastery at Toledo. Ultimately, through the mediation of Philip II and the apostolic nuncio, the difficulties were settled, and the discalced were established as a separate province within the order in 1581. Finally, on Dec. 20, 1593, Clement VIII established the Discalced Carmelites as an independent religious order with their own superior general and administration.

Expansion and Subsequent History. In 1582 the discalced friars sent their first missionaries to the Congo, but the entire expedition was lost at sea. A second group suffered the same tragic consequences, but finally a third group reached the Congo successfully. The Spanish discalced, however, were not enthusiastic about the spread of the order beyond the confines of Spain. The worldwide expansion of the order thus fell to the Italian branch. Monasteries of the reform had already been founded in Genoa, Venice, and Rome, when Clement VIII in 1600 separated the three monasteries and their 30 priests from the Spanish Carmelites, thus creating two separate congregations within the reform, Spanish and Italian, a division that lasted until 1875. From the Italian group the reform spread throughout Europe in the early 17th century—to Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and even to missions in England.

Thomas of Jesus (Díaz Sánchez de Avila), whose work influenced the establishment of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, promoted missionary activity among the discalced. One of their more important mission endeavors was

in Persia. In Sumatra two Discalced Carmelites, Bl. Dionysius of the Nativity and Bl. Redemptus of the Cross, suffered martyrdom (1638). Prosper of the Holy Spirit led a small group to Palestine (1634) and reoccupied Mt. Carmel, the ancient seat of the order, which had not been inhabited by Carmelites since their expulsion by the Saracens in 1291. The monastery newly reconstructed there was twice destroyed by the Turks in 1720 and 1821. The present monastery on Mt. Carmel, completed in 1853, houses the international school of philosophy for the order. The superior general who resides at Rome, is, according to the legislation of the order, the prior of the monastery on Mt. Carmel.

The European provinces of the order were largely destroyed during the revolutions and suppressions of the 18th and 19th centuries. The restoration of the provinces took place after the middle of the 19th century, and in 1875 Leo XIII united the Spanish and Italian congregations. A new missionary movement ultimately brought Discalced Carmelites to the Orient, South America, and the U.S. In 1907 there was founded in Rome the College of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, an international house of theology for members of the order; in 1957 the Institute of Spiritual Theology was established there. Three outstanding churchmen came from the ranks of the Discalced Carmelites during the 20th century: Cardinal Giuseppe Goti, who served as prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith under Pius X; Cardinal Raffaele C. Rossi, who was secretary of the Congregation of the Sisters; and Cardinal Adeodato Piazza, who later occupied the same post.

The first permanent foundation in the U.S. was made at Holy Hill, Wis., in 1906 by friars from the Bavarian province. In 1916 friars from the province of Catalonia founded a monastery in Washington, D.C. These two groups were united in 1940, and 7 years later the monasteries of this union were established canonically as the Province of the Immaculate Heart, which now has monasteries in the states of New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. This province has missions also in the

Philippine Islands, where it staffs the Diocese of Infanta on the island of Luzon. In 1915 Spanish friars exiled from Mexico established themselves in Oklahoma, and ultimately made additional foundations in Texas and Arkansas. These monasteries of the southwestern section of the U.S. were constituted as the Province of St. Therese (1947). Since 1925 friars from the Irish province have staffed four monasteries in California.

Carmelite Way of Life. The daily life of the Discalced Carmelite combines prayer and apostolic activity. The Divine Office is recited in common, and 2 hours are devoted to meditation each day, 1 in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Silence is maintained in the cloisters throughout the day, except for an hour of recreation in the afternoon and an extra hour in the evening during the summer. The friar lives in a cell, a small room containing only a simple desk and bed made of planks. Apostolic activities, such as preaching, administration of the Sacraments, and spiritual direction, are undertaken insofar as they are considered conformable to the contemplative ideal of the order. Discalced Carmelites teach their own friars who are studying for the priesthood but do not conduct schools for lay people. The order has always considered itself the custodian of the writings and doctrine of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, and the 4 centuries of its existence has witnessed a large production of books and periodicals concerning spiritual theology.

One of the early institutions of the order was the "desert," a monastery of complete eremitical life where the friars could retire for a year at a time to engage in a life of solitude and silence. The first desert was founded by Thomas of Jesus at Bolargue in Spain (1592). The deserts were destroyed during the revolutions, but a number have since been rebuilt. In 1964 there were four deserts in the order; at Roquebrune, near Nice in France; at La Reigada, in Navarre; at Las Batuecas, in Castile, and the most recent, near Florence, in Italy. Friars of any province may, with permission of the superior general, spend a year in one of these deserts. The census of the order of

1961 showed there were 361 monasteries grouped in 28 provinces. The total membership in 1964 was more than 4,000.

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Carmelite Nuns, Discalced (DC). Founded in Spain in the 16th century by St. Teresa of Avila, the Discalced Carmelite nuns are probably the best-known of all cloistered orders of women. From the original foundation at Avila, this branch of the Carmelite reform movement spread throughout the world, and has numbered in its ranks many illustrious members.

Teresa of Avila entered the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation at Avila in 1533, but 20 years passed before she embarked on a completely generous program of spiritual living. As part of her own plan for a more dedicated life, she petitioned her superiors for permission to establish a single convent where a few nuns could follow the primitive Carmelite Rule and eliminate some of the abuses then existing at the Incarnation convent. There was much resistance and reluctance on the part of her own Carmelite superiors, the local ecclesiastical authorities, and the townspeople who feared that another convent would prove a financial burden to the area. But finally, on Aug. 24, 1562, Teresa and three others nuns occupied a small stucco building in Avila, which became known as the convent of St. Joseph. During her difficulties before, and following, the foundation at Avila, she was greatly aided by the Franciscan Peter of Alcantara and the Dominican Pedro Ibáñez (d. 1565). Teresa originally intended to found only one convent, but her private revelations and the requests of bishops in Spain encouraged her to establish additional convents for cloistered Carmelite nuns. She spent the remainder of her life traveling through Spain organizing these convents, 15 of which

she had founded by the time of her death in 1582. In 1600 there were 47 convents of Discalced Carmelite nuns.

Anne of Jesus was the dominant personality among the nuns after Teresa's death, and it was she who established the first foundation in the Low Countries at Brussels. Bl. Anne of St. Bartholomew is credited with having saved the city of Antwerp by her prayers during the siege of 1622. Barbe Acarie (1566-1618), a noblewoman and mother of six children, introduced the nuns into France in 1604. She herself entered one of the convents in 1614, after her husband's death. Adopting the name of Mary of the Incarnation, she died after only 4 years in the convent of Pontoise, and was beatified in 1791.

In the 18th century, the order was distinguished by Bl. Mary of the Angels, daughter of a noted Italian family, who died at the Carmel of Turin in 1717; St. Teresa Margaret, who died at the age of 22 at the Carmel of Florence; and the 16 nuns from the Carmel of Compiègne who were guillotined during the French Revolution in 1794, and beatified by Pius X in 1906. The 19th-century Carmelite from the French province of Normandy, St. Thérèse de Lisieux, added new luster to her order. Her memoirs, published after her death, became a best-seller in spiritual literature, and Pius XI called her the greatest saint of modern times. A contemporary of Thérèse, a young French nun from the Carmel of Dijon, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, has also attracted considerable attention by her writings.

The first Discalced Carmelite convent in the U.S. was founded at Port Tobacco, Md., in 1790, by a group of nuns from the Carmel of Antwerp. This was also the first foundation of female religious in the original 13 colonies. In 1830 the Port Tobacco community moved to permanent quarters in Baltimore, Md. By 1964 there were 64 convents in the U.S. The Discalced Carmelite nuns have foundations in every part of the world, and the 1961 census of the order registered 727 convents, with a total membership of more than 15,000 nuns.

The life and work of the Carmelite nun is exclusively one of prayer and penance. There is no active apostolate, since the nuns dedicate themselves to praying for the work of the Church and for the sanctification of priests. Perpetual abstinence is ob-

served, as well as a yearly fast from September 14 until Easter. The Divine Office is recited in choir each day, and two hours are devoted daily to formal meditation. The nuns are cloistered; they speak to visitors only through a grillwork in the convent parlor. A nun remains all her life in the convent she first enters, except when she is sent to join a newly established convent.

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Carmel and Our Lady

In the Church's calendar three of our Lady's days are named for places sacred to the memory of Mary. One is Lourdes (Feb. 11), another is Saint Mary Major (Aug. 5, dedication of the principal Roman Church in the Blessed Virgin's honor), and the third is Carmel, the site in the Holy Land forever associated with Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16).

Like Cana, like Calvary, Carmel is more than merely the name for a part of Palestine. Cana and Calvary bring to mind Christ's love for his human brothers and sisters, and are reminders also that the Mother of Jesus was there on both occasions. In the Old Testament the mount of Carmel was already much more than the name of a verdant promontory overlooking the sea ("the beauty of Carmel" Is 33, 2), it was a holy place sanctified by the memory of Elijah and his followers, men of prayer who fought for the rights of the true God nine hundred years before Christ. Christian writers and the liturgy would interpret Elijah's vision of the cloud rising from the Mediterranean sea, presage of the end of a terrible drought, as a symbol of the Virgin Mary whose Son would be the Messiah and Savior (1 Kgs 18, 42-45, and the first reading for the Carmelite proper Mass for July 16th).

Carmelite Origins

After the days of Elijah and Elisha other hermits lived sporadically on the slopes of Carmel seeking solitary lives of prayer, a custom that continued into the Christian era. In the twelfth century, after the 2nd crusade (A.D. 1147-49), a group of Westerners, Latin hermits from Europe, settled on Carmel and began a simple form of religious life. Saint Albert, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem who was then resident at Acre, gave them a rule early in the 1200's. Their life was centered on God: day and night meditating on the law of the Lord and watching in prayer, so read the Rule of Saint Albert, which the Holy See approved in 1226. The Carmelite calendar commemorates Saint Albert of Jerusalem, the Lawgiver of Carmel, on Sept. 17th.

Along with the austere figure of Elijah the hermits looked for inspiration to the Mother of Jesus. Saint Albert's Rule called for an oratory to be built in the middle of the hermits' cells. Pilgrim accounts testify to the existence of such a chapel dedicated to the "lady of the place," Our Lady of Mount Carmel. What doctrine touching Mary was especially recalled by the Carmelite oratory? It was likely her motherhood of the Son of God; a frequent title of the time was *Virgo Dei Genitrix* (Virgin Mother of God). A strong sense of the mystery of the Incarnation suited the land of the Savior's birth and, along the same lines, later Carmelites would venerate not only Saint Joseph but also Saints Joachim and Anne. From the initial oratory of Mount Carmel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Carmelites derived the custom of dedicating their chapels and churches to our Lady.

As the Latin kingdom of the Crusaders crumbled before the Saracens, the newly formed religious family returned to the West, to the countries they had come from - Italy, France, England and others. Such foundations began as early as the 1230's, and by the time of the Second Council of Lyons (A.D. 1274), when the existence of the group was in grave danger, its members were defending the title of "Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel."

