



# Flos Carmeli

## Guidelines for our Teresian Studies: The Book of Life, Year 1 of 6 (2009-2015)

- I READ TERESA AGAIN
- II DISCERN WITH TERESA
- III CELEBRATE

In this section we would like to offer some key ideas for a more in-depth study of the Teresian texts, which can be used in any personal or community study.

By way of 'Lectio Divina', we would like to suggest a possible practical plan that is pedagogical and clear. It is to allow the text and Teresa's own voice to question us today. The primary intention for this study is not pastoral, it is rather for our own renewal. This plan could be suitable for community meetings. If the community would like to get more out of the text or use it from a more pastoral perspective, we offer in the 3rd section (LET'S CELEBRATE) seven ways to share, celebrate and discuss the contents of each text.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Inside this issue

Provincial delegate's report 7

Provincial council report 10

Formation alert 13

National Council meets 14

Report of Baltimore Congress 16

Reflections on evangelical counsels 18

The call to Carmel 23

News from around the province 24

(Continued from page 1)

## I. READ TERESA AGAIN

### HOW TO DO THIS? STEPS TO FOLLOW

(Each community is free to use these steps, selecting just some of them or organize themselves in another way. The steps are a pedagogical suggestion)

#### 1) QUESTION MYSELF before beginning:

From what context am I reading the text?

YOUR

Where am I vocationally and spiritually at this particular time?

What is my interest in this? With what anxieties do I approach the text?

#### 2) INVOKE THE HOLY SPIRIT:

In the spirit of Teresa de Jesus, we ask for light and wisdom of heart, to give us a better understanding, always humbly allowing ourselves to be enlightened and, like Teresa, to want to learn. We do not read to be informed but rather to be renewed.

#### 3) CONTEXTUALIZATION:

Someone from the community takes it upon himself to situate the text in context: when does this happen in Saint Teresa's life, what is the social and ecclesial environment, the Carmelite situation. What is Teresa responding to? What does she bring to this of herself that is original, as a woman?

#### 4) READING AS A COMMUNITY:

Read out loud, pausing occasionally: By reading the same passage together we bring Teresa's words to life and are reminded of what she wanted to say to us.

#### 5) SILENCE:

Allow for brief periods to allow the text to resonate in each one. You might like to underline some aspect or words that resonated (others listen in silence).

#### 6) EVOCATION-RESONANCE:

What aspects struck you in this reading, from what St. Teresa said of God, of herself, of others? What key-words did you encounter in the text? Underline two or three.

(Continued on page 3)

## Meeting minutes from Groups in Dis- cernment

*When are they due?* Please send them to me within 45 days of your meeting.

*How should you send them?* Please send them as an attachment to your email. Do not include them in the body of the email itself.

And please send them in one or the other file formats— either in Microsoft 2007 (a .docx file), or in Microsoft 97 – 2003 (a .doc file). Please do not use Word-Pad or Works Processor or any other program, as I will not be able to open them.

Thank you.

Karen Harris

OCDS Provincial Council  
Secretary

## *A letter from the editor*

Once more, with accuracy

In the last edition, I requested that anyone interested in receiving the Flos Carmeli via e-mail should contact me. I'd like to make another plug for that here, since it seems to make sense from a "green" perspective to send the newsletter electronically and to husband resources now used in printing and postage. For those who choose this option, please contact me via THIS e-mail address: [tnmhanley@yahoo.com](mailto:tnmhanley@yahoo.com). The address printed in the last Flos was incorrect.

In the current issue you'll find the order's study guide for Year 1 of the planned six years of Teresian studies, with suggestions on how to implement this study in the Provincial Delegate's report. Your responses to the question "How do I, a Carmelite Secular, live the evangelical counsels?" appear on page 18. And don't miss newly ordained Father Juan Cabrera's article on his call to Carmel on page 23.

As always, send chapter news and photos to Father Bonaventure at [bvsauer@yahoo.com](mailto:bvsauer@yahoo.com).

And now, let us set off together in our reading of Teresa's *Life*.

Martha Hanley, O.C.D.S.

*(Continued from page 2)*

### 7) WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY OF US?

"This history is my history" The idea is to make real the experience described by Saint Teresa.

In what way does the text speak to me and my life? What does it say about me?

Is what Saint Teresa says done in your community? What suggestions come up?

What does this text suggest, condemn and reveal about or society and modern world? Our responses should be specific and concrete.

What does Saint Teresa suggest to us?

### 8) PRAYER:

Let us conclude as Teresa would have done, praying spontaneously and sincerely, 'in spirit and in truth'. There should be opportunity for anyone who wishes to pray out loud.

## II DISCERN WITH TERESA

### CRITERIA TO BEAR IN MIND.

Teresa's writings confront us with life, entice us to experience, challenge us to take part in a real adventure; i.e., not something theoretical or imaginary. Her writings can be read using these key-ideas, and enlightened by some of the following approaches:

**PASTORAL:** *A pastoral application.*

**EXPERIENTIAL, MISTAGOGICAL PROPHETIC:** *Teresa's initiation to the experience.*

**BIBLICAL & LITURGICAL:** *read the events of her life from the perspective of the Word of God*

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

**CRISTOCENTRIC & BIBLICAL:** *an invitation to keep one's eyes fixed on Christ.*

**ECCLESIAL:** *an experience of communion with the Church.*

**COMMUNITARIAN:** *a sense of fraternity, relating with everyone and everything.*

**APOSTOLIC & MISSIONARY:** *"For this... the Lord has brought us together"...*

**INCULTURATION:** *a valid message for our time and for every culture.*

#### TEXT THAT COULD BE READ IN COMMUNITY

We would like to suggest **eight** important texts. There are eight, but each community can choose the number of texts to study in-depth, depending on the kind and number of meetings you wish to hold.

1. Chap. 1: Key-moment in her Life

**" I BEGAN TO WAKE UP"**

"It was You that..."

2. Chap. 4. 10 & 8: 5-6:  
*Who is the God of your experience?*

**"THE GREAT GOODNESS OF GOD..."**

3. Chap. 9: Conversion

**"I TRUST TOTALLY IN GOD"**

4. Chap. 13: Prayer and a beginner"

**LOOK AT CHRIST WHO IS LOOKING AT US"**

5. Chap 22: 10-18: Christ's humanity

**"CHRIST IS A VERY GOOD FRIEND"**

6. Chap. 26.6; 27:1-4. 6: Christological experience and Teresian prophecy

**"TO MAKE KNOWN TO MY CONFESSOR THE WHOLE STATE OF MY SOUL AND THE**

**FAVORS GOD GRANTS ME"**

7. Chap. 32: 11-18: Foundation of the new Carmel

**"HIS MAJESTY COMMANDED ME TO STRIVE FOR THIS MONASTERY"**

8. Chap. 40: 1-10, 23-25: The final chapter from an open book

**"THIS IS THE WAY IN WHICH I NOW LIVE"**

#### III. CELEBRATE

The following are seven ways you might choose to do this. They are offered as a pedagogical guide so that each community might use them as seems fitting. They can serve as additional material and implemented in other situations. The prayers could be used as something to share, or for a prayer service again, for a day of renewal, catechesis, a penitential service, as something to study and compare with the world outside, etc.

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)

1. **SHARE - DIALOGUES**
2. **PRAYER SERVICE**
3. **A DAY OF RECOLLECTION**
4. **CATECHESIS**
5. **PENITENTIAL SERVICE**
6. **QUESTIONS FROM OUTSIDE**
7. **CHALLENGE, COMMITMENT, ADVENTURE, PROPHECY**
8. **CULTURAL EXPRESSION**

1. **OPEN ENDED DIALOGUES**

Small groups to read / reflect on the text.

