



Flos Carmeli

Fr Luis becomes new provincial



**Father Luis Joaquin
Casteneda, OCD**

Fr Luis Joaquin Casteneda, OCD, was elected provincial of the Oklahoma Province in March 2011. A native of Mexico, he began formation in the order after meeting the Discalced Carmelite nuns in New Caney, Texas. He did his postulancy and novitiate in Marylake, in Arkansas, then studied in New Orleans. Before finishing his theology studies, he was transferred to San Antonio. He completed his studies in theology and his formation and was ordained in 2003.

After ordination he continued his studies in religious formation and has been working in formation and vocation promotion for six years. He has lived in Oklahoma City for two triennia and helps with parish work there.

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Report of the Provincial Delegate

Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

June was a full month for the Province, for both the friars and the Seculars. We friars celebrated our triennial Provincial Chapter during the first two weeks of June—and, yes, that is the verb one uses for a Provincial Chapter, one “celebrates” a Chapter. This celebration, such as it was, consisted of two weeks of often intense, sometimes contentious, but always respectful and fraternal deliberation and decision-making. All the solemnly professed friars of the Province participate in our Chapters.

We discussed the state of the Province in general and set priorities and goals for the coming triennium. We heard reports on each of the houses of the Province. We reviewed and revised our Chapter Acts—a set of rules and regulations that governs the life of the Province beyond what our *Constitutions* and *Norms* can specify. Lastly, we devoted a day to the Secular Order and another to the Carmelite Nuns. Representing the Seculars, the OCDS Provincial Council met with the friars at the Chapter on Monday, June 6. I believe you will be able to read a report about this meeting elsewhere in this issue of the *Flos*.

The Provincial Chapter does not itself determine the assignments for the coming triennium—namely, which friar will do what and live where. These assignments are decided instead by our Provincial Council in the days immediately following the Chapter. By the way, I was elected to serve, along with three others, on the Provincial Council of the friars. Our full Council consists of: Fr. Stephen Sanchez as First Councilor, or Vicar Provincial; myself as Second Councilor; Fr. Ralph Reyes as Third Councilor; and Fr. Luis Gerardo Belmonte as Fourth Councilor.

In making these assignments the Council asked that I continue as OCDS Provincial Delegate for another triennium, something I was very happy to do. This will be, then, the first time since my ordination in 1992 that I’ve been asked to continue in a particular position beyond the three years of a given triennium. It is also the case that I’ve been asked to move from one house to another of the Province every three years. While the first record—continuing in the same work—is now broken, the second—moving every three years—remains intact. Having lived at the Basilica in San Antonio through the 2005-2008 triennium, I was moved to New Orleans this past triennium, residing there since 2008. Now I’m being sent back to San Antonio. Change, it seems, is the one thing that never changes.

The community in San Antonio will consist of Fr. Luis Gerardo, who will be our superior and the pastor at the Shrine; Fr. Marion Joseph Bui, who will assist Fr. Luis as parochial vicar—which is to say, as assistant pastor; Fr. Gregory, who will live in San Antonio but serve the Province as vocation director and student master; Fr. Luis Joaquin, our very own newly elected Provincial, who will make San Antonio his residence; and Fr. James Anthony, assisting Frs. Luis Gerardo and Marion in the parish. Thus, we will be six in all, joined by our three students, Brs. Alberto, Jorge, and Juan Guillermo. As much as I will hate leaving New Orleans and the setting of our life here, I’m looking forward to living and working as a member of such a full community at the Basilica in San Antonio.

At the end of June our Province celebrated—and here the word truly applies—the OCDS Regional Congress in Lafayette, LA. This gathering was a huge success, and I heard only good things about it from those who attended. In fact, I heard only superlative things. The Congress as a whole ran smoothly, the individual workshops and presentations were each well-received and appreciated, and everyone experienced a good measure of Teresian fun and fellowship with an equal dose of Cajun *joie de vivre* thrown in. We are

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all grateful to the planning committee and to the two hosting communities of Lafayette for their dedicated, conscientious, and generous work in putting the Congress together. Their efforts bore great fruit, and I feel privileged to have been part of it.

On Friday evening of the Congress, scheduled last at the end of a long, full day, the Provincial Council chaired a meeting of the OCDS Plenary Council as it is set forth in the *Provincial Statutes, Section XIX*. The Provincial Council introduced themselves, especially its three new members, then gave a report to those in attendance on the state of the Secular Order in the Province. They also talked about upcoming events, most notably the leadership workshops being planned for next spring. Discussion then turned to three other matters. Let me review them one by one, each under a separate heading.