The Carmelites have never claimed a specific historical founder, such as Saint Francis or Saint Dominic, or Saint Ignatius Loyola of a later date. They honored Saint Elijah, zealous man of prayer and activity in the Hebrew Bible, as a model and spiritual father, and claimed a special kinship with the Mother of God as the special patroness of their Order, the Lady in whose honor the family of Carmel was brought into being, and who watches over and protects her Carmelite sons and daughters with constant loving care. Early documents make it clear that the Carmelites of the thirteenth century considered themselves particularly dedicated to the Mother of God under the title Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Patronage of Mary

To medieval people, "patronage" was an accepted reality: vassals would express belonging to their patron not by words alone but by a gesture of dedication, placing their hands in his. The hermits of Carmel "dedicated" their oratory to the Virgin Mother of God, as her exclusive patrimony. They regarded themselves as bound feudal style to the "Lady of the place," under whose patronage they carried on their religious lives. Patronage involved two persons, with mutual rights and duties for both parties. The lord undertook to protect his subject, who in turn promised to serve him. Formulas of religious profession, in word and gesture, still reflect the medieval background of the ceremony of homage by which the vassal gave himself to the service of the lord his patron and was promised protection in return. The religious still places his hands in those of the superior, pledging fidelity to his vows until death. In the Carmelite profession the dedication is to God and to the Virgin Mary.

In 1282 the prior general, Peter of Millau, wrote King Edward I of England, seeking royal protection and promising prayers to "the most glorious Virgin ... to whose praise and glory the Order itself was specially instituted in parts beyond the sea." The general chapter at Montpellier, A.D. 1287, requested "the prayers of the glorious Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, in whose service and honor our institute of Mount Carmel was founded." By 1294 the Constitutions could direct that "whenever anyone asks about our Order and its name, the name of the Blessed Virgin is to be given it." Papal documents read in the same manner, e.g., a bull of Clement V (1305-14): "Your holy Order, divinely instituted in honor of blessed Mary, the glorious Virgin . . ." Indulgences were granted for using the Marian name of the Order, and in 1379 the Holy See approved and indulgenced that title.

Along with giving a religious sense to the secular custom of patronage, and taking Mary as the "patroness" of her servants, Carmelites regarded the Mother of Jesus as their spiritual

mother and as the “sister” they imitated in their own lives of faith and prayer. The English Carmelite theologian, John Baconthorpe (d. 1348), famous among other things for his defense of the Immaculate Conception, wrote a short commentary on the Carmelite Rule as a word-picture of our Lady’s own life. Other fourteenth century documents call Mary “Mother of our Order of Carmel.”

Considering Mary as “sister,” an approach that is becoming fairly frequent again in current Catholic consideration, was a way of regarding the Blessed Virgin as the great example of doing God’s will in all things. For Carmel there was a sense of intimacy between the “brothers of our lady of Mount Carmel” and Mary their “sister.”

One cherished point of resemblance was Mary’s virginity as imitated by the consecrated chastity of her Carmelite brothers. A later age would hold chastity according to one’s state of life as one of the requirements for the ‘Sabbatine privilege’ of the Scapular. In effect this was asking of the wearer of the Scapular a virtuous life, making the Scapular a meaningful sign of Christian living.

A fifteenth century writer added to the record of a general chapter the axiom, “Keep Mary in mind and Jesus will grow in your heart.” A book composed in the late 1300s reflects the fundamental Carmelite spirituality and our Lady’s role as model; it is known as the *Book of the First Monks* or also as *John Forty Fourth*. In following the Rule of St. Albert the Carmelite is living like Mary; imitation is the keynote. The mantle of Carmel, the white cloak which gave the name Whitefriars to Carmelites, is a symbol of the purity of Mary.

Arnold Bostius, Voice of Carmel

The great fifteenth-century exponent of Carmelite outlook on our Lady is Arnold Bostius of Ghent, Belgium (d. 1499). His book, written in 1479, synthesizes the traditions of the Order: *Of the Patronage and the exercise of that patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary toward the Order that Bears her Name*. A. Bostius was ranked by a later chronicler as “among the first fruits of the reform of Blessed Soreth, from whom he absorbed an outstanding piety toward the holy Virgin Mary.” Blessed John Soreth, of the province of France (to which Ghent belonged), was superior of the entire Order, 1451-71. Bostius wrote his biography. Soreth was the founder of the cloistered nuns.

In one of his exhortations this holy man wrote, “Let the word of God abound on your lips, be found on your lips, in your mouth, by preaching, and in your heart by meditating; just as the holy Virgin Mary, the patroness of our Order, kept all the words of God, pondering them in her heart, so must God’s word flourish in your heart through contemplation and on your lips through preaching.”

A friend of the Ghent community had put the question: “How has Mary shown her patronage to the Carmelite Order?” At the prior’s request Arnold Bostius supplied the answer.

He followed an historical pattern, tracing the bond between Mary and her Brothers of Carmel. He began with Elijah the prophet of Carmel and traced the story through the “sons of the prophets” into the Christian era and up to his own century. Legends dealing with pre-Christian and early Christian dwellers on Carmel were very dear to medieval Carmelites.

Closer to his own day Bostius takes up actual events, and regards Mary as presiding at the growth of Carmelite life, also as counseling migration to Europe. He writes of saintly Carmelite servants of Mary, such as Saint Andrew Corsini (d. 1374), Saint Peter Thomas (d. 1366) and others.

In the Carmelite Chapel of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (Washington, D.C.) Our Lady of Mount Carmel is shown surrounded by saints of her Order: Saint Simon Stock (d. 1265), Saint Teresa of Avila (d. 1582), Saint John of the Cross (d. 1591), Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face (d. 1897), Saint Andrew Corsini (d. 1374) and Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi (d. 1607). The feast of All Carmelite Saints (November 14) sounds the same theme of the Carmelite “cloud of witnesses” who surround us on our own pilgrimage of faith (entrance prayer).

Spiritual Mother

More important than his sometimes shaky history is Bostius’ theological consideration that Mary is mother in the order of grace, and hence we have the privilege and obligation to imitate her and give her loyal service and filial love. “Blessed be God,” he wrote, “who chose for himself such a mother, not a woman of proud heart, of harsh and impatient spirit, but a woman indescribably gentle, humble, tender, able to sympathize with the suffering and to adapt herself to everyone, a woman he knew in advance would be suitable for our needs . . .”

There was great interest in the Belgium of Bostius’ time in Our Lady of Sorrows; it was common to describe her compassion on Calvary as the spiritual child-bearing of the brothers and sisters of Christ, a thought Bostius applies particularly to Carmel: “She is the loving mother of all Christians, making herself all things to all, open in mercy to all ... the exalted queen of heaven ... the universal mother of all Christians, the common harbor and refuge of all men ... the mother whom no one invokes in vain ... the lovable mother of Christian salvation ...”

We are “the little children whom this mother bore unto Christ through the Gospel, to whom she has given birth again and again, until Christ is inseparably joined to them, until they are associated to Christ in heaven.” “We know from experience of her mercy, and we know it is not contrary to justice . . . she is called the sealed fountain. For that fountain of mercy is so exuberant its mercies never cease, and yet the seal of justice remains unbroken, for she knows how to show mercy without violating justice.”

The Carmelite vocation is basically *vacare Deo* (a rough translation is ‘to be at rest in God’ or ‘to contemplate God’). Bostius adds thereto the traditional Marian emphasis: “to be caught up daily in the praises of Mary” (*Mariae laudibus quotidie vacare*).

The Scapular

Writing of the Scapular, a devotion very popular among lay people at the end of the fifteenth century, Bostius recounts the familiar story and combines a careful understanding of Mary's spiritual motherhood with his sense of the bond between Mary and Carmel. The Scapular, given to Saint Simon Stock in the thirteenth century at a time of crisis for the Order, is a sign of relationship to the Blessed Virgin.

It is a garment given us by our Mother, a gift for our spiritual good. It requires a reciprocal love on the part of the wearer: to invoke Mary in all needs, to contemplate her life and virtues, to live in continual dependence on her, to imitate her. "Happy are they who receive the gifts of Mary with tenderness in the embrace of mutual spiritual love. Knowing they have been chosen by her for so great an inheritance, seeing this habit they will remember with joy the love of predilection with which the most lovable giver surrounds them."

"Oh heavenly mystery, equally admirable to hear and to relate: the Queen of mercy, who by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit clothed the Eternal Word with her own flesh for the redemption of the world, now, with the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, rewards with her own garment the Carmelites who spread the divine word for the reconciliation of the world," Bostius says.

The beloved medieval hymn associated with Saint Simon Stock and the Scapular of Carmel is the *Flos Carmeli*; it has often been set to music, in gregorian chant and other forms.

Flower of Carmel,
Vine blossom-laden,
Spendor of heaven,
Child-bearing maiden,
None equals thee.
O Mother benign,
Who no man didst know,
On all Carmel's children
Thy favors bestow
Star of the sea.

Writing of devotion to Mary in the late medieval period the Dutch Carmelite Titus Brandsma called attention to Carmelite interest in the central mystery of God's becoming man: "The contemplation of this mystery has led to a twofold devotion to Mary, which we had better describe as an imitation of Mary, gradually deepening into a closer union with her. We may see the same in the Imitation of Christ in the 14th and 15th centuries, which matured in the 16th century into a close union with Christ. One should not think of the imitation without thinking of the union, nor of the union without the thought of the imitation. Both flow into each other . . ."

Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross

The deep devotion of Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross to Our Lady of Mount Carmel deserves to be better known. **As we complete the fourth centenary of the death of Saint Teresa (d. 1582) we are achieving a new sensitivity to the importance of experience in Christianity; we are appreciating more and more the role of the mystics in understanding the truths of the faith.** When Pope Paul VI named Saint Teresa a Doctor of the Universal Church in 1970, he spoke of the action of the Holy Spirit in her life and praised her gift of discernment. At her own mother's early death Teresa took Mary for her mother. Her life records special interventions of our Lady, such as seeing Mary one evening after Compline with her white mantle protecting all present; and at the Incarnation convent seeing not the statue but Mary herself in the stall of the prioress at the singing of the Salve Regina.

Saint Teresa regarded our Lady as the mother in all her foundations, and gave high place to liturgical feasts of the Blessed Virgin. In many respects Saint Teresa shared the attitudes of our Lady: the Virgin Mary overshadowed by the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation and her heart transfixed with sorrow on Calvary in the dark night of the absence of her Son. Saint Teresa shared Mary's exultation in the Magnificat and she loved to say over and over, "My soul magnifies the Lord."

In begging the permission of the Father General for monasteries of friars as well as convents of women, Saint Teresa appealed to Father Rossi's love of the Virgin, writing of the great "service it would be to our Lady to whom he was most devoted. It must have been she who brought it about." At a time when the foundations in Andalusia were in danger, Saint Teresa wrote Father Rossi (June 18, 1576), ". . . like a true father, forget the past, and remember that you are a servant of the Virgin, and that she will be offended if you cease to help those who, by the sweat of their brow, seek the increase of the Order."

The same Father Rossi was most anxious to establish Carmel in the New World; he wrote in patents of 1570: "moved and led by a great desire to the honor of the divine Majesty and the ornament and splendor of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mistress of this our Order of Mount Carmel."

Saint John of the Cross entered Carmel through love of the Blessed Virgin. He saw Mary as the great exemplar, the perfect model of the way to God. Typically, Saint John went to the root of Mary's holiness, her docility to the internal action of the Holy Spirit. According to him, Mary acted always under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. "So it was with the Glorious Mother of God. Perfect from the first, there was no impression of created things on her soul to turn her aside from God or in any way to influence her; for her every movement ever proceeded from the Holy Spirit" (*The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*).

The Reform led to the juridical separation of the Discalced Carmelites, but both branches of the Carmelite family retained and developed their common patrimony of devotion to our Lady. In the recently published English translation of the proper Sacramentary and proper Lectionary,

a collaborative effort, both Orders share almost all the feasts, including of course those of our Lady.

Touraine and Marie Petyt

In the seventeenth century the old branch of the Carmelites was revitalized by the Reform of Touraine that gradually spread through most of the Order, leading to the Constitutions now in use and also to the rule used by the lay Carmelite Order of our Lady of Mount Carmel (the new name for the old Third Order Secular, corresponding to the term 'Secular Carmelites' or OCDS).