Discuss with friends, disalced Carmelites, prayer groups...

Any of the Saint's texts can be used for dialogue, being born out of dialogue.

Cf. Life 7.20: "A great evil it is for a soul to be on its own"

2. **PRAY WITH THE CHURCH**

Prepare a prayer service using the Teresian plan, starting from the text in question, so that it can be taken up by the community or our groups.

Saint Teresa always interrupts the accounts of her life to pray; her life is always in God's presence, it is to Him whom she loves that she refers.

Life 8.5: "Taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us"

**A QUIET DAY OR DAY OF RECOLLECTION**

Prepare for a day in the desert.

**Guidelines for a day of quiet.**

Teresa loved solitude, as a chance with herself, with others and with the Lord. She searched in the solitude for Him who was at the same time distant and near; in this way she discovered the Truth.

4. **CATECHESIS**

**Start from the text and expand on what it says, making explicit Teresa's teaching in the chapter just read, that invites us to an experience of God. Catechesis should carry out by one's own community.**

Teresa really knows how to entice people and to influence those around her with her enthusiasm.

Life 38.18: "It is a powerful lesson for raising one's desires for pure truth"

5. **A PENITENTIAL SERVICE**

**Starting from Teresa's text, prepare a reconciliation service, bringing together the various and nuanced elements that were present in Teresa's conversion experience.**

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

**Teresa's life changed radically when she met Christ. She went from striving alone to placing all her trust in God. It was God who changed her life.**

**Life 9.3: "I was very distrustful of myself and put all my trust in God"**

## 6. QUESTIONS FROM OUTSIDE

**Someone from outside the Carmelite circle suggests a theme, transposing Teresa's voice in a novel and incisive way. Ask someone to talk to us and, without fear, ask us questions.**

How do others who are not Carmelites see us, from the viewpoint of this text?

Life 10.8: "I have always tried to find someone who would give me light"

## 7. CHALLENGE, COMMITMENT, ADVENTURE, PROPHECY

Open up ways, explore paths. Teresa, as a teacher, did not want us to stick to her words, nor with her experience. She encourages us to have our own, unique experience of the God who loved her. God, eternally new, challenges us to give Him our lives.

**Saint Teresa is a lady who rouses others. She is totally immersed in the experience she is narrating. With this experience she was not ashamed to express herself in public, to witness to the God who loved her with His intimated mercy.**

**So, we suggest you accept Teresa's challenge and search in the text for concrete suggestions, to present in the 'market place' (i.e., the communications media) Teresa's wish to proclaim the truth out loud and without**

**fear.**

An example: Distribute in your city centre a clear and well-known text from St. Teresa's writings, that invites peoples to let Christ look at them.

Life 25.17: "Oh, who will cry out for You, to tell everyone how faithful You are to your friends!"

## 8. A CULTURAL EXPRESSION

**Look within the cultural domain, including the secular, to where you might find an event, or a song, a film, an item of news etc., which reflects, coincides with, or even contrasts with some aspect from Teresa writings.**

**The community should strive to convert the text into something cultural, using modern language and make it accessible to people who are searching today. Each has read St. Teresa from its own perspective, making her writings come alive, evoking her, and being questioned by her, in spite of the long time gap.**

Life 17.5: "It is (a grace) ... to know how to describe (the Lord's favor) and explain it"

### Mark your calendars

The O.C.D.S. Regional Congress of the California-Arizona Province will be June 24-27, 2010, in Bakersfield, Calif. The Carmelite Institute Conference, "Carmel's Quest for the Living God," will be June 15-19, 2010, in South Bend, Ind.

# Provincial Delegate's report

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

( spent most of the summer—the months of July and August to be exact—at Marylake Monastery, our house near Little Rock. I was there, for one, to assist with weekend help-outs, a ministry I always enjoy. But the provincial also asked me to spend these months there in order to help with community life while our two novices were at Marylake this summer.

Our two novices are: Br. Juan Guillermo Quintana, originally from Mexico, who began his novitiate year this past January; and Br. Daniel Lacourge, from Slidell, LA, who began the novitiate with his clothing ceremony just this past July 15. Both are fine candidates, earnestly seeking God's call in their lives. Please keep them in your prayers, especially during this crucial time of their initial formation as a Carmelite.

In July I attended the OCDS Regional Congress hosted by members of the Washington Province in the Baltimore area. It was a large gathering, with nearly 400 in attendance. The schedule was quite full— involving conferences, panel discussions, and workshops. There was no single theme for the Congress. Rather, presentations were arranged around four broad topics: the challenge of the vocation itself, issues in formation, forming community, and the apostolate. In a concerted, consistent way the planners sought to involve Seculars themselves in these presentations. Of course, there is more to be done in this direction. But the Congress did represent what regional congresses will increasingly be like in the future. The format will be varied, and the topics, and issues addressed diverse, while the majority of presenters—be it in giving conferences, leading panel discussions, or conducting workshops—will be Seculars.

## St. Teresa Study Program—Year One

All of you should have heard by now of the Study Program the Order has inaugurated to prepare us for the Fifth Centenary of the birth of Holy Mother in 2015. You should also have received, or at least have seen a copy, of the *Guide* issued by the Center of the Order for use during this first year of this 6-year program. The year is to be dedicated to study of St. Teresa's autobiography, *The Book of Her Life*.

The *Guide* is meant to help us with planning our study of this work, both as individuals and communities. It seems to me to be organized according to a three-step process. First, of course, we need to **read** Teresa. *What is she saying?* Then we need to **discern** the meaning and relevance (the truth) of her teaching for us today—"discern"

being the word the *Guide* uses. *Not just what is Teresa saying, but what is she saying to me, to us?* And lastly, we need to **celebrate** the light and grace (the spiritual truth) that we have received through her—"celebrate" being the word the *Guide* uses. How do we give expression to and share with others this truth that has been entrusted to us as Carmelites through our Holy Mother? *Not just what is Teresa saying, nor just what is she saying to us, but what are we saying about Teresa for others?*

Another approach to planning for this Study Program is to look at the three general aspects of our vocation and ask how we might (both individually and in community) engage or incorporate *The Book of Her Life* into each of these aspects. The three aspects I have in mind are: prayer (both personal and in

*(Continued on page 8)*

(Continued from page 7)

community), community life and study (which includes initial as well as ongoing formation), and the apostolate (especially the community apostolate).

Thus, in the area of personal prayer, for example, someone in the community might prepare a handout highlighting passages from *The Book of Her Life* that seem particularly conducive to personal meditation. Members of the community can then use this handout for their prayer. Or someone might compose a prayer from Teresa's own words (taken from *The Book of Her Life*), which members of the community can then use as they begin mental prayer each day. Or, in the area of community life and study, to offer another example—in place of your usual monthly meeting the community could celebrate a day of recollection together with different members of the community offering reflections on texts from *The Book of Her Life*. The possibilities are endless, limited only by your imagination and creativity.

A final word on this Study Program. The Order has inaugurated the program because it sees in the upcoming centenary of the birth of Holy Mother an occasion of grace and an opportunity for renewal. Thus, I invite you to take advantage of this grace by opening yourselves, personally and as communities, to a process of renewal in our Carmelite vocation through a prayerful and focused study of the life and teachings of St. Teresa. The more we give the more we will receive.