The spiritual writers of the Reform of Touraine wrote often about our Lady and the values of the Scapular devotion. A laywoman attached to Carmel, Marie Petyt (Marie of Saint Thérèse) (d. 1677), directed by the Belgian Father Michael of St. Augustine Ballaert, O.Carm. (d. 1684), had a most remarkable sense of mystical union with Mary, always in perfect harmony with the central position of Christ. She wrote, "Mary becomes a means and a firmer bond, tying and uniting the soul to God.'

Here are some of Marie Petyt's insights, further enriching the heritage of Carmel about our Lady. "May the soul of Mary be in each one of us, and may Mary's spirit be in us all, that it may exult in God its Savior ... may Mary's spirit be in us all, that by that spirit we may live. May her spirit abide in us, itself accomplishing our works, thus itself making us able to live by it." "Just as in the hearts of the Sons of God the spirit of Jesus cries Abba, Father, so also in those same hearts it must cry Ave Maria." "In Christ Jesus Mary has begotten you, nourished you, given you growth. She is the Mother of fair love and holy hope, in whom will come to you all the graces necessary for perseverance in true piety. Nay, she will serve you as a well of living waters. She will not disdain either in the hour of your death to say that she is your sister, even your Mother, that then all may be well for you and that your soul should owe its life to her."

How God-centered this Carmelite Marian spirituality was appears in these words: "Our love will then flow, as it were, from God to Mary and from Mary back to God." The Holy Spirit brings us an overflow of divine love, which is then directed toward Mary only to return again from her to God. "The soul, carried toward Mary on the flood-waters of divine love, draws Mary with it and returns to God, without medium or hindrance of any kind." "Let us make this our solid conviction: when we live, we live for Mary, our Queen and Mother; when we die, we die for Mary, our Lady and Mother; because, whether we live or die, we are her children. I seem to hear her voice: you may have many foster-mothers, many guardians, she says, but you have not many mothers-in Christ Jesus I have begotten you."

She appeals to the example of Jesus himself: "... just as this Spirit (Gal. 4,6) produced in Jesus a filial love for his eternal Father, so it also produced in him a filial affection for his most dear Mother, and this it will continue to do for all eternity. Is it any wonder, therefore, if the Spirit of Jesus which in the hearts of the children of God cries Abba, Father (that is, produces

love for the Father of Jesus), also cries from those same hearts, Ave, Mater (that is, produces filial and reverential love and affection for Mary) even as happened in Jesus himself during his lifetime and happens now in heaven?" And this concluding quotation: "May he bring this life to perfection in us, he who, through the intercession of his dear Mother, has inspired us with the desire for it: Jesus, blessed forever. Amen."

The Modern Carmelite and the Church's Teaching on Mary

What should be the attitude of the modern Carmelite toward our Lady? Much has happened in recent years: the Church teaches the same doctrines about the Blessed Virgin it always has, but there has been all the same a significant change of direction in the Church's approach to her. For a century and more there was an enormous outpouring of interest in the Blessed Virgin among Catholics, and this was encouraged by official teaching.

We recall the solemn definitions of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX in 1854, the Assumption by Pope Pius XII in 1950; the many rosary letters of Pope Leo XIII; the encyclical on Mary's spiritual motherhood of St. Pius X (1904); the many manifestations of Marian piety during the long pontificate of Pius XII: the Marian Year (1954), the Lourdes centenary (1958) and many other events. Pope John XXIII continued the pattern of Pius XII; his writings and speeches were filled with mentions of Mary.

The Second Vatican Council issued the most complete statement about our Lady that any ecumenical council ever published, in the concluding eighth chapter of the dogmatic constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, third session, Nov. 21, 1964): "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church."

In the first document of the Council, on the liturgy' (2nd session, 1963) the Council Fathers had already expressed with great clarity the inseparable place the Mother of Jesus holds in her Son's saving work and hence in the Church's worship, as Mother of Christ and perfect model of the Church. The change of direction was a recaptured emphasis on the biblical and early Christian approaches to our Lady, not simply in terms of her privileges but seeing those very privileges as the perfect illustrations of God's plan of mercy for all his people. The Church regards the "Mother of Jesus" of Bethlehem and the Upper room, the "woman" of Cana and Calvary and the Apocalypse, as the great model of the Church, daughter of the Church even before she is Mother of the Church.

However, in the soul-searching that followed the Council it seemed to some that the Church had somehow strangely reversed itself with regard to our Lady. There was an embarrassed silence about her. Thank God, the Church is recovering from this difficult period, and has learned from the suffering and upset the neglected lesson of the Council, that full attention must be given to prayer and contemplation. Authentic devotion to Mary cannot thrive, or even finally survive, in the distracting atmosphere of constant frenetic activity, or secular humanism wearing an apostolic mask. Carmel has learned the same lesson from the post-conciliar troubles.

We have attempted in this essay to present some historical high points of Carmelite devotion to Mary. These great events remain our family treasures and we derive strength and encouragement from recalling them. At the same time, as sons and daughters of the living Church, Carmelites should excel in loyalty to the Church's present teachings about our Lady and in putting into practice the forms of piety recommended by the Council, the Popes and the Bishops. Pope John Paul II continued the Marian teaching of his predecessors, particularly as a pilgrim to our Lady's shrines all over the world, in his native Poland, Guadalupe in Mexico, Knock in Ireland, and the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

The too-little-known statements of the Second Vatican Council merit our careful attention and reflection: they offer a beautiful and well-balanced picture of Mary's role in our spiritual life, especially as our spiritual mother, an approach congenial to the whole Marian story of Carmel.

"Mother of God" is the title by which Mary has been honored in the eucharistic liturgies of East and West since the fourth century, even before the Council of Ephesus defined this truth in 431. The Second Vatican Council stated with crystal clarity Mary's place in the mysteries of Christ celebrated in the liturgy (numbers 102 and 103 of the liturgy constitution). The bishops of the United States issued on Nov. 21, 1973, a joint pastoral explanatory of the Council's teaching, with application to all Christian vocations: *Behold Your Mother, Woman of Faith*.

Pope Paul VI gave the Church a major letter on devotion to Mary, written expressly to allay fears that the Church had pulled back on its commitment to the Mother of the Lord, *Marialis cultus* (Feb. 2, 1974). The letter, which is the Marian testament of Paul VI to the Church, presents in simple language, with many compelling examples, the place of Mary in the revised Western liturgy. One example is the strong sense of Mary as model of the Church in the new prefaces for December 8 (the Immaculate Conception) and August 15 (the Assumption). There is also a section on the Rosary and the Angelus, popular nonliturgical prayers.

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus

There is cause for great gratitude to the Holy Spirit for an enriched understanding of Mary, Mother of God, and our Blessed Mother. A constant stream of first-rate scriptural studies on the Virgin Mary is being published, and Protestant as well as Catholic scholars are writing about the Gospel portrayal of Mary as the woman of faith. At the end of the last century Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, without the benefit of a special education in Bible study, but guided by the Holy Spirit in the way of prayer, made the same discovery of the Mother of Jesus as the woman who walked by faith. Our Lady of Mount Carmel held a prominent place in the life of Saint Thérèse, and is mentioned frequently in her writings. "Who could ever have invented the Blessed Virgin Mary?" she said near the end of her short life.

In Saint Thérèse's judgment it was wrong to think that from the moment of Simeon's prophecy the shadow of the cross hung over Mary's heart. Rather she was ready for Calvary not

because God had opened up the future to her but because she accepted his mysterious and loving will day by day in the obscurity of faith. Her words, “Mary is more mother than queen,” are often quoted, and the excellent studies on the spirituality of Saint Thérèse that continue to appear also explore her profound appreciation of the place of Mary in Carmel.

Edith Stein O.C.D., and Titus Brandsma O.Carm.

The ancient vine of Carmel flowers still, as two Carmelite contemporaries have shown us. In the horror of the concentration camps both met their deaths as witnesses to Christ. One was the brilliant convert philosopher, Edith Stein, who became a Catholic in Germany in 1922 and who entered the cloistered Carmel of Cologne in 1933 as Sister Benedicta of the Cross, O.C.D. She was transferred to the Netherlands in hope of saving her from the Nazi persecution of the Jews, but in vain. She died at Auschwitz, August 10(?), 1944. She was canonized by Pope John Paul in 2006. Our Lady is mentioned often in her writings. With reference to the spirituality of women she said that though not all need enter religious life all must “in every way become the handmaids of the Lord, after the example of the Mother of God.” Shortly before entering the convent she wrote, “There is a vocation which consists in suffering with Christ and thus in his redemptive work. If we are united to the Lord, we are members of his Mystical Body. Christ continues to live and suffer in his members, and suffering endured in union with him becomes his, made efficacious and united in his great redemptive work. The essence of the religious life, especially the Carmelite life, is to intercede for sinners and cooperate in the redemption of the world by voluntary and joyous suffering.”

The other contemporary is Father Titus Brandsma, O.Carm. A renowned authority on the medieval spirituality of the Low Countries, once Rector of the University of Nijmegen and organizer of a Marian Congress in the Netherlands, he was active also in the flourishing Dutch Catholic Press before the war. As spokesman for the Bishops in resisting Nazi attempts to use the Catholic papers for propaganda purposes, Father Brandsma was arrested and sent to Dachau, where he suffered much and died on July 26, 1942. His cause has been introduced. His writings and apostolic activities frequently included our Lady and in his papers after his death were found these words from a retreat just before the outbreak of the war: “Let us prepare ourselves. Union with Jesus promises suffering. It was because of Mary’s most intimate union with Jesus that the greatest suffering struck her. We follow Mary who shows us the way to understanding, and to share in the sacrifice of Jesus; and then to resurrection and ascension; we have deserved it. God has let us deserve it. Our place is reserved! We will not let it slip from our grasp. We will say to Mary, “Keep my place for me. I am coming!”

In the new proper preface for the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel on July 16, we recall Mary’s motherly patronage, guiding us gently to the mount of Carmel, even as she has done for our Carmelite spiritual ancestors for eight centuries. We address the Father in the liturgical preface: “Father ... your Word filled her heart, and inspired all her actions, making her constant in prayer with the Apostles, and through her share in our salvation constituting her the spiritual

mother of all mankind. She watches unceasingly with a mother's loving care over the brethren of her Son, and lights us along our pilgrim way to the Mount of your Glory, our beacon of comfort, and the embodiment of all our hopes as members of the Church."

The entrance antiphon for the votive Mass of our Lady of Mount Carmel puts on Mary's lips these words from the psalms (Ps. 33, 12, also Isaiah 2, 3): "Come my children, listen to me. I will teach you how to fear the Lord. Come, let us climb the mountain of the Lord, let us walk in his paths." And in the entrance prayer for the feast of July 16 we say, "Father, may the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel, protect us, and bring us to your holy mountain, Christ the Lord."

Let the beginning of Arnold Bostius' landmark book on Carmel and our Lady serve as the ending of this essay:

"All that I am, all that I am worth, I confess it with all my heart, I owe to Mary. In the past she has so lavished her gifts upon me that it is my duty to venerate everywhere the vestiges of her passing.... She received me, all unworthy, into her bosom, and brought me into the land of Carmel that I might dwell all the days of my life in the house of my Mother. She covered me with her mantle white as snow; she nourished me, strengthened my powers; she crowned me with her glorious title. Beginning at my cradle, she has been to me a most lovable Mother and a very dear patroness."

The quotations from Marie Petyt are from brochures by Thomas McGinnis, O.Carm., and are used with his permission.

Rev. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., S.T.D.

Saints of Carmel

Saint Teresa of Avila

Carmelite reformer and mystic; b. Avila, Spain, March 28, 1515; d. Alba, Oct. 4, 1582. Her family origins have been traced to Toledo and Olmedo. Her father, Alonso de Cepeda, was a son of a Toledan merchant, Juan Sánchez de Toledo and Inés de Cepeda, originally from Tordesillas. Juan transferred his business to Avila, where he succeeded in having his children marry into families of the nobility. In 1505 Alonso married Catalina del Peso, who bore him two children and died in 1507. Two years later Alonso married the 15-year-old Beatriz de Ahumada of whom Teresa was born.

Early Life. In 1528, when Teresa was 15, her mother died, leaving behind 10 children. Teresa was the “most beloved of them all.” She was of medium height, large rather than small, and generally well proportioned. In her youth she had the reputation of being quite beautiful, and she retained her fine appearance until her last years (Maria de S. José, *Libro de recreaciones*, 8). Her personality was extroverted, her manner affectionately buoyant, and she had the ability to adapt herself

easily to all kinds of persons and circumstances. She was skillful in the use of the pen, in needlework, and in household duties. Her courage and enthusiasm were readily kindled, an early example of which trait occurred when at the age of 7 she left home with her brother Rodrigo with the intention of going to Moorish territory to be beheaded for Christ, but they were frustrated by their uncle, who met the children as they were leaving the city and brought them home (Ephrem de la Madre de Dios, *Tiempo y Vida de Sta. Teresa*—hereafter abbrev. TV—142–143). At about 12 the fervor of her piety waned somewhat. She began to take an interest in the development of her natural attractions and in books of chivalry. Her affections were directed especially to her cousins, the Mejias, children of her aunt Doña Elvira, and she gave some thought to marriage. Her father was disturbed by these fancies and opposed them. While she was in this crisis, her mother died. Afflicted and lonely, Teresa appealed to the Blessed Virgin to be her mother. Seeing his daughter's need of prudent guidance, her father entrusted her to the Augustinian nuns at Santa María de Gracia in 1531.

Vocation. The influence of Doña María de Brincoño, who was in charge of the lay students at the convent school, helped Teresa to recover her piety. She began to wonder whether she had a vocation to be a nun. Toward the end of the year 1532 she returned home to regain her health and stayed with her sister, who lived in Castellanos. Reading the letters of St. Jerome led her to the decision to enter a convent, but her father refused to give his consent. Her brother and confidant, Rodrigo, had just set sail for the war on the Río de la Plata. She decided to run away from home and persuaded another brother to flee with her in order that both might receive the religious habit. On Nov. 2, 1535, she entered the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation at Avila, where she had a friend, Juana Suárez; and her father resigned himself to this development. The following year she received the habit and began wholeheartedly to give herself to prayer and penance. Shortly after her profession she became seriously ill and failed to respond to medical treatment. As a last resort her father took her

to Becedas, a small village, to seek the help of a woman healer famous throughout Castile, but Teresa's health did not improve. Leaving Becedas in the fall of 1538, she stayed in Horrigosa at the home of her uncle Pedro de Cepeda, who gave her the *Tercer Abecedario* of Francis of Osuna to read. "I did not know," she said, "how to proceed in prayer or how to become recollected, and so I took much pleasure in it and decided to follow that path with all my strength" (*Libro de la Vida*, the autobiography of St. Teresa—hereafter abbrev. V—4.6).

Instead of regaining her health, Teresa grew even more ill, and her father brought her back to Avila in July 1539. On August 15 she fell into a coma so profound that she was thought to be dead. After 4 days she revived, but she remained paralyzed in her legs for 3 years. After her cure, which she attributed to St. Joseph (V. 6.6–8), she entered a period of mediocrity in her spiritual life, but she did not at any time give up praying. Her trouble came of not understanding that the use of the imagination could be dispensed with and that her soul could give itself directly to contemplation. During this stage, which lasted 18 years, she had transitory mystical experiences. She was held back by a strong desire to be appreciated by others, but this finally left her in an experience of conversion in the presence of an image of "the sorely wounded Christ" (V 9.2). This conversion dislodged the egoism that had hindered her spiritual development. Thus, at the age of 39, she began to enjoy a vivid experience of God's presence within her. However, the contrast between these favors and her conduct, which was more relaxed than was thought proper according to the ascetical standards of the time, caused some misunderstanding. Some of her friends, such as Francisco de Salcedo and Gaspar Daza, thought her favors were the work of the devil (V 23.14). Diego de Cetina, SJ, brought her comfort by encouraging her to continue in mental prayer and to think upon the humanity of Christ. Francis Borgia in 1555 heard her confession and told her that the spirit of God was working in her, that she should concentrate upon Christ's Passion and not resist the ecstatic experience that came to her in prayer. Nevertheless she had to endure the distrust even of her friends

as the divine favors increased. When Pradanos left Avila in 1558 his place as Teresa's director was taken by Baltasar Alvarez, SJ, who, either from caution or with the intention of probing her spirit, caused her great distress by telling her that others were convinced that her raptures and visions were the work of the devil and that she should not communicate so often (V 25.4). Another priest acting temporarily as her confessor, on hearing her report of a vision she had repeatedly had of Christ, told her it was clearly the devil and commanded her to make the sign of the cross and laugh at the vision (V 29.5). But God did not fail to comfort her, and she received the favor of the transverberation (V 29.13-14). In August 1560 St. Peter of Alcántara counseled her: "Keep on as you are doing, daughter; we all suffer such trials."

Reformer. Her great work of reform began with herself. She made a vow always to follow the more perfect course, and resolved to keep the rule as perfectly as she could (V 32.9). However, the atmosphere prevailing at the Incarnation monastery was less than favorable to the more perfect type of life to which Teresa aspired. A group assembled in her cell one September evening in 1560, taking their inspiration from the primitive tradition of Carmel and the discalced reform of St. Peter of Alcántara, proposed the foundation of a monastery of an eremitical type. At first her confessor, the provincial of the Carmelites, and other advisers encouraged her in the plan (TV 478-482); but when the proposal became known among the townsfolk, there was a great outcry against it. The provincial changed his mind, her confessor dissociated himself from the project, and her advisers ranged themselves with the opposition. Six months later, however, when there was a change of rectors at the Jesuit college, her confessor, Father Alvarez, gave his approval. Without delay Teresa had her sister Juana and her husband Juan de Ovalle buy a house in Avila and occupy it as though it were for themselves (V 33.11). This stratagem was necessary to obviate difficulties with nuns at the Incarnation while the building was being adapted and made ready to serve as a convent. At Toledo, where she was sent by the Carmelite provincial at the importunate request of a

wealthy and noble lady, she received a visit from St. Peter of Alcántara, who offered to act as mediator in obtaining from Rome the permissions needed for the foundation. While there she also received a visit from the holy Carmelite María de Yepes, who had just returned from Rome with permission to establish a reformed convent and who provided Teresa with a new light on the question of the type of poverty to be adopted by her own community. At Toledo she also completed in reluctant obedience to her confessor the first version of her *Vida*. She returned to Avila at the end of June 1562 (TV 506-507), and shortly thereafter the apostolic rescript, dated Feb. 7, 1562, for the foundation of the new convent arrived. The following August 24 the new monastery dedicated to S. José was founded; Maestro Daza, the bishop's delegate, officiated at the ceremony. Four novices received the habit of the Discalced Carmelites. There was strong opposition among the townspeople and at the Incarnation. The prioress at the Incarnation summoned Teresa back to her monastery, where the Carmelite provincial Angel de Salazar, indignant at her having put her new establishment under the jurisdiction of the bishop, rebuked her, but after hearing her account of things, was mollified and even promised to help quiet the popular disturbance and to give her permission to return to S. José when calm had been restored. On August 25 the council at Avila met to discuss the matter of the new foundation, and on August 30 a great assembly of the leading townspeople gathered. The only one in the assembly to raise his voice against the popular indignation was Domingo Báñez, OP. A lawsuit followed in the royal court, but before the end of 1562 the foundress, as Teresa of Jesus, was authorized by the provincial to return to the new convent. There followed the 5 most peaceful years of her life, during which she wrote the *Way of Perfection* and the *Meditations on the Canticle*.

Foundations. In April 1567 the Carmelite general, Giovanni Battista Rossi (Rubeo), made a visitation, approved Teresa's work, and commanded her to establish other convents with some of the nuns from the convent of the Incarnation at Avila. He also gave her permission to establish two houses for men

who wished to adopt the reform. The extension of Teresa's work began with the foundation of a convent at Medina del Campo, Aug. 15, 1567. Then followed other foundations: at Malagon in 1568; at Valladolid (Río de Olinos) in 1568; at Toledo and at Pastrana in 1569; at Salamanca in 1570; and at Alba de Tormes in 1571. As she journeyed to Toledo in 1569 she passed through Duruelo, where John of the Cross and Anthony of Jesus had established the first convent of Discalced Brethren in November 1568, and in July 1569 she established the second monastery of Discalced Brethren in Pastrana.

These foundations were followed by an interval during which Teresa served as prioress at the Incarnation monastery in Avila, an office to which she was appointed by the apostolic visitor, Pedro Fernández, OP. This duty she was loath to assume, and she had much opposition to face on the part of the community. However, with the help of St. John of the Cross, who served as a confessor for the nuns, she was able to bring about a great improvement in the spiritual condition of the community. On Nov. 18, 1572, while receiving Communion from the hands of John of the Cross, she received the favor of the "spiritual marriage."

At the request of the Duchess of Alba she spent the first days of 1573 in Alba, and then went to Salamanca to put things in order at the foundation there. At the command of Jerome Ripalda, SJ, she started her *Book of the Foundations* the following August. On March 19, 1574, she established a foundation at Segovia, where the Pastrana nuns had been transferred because of conflicts with the Princess of Eboli. This marked the beginning of a second series of foundations. The next was made at Beas de Segura in February 1575. There Teresa met Jerome Gratian, apostolic visitor of the order in Andaluca, who ordered a foundation in Seville. The bishop objected, however, and Teresa sent Ana de S. Alberto to Caravaca to make a foundation there in her name on Jan. 1, 1576, and that of the Seville convent was delayed until June 3 of the same year.

Crisis Between the Calced and Discalced. The entry of the Discalced Brethren into Andalusia was forbidden by Rossi, the general of the order, who opposed Teresa and Jerome Gratian

in this matter. The general chapter at Piacenza in 1575 ordered the Discalced Brethren to withdraw from Andalusia, and Teresa herself was ordered to retire to a convent. The general put Jerome Tostado at the head of the Discalced Brethren. While the conflict raged between the Calced and Discalced Brethren, Teresa wrote the *Visitation of the Discalced Nuns*, a part of *The Foundations*, and her greatest book, *The Interior Castle*.

The nuncio Nicholas Ormaneto, a defender of the Discalced Brethren, died June 18, 1578, and his successor, Felipe Segá, was less favorably disposed toward them. John of the Cross was imprisoned in Toledo. Against Teresa's will the Discalced Brethren held a chapter in Almodovar on Oct. 9, 1578. The nuncio annulled the chapter and by a decree put the Discalced Brethren under the authority of the Calced provincials who subjected them to some harassment. The King intervened, and four were named to advise the nuncio, among them Pedro Fernández, OP. Angel de Salazar was made vicar-general of the Discalced Brethren while negotiations were afoot for the separation of the Discalced from the Calced Brethren and the erection of a Discalced province.

Teresa then turned to visiting her convents and resumed the founding of new ones. On Feb. 25, 1580, she gave the habit to foundresses of the convent in Villanueva de la Jara. The brief *Pia consideratione*, dated June 22, 1580, ordered the erection of a distinct province for the Discalced. On March 3, 1581, the chapter of the Discalced was held in Alcalá, and Jerome Gratian, who was favored by Teresa, was elected the first provincial. Teresa's last foundations were: at Palencia and Soria in 1581, at Burgos in 1582; the most difficult of all, Granada (1582), was entrusted to the Venerable Anne of Jesus.