### ***Request for information about Spiritual Assistants***

I have a request to make of all presidents of study groups or chapters. I need to get a better handle on the situation with respect to spiritual assistants in

our province. Thus, I'm asking you to send me the following information:

(1) The name of your spiritual assistant, along with his or her contact information—address, phone number, email—as you have it.

(2) Some indication as to when your spiritual assistant received his or her appointment and for how long.

(3) A brief description of what your spiritual assistant does in his or her capacity—for example, does he or she give talks? How often? Does he or she attend meetings? How often? If so, how does he or she participate in your meetings? Does he or she assist with formation and/or the evaluation of candidates? In what ways? Does he or she attend council meetings or otherwise meet with the council? For what reasons?

Please send this information to me via email. My address is [bvsauer@yahoo.com](mailto:bvsauer@yahoo.com). I will be very appreciative as the matter is important.

### ***Invalid marriage—an impediment to making profession in the Secular Order***

At some point in a person's formation process prior to first profession, and probably sooner rather than later, you need to determine whether a candidate is in a valid Catholic marriage. This question is relevant simply because you cannot approve someone who is not in a valid marriage to make their promise (first or final) as a Secular Carmelite. This is not a judgment on the state of the person's soul, or their personal holiness, let alone their eternal salvation. It has only to do with their relationship with the church—or, as we say, with their being in "good standing" in the church.

Other questions about a person's

(Continued on page 9)



(Continued from page 8)

marital life or status—questions such as, for example, *Are you divorced?*—while they are certainly pertinent to a candidate's life story, and so to that extent relevant to their formation, yet are not really relevant to the matter at hand—namely, the candidate's good standing in the church, and so their freedom to make profession as a Secular Carmelite. Thus, all these other questions about married life and status are to be left for the usual process of self-disclosure that happens progressively during formation and is for the most part determined by the candidate's own comfort level in such matters.

Let me underscore this point. There is no problem with a person being divorced, for example, and so there is really no reason to inquire into whether or not a candidate has ever been divorced. He or she can reveal such things in their own good time, when they are ready. Of course, most of the time an invalid marriage results from someone having divorced and then remarried without first having had the prior marriage annulled. The issue, of course, is not the divorce but the remarriage “outside the church.” In the same way there are those instances when someone has simply married “outside the church,” without there being a prior marriage at all. That marriage, too, is invalid and needs to be convalidated, or “blessed,” by the church.

Probably the simplest and gentlest way to get an answer to this question is to include on the application form—the one to be filled out either before or early on during the aspirancy—a single twofold question: *Are you married? If so, are you married in the church?* There might be another way to phrase it. But to ask whether someone is married “in the church” seems to me clear and straightforward, and most Catholics know what is meant. Obviously, if there's any uncer-

tainty in a particular situation, it would be appropriate to consult your spiritual assistant (or a pastor or other priest) as needed.

When should the question be asked? As I said above, probably sooner rather than later. In theory there's no reason a person in an invalid marriage cannot be admitted to formation as a novice and continue up to the point of first promise. But that's where it would have to stop until the invalid marriage were convalidated or “blessed.” Thus, both you and the candidate would do well to know about and have thoroughly discussed this potential obstacle *sooner rather than later*.

What should you do if a candidate is in an invalid marriage? Well, to some extent it's up to you—that is, to the local council. There's no single, one-size-fits-all approach or solution. If a person has already initiated an annulment process, and the process is well underway, and he or she intends to have their marriage “blessed” once the process is complete, and it seems there's good reason to expect the annulment to be granted in the near future, then you might decide to let them continue in the aspirancy for the time being, although you should be very clear with them about the situation and the potential problem. On the other hand, if a person has not even begun an annulment process, then you might ask them to do that, of course, while in the meantime discontinuing formation. Thus, you and they can better determine just what and how long a time the annulment process might require. You can then offer to stay in touch with the person and, depending on how things unfold, invite him or her to return and begin formation at some point in the future.

Lastly, there will no doubt be those situations where you have no choice but

to ask the person to discontinue with the community indefinitely and very possibly forever, as difficult and disappointing as that may be. Needless to say, any such discussions and decisions are to be conducted and made by the full council, being always subject to the confidentiality that holds for all such council deliberations.

## Report of the Provincial Council

Happy feasts of Therese and Teresa!

With this feast of St Teresa, the entire Order begins a six year study of the works of our Holy Mother. Information about this was emailed to all our presidents recently and the study guide for this year's study of *The Life* is included in this issue of the Flos. We hope that all of our communities view the next six years as a great opportunity to look at ways in which we as Seculars can help others learn more about St Teresa. We see the potential for some collaboration with our friars. Already some communities have been sponsoring a day of talks and reflections about Carmel in which the local OCDS community does all the organizing of the event and sponsors one of our friars to give the talks. Or maybe your own community has members who have the gift to present as well! In 2015, the Order will celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Teresa's birth so this gives us plenty of time to come up with great ideas on how we can spread her great teachings about prayer.

We are very happy to welcome to the Provincial Council **Martha Burchard** from our Sioux City community. Martha has agreed to complete the term vacated by **Nancy Thompson**. That still leaves us short one person to finish out the five year term vacated by **Gloria Guajardo**. Please feel free to submit to us any suggestions for that open spot.

In July, **Dorothy, Elizabeth, and Fr. Bonaventure** attended the Baltimore Congress. Prior to the congress, they, along with **Linda Kotz** from our New Orleans community, attended the annual meeting of the OCDS National Council for the USA. Highlights of the meeting discussion are printed in this issue of the Flos. **Fr. Bonaventure** gave one of the keynote talks on the evangelical counsels for OCDS and **Elizabeth** gave one of the smaller workshops on the topic of leadership in OCDS communities. It was **Dorothy's** first congress outside of our province so she had the opportunity to learn about some of the differences between the three US provinces.

At the end of August, the Provincial Council held a meeting in Dallas with Fr Provincial, **Gregory Ross**. We had several items on which we needed his input including the demand from one diocese for safe environment training by a council, setting up the OCDS as a non-profit entity, and the need for a new statute on disciplinary matters. We also met briefly with **Pat Darby** who has indicated her desire to retire from service to our province at the end of this triennium. Pat has looked after our Central Office for many, many years and will be working with us on developing a job description and the transition to someone else taking over that role.

*(Continued on page 11)*

*(Continued from page 10)*

We have closed out the summer with a number of visitations. We seemed a bit focused on Houston and Mississippi of late.

**Elizabeth** visited our communities in New Caney (a suburb of Houston), our Houston study group and Lubbock. **Henrietta** visited Houston-San Juan as well as Jackson, MS and Natchez-Vidalia, MS. **Dorothy** went to Madison, AL and Knoxville, TN. She also met briefly with our Georgetown, TX study group.

The Provincial Council recognized a new Group in Discernment in Chattanooga, TN and has asked our Mobile, AL community to men-

tor them. We hope to soon send someone (looks like it'll be **Fr Bonaventure**) to Sioux City to discern if our Group in Discernment in Omaha is now ready to be elevated to Study Group status.

So as you can see, we've been a bit busy over summer.

The Provincial Council

Henrietta Albright, Martha Burchard, Elizabeth Korves, Dorothy Mansen

## When members can't attend meetings

*There have been many questions about the status of members unable to attend meetings for different reasons. The Provincial Council hopes that this little summary of the legislation involved helps to clarify the various categories and expectations.*

**INFIRM/HOMEBOUND:** (Statutes, Sec XVI.6)

Unable to attend due to illness or age (short term or long term)

The community shall take responsibility for keeping members involved in communal life by maintaining regular contact.

(Keep member updated on reading assignments. etc.)

It is also the responsibility of the member to maintain contact with the community.

Infirmarian is to report to the community status of the ill member, send cards, notes, pictures, etc.

*(Continued on page 12)*

**ISOLATE:** (Constitutions, Art 56; Statutes , Sec II )

Unable to attend due to distance from community (more than one hour drive)

Isolated members should visit community once a year and be invited to attend retreat or days of recollection.

President is to initiate the initial contact with the isolate.

Isolates are to maintain monthly contact with the community via member appointed by the Local Council.

If isolate is definitively promised they should receive on- going formation from the community.

Isolate in Formation: Assigned to a canonical community by the Provincial Council with the approval of the Local Council.

Director of Formation conducts formation via long distance.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE:** (Statutes, Sec XVI.7)

A Leave of Absence is a withdrawal from active participation in community life for a limited amount of time.

Someone on a leave does not attend meetings, retreats, days of recollection, or other events in the life of the community until the leave is over.

The local Council may approve a one-year leave of absence for those in Definitive Promise for a serious reason.

The leave of absence may be renewed by the Local Council for up to two more years.

Further extensions may be applied for through the Provincial Council.

**INACTIVE:** (no legislation governing this category)

A Definitively professed member who has been absent from the community for more than a year and not in one of the categories above.

Community should have in place a procedure to monitor absences and follow-up on missed meetings.

Community should try to locate inactive member and determine status.

In active member should be invited to return to community.

A Local Council may take steps to dismiss someone who has been on inactive status for an extended period of time. An explanation should be provided to the member.

(Statutes, sec. XVI. 9 )

# Formation Alert from the Provincial Council

*Recently ICS has come out with a new book that pulls together several of the articles by Fr Aloysius Deeney that have been circulating online for the past several years. Some of these articles are used in our formation guidelines. The earlier versions are still available (with permission) on our provincial website but slightly edited versions are now also available in the new book. It is titled "Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites" and can be purchased from the Institute of Carmelite Studies. Below are the page numbers that correspond to our formation guidelines.*

## **Aspirancy:**

The New OCDS Legislation and the Vocation to Carmel - talk by Fr. Aloysius Deeney OCD - (same as pg. 22-37 in "[Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites](#)")

Profile of an OCDS - talk by Fr. Aloysius Deeney OCD - (same as Testing and Discerning a Vocation to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelies - pg. 9-21 in "[Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites](#)")

## **Definitive Promise:**

Beatitudes - talk by Fr. Aloysius Deeney OCD - (same as The Beatitude and Your Vocation to Carmel - pg. 63-77 in "[Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites](#)")

# Subscribe to Carmelite publications

Did you know that each U.S. province has a Carmelite magazine? Below is information regarding each of these magazines.

## **From the Oklahoma Province:**

The Apostolate Magazine

1111 Culebra Ave

San Antonio, TX 78201

210-734-4002

[http://www.littleflowerbasilica.org/Apostolate\\_Magazine.php](http://www.littleflowerbasilica.org/Apostolate_Magazine.php)

Cost: FREE

## **From the California-Arizona Province:**

Carmelite Digest

PO Box 3898

Yountville, CA 94599-3898

<http://www.carmelitedigest.com/contact.html>

Cost: \$26/year

## **From the Washington Province:**

Clarion

2131 Lincoln Rd NE

Washington, DC 20002-1151

[http://www.flowerofcarmel.org/subject\\_index\\_2.htm](http://www.flowerofcarmel.org/subject_index_2.htm)

Cost: \$10/year

Spiritual Life

2131 Lincoln Rd NE

Washington, DC 20002-1151

<http://carmelocd.net/store/index.html>

Cost: \$22/year

# National Council meets, deliberates

*The National Council met in Baltimore July 16, 2009. Notes from the meeting follow.*

## **Provincial Reports**

### *Oklahoma Province:*

Two members resigned from their Provincial Council for health reasons and they are working to replace them

Although the Houston Congress was canceled last year, a large group of OCDS from California did not receive word in time and arrived after it was too late to get flights home; two friars and the OCDS Provincial Council president remained to look after them and a “mini-congress” was held in the midst of the hurricane of the 24 people left behind

The province recently held two workshops for local councils, one in Dallas and one in Ponchatoola, LA. These workshops covered a variety of topics like formation, discernment, working as a council, etc. They were well attended with most of the communities in the province sending at least one council member.

All communities in the province have received at least one visitation and now the Provincial Council is well into next round. All canonical communities are visited once every three years. Study groups are on a more frequent cycle of visits. The full visitation process was described since the other provinces were curious about how it is done.

### *California-Arizona Province:*

Their Provincial Council members are nominated by their communities and then the current Provincial Council chooses the new members based on the region with the Provincial Delegate making the official appointment.

Every three years there is a meeting of the Formation Directors in the province. All Formation Directors are required to attend.

The Provincial Delegate is planning to hold regional meetings for remote areas so that OCDS in those areas can interact with a friar. These would not be a retreat but rather a conference and then discussion of formation issues. The Delegate also plans to meet with individual local councils as part of the regional gathering.

The Provincial Council is working on a provincial policy manual.

Provincial website has an area for questions/communication

They are looking at using Skype as a means of staying in contact with the communities in the province.

The challenges within the province are a lack of Spiritual Assistants and a few councils having trouble getting along.

### *Washington Province:*

They have a 7-member Provincial Council.

*(Continued on page 15)*

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There has been confusion in the province regarding the canonical status of many of the communities. The Central Office has been going through their records and Fr Deeney in Rome has been helping to verify which communities have canonical status and which do not.

Provincial Delegates are working to help local councils better understand their responsibilities.

The province does not have isolates but they still need to clarify who is not attending meetings due to distance, age, or illness.

The Central Office has been focusing on updating rosters.

The province is divided into regions and each region is divided into districts or clusters.

They are still working to sort out how to insure OCDS are considered non-profit for tax ID purposes since all communities need a tax ID for the bank accounts.

### **Congresses**

2009 Baltimore Congress: Have 310 people registered, 20 percent from outside of the Washington Province

2010 Congress: 24-27 June in Bakersfield, CA

2011 Congress: 23-26 June in Lafayette, LA

### **Spiritual Assistants**

Oklahoma and Washington Provinces see the Spiritual Assistant in an advisory capacity; encourage local councils to fully assume their responsibilities

California-Arizona Province sees the Spiritual Assistants as being more involved in the community

Washington and Oklahoma Provinces appoint their Spiritual Assistants for a specific length of time

### **Safe Environment Concern**

The Oklahoma Province brought up that a bishop within their province had recently contacted the local OCDS community to require safe environment training as well as liability insurance. The matter was referred to Fr Provincial who is consulting with Praesidium regarding the issue since that is who the friars work with.

### **Future of the National Council –**

While everyone finds the opportunity for networking between the provinces to be valuable, there is a concern about the costs involved for each province in sending representatives to the National Council meeting. Now that each province has its Provincial Council in place, the suggestion was made to have less frequent meetings(perhaps every third year) of all the provincial councils instead of an annual National Council meeting. The matter was referred back to the provincial councils for the following actions:

Provincial Councils are to look at the needs of their province and how the National Council could be changed to help meet those needs (i.e. formation of formators, apostolate); what should be the make-up of the National Council; do we want to shift to more a meeting of the Provincial Councils (i.e. an inter-provincial council)

Ask the Provincial Councils to respond to the National Council by Feb 1 so the NC chair can set the agenda for the 2010 meeting

The NC chair will notify Fr Donald by Feb 15 whether the NC will need 1 day or 1 ½ days for its 2010 meeting so the Congress planning committee can finalize the meeting room.