Teresa's body was interred in Alba. Paul V declared her a blessed April 24, 1614, and in 1617 the Spanish parliament proclaimed her the Patroness of Spain. Gregory XV canonized her in 1622 together with SS. Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, Isidore, and Philip Neri.

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IO. STECGINKI

Spiritual Doctrine. Among the writings of St. Teresa, three can be indicated as the depositories of her spiritual teaching: her autobiography, the *Way of Perfection*, and the *Interior Castle*. Readers must exercise some caution, however, and resist the temptation to hastily synthesize the doctrine in these books, because St. Teresa wrote from her personal experience at different stages of the spiritual life. For example, the doctrine of prayer found in the autobiography is not identical with that in the *Interior Castle*; more than a decade had elapsed between their composition, and Teresa had meanwhile attained a higher degree of spiritual maturity with its simultaneous expansion of experience.

The autobiography, written primarily as a manifestation of her spiritual state for her directors, was later enlarged in scope and in audience. Chapters 11 to 22 inclusive—a later addition—are devoted exclusively to the discussion of prayer, although additional comments and examples are scattered throughout the remaining 28 chapters. Teresa depicts different stages of the life of prayer in metaphorical terms taken from the manner of securing water to irrigate a garden. The "first water" is laboriously obtained from a well and carried in a bucket to the garden; this is in reference to beginners who, liberated from the more flagrant mortal sins, apply themselves to discursive prayer of meditation, although they experience fatigue and aridity from time to time. After speaking at length of meditation in its stricter meaning, Teresa made a brief reference to "acquired" contemplation before beginning her discussion of the "second water." In this second stage, the gardener secures water through use of a windlass and bucket;

here Teresa refers to the "prayer of quiet," a gift of God through which the individual begins to have a passive experience of prayer. The third method of irrigation is the employment of water from a stream or river; the application made by Teresa is to the "sleep of the faculties." Although Teresa considered this an important stage in the evolution of prayer when she wrote her autobiography, she later relegated it to a simple intensification of the "prayer of quiet" in the *Interior Castle*. The fourth method of irrigation is Godgiven: the rain; Teresa employs this metaphor to describe a state of union in prayer in which the soul is apparently passive.

Her *Way of Perfection* Teresa addressed to her nuns, teaching them therein the major virtues that demand their solicitude, casting further light on the practice of prayer, and using the *Pater Noster* as a vehicle for teaching prayer at greater depth. This book is sometimes referred to as the apex of Teresa's ascetical doctrine.

The *Interior Castle* is the principal source of mature Teresian thought on the spiritual life in its integrity. Chief emphasis is laid on the life of prayer, but other elements (the apostolate, for example) are also treated. The interior castle is the soul, in the center of which dwells the Trinity. Growth in prayer enables the individual to enter into deeper intimacy with God—signified by a progressive journey through the apartments (or mansions) of the castle from the outermost to the luminous center. When a man has attained union with God in the degree permitted to him in this world, he is "at the center" of himself; in other words, he has integrity as a child of God and as a human being. Each of the apartments of the castle is distinguished by a different stage in the evolution of prayer, with its consequent effects upon every other phase of the life of the individual.

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[S. V. RAMGE]

Saint John of the Cross

Founder (with St. Teresa) of the Discalced Carmelites, Doctor of the Church, renowned for his poetry and writings in ascetical-mystical theology; b. Fontiveros, Spain, June 24, 1542; d. Ubeda, Dec. 14, 1591 (feast, Nov. 24).

Life. Gonzalo de Yepes, John's father, was disowned by his wealthy family of silk merchants for marrying a humble silk weaver, Catalina Alvarez. When forced to adapt to surroundings of poverty and hard work, Gonzalo died young, shortly after the birth of John, his third son.

John received his elementary education in Medina del Campo at an institution for the children of the poor, in which he was also fed and clothed. Besides his elementary studies, he was introduced to various crafts through apprenticeships. At 17 he found work at a hospital in Medina and was able to enroll in the Jesuit College, where he received solid training in the humanities.

In 1563, he entered the Carmelite Order in Medina and changed his name to Fray Juan de Santo Matía. After his novitiate and profession of vows, he went for studies to his order's College of San Andrés at Salamanca.

He enrolled at the university in Salamanca in the school of arts for the years 1564 to 1567 and in the theological course, 1567-68. In the school of arts, he attended classes in philosophy; in theology, he probably heard the lectures of Mancio de Corpus Christi, OP, on the *Summa* of St. Thomas. An indication of Fray Juan's talents is evident in his appointment, while still a student, as prefect of studies. This office

obliged him to teach class daily, defend public theses, and assist the regent master in resolving objections.

He was ordained in 1567, and while in Medina to sing his first Mass, he met Teresa of Avila, who had begun a reform within the order. She spoke to him of her plan to restore the Carmelite Primitive Rule for the friars as well as the nuns. Fray Juan, who had been longing for a life of deeper solitude and was thinking about transferring to the Carthusians, promised to adopt this life. With two others, at Duruelo, Nov. 28, 1568, he made profession of the Carmelite Primitive Rule, and changed his name to Fray John of the Cross. The new life in keeping with the Primitive Rule was austere and predominantly contemplative. But the active apostolate was not excluded; it consisted mainly of preaching and hearing confessions. The friars of this new reform wore sandals and were soon referred to as Discalced Carmelites.

At Duruelo Fray Juan was appointed subprior and novice master. Later he was named rector of a newly established house of studies in Alcalá. In the spring of 1571, Teresa was ordered to govern the Convent of the Incarnation and to reform its 130 nuns. Realizing the need of a prudent, learned, and holy confessor at the Incarnation, she obtained permission from the apostolic visitor to have Fray John as confessor.

While he was confessor there, the reform grew rapidly. But the attitude of the Carmelite Order toward the reform, for reasons due mainly to a conflict of jurisdiction, began to change. In 1575, in a chapter at Piacenza, it was determined to stop the expansion of the reform of the order.

On the night of Dec. 2, 1577, some Carmelites seized Fray John, took him to Toledo, and demanded a renunciation of the reform. He refused to renounce it, maintaining that he had remained at the Incarnation by order of the nuncio. They declared him a rebel and imprisoned him. He lived 9 months in a cell 6 feet wide and 10 feet long, with no light other than what came through a slit high up in the wall. During this imprisonment he composed some of his great poems. In August 1578, in a perhaps miraculous way, he escaped; eventually he journeyed to a monastery of Discalced in southern Spain.

The following years were given to administration: he was prior on several occasions, rector of the Carmelite College in Baeza, and vicar provincial of the southern province. In 1588 he was elected major definitor, becoming a member of the reform's new governing body, headed by Father Doria.

During these years as superior he did most of his writing. He also, besides giving spiritual direction to the Carmelite friars and nuns, devoted much time to the guidance of lay people.

His deep life of prayer is evident in the splendid descriptions of *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame of Love*. He once admitted: "God communicates the mystery of the Trinity to this sinner in such a way that if His Majesty did not strengthen my weakness by a special help, it would be impossible for me to live."

Toward the end of his life, a controversy arose within the reform. Father Doria desired to abandon jurisdiction over the nuns founded by St. Teresa and also the expulsion of Father Gratian, a favorite confessor of Teresa, from the reform. As a member of the governing body, Fray John of the Cross opposed Doria in both matters. For obvious reasons John was not elected to any office in the chapter of 1591. He was instead sent to a solitary monastery in southern Spain. While there, he heard news of the efforts being made to expel him also from the reform.

In mid-September, he noted a slight fever caused by an ulcerous inflammation of the leg. Since the sickness grew worse, he was obliged to leave the solitude he so loved for the sake of medical attention. He chose to go to Ubbeda rather than Baeza because "in Ubbeda, nobody knows me." The prior of Ubbeda received him unwillingly and complained of the added expense. On the night of December 13, John of the Cross died, repeating the words of the psalmist: "Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

In 1592 his body was transferred to Segovia. He was beatified by Clement X in 1675, canonized by Benedict XIII in 1726, and declared a Doctor of the Church by Pius XI in 1926.

Writings. The saint's major treatises are *The Ascent of Mount Carmel—The Dark Night*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, and

The Living Flame of Love. These writings have greatly influenced studies in spiritual theology. Pius XI, in proclaiming St. John of the Cross a Doctor of the Church, stated that they are rightly looked upon as a code and guide for the faithful soul endeavoring to embrace a more perfect life.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel—The Dark Night, beginning as a commentary on the poem *The Dark Night*, is a treatise on how to reach perfection (union with God). The poem, St. John says, refers to the path of perfection as a dark night for three reasons: the soul on this path must mortify its appetites, journey in faith, and receive God's communication. These reasons involve privation just as night involves a privation of light. *The Ascent* has three books and the *Dark Night*, two.

Book One of the *Ascent* discusses the mortification of all voluntary, inordinate appetites; for these appetites are contrary to the perfect love of God. It frequently refers as well to the active night (or purification) of the senses, teaching that a man must acquire the habit of using his sense faculties only for God's honor and glory, out of love for Christ and in imitation of Him.

Books Two and Three of the *Ascent* treat of the journey in faith, especially as it is in the active purification of the spirit. The soul must walk in the darkness of faith to reach union with God, and deprive itself of everything contradicting full adherence to God and to the law of Christ and of His Church. In the active night (or purification) of the spirit, a man must endeavor to purge his spiritual faculties through the theological virtues. The saint explains how each of these virtues purifies its respective faculty of whatever is not for God's glory, and unites it to God. In these two books he has especially in mind souls receiving contemplation; hence, in seeking to purify their spiritual faculties they must also turn aside in prayer from particular knowledge in order to receive through a general, loving attentiveness to God in faith the general, loving knowledge of God, which is the meaning of contemplation.

The two books of the *Dark Night* describe how God purifies the soul passively. The discussion of God's communication is limited to that communication called purgative contemplation.

Because this contemplation is dark and painful to the soul it is called a night.

Book One of the *Night* deals with the defects of beginners, the signs of initial contemplation, and the benefits of the passive purification of the senses. Book Two gives a vivid picture and analyses of the purgative contemplation that God infuses in the passive night of the spirit.

Through these active and passive purifications, the soul reaches union with God, ridding itself of everything out of conformity with His will. In this union, it habitually employs all its faculties, appetites, operations, and emotions in God, so that in its activity it resembles God; this union is called "the union of likeness."

The Spiritual Canticle comprises a poem (a loving colloquy between the soul and Christ) and its commentary. The stanzas of the poem are like outpourings of that love which arose from the abundant mystical knowledge communicated by God to the soul of the saint. They recount the history of his love of Christ and its forward movement, and mark the degrees and stages of his spiritual life. In its general plan the poem dwells on four main aspects of the life of divine love: (1) the anxious loving search for the Beloved; (2) the first encounter with Him; (3) perfect union with Him; (4) the desire for that perfect union that will be had in glory.

The chief elements of the commentary include: a general summary of the content of each stanza, a detailed explanation of each verse, and frequent doctrinal explanations of the thought.

The Living Flame of Love is also a poem with a commentary. This poem is the song of a soul that has reached a highly perfect love within the state of transformation. The state of transformation in God is the loftiest attainable on earth. It is equivalent to the state called "spiritual marriage" in the *Canticle* and "the divine union" in the *Ascent-Night*: a habitual union with God through the likeness of love. The four stanzas of the *Living Flame* refer to transient, intense actual unions (in contradistinction to the habitual union) experienced by one advanced within this state of transformation.

The commentary, like that of the *Canticle*, gives a general summary of each stanza, a detailed explanation of each verse, and many doctrinal explanations.