# Report of the Baltimore Congress

*Hosted by the Washington Province in July 2009*

By Dorothy Mansen, O.C.D.S.

On Friday morning, Rev. John Sullivan, O.C.D., Provincial of the Washington Province, gave the keynote address. He spoke of Christ as the King and that St. John of the Cross said, "We will be judged as to our love...." The question is then, how well do we imitate Christ for others and for ourselves?

There are three fundamentals we have as Seculars: 1<sup>st</sup>, God alone suffices, 2<sup>nd</sup>, we can spend our lives on earth doing good and 3<sup>rd</sup>, where there is no love, put love. God alone suffices: God is love. He is a motivational force. St. Teresa burned with love. As Seculars we have to go out of ourselves and into the world. We are to share our experience of God, leaving the time for ecstasy for the next world. We are to look out for each other in the family of Carmel.

After Mass on Friday morning which was celebrated by the archbishop of Baltimore, Edwin F. O'Brien, Fr. Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D., Provincial Delegate of the Central Province, talked about "Living Out the Promise in the World Within our State of Life, Based on the O.C.D.S. Constitutions."

He said that chastity is loving God above all else and leads us to love our neighbor. It is an interior intimacy with God. Poverty is the deep-seated desire to live the Gospel and using our gifts from God at the service of the Gospel. When we practice obedience we are open to God's will and freely cooperate with those responsible for guiding and leading the Order, that is, for the good of another. In doing so, we manifest our commitment to the world. We

must seek God's will to obey it, and in obeying it we belong to God. By living the evangelical counsels we live a life in allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Father's talk was followed by a workshop called "Living Out the Promise" which addressed our call, vocation and mission; how our Promise and commitment become manifest in our state of life; and living the evangelical counsels as Seculars.

Later that afternoon there was a four-person panel discussion, "Understanding our Carmelite Commitment, both Initial and Ongoing," that addressed how we live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ, our daily prayer life, how we mature on the spiritual journey and the ecclesial aspects of the O.C.D.S. vocation.

Saturday morning found everyone listening to a panel discussion on Formation Issues. This included short talks about the formation guidance lines, the role of the monthly meeting, discernment and ongoing formation. There was time for questions and answers.

At the next set of workshops that afternoon in three separate groups such topics pertaining to formation were then discussed. That is, the critical first steps of formation, training of teachers, and continuing formation after profession, or maturing as a Carmelite and Christian.

Fr. Kevin Culligan, O.C.D., gave a presentation called "Forming Vibrant O.C.D.S. Communities." He explained that in the time of Jesus the community was a

*(Continued on page 17)*



(Continued from page 16)

communion of people who believed in Jesus Christ. These people formed a community to be with him, to be his friends, and share and to support him. They were to love one another. This community continued after his resurrection. He was with them. They were with each other. The Book of Acts teaches Eucharist, prayer and fellowship. Acts is the foundation of the life of the Church and also the Carmelites as expressed in the Rule of Albert Chapters 7 to 11.

St Teresa wrote this about how the communities of nuns were to act. They were to “Pray without ceasing and that all sisters must be equal. Lineage is not observed and all must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear and all must be helped.”

In our Constitutions the promise is made to the community. Community seeks God’s way. The distress that we feel over current events, the destruction of life, greed and materialism should be motivators for us. We should ask, how can my community remedy any of these?

St. Teresa in her *Foundations* felt great distress over the breakup of the church. She thought that what she could do was to follow the counsels the very best she could and that those who lived within the walls would do so too. If we do this too, we can transform our consciousness. A vibrant community takes matters to heart and attempts to identify and oppose through prayer and action against the idolaters of the 21st century and speaks for those who are voiceless in our society. Father Kevin suggested reading the statement of the Catholic Bishops on global poverty found on [www.usccb.org/globalpoverty](http://www.usccb.org/globalpoverty). Communities can sign up and receive briefings on programs that can help. Someone in the community could be appointed to set ways to pray. Wide-

spread poverty constitutes a challenge. The face of the poor is the face of Christ.

He continued saying, vibrant communities are devoted to Mary, they pray to Mary for help. Teresa’s nuns prayed to keep their vows and for the welfare of others. Mary is the model of total commitment to God’s kingdom.

Lastly, he said that a vibrant community is a loving community where unconditional love is lived. It is bonded in Jesus Christ, has concern for one another, an adherence to Carmel, is responsive and is steeped in prayer.

At 4 p.m. there was another workshop on community issues. Three breakout groups discussed leadership, retreats led by Seculars and dividing and forming new communities.

Sunday morning Father Thomas Otang’a, O.C.D., presented the topic “How Can Secular Carmelites Serve the Church in the 21st century? In his rousing talk he said that presently Seculars are challenged to respond in a proactive way to the needs of the church. We are to bring Jesus Christ to others by giving better account of ourselves as Carmelites. We should interact with people, be simple in our lifestyle and diligently challenge society to refocus on Jesus Christ instead of self-gratification.

Another way to serve the church would be to support the mission in Kenya that is the house of study. He gave himself as an example of having been supported by a community that continually sent small amounts of money that supported his education and led to his ordination. He spoke of how the majority of priest are becoming elderly or already are. The laity must accept more responsibility for the church. This calls for a willingness to help others by taking leadership roles.

We should share our knowledge of contemplative prayer by holding retreats and hav-

(Continued on page 18)

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ing an O.C.D.S. publication. He even went as far as saying that we should think and plan ahead for a Secular Retreat House where Seculars would conduct the retreats. The time to prepare for leaders to do that is now by educating our best speakers.

The last panel discussion on Sunday morning dealt with apostolate. Some examples of apostolates in the Washington Province are as follows:

- A community had indexed all the past articles in the *Clarion*, a publication put out by the Washington province much like our *Flos Carmeli* but containing more formation articles. (This index is available by book or on a

Web site.)

- Another community had gathered the names of the priests in the diocese and in orders and had assigned them a day in which everyone would pray just for them. This was published on a calendar and distributed month.
- It was suggested that next year a community might gather Carmelites together at a prolife rally and hold a sign saying “Carmelites for Life.”

## Some reflections on living the evangelical counsels

### *Submitted by Seculars of the Oklahoma Province*

*Compiled by Fr. Bonaventure Sauer,, O.C.D.*

*Over the past few months, in response to my request, I've received seven written reflections on the topic I suggested—living the evangelical counsels as a Discalced Carmelite Secular. They are given here. I suspect you will find them as individually distinctive and thoughtful as I did.*

#### **1. Charles Jakubczak, OCDS**

*Atlanta Study Group*

I try to correlate the evangelical counsels with St. Teresa's three virtues foundational for prayer—humility with obedience, detachment with poverty, and love of neighbor with chastity. The journey started for me with obedience (the desire to do God's will), which came to me from first realizing who God is (our Creator, Redeemer, etc.) with respect to the lowliness that I am (the awareness humility affords). This then led to an ongoing effort to see God's will at work in the ordinariness and even monotony of daily

life, as well as in its significant, life-changing moments, of course. Soon I began to realize how truly dependent I am on Him, and this led me to offer it all up to Him, down to the littlest breath (in detachment or poverty of spirit). This in turn led me to experience within myself a wellspring of generosity towards others that I never knew I had (a God-given capacity for love of neighbor or chastity). Of course, every person's experience is different, but I think humility is the stepping off place, for you will never empty yourself or love God and others without it.

*(Continued on page 19)*

*(Continued from page 16)*

## **2. Molly Vacha, OCDS**

*Sioux City Chapter [Omaha GID]*

**As I reflect on the three evangelical counsels of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, I do not feel I can separate them out and talk about one in particular. They seem to blend all together and move as one. If Chastity impels me to a Christ-like love in this or that circumstance, it seems to flow directly from the inner impulse of trying to live in Obedience to Christ. And then in following that impulse it requires of me an act of Poverty in letting go of my own will and accepting God's, which lies before me to do yet beyond my full understanding.**

**In daily decisions, then—questions of which, what, where, when, how, and especially why—if I am moved to do acts of Obedience, I am moved to do acts of Poverty as well, which of course are all moved in me by the promptings of Chastity. Around and around it goes, in a circle, and it doesn't matter where you start, one leads to the other. So, I guess the way the Evangelical Counsels have helped me is by providing a *Base* to draw from in life—a deep well when making decisions, and a help in affording me a sense of balance in life. This *Base* seems to encompass in itself all the fruits of the Holy Spirit—and for me in particular, the fruits of temperance, prudence, and moderation.**

## **3. Stephen Ramsey, OCDS**

*Sioux City Chapter [Omaha GID]*

*I find that when it comes to the Evangelical Counsels, it is best to work backwards. "Counsel," after all, is from the Latin word for "advice." These are pieces of advice meant to help us so that we can live and proclaim the evangelion—the gospel, or good*

*news. So, in asking, "What advice do they give?" we do well to ask, "What problems are they addressing?"*

*I think they address the three most salient aspects of our brokenness: our attitude toward things, our attitude toward other people, and our attitude toward God.*

*It is easy spend one's life in the hope that possessions will sate the hunger that besets us at every turn. When I get that car, or that promotion, or that title, or that job, or even that relationship, things will be well. Men will respect me. I will be loved. I will finally be at rest. But somehow, the moment of fulfillment never comes. We're left frustrated and angry—always looking around the next corner. The good news counsels poverty as the antidote to this problem. A life suffused with this virtue is a life of detachment.*

*We would like to be good, warm-hearted, friendly people. Maybe we fancy ourselves being so. But on closer examination, we find that so many of our relationships—especially the casual ones we have with acquaintances or with people we encounter throughout the day—are mostly centered on ourselves. In subtle ways, we ask ourselves what we can get out of other people; what's in it for us. Even in our acts of charity, we sometimes seek power over others. This attitude stands in the way not just of an authentic, integrative sexuality, but of true, lasting relationships with other Christs that are based on equality and self-giving. The good news counsels chastity as the antidote to this problem. A life suffused with this virtue is a life of love.*

*If we are storing up treasure on earth and seeking to dominate others, it is not because we are evil. It is because we are weak, vulnerable, and afraid. If I don't gather possessions and strive to be "somebody," won't I end up at the bottom? If I really do give of myself fully, won't people take advantage of me? Truth is, even very devout Christians are frightened of what it would mean to be meek, poor, hungry, and persecuted. We regularly go*

*(Continued from page 19)*

*to great lengths to avoid such things, and with good reason. But in our fear, we evince the most serious lack of faith and trust possible. We ask and knock and seek, but in the end, we secretly believe that it is only by our own lights—and not by God's transcendent promises of love and devotion—that we can hold back against all that threatens us. The good news counsels obedience as the solution to this problem. A life suffused with this virtue is a life of humility.*

*Years ago, if someone had asked me what the Order is all about, I would have said, "prayer." Nowadays, I am inclined to think that prayer is simply the most efficacious way of helping us to "tend towards evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels." At first they seem like heavy—perhaps impossible—burdens, but gradually we come to see that the Counsels are "good news" for those who struggle to live the Gospel. Even our most halting attempts to live them draw forth the love and mercy of the Prince of Peace.*

#### **4. Amelia H. Wilkins, OCDS**

*Sioux City Chapter*

Article 14 of the *Constitutions* reads in part: "In evangelical poverty there is a wealth of generosity, self-denial, and interior liberty and a dependence on Him who 'Through rich, yet for our sake, became poor' (2 Co 8:9) . . . [It] recognizes personal limitations and surrenders them to God with confidence in His goodness and fidelity."

Reflecting on my recent trip to the Philippines this past summer to attend a Pharmacy Class of '59 Reunion I've come to the insight that, well, maybe I am living the evangelical counsel of poverty without always realizing it! As I prepared for this trip last summer, anxieties about it began to surface when I realized I had to travel alone. Moreover, it had been 13 years since my last trip to the Philippines. And that trip was prior to 9/11. And there was the present threat—last summer, that is—of the H1N1 virus. Yet I had promised to attend. So, I was

in a dilemma. Should I go or not? At prayer time one day it came to me—I should trust in and depend on the Lord. Surrender it all! Jesus will be my companion. This resolution gave me confidence, and confidence gave me peace and hope.

The trip went well. I enjoyed the five-day reunion with my classmates whom I'd not seen in nearly 50 years! We celebrated with a thanksgiving mass, and a pilgrimage to a local shrine, as well as with a banquet and other festivities. One thing the Lord showed me was the great suffering and poverty of so many people in the Philippines who still do not, for all that, lose hope. Their faith is evident in their prayer, their great devotion, and their steadfast religious practice. During my visit I saw how the churches were always full, even at daily masses! So it is that the poor are blessed.

Despite my doubts before the trip, I'm glad I followed God's purposes and went. It was a great learning experience for me in many ways. But especially I learned to trust always in God's goodness and care! I write in gratitude for graces received.

#### **5. Pat Darby, OCDS**

*Dallas Chapter*

**When I made my Final Promise on July 19, 1992, it was exciting to me to be professing the evangelical counsels for "the rest of my life." During my initial formation I had read how Christ proposes these counsels to every disciple and that by professing them within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church—such as would be the case in the married state, for instance—we indicate to the world that our life now consecrated to God. And that is what I wanted.**

**As for each of the three counsels, I thought I understood Obedience well enough, although I had to learn over the years just what it can ask of us concretely. I also felt I had a pretty good understanding of Poverty. But even after making my Final**

*(Continued on page 21)*

(Continued from page 20)

**Promise, there remained for me many unanswered questions about the evangelical counsel of Chastity.**

**The source that eventually provided the richest and most satisfying explanation for me of the counsel of Chastity was the *Catechism*. There I read words, succinct yet profound, that not only answered my questions but gave me much more to ponder besides. Here is a portion of the passage that meant so much to me. It can be found in nn.2341ff.**

**The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason. Self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life . . .**

**[The virtue of chastity thus] has laws of growth . . . [and] involves a cultural effort [as well], for there is an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society . . .**

**The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends, who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality . . .**

**Preparing these reflections has deepened my appreciation and renewed gratitude for the gift of being able to profess and live the evangelical counsels.**

## **6. Jan Hicks, OCDS**

*Knoxville Study Group*

Perhaps the desire to be obedient to the will of God is the most we can ever hope for in some of the situations we face in this world. Here is an example from my own life.