In his major works, therefore, St. John of the Cross treats mainly of how one reaches perfection (or union with God), and of the life of divine union itself. In brief, this union is reached through the practice of the theological virtues, which purify the soul and unite it with God. The life of union with God is a life of perfect faith, hope, and charity.

His remaining writings include relatively few letters, various maxims and counsels, and about 10 poems. These minor works deal chiefly with the same themes as the major works.

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[K. KAVANAUGH]

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

French Carmelite nun celebrated for her autobiography; b. Alençon, France, Jan. 2, 1873; d. Lisieux, Sept. 30, 1897 (feast Oct. 3).

Early Life. Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin was the youngest of nine children born to Louis and Zélie (Guérin) Martin, two boys and two girls having died before her birth. Louis was a successful watchmaker and jeweler, while Zélie was a craftswoman. Their last child, Thérèse, was a sickly in-

fant and had to be boarded with a wet nurse for the first year of her life. As she was a warm and affectionate child, deeply devoted to her family, her mother's death constituted a traumatic experience in her young life and plunged her into a state of sadness and sensitivity that she endured for 8 years.

Thérèse, in her autobiography, divided her own early life into three distinct periods: the first was the happy and untrammelled period of her infancy before her mother died; the second, the 8 years from 1877 to 1886, her "winter of trial," as she called it, a time of sensitivity and weariness and occasional religious scruples; the third was the period between 1886 and 1888, beginning with what she called her "conversion" and terminating with her entrance into the convent.

The family moved to Lisieux in 1881, and Thérèse was enrolled in the Benedictine Abbey school as a day student. She was a bright, retentive student, but shy and somewhat withdrawn, and consequently found school life unpleasant. In 1883 at the age of 10 she contracted a strange illness during which she suffered a mixture of convulsions, hallucinations, and comas for 3 months. Finally, while earnestly imploring the help of the Blessed Virgin, she was instantaneously cured. Thérèse always believed her cure was miraculous and that the statue of Our Lady of Victories, before which she had been praying, actually smiled at her.

On Christmas 1886, Thérèse experienced her "conversion," an instant change which marked the inception of a new maturity and a more intense religious program. The actual occasion of this experience was simple. She had just returned from midnight Mass, and her father made a deprecatory remark about the festivities arranged for his youngest daughter. Ordinarily she would have been deeply hurt by the careless remark but, as she wrote: "Thérèse was different now, Jesus had changed her heart." Her sister Céline stated: "I was a witness to that sudden change, and I thought I was in a dream. That transformation was not limited only to a new self-possession but, at the same time, her soul could be seen to develop and grow in the practice of zeal and charity." From her earliest years Thérèse had been extraordinarily religious; in fact, she remarked near the end of

her life that from the age of 3 she had never refused anything to the good God. She had been diligent at prayer and extremely conscientious in the practice of virtue. But the experience of Christmas 1886 marked a new stage in her religious development, as she acquired an intense interest in the apostolate, conceived a desire to suffer for God, and began to make immediate plans for entering the Carmelite convent in Lisieux.

A Carmelite. Her two older sisters, Pauline and Marie, had already entered the cloistered convent of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Lisieux, and it was there that Thérèse wished to serve God. At one time she had wanted to become a foreign missionary but she finally concluded she could help in the conversion of even more souls by joining a contemplative order. She was only 14 when she made application to the Carmel, and while the nuns were willing to receive her, the Abbé Delatroette, ecclesiastical superior of the convent, felt she should wait until she was 21. Thérèse, accompanied by her father, visited Bishop Hugonin to petition her early admission to the Carmel. The bishop took the matter under advisement; and while waiting for his ultimately favorable reply, she and her father and her sister Céline embarked on a pilgrimage to Rome. During a general audience Thérèse was presented to Leo XIII, and despite the prohibition to speak she asked him to allow her entrance into Carmel at the age of 15. He gently assured her she would enter if it were God's will.

On April 9, 1888, at 15 she entered the Carmelite convent, spending the remaining 9½ years of her life in the red-brick building on the Rue de Liverot. All was far from serene in the Carmelite convent of Lisieux during the years that Thérèse lived there, and the major part of the difficulties can be ascribed to her superior for most of her time in the convent, Mother Marie de Gonzague, a woman of mercurial temperament, jealously guarding her position of authority and allowing the convent to be split into two factions. Thérèse abstained from the inner politics of the convent and concentrated on her own life of prayer. She was intensely faithful to the rule of the order, quietly performing the duties assigned her; the full heroism of her life of fidelity and closeness to God was not even

comprehended by most of the nuns in the convent until her memoirs were published posthumously.

In 1893 Thérèse was appointed acting mistress of novices, an office she held for the last 4 years of her life. During that time she articulated her "Little Way," that attitude of approaching God that Benedict XV said "contained the secret of sanctity for the entire world." There was nothing essentially new about her "Little Way," but it was a fresh and vigorous restatement of basic Christian truths. Pius XI defined it by saying "it consists in feeling and acting under the discipline of virtue as a child feels and acts by nature." Her "Way," therefore, is not a single virtue or a slogan, but a whole attitude of soul, the basis of an entire relationship with God.

The first manifestations of a tubercular condition came some 18 months before her death, but she continued the monastic observances as well as she could for more than a year until she was finally placed in the convent infirmary. During her final illness she was often fatigued, racked with pain, and plunged into a bitter temptation against faith. Shortly before her death she said: "I did not think it was possible to suffer so much." Her final words were: "My God, I love You."

Autobiography. One year after her death a form of her autobiography was published privately and mailed to a number of other Carmelite convents in lieu of the traditional obituary notice. There was an immediate demand for additional copies and a general printing was ordered. In the next 15 years it was translated in countries all over the world and more than a million copies were printed. Thérèse did not originally intend to compose an autobiography, and it was only in the last months of her life, when she realized she had a mission to teach others her "Little Way," that she asked her sister to collect and edit her writings. The first section of the memoirs was written as a feast day present for her sister Pauline, the second as a short spiritual essay for her sister Marie, and the third for the prioress, Mother Gonzague. The document is epistolary in form and baroque in style, thus the language often appears coy and saccharine. Thérèse, writing in the full stream of the late Romantic movement, used the only language she knew, but she

wrote with a complete honesty and candor that is the ultimate appeal of these amazingly successful memoirs.

Cult. Worldwide reaction to the young French nun was impressive. Pius XI called it a "hurricane of glory." As Thérèse's autobiography gained popularity, letters began to inundate the Carmel of Lisieux and there were countless reports of favors, spiritual and material, granted through her intercession. The Holy See waived the usual 50-year waiting period, and allowed the investigations for beatification to be inaugurated. She was beatified in 1923 and canonized May 17, 1925, less than 28 years after her death.

In the bull of canonization, Pius XI said that she fulfilled her vocation and achieved sanctity "without going beyond the common order of things." This phrase is the key to understanding her message and popularity. Her life was simple, devoid of the drama and major conflict that characterize the lives of so many saints, but in the framework of that simple life she achieved sanctity.

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[P. T. ROHRBACH]

Saint Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart

Discalced Carmelite nun and mystic; b. Arezzo, Italy, July 15, 1747; d. Florence, March 7, 1770 (feast, March 11). Her name in the world was Anna Maria Redi. She came of a Tuscan family of the lesser nobility. Her father, Ignatius, early recognized signs of spiritual genius in his child and tried to encourage her, without destroying her originality or disturbing her normal development. It was from him that she learned the devotion to the Sacred Heart that was later to play a major role in her spiritual synthesis.

Anna Maria entered the Discalced Carmelite convent in Florence on Sept. 1, 1764, and took the name Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart because of her devotion to the Sacred Heart and to SS. Teresa of Avila and Margaret Mary Alacoque.

In the community Sister Teresa Margaret served as sacristan and infirmarian. Few suspected the intense working of grace in her soul. Our knowledge of her spirituality depends on the sworn testimony of her director, Idephonse of St. Aloysius, O.C.D. Drawn to the hidden life, she sought to imitate not only the external phases of the hidden life of Christ, but also its expression in His intellectual and volitional life, so far as this was possible. The divine response to her desire was an aridity so intense that she was hidden from herself and had no suspicion of her high degree of sanctity.

St. Teresa Margaret was important as a herald of the Sacred Heart devotion, not only in Carmel, but in Tuscany and Italy as well, where Jansenism attempted to bring the devotion into disrepute. In her we have an example of a spirituality centered upon the Sacred Heart. Through this she reached lofty heights of Trinitarian contemplation.

She died at the age of 22, and her body has remained incorrupt. A portrait was made of her as she lay in death. She was canonized by Pius XI on March 19, 1934.

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the Catholic Encyclopedia

Saint Raphael Kalinowski of Saint Joseph, O.C.D. 1835 - 1907

Childhood. Joseph Kalinowski was born in Vilna, Lithuania, September 1, 1835. His father was Andrew Kalinowski, a respected professor of mathematics at the Nobility Institute of Vilna. Josephine, his mother died two months after Joseph was born.

Education. During the time of the occupation, the Russians closed all Lithuanian and Polish schools. Hence the only avenue open to a higher education was to enter the Russian engineering Academy. Thus Joseph at the same time also became a member of the Czarist Russian Army, and eventually obtained the rank of Captain.

Religion. During High School he became indifferent to and abandoned the practice of his religion, as do many. This lasted several years, but in his twenties he began to read spiritual books, especially the Confessions of Saint Augustine and had a change of heart.

The Polish Insurrection. Although at first reluctant to do so, in 1861 he became part of the Insurrection of Poland for its freedom from Russia. Shortly thereafter he became Commissioner of the War Ministry in Lithuania.

Capture and Sentencing. He was captured by the Russians in 1864 and sentenced to die before a firing squad. The sentence, however, was commuted to forced labor and exile in the salt mines of Ursole in Siberia, three thousand miles from home. He remained in exile for ten years, bore his sufferings in a Christian way, and gave good example to all.

Liberation from Exile. When Kalinowski was 39 years old, he was finally granted his release, but forbidden to settle in Lithuania. While in exile he began to practice his religion very diligently and his desire to serve God by becoming a priest and a religious had been growing. But by the time he returned to his homeland, all Monasteries had been closed or suppressed by the Russians. But through a chance meeting of a holy Carmelite Nun, he decided to enter the Order of Carmel. To fulfill his

vocational dream, he was forced to go to the west.

Enters Carmel. His dream of becoming a Discalced Carmelite became a reality when he was 42 years old. He entered the Order in Lintz, Austria and was immediately sent to Gratz for his novitiate. He was given the name Brother Raphael of Saint Joseph. He did his philosophical studies in Hungary, but studied theology in Poland where he was ordained to the priesthood when he was 47. His first Mass was offered in the chapel of the Carmelite Nuns in Cracow.

Spiritual director. As a priest, he did not have the gift of eloquence, and he knew it. But he was an exceptional spiritual director and confessor, spending many long hours in the confessional, for which he is remembered as a "martyr of the confessional." Because of his holiness, many people came to him for spiritual direction. His fruitful and blessed program in giving spiritual direction consisted in seeing that every soul who came to him had the spiritual gifts of "love, joy and peace" that Saint Paul mentions in Galatians 2:20. He was dearly beloved by all. "He possessed unspeakable sweetness and kindness," people said, "and he was a true angel of goodness."

Monastery and Church at Wadowice (near Cracow). Father Raphael who built the present Monastery and Church where Pope John Paul II served Mass when he was young boy. The Pope referred to this fact when he beatified Father Raphael Kalinowski on the morning of June 22, 1983 in Cracow. These are his words: "From my youth, almost from my birth, I lived near and frequented the Carmelite house and church built by this blessed man."