As a prosecuting attorney, I once encountered an excruciating moral dilemma. Through it all my greatest desire was to be obedient to the will of God as it is reflected in the moral law taught by His Church, regardless of how my career might be affected. The question was whether to file a notice to seek the death penalty in a case that virtually any prosecutor would view as a death penalty case. The accused was a serial killer who targeted strangers and killed them slowly in obvious enjoyment of the act.

An additional factor in my difficulty was that, in my state at the time, there were only two penalties for first degree murder—(1) a death sentence, requiring 15 to 20 years of appeals, or (2) a life sentence, which could be paroled in ten years. Yet the state had a history of corruption in the parole process. And I had always considered public safety and the protection of the innocent my highest duty as a prosecutor.

Of course, I knew the traditional teaching of the Church and how the Holy Father had even added the caveat that the death penalty should be *rare and virtually non-existent*. So, I wanted someone in authority to tell me what to do. Then I could simply *obey* the command given.

I happened to be on retreat in Dallas and there had the opportunity, as a Secular Carmelite, to speak to the provincial delegate. I asked him about my dilemma, with a willingness to obey whatever he said to do. His answer was that my promise and vows in Carmel did not speak specifically to this matter, and that my only obligation was to do what a good Catholic should do. And I would have to decide that.

I then went to my pastor, who was my confessor, and for whom I had great respect. He said he thought that what the Holy Father had said probably prohibited me but that he was not a moral theologian. He would ask for me. Within a couple of weeks, he had called three respected moral theologians. All had said I was free to seek the death penalty after carefully weighing all the individual circumstances against the principles given by the Church. (Continued on page 22)

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And so I went to my final human authority, my bishop, who spoke with me for more than an hour. I began by saying that I would obey him and do whatever he said. The bishops of my state had lobbied to abolish the death penalty. And my bishop explained why he personally was opposed to the death penalty. But, after hearing my dilemma, he said, “You are free in conscience to see the death penalty.”

So I knew that the death penalty was not an evil in itself and that no earthly authority would bind me in obedience as I sought to make a prudential decision in this case. Although I prayed, I heard no voice from heaven. Ultimately, then, I was at peace with my decision.

After this case, the district attorneys’ conference joined the anti-death penalty voices and lobbied the legislature of the state for a third possible penalty—life without possibility of parole. It passed, and now the death penalty is truly “rare” in my state.

## **7. Teresa Siebenmorgan, OCDS**

### *Little Rock Chapter*

*In the spirit of poverty the Discalced Carmelite Secular does not seek nor cling to extravagant material possessions. Having only what is necessary for the stewardship that God asks of each of us—there lies our blessing. Our vocation as Discalced Carmelite Seculars also asks that we be willing to share with God’s needy ones, of course.*

*Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. A woman who is a Discalced Carmelite Secular sees in Mary a model of modesty in dress and behavior. Like Mary, the Discalced Carmelite Secular’s whole life is to be a prayer. Presenting ourselves in a chaste way to others is an important of being “prayer” in this*

*world. Modest attire and behavior in the workplace can bring blessings to those with whom we work. Modest attire and behavior in any and every public place sets us apart from the excessive, even ostentatious sexuality of our age, allowing us to witness to the true nature of human love and feminine beauty. Such a witness can bring blessings to those with whom we have dealings.*

*As a Discalced Carmelite Secular, in addition to the will of God and the teachings of the Church, the Constitutions and Provincial Statutes are our guides to faithfulness. But our obedience also entails a living obedience to the Order and to the Province—as represented in the general, the provincial, his delegate, and the provincial council—and to the local council. Their directives are to be heeded whenever they act in their position of leadership for the good of all and the building up of the whole.*

# The Call to Carmel

By Father Juan Evangelista Cabrera, O.C.D.

*Father Juan Evangelista Cabrera, O.C.D., was ordained to the priesthood on June 12, 2009, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio. The following reflection on his call to Carmel first appeared in Gentle Breezes, a publication of the Oklahoma Province. Reprinted with permission.*



The Church is a body which consists of many parts. Each part has a particular function that is done for the well-being of the whole. For this reason each religious congregation in the Church has a particular charism, a particularity that defines its identity and its mission in the Church. The Order of Carmel as reformed by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross is no exception. The charism of the order of Discalced Carmelites is contemplative prayer. The frequent encounter with God in the silence and intimacy of contemplative prayer lies at the root of our identity and mission in the Church. It is through contemplation that we strive to a hidden union with God who dwells in the center of our souls.

As Discalced Carmelites we are called “to a consecrated life of allegiance to Jesus Christ. In this we are sustained by the example and protection of Our Lady. Her life of union with Christ we regard, as it were, the prototype of ours.”<sup>1</sup> We are blessed to have our Carmelite saints and their writings as nourishment and guide in this journey, especially our founders St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, both masters of the mystical life and doctors of the Church. Sacred liturgy and the Word of God also stand as essential pillars of our life.

Our call to prayer is to embrace the whole of our life, and its fruits are to overflow in the prophetic dimension of our vocation as apostolic service. This is manifested in a variety of ways: spiritual direction of our Carmelite nuns and the laity, parishes, Carmelite Third Order, retreats, centers of spirituality, etc. In this way prayer and action blend moving us to share with the people of God what we ourselves have received.

Our Order is divided around the world in Provinces. We are the Oklahoma Province of St. Thérèse, which includes the southern part of the U.S.

periences in his heart a desire for intimacy and union with the living Triune God, in whom he finds the answer to his deepest aspirations. Someone who is considering this call first contacts us via letter, e-mail or phone. If the vocation director sees fit, after a time of regular communication the candidate is later invited to make a live-in experience for at least a week. At the moment we are glad to have two young men who are in this stage, Jorge Luis Morales-Nazario originally from Puerto Rico and residing in San Antonio, and Brad Wagner from Mexico but residing in Dallas, Texas. They will both officially apply to enter with us as postulants in January of 2010.

The postulancy is the formal beginning of the discernment process for a man considering a vocation to Carmel. This is a period of six to nine months in which the candidate lives with us, learns the generalities of religious life, and gets to know the community more closely. This takes place at our monastery of Oklahoma City. In January of this year our Province rejoiced in receiving our postulant Daniel Lacourrege from Sli-dell Louisiana. He is currently spending some time in our monastery of San Antonio learning Spanish, since our Province is bilingual.

The second stage of formation is the novitiate, which normally takes place at Marylake monastery in Little Rock, Arkansas. This is a period which lasts little more than a year in which the candidate receives the habit of Carmel and his religious name. This time is dedicated to an intense immersion in prayer and the spiritual study of Carmelite spirituality through the writings of our saints, particularly our founders St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. In December of 2008 we celebrated the entrance of our postulant Juan Guillermo Quintana from Guajuato Mexico into the novitiate. He received the

*(Continued on page 23)*

(Continued from page 23)

habit of Carmel and took the religious name Br. Juan Guillermo of Jesus of Mercy. When he finishes his novitiate he will enter the next stage, the profession of his first simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience for one year. This he will renew every year for five years. During this stage he will reside in our St. John of the Cross House of Studies in New Orleans, Louisiana. There he will do studies in philosophy and theology at Notre Dame Seminary for around five years. At the end of this time students become eligible for solemn vows and holy orders, if called.

The call to Carmel is a call to be immersed in the love relationship of our God who is in himself a communion of love. Prayer, the sacraments, and the guidance of our Carmelite saints

insert us in this eternal love exchange and help us to remain always receptive to it as Our Lady did. Ministry allows us to share the experience and fruits of this encounter with others and to assist them in their own journey to God. This is the way we strive to bear witness to the world of “what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and touched with our hands.”<sup>ii</sup> That is, that God has irrevocably loved us in Jesus Christ, in whom is the answer to our deepest longings for happiness, fulfillment and love.

*Discalced Carmelites: Constitutions and Norms* (1981), 40.  
1 Jn 1:1

## News from around the province

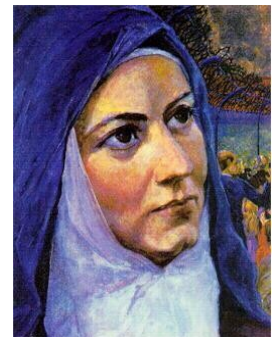
*Compiled by Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.*

### 1. Austin, TX

This past August 28 the Austin OCDS community celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its canonical establishment. Here is a copy of the announcement they sent out:



20th Anniversary Celebration  
Community of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross  
Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, Austin, TX  
August 28, 2009, 5:00 to 9:00 PM  
Mass at 5:30 in the Church  
Followed by dinner in the Brennan Auditorium  
St. Thomas More Catholic Church





## St. Thomas More Catholic Church

*The following is a brief selection from a speech on the history of the Austin community given at the anniversary dinner by John Figlan, OCDS, a member of the community. The photo below was taken at the dinner.*

. . . This moving about from meeting place to meeting place over these first few years—1983 to 1985—reminds me of Moses taking the Israelites through the desert 40 years to reach the Promised Land. The people had a vision of that Promised Land. Yet they faltered and struggled towards it, seeking their identity as the people of God. They had received a “Rule of Life” to live by, which for them were the Ten Commandments. It seems that we, too, as a burgeoning Carmelite Secular Community, were going through our own wandering in the desert, seeking to live out our Rule of Life and find our identity as we journeyed towards the Promised Land of Carmel.

In the years 1986 and 1987 there were many encouraging signs indicating that we were on a good track towards becoming a Carmelite Secular Community despite the usual—and not so usual—difficulties. But we held together. These signs of promise were: (1) our retreat at the San Jose Retreat House in San Antonio where our first 8 members made first promise; (2) the 10 new aspirants who were received into formation at this time; (3) our first election of a president and council; (4) our get-together with Bishop John McCarthy, bishop of Austin at the time; and (5) the visitation made by the Provincial Delegate, Fr. John Michael Payne, OCD. It was a busy time!

The years 1988-1989 were significant years. We moved again, like nomads in the desert, from a meeting room at St. Edwards University to St. Theresa’s Parish. In December we requested and then, almost a year later, received canonical status, which we celebrated in December 1989. A few months later we ourselves elected a president and 3 council members, who then appointed a Formation Director, Treasurer, and Secretary. Deacon Tim Graham was named our Spiritual Assistant. We were set to go, although we had only just begun . . .



*Some Further Reflections on the Evening by John Figlan*

One of our members, Marsha Benda, aptly stated of the celebration that it was an opportunity for “great food, fellowship, and the opportunity to further reflect upon our journey as a community.” Great food was provided by our members primarily for the enjoyment of our guests—family and friends. And they certainly enjoyed it!

*(Continued on page 26)*

Good conversation ensued between our guests, most of whom had not met before and were unfamiliar with the Carmelite Secular vocation. A talk on the history of the Austin Community and on the Secular vocation helped. Comments from many of the guests suggest that they were appreciated. Indeed, many who came as strangers left as friends with a common bond between them—they each had friends or family members who belonged to the Austin OCDS community.

Among ourselves who are members of the community, it was an evening in which we left our cells to “attend to some other duty” (*Rule* n.10). The event became an apostolate for us as we served others outside our community while providing spiritual nourishment for ourselves. It showed even further how, by working together, we can do an apostolate. The “cell” of our monthly meetings and individual lives is not endangered by our leaving it for others.

So, we experienced great food, marvelous fellowship, and upon further reflection a unifying work which gave us a better sense of ourselves as a community with a potential for an apostolate in the future.

\*



## 2. Houston, TX — Study Group #3, *St. Theresa*



Elizabeth Korves, OCDS, a member of the Provincial Council recently made a visitation of our Study Group, *St. Theresa's* in Houston. The visitation was most fruitful, and we are very thankful for her time and efforts. One member said afterwards, "Elizabeth is more Carmelite than the Carmelites." She sure made an impression on our group! Most of our members are included in the photo to the left. Only two are missing.

## 3. Georgetown, TX — Study Group *Triumph of the Cross*

On the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel our Study Group celebrated the Rite of Definitive Promise during the 6:00 PM mass at St. Helen's Church in Georgetown. Our Spiritual Assistant Msgr. Louis Pavlicek presided. A reception followed. The three

*(Continued on page 27)*

*Continued from page 26)*

newly professed members are Claire Bloodgood, Lansing Prescott, and Carolyn (Birdie) Ehrenfeld. Our Study Group now has 22 members altogether—nine in definitive promise, five in third year and three in first-year formation for definitive promise, three novices and two aspirants. We have been together as a study group since 2001.

\*

#### **4. Obituary Notice — Peggy Wilkinson, OCDS**

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of our "greatest secular Carmelite," Peggy Wilkinson. She was honored to be one of the presenters at the 2009 OCDS Congress in Baltimore, and was enthusiastic about the format and program of the Congress, which she said was the best since 1985 because of the topics discussed and the participation of Seculars themselves.

It would be impossible to determine the number of lives her book—*Finding the Mystic within You*—may have impacted. Many in the Washington DC area, both seculars and others, were personally affected by her teaching and by her willingness to share her spiritual journey and insight. Even though she has had health problems in recent years, she never stopped traveling to the "top of the mountain" and taking us with her. It is with great joy and confidence that, as we mourn her death, we also know that she has now finally achieved her highest goal in life—perfect union with Christ Jesus.

In Carmel,  
Fr. Regis



#### **Mrs. Margaret Mary "Peggy" (Dimond) Wilkinson**

*From the obituary originally published in the Frederick News on Thursday, August 13, 2009*

Margaret Mary "Peggy" (Dimond) Wilkinson, of Frederick and formerly of Rockville and Washington, passed away unexpectedly at her daughter's home on Monday, Aug. 10, 2009.

Born on Nov. 16, 1929, in Washington, she was the daughter of the late James R. and Helen Murphy Dimond. Mrs. Wilkinson was married for 54 years to Thomas A. Wilkinson, who preceded her into eternal life on March 7, 2006.

She was a Secular Carmelite for more than 40 years, the author of the book "Finding the Mystic within You" and the video "The Mystical Life," and wrote extensively and led conferences and retreats on all aspects of Carmelite spirituality.

Mrs. Wilkinson is survived by eight children and by 17 grandchildren. She is also survived by two great-grandchildren, a sister, 3 brothers, and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews.

Flos Carmeli provides information for the Secular members of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in the Oklahoma Province, which has jurisdiction over O.C.D.S. members living in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas. For subscription information contact Martha Hanley, editor, at [tnmhanley@yahoo.com](mailto:tnmhanley@yahoo.com).

## Parting Words

We can produce works that will call forth admiration or praise, but if the work we have done has not made us more holy—more like our Lord—it is of small value. If in doing it, there has been little effort to overcome our own will and judgment, our overeagerness if we are so absorbed in what we are doing that we cannot render an act of charity graciously; if we show irritation under interruptions or when things do not please us, sensitiveness if our work doesn't satisfy; these and similar reactions show the presence of the natural, and unless this is combatted, we shall do little for God, however perfect our works may appear.

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