Illness and Death. After consuming all his energies for the Lord, Father Raphael died a holy death at Wadowice on November 15, 1907. He was 72 years old at the time. His body was transferred to the conventual cemetery of Czerna (Cracow). But his reputation of extraordinary holiness was recognized from the beginning and continues to this day. In the fourth centenary year of the death of Saint John of the Cross, Father Raphael of Saint Joseph was canonized in Rome on November 17, 1991. Now we can say and joyfully exclaim, Saint Raphael Kalinowski pray for us and for our Holy Order!

His Legacy. Father Valentino Macca, O.C.D. accurately summed up the life of Saint Raphael Kalinowski when he observed: "His contemporaries are in accord in describing him as a "living prayer." Another feature that permeated his Carmelite life was his devotion to Mary, whom he venerated as the "Foundress" of our Order. He wanted us to imitate her virtues, especially her humility and her recollection in prayer. "Our eyes," he used to say, "must be constantly turned to her. We must ever preserve the memory of her benefits and strive to be ever faithful to her."

[MICHAEL D. GRIFFIN, OCD]

Saint Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes, Chile 1900-1920

Saint Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes, Chile is the fourth Carmelite Saint canonized bearing the glorious name Teresa. She is the youngest and the newest Saint of our holy Order and has the distinction of being the first American Carmelite Saint to be elevated to the altars. Let us now give a brief summary of her life.

Her Life. It was a difficult birth and Lucia did not think her child would live. But, on July 13, 1900, in Santiago Chile, there was great rejoicing in the patriarchal mansion of Don Eulogio Solar, the maternal grandfather, when a beautiful baby girl Juana Fernández Solar was born. Ladislao, the family carriage driver, summed it up best when he said: "If the little girl came this far, it is a sign that the Lord wants her to do great things."

On the vigil of the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patronal feast of Chile, the baby was baptized Juana Enriqueta Josefina of the Sacred Hearts. As a child Juanita had a terrible temper and was very stubborn. But from the age of six when she started attending Mass each day with her mother and Aunt Juana, things noticeably began to improve.

First Communion. Though she was forbidden to receive Communion till she was ten, Juanita tells us her First Communion Day was the greatest of her life. That singular day, she later wrote, "was a day without clouds." It was also the day when "I heard the sweet voice of Jesus for the first time." Jesus often spoke to her after Communion.

Devotion to Mary. It could not have been otherwise. The child was particularly distinguished for her tender devotion to Mary the Mother of her Lord, whose virtues she tried to copy. For her, Mary was her "mirror"; and she would keep looking to Mary to become more beautiful in the eyes of Christ. She faithfully recited the rosary every day.

Education. Desirous that Juanita be given a good Christian education, her parents sent her to the two excellent schools conducted by the Religious of the Sacred Heart in Santiago. In High School she earned the blue ribbon for being her school's outstanding student. She was accorded first prizes in literature, history, religion and chemistry.

Vow of Virginity. When Juanita was fifteen, she consciously made a vow of perfect virginity, and this effort only increased her desire to enter the religious life. The question was, should she become a religious of the Sacred Heart or become a cloistered Carmelite? This was this high school student's dilemma. Under Our Lord's guidance, she chose to enter Carmel.

Spiritual Reading. By the time she was sixteen, she had already read *The Story of A Soul*, written by Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, better known as the little Flower. A year later she was encouraged to read *The Praise of Glory* by Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, a French Carmelite who died in the odor of sanctity in Dijon in 1906. And, of course, she read great parts of Saint Teresa of Avila's *Autobiography* and all of *The Way of Perfection*. Through this reading, Juanita identified with and became convinced that she was called to imitate these saintly women and thus her Carmelite vocation. She entered Carmel at eighteen years of age.

Carmel. Though born into a wealthy aristocratic family, Juanita chose to follow the poor Christ, and entered the Carmel of Los Andes, a convent noted for its poverty. The Carmel is located about sixty miles from Santiago. She quickly adjusted to life there. After her death, the Sisters declared that she was already a saint when she entered Carmel.

Called Teresa of Jesus. After the fervent novice lived in the Carmel of Los Andes for five months, she was clothed with the Carmelite habit. Her new name was Sister Teresa of Jesus, in honor of Saint Teresa of Avila, the foundress of the Discalced Carmelite Order. In a short time she achieved outstanding holiness. But her life was cut short by typhus. Death occurred of April 12, 1920. She was only nineteen year and nine months. She lived in Carmel for only eleven months.

Venerated as a Saint despite her desire to live a hidden life, throngs of the faithful began visiting her tomb immediately after her death. People claimed they had received many spiritual favors through prayers to this young Chilean Carmelite. Miracles were attributed to her intercession, though most were spiritual miracles.

Beatification. Pope John Paul beatified her during a pastoral visit to Chile in 1987. On that occasion the Pope affirmed that during her lifetime Sister Teresa had performed no extraordinary deeds or anything which would command worldly acclaim. She was, however, an extraordinary contemplative and mystical soul, the Pope said. God reflected Himself to her in prayer, and she increasingly discovered God to be the joy of her life. Summarizing her message, the Pope proclaimed: "This is the new Christian hymn of love that this beautiful young Chilean girl sings to the Church and to the world today: God is infinite joy. In Him alone can one find happiness that is infinite." She tried to communicate this message to others all through her short life. And this teaching clearly shines through her letters to friends, members of her family, and to her spiritual directors.

National Shrine in Her Honor. In 1988 at Auco, Rinconada, only a short distance from Los Andes and quite close to her grandfather's Chacabuco Hacienda, a National Shrine was consecrated in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel where the remains of Saint Teresa of Jesus of the Andes are venerated. It has been estimated that between one and two hundred thousand people visit the Shrine each month. From the petition boxes we learn that the people are chiefly praying to our Saint for three things: first, for peace, love and harmony in the home. Secondly, that loved ones be brought back to the practice of the faith. And since Teresta influenced ten girls to become nuns and got her own mother to join the Third Order of Carmel, people are praying to her for vocations to the priestly and religious life.

Canonization. On March 21, 1993 in the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, Pope John Paul II solemnly canonized Saint Teresa of Jesus of the Andes as a Saint.

Books on Saint Teresa of Jesus of the Andes

The Teresian Charism Press provides readers with four books dealing with the life and message of this new saint. The first book, **God, The Joy OF MY Life** is the first biography written in English on the saint; and it also contains a translation of her **Diary**. The second book is called **TESTIMONIES TO TERESA OF THE ANDES**. This book contains the remarkable

Circular Letter of Mother Angelica Teresa, her religious Superior as well as the important recollections of her favorite brother. There is even a summary or official digest of the beatification process. In addition, in this book we have the answers of the Carmelite Nuns of Los Andes to four compelling questions: 1. Why is Teresa of the Andes important to the world today? 2. Why is she important to the Church today? 3. Why is Teresita important to Carmel today. 4. And why is she important to the youth of today? And the final book contains a translation of the beautiful letters of this teenage saint. One would never dream that so young a girl could write such deep and moving letters.

[MICHAEL D. GRIFFIN, OCD]

Blessed Josefa Naval Girbes, Virgin of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, 1820-1893

Childhood. First of five children of Francisco Naval and Josefa Girbes, was born at Algemesi, Spain, December 11, 1820. The city of Algemesi is about 25 miles from Valencia, Spain, in the center of the region known as the "Ribera de Jugar." Josefa was baptized the day she was born and given the name Josefa Maria. But she was called Josefa, or Señora Pepa, or just Pepa, the name by which she is most often invoked today.

Education. There were no public schools. Josefa's formal education was therefore limited to what she could learn by attending the school called "La Enseñanza", which was conducted under the patronage of the Cathedral Chapter of Valencia. There she was taught the skills expected of a person of her social class; and she also learned the rudiments of reading and writing. In addition, Josefa became an expert embroiderer of silk and gold.

Home Life. Josefa received a thoroughly Christian upbringing from her parents. In 1828 she was confirmed, and made her First Holy Communion a year later. After her mother's death in 1833 (she was 13), Josefa faced her fate in life with great courage, and looked after her orphaned brothers like a mother.

The love of God, which her parents had instilled into her heart when she was a young child, grew stronger and stronger during her adolescent and young adult life. She lived a life of intense

prayer, especially once she began to receive encouragement from her zealous parish priest. With his approval, she took a vow of perpetual virginity when she was eighteen.

Apostolic Life. Josefa was an active member of her parish and devoted herself to helping others as far as possible. She started a school of needlework which attracted many from all walks of life. The needlework sessions were accompanied by readings and spiritual conversations that also provided her pupils with spiritual formation. And so little by little more and more girls and young women came to her house to practice their needlework and learn the practice of virtues. Under Señora Pepa's sure guidance, they became experts at both.

Teacher. Her "curriculum" included everything from basic catechism through meditation and the highest stages of prayer. She prepared children for their First Communion. She involved them in the initiatives of their local parish church community. She prepared them for their vocations as spouses and mothers or as religious. The "Maestra" was a living example of the detachment from the things of the world which she imparted gently to one and all. She led her "disciples" to the most profound and active participation in the liturgical life and to the social initiatives of the Church.

Death. Señora's health had always been fragile, but in 1891 it began to decline sharply due to a heart condition. The Servant of God died in her home at Algemesi in February 1893. She was buried in the public cemetery in the brown tunic and white mantle of the Carmelite habit, as she had expressly requested. Her funeral was a triumph.

Lay Carmelite. Because so many records were destroyed during the Spanish Civil War of 1936, we do not have exact information as to when and where she entered what was then called the Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of Saint Teresa. But there is ample testimony that she was a member of the Order, and that her Lay Carmelite community was served by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of the Province of Valencia.

Beatification. Pope John Paul II beatified her on September 25, 1988 in Rome. She is the first Lay Carmelite to be beatified. Her beatification brings great joy to the whole Order. She will, naturally, be a great source of encouragement and inspiration to our Lay Carmelites everywhere.

Venerable Anita Cantieri 1910-1942

Introduction. In his biography, entitled *L'Allodola Del Carmelo*, Emilio Barsotti calls Anita Cantieri "The Skylark of Carmel." The title is descriptive and fitting. Webster's Dictionary, as a matter of fact, observes that a skylark is noted for its song, especially as uttered in vertical flight. The higher the skylark flies, the stronger and more beautiful its song becomes. This, we will see, is a perfect description of Anita Cantieri, a lay Discalced Carmelite who died just fifty years ago.

The Servant of God, Anita Cantieri was born in Lucca, Italy in the Province of Tuscany on the thirtieth of March, 1910. She was the last child of her family, having been preceded by seven brothers and three sisters.

Religion. Her family was profoundly religious and saw to it that she was taught catechism at an early age. As a matter of fact, at the age of five she was considered ready to receive her First Holy Communion. From the time she was eleven till she was eighteen, she studied under the Sisters of Saint Dorothy in Lucca. At twelve, she decided to become a nun and this brought about in her many changes, which she called her "conversion."

As the years went by, it was noticed by everyone that "whether in school or in her parish", the Servant of God was always the first to undertake spiritual initiatives for the common good, encouraging her friends and companions, especially by the example of her own life. In this way with God's help, Anita was prepared for her total consecration to the Lord in the religious life.

Enters Religious Life. On the twenty fourth of May, 1930, Anita entered the postulancy of the Carmelite Sisters of Saint Teresa (this group was founded by Venerable Mother Teresa Maria of the Cross in 1847). From the day she entered, the Servant of God showed that she possessed a profound interior life and gave every sign of becoming a perfect religious. She did everything cheerfully and with great care and exactitude. She was especially devoted to the Eucharist, perpetually exposed for the adoration of the faithful in the Church attached to the Convent.

Serious Illness. She had scarcely been in the convent three months, when she became seriously ill. It was probably the first indication of an illness that would confine her to her bed for the

rest of her life. As a result, the Superiors were forced to send her home. This was a great disappointment for Anita. In her Diary she relates how her physical condition did not disturb her calm and, in fact, she thanked the Lord for having made her understand that her Carmelite vocation was to be realized in her family where, as she wrote, there was not lacking "either cloister, or cell, or mortification."

Becomes a Secular Carmelite. To become a Saint according to the spirit of Carmelite spirituality, her spiritual director, Monsignor Pasquellini, enrolled her into the Third Order Secular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa on July 1, 1935. The name she took as a Carmelite, was Teresa of the Child Jesus. On August 25, 1936, she became a member of the *Regnum Christi*, a lay association clearly oriented toward the apostolate.

From her understanding of her Rule of Life, she learned that a life of prayer and meditation is a special time for union with God, generous and serene acceptance of her physical and moral sufferings each day and of prayer offered up for the conversion of souls, and for the sanctification of priests and souls consecrated to God.

Death. Her condition steadily worsened and in the beginning of 1942, it was clear that her time on earth could not last much longer. It is stated that she actually predicted the day and hour of her death. The death of Anita Cantieri, rightly named the Skylark of Carmel occurred at ten in the morning, August 24, 1942.

Virtuous Life. The most important activity in the life of the Christian is the practice of the virtues, particularly the virtues of faith, hope and charity, whose function is to directly unite the soul with God.

Exceptional Love. While there were no extraordinary things to report in her life, she was distinguished for her ardent desire to imitate Christ and reach the heights of perfection. In fact, she wrote in her Diary: "I don't want to remain mediocre. I want to become a saint, and since the glory of God is correlative to my holiness, I want to procure this in a great way. I want to become a great saint."

Two other points emerged in the Process of her Beatification. First, she was guided by true faith in all her thoughts and in all her actions. She always adhered with all her strength to the truths of religion; in particular, she felt strongly attracted by the mystery of the indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity, the Eucharist, the redemptive death of Christ and the life of the Holy Virgin. In all her actions she was profoundly animated by the

desire to fulfill them for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.

A second consideration was highlighted during the Canonical Trials. Anita, even though stricken with pulmonary and abdominal tuberculosis, and limited to being able to sit up in a chair from time to time, was intensely interested in the spiritual welfare of others and the apostolate of the Church. Of this remarkable aspect of her life, Father Simeone de la Sagrada Familia, the Postulator of our Order, has written: "She also felt a vivid desire to communicate her faith to others. Consequently, she had a particular zeal for the spreading of the kingdom of God and became an efficacious helper of her Pastor. She concerned herself with the baptism of the infants, prepared children to receive the Eucharist, concerned herself with instructing adults in their faith and in the life of prayer. She labored for the salvation of sinners, making sure that Viaticum was given in time to those in need."

How could our Skylark of Carmel sing so strongly, so vibrantly, so beautifully even in her worst sufferings? This earth of ours, obviously, cannot provide such melodic sweetness, for her sweetness was from above. It is actually a song that the soul sings together with Christ, united with and inflamed with love for the One who came to spread Divine Fire over the face of the earth.

Prayer: O, Skylark of Carmel, intercede for all of us that we may be able to sing with Christ our song of praise and adoration in Carmel.

Approval of Her Heroic Virtues. In *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper it was officially reported that on Saturday, December 21, 1991, in the presence of the Holy Father, the following Decree was promulgated: "The heroic virtues of the Servant of God, Anita Cantieri, Virgin of the Third Order Secular of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel; born at Arancio, Italy on 30 March 1910 and died at Lucca on 24 August, 1942."

By this Vatican act, we can now officially call her Venerable Anita Cantieri. This is an important step on the road to her eventual beatification. The only remaining thing now required will be the approval of a miracle obtained from God through her intercession, and then the announcement by the Holy Father of the date of her solemn beatification.



Bl. Isidore Bakanja, 24 Year Old Scapular Martyr 1885-1909

Since one of the important apostolates of our holy Order is the promotion of devotion to the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, it was with great edification that we recently learned of a young man in Africa who suffered martyrdom rather than renounce wearing the scapular he wore to honor Our Lady. The following is the story of this Marian African martyr of our century.

Isidore Bakanja, born c. 1885 in Belgium Congo (Zaire), became a Christian as a teenager. His love for Christ Jesus translated into prayer and witness. Mild and respectful, pure of heart, he nourished a tender devotion for Mary through reciting the rosary and the wearing of the brown scapular, which he had been taught were signs of being a Catholic. He was mercilessly scourged by an atheist employer because he would not remove

his scapular. His agony lasted more than six months. Having forgiven his killer and promised to pray for him, he died on August 15th, 1909, his rosary in hand and his scapular around his neck.

This glorious young Christian has been solemnly beatified by the Church. The following prayer in honor of Isidore Bakanja has been officially approved:

Merciful and forgiving Father, you filled your servant Isidore Bakanja with the gifts of prayer and witness, and inspired him to heroic patience and pardon in his atrocious sufferings; by the grace of your Spirit, grant us your gifts of reconciliation and perseverance in the faith, and lead us on the way of justice and peace. We ask this through Christ Jesus Our Lord. Amen

[POSTULATOR GENERAL, ROME]

The Liturgy of the Hours

Introduction

The Lord Jesus, by word and example, taught his disciples that prayer is normative for the Christian believer. His life was spent in prayer: reflection alone in the desert, morning and evening prayer in the synagogue, praying with his disciples. Jesus was a 'man of prayer' in every sense of the word, for communication with his heavenly Father was indicative of his whole life's work and mission. *Even now, the risen Lord forever lives to make intercession for us* (see Hebrews 7:25). He is the supreme and eternal Priest and our prayer is meant to be a participation in his *heavenly* liturgy. Prayer is the language of the city of God. Our motivation in prayer is to be joined to the Lord, to make his prayer ours, in the hope that ours will be his.

Christian prayer, like the prayer of Jesus, is living in the presence of God in an intimate communion of praise and thanksgiving of reflection and supplication. The mighty works of God in the history of his people and in the personal history of the believer are the ground of all prayer. *It is the creative and loving kindness of God in our individual lives and in the Christian communities which enables us to sing out his praises and makes us confident enough to place before him our most pressing needs, our most urgent desires, and our most anxious pleas.*

Thus, whether it is the meditative prayer of the Christian alone in a room or the surging hymns and petitions of the liturgical assembly, Christian prayer finds its center in the person of Jesus Christ because it is in the name of the Lord Jesus that we pray, and in his name that our assemblies are formed.

The "necessity of praying always and never losing heart" (Luke 18:1) is the basis of the Christian's obligation to pray. From the earliest times the Church has interpreted Christ's norm in two directions: personal prayer and liturgical prayer. The Lord's Prayer provided the model for personal Christian prayer. It is praise and petition, confidence and thanksgiving all in one movement offered to the Father.

Liturgical prayer, when the ecclesial assembly gathers together, also models itself on the life and example of Jesus. Jesus was ever attentive to the festivals of Israel. Attendance at Temple and synagogue expressed his own piety. His very act of redemption is given to us to celebrate in the context of the most basic of Jewish liturgical rites: the home seder. In the same way, the liturgy of the hours or Divine Office from the days of the early Church to our own, is modeled on the hinges of synagogue Sabbath worship, Morning and Evening Prayer. The Office is an expression of "the necessity of praying always," day after day, hour by hour.

The Second Vatican Council decreed a thorough reform of the liturgy of the hours so that it would truly express the sanctification of time and the consecration of the Christian's life in a rhythm not unlike that of the life of the Lord himself. By its nature, the Office is a priestly work of the whole Christian people and mirrors the eternal praise offered by the heavenly court. It is the rich source of personal prayer also, for the liturgy of the hours familiarizes us with the psalms and Scriptures. It teaches us confidently to offer our petitions to the Lord day after day. In morning and evening we pray the Lord's Prayer and the gospel canticles proclaiming God's marvelous deeds. The Office nourishes us through song and prayer for the Sunday eucharistic assembly. Indeed, it is the prolongation of the central eucharistic theme of praise and thanksgiving. Ultimately, through the celebration of the hours we are placed in more intimate contact with the mystery of Christ made present in the liturgical year.

In many ways then the liturgy of the hours is a school of prayer for all Christians. There we learn to pray. Through the Office the community, that is the Church, is manifested. Thus the obligation to pray the hours is serious for the whole Church, particularly those in orders who lead the assembly to celebrate this liturgy daily, and who have, in a special way, given themselves to public ministry within the Church.

The Liturgy Revised

The work of revising the traditional Roman Office took several years. The basic Latin text, prepared by the Apostolic See at the mandate of the Second Vatican Council, was published in 1971 and 1972 under the title *Liturgia Horarum*. In turn, this text was faithfully rendered into contemporary English by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, sponsored by some eleven bishops' conferences and serving the Church in their countries and many other countries of the world. This translation, which was published in 1974 and 1975, is the only version approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for the Church in the United States. It appears in editions issued by several publishers.

The *Liturgy of the Hours*, whether in its complete form (4 volumes) or in 1 volume (*Christian Prayer*), has a number of distinctive features which show the goals sought by the Second Vatican Council: a simplified and somewhat abbreviated structure; a vastly enlarged range of biblical and non-biblical readings, the latter not only from the Fathers and traditional writers, but also from modern sources; psalm prayers to give a Christian reflection upon the Old Testament songs of praise; canticles from Scripture not used in the previous Office; new intercessory prayers in litany form; *wide flexibility and adaptability* in the use of texts. Even apart from the official approbation of Church authority, the Roman *Liturgy of the Hours* is a vastly improved collection of prayer services for the hours of each day of the Christian year.

The Liturgy of the Hours is preceded, as was the restored Order of Mass in 1969, by an important General Instruction. This lengthy document goes far beyond the introductory material of the old *Breviarium Romanum*. It gives not only necessary directions but also a

Careful description of all the elements which make up the liturgy of the hours and, still more important, the basic rationale for common services of prayer in the Christian community. The riches of the liturgical Office, the relation and *flexibility* of the parts, and the like are all explained in the General Instruction.

The Prayer of the Church

Perhaps the most difficult and challenging task is to make the liturgy of the hours in fact and practice, as well as in theory and doctrine, the prayer of the entire Church. It is several decades since the celebration of Sunday Prayer or Vespers practically disappeared from parishes in this country. The best efforts of the liturgical movement in the 1940s and 1950s to restore Sunday Vespers or Compline to parish use had only minimal success. The singing of Sunday Vespers was largely limited to seminaries; the singing of anything like the whole Office was largely limited to religious communities.

To introduce, in 1977, the common celebration of even some part of the Church's liturgical prayer in parishes and similar communities and gatherings will require extraordinary efforts, which are beyond the immediate purpose or scope of this statement to suggest. Such a development will be aided considerably, however, by the providential growth of groups, houses, and associations for prayer; by the practice among priests and others of voluntarily gathering to pray some part of the liturgy of the hours; by making it part of the prayer of meetings of priests' senates, diocesan and parish councils and of the prayer life of seminaries, rectories, and religious communities; and by greater familiarity with styles of common prayer similar to the official liturgy. Above all, it will be helpful if those accustomed to pray the Office alone, especially priests and deacons, gather others from their parishes to join with them in common prayer.

Bishops Committee on the Liturgy National Conference of Catholic Bishops
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Resource: *The School of Prayer: An Introduction to The Divine Office for all Christians.* By John Brooks. Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1992. Pp. 441. This small book is an excellent resource for understanding and teaching the structure of the Office. It also has commentary of the Hymns and Psalms of Morning, Evening and Night prayer. Available through Amazon.com.