The Dismissal Statute

As you know, the Provincial Council recently drew up a proposed Dismissal Statute, which it then published in the last issue of the *Flos* for your consideration. The Council has since that time discussed the Statute further. It has also discussed the matter with Provincial Council members of the other two US Provinces—at a meeting of the Interprovincial Council held just prior to the Regional Congress in Lafayette. While there are issues and needs the Statute seeks to address, there are also almost insurmountable difficulties it raises. Thus, this further discussion of the Statute has led the Provincial Council to conclude it's probably best *not* to proceed with it. In other words, the Provincial Council has decided to dismiss the Dismissal Statute from further consideration.

This decision was shared at the Plenary Council meeting in Lafayette with those in attendance. At the same time it was also mentioned that the Provincial Council will, over the coming triennium, craft two Statutes that will effectively address the same needs and issues the proposed Dismissal Statute sought to address. The first of these two prospective Statutes will deal with matters of attendance at community meetings and the question of how to respond to and work with those who are repeatedly absent. The second prospective Statute, which will be difficult to draft, will try to propose guidelines to help local councils resolve conflicts as they come up in community. It may take a while to prepare these two Statutes. But once a preliminary draft is ready the Provincial Council will then publish them in the *Flos* asking for your reaction.

Spiritual Assistants

One of my responsibilities as Provincial Delegate is to sort of monitor the spiritual assistants of the Province. With communities that have a spiritual assistant—who can be, as you know, a friar, a priest not of the Order, a deacon, a religious brother or sister—it is my job to officially appoint this person to the role and see to it that he or she has all that they need to fulfill this ministry fully and properly. This official appointment, by the way, is not to be open-ended or for an indefinite period of time. It is to be given for a set term, although that term can of course be renewed.

This past triennium I've been rather lax in fulfilling this duty, I'm sorry to say. But as we begin a new triennium my plan is the following—and I shared it at the Plenary Council meeting in Lafayette with those in attendance—Within a few months, once I get settled into my new abode, I will contact the president of each chapter or study group and ask him or her to submit to me the name and contact information of the person they've arranged with to serve as their spiritual assistant. I will then send out a letter to each assistant officially appointing him or her to this position. The term of the appointment will be for the remainder of the triennium—that is, until June, 2014. Over these next three years, then, I will try to maintain some sort of regular contact with the spiritual assistants of the Province just to see how they are doing and how I might be of help to them as needed.

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Provincial Delegate report cont.

Some of you, I know, do not have a spiritual assistant, being unable to obtain one. For those communities I will offer myself to serve as your spiritual assistant, as best I can, in some sort of watered down capacity. We will have to arrive at an agreement as to how to proceed. I have some ideas, but I can't say, of course, whether or not it will play out workably in practice. We'll see. Perhaps it will be better than nothing. Maybe not.

Central Office and Administrative Secretary

At the Plenary Council in Lafayette we also discussed the proposal I presented in the winter issue of the *Flos*—namely, that of setting up a more fully functioning Central Office, run by a Provincial Secretary, which might better meet the administrative needs of the Secular Order in our Province. Just below, following this Report, I have attached a simple list of the sort of administrative responsibilities we have in mind. It is not a formal job description. But it can serve as a reminder of just what is meant by a Central Office in the Province.

I of course have wanted to assess the overall level of support for this proposal throughout the Province. The discussion of the question at the Plenary Council in Lafayette convinced me that, at least in theory, you perceive the need and support the effort of the Provincial Council to address it in this way. The question that remains, therefore, has to do with how much you are willing and able to pay to maintain just such a Central Office in the Province. Let me put the question this way:

At present you each pay \$40 annually in dues to the Province. *How much are you willing and able to increase those dues in order to finance this proposed Central Office?* There are approximately 800 Seculars in the Province. Increasing the dues from \$40 to \$50 annually would give the Province an additional \$8000 to work with in maintaining this Office. \$55 in annual dues would give it \$12,000 to work with. Increasing your dues to \$60 annually—which would seem to me to be an upper limit—would give the Province \$16,000 with which to hire the right person with the right skills to run the Office well. Remember that in all these figures we are talking about annual dues. Thus, \$60 in annual dues to the Province amounts to \$5 a month, a figure which might seem a little more manageable.

At the Plenary Council meeting, then, I asked the presidents of the communities present—and I am now asking all presidents of all communities throughout the Province—to please discuss in your community this question: How much are you willing and able to pay in increased annual dues to the Province, beyond the \$40 you presently pay, in order to finance a Central Office? My request is that each president please return to me some sort of response to this question, on behalf of your community, by early September if possible.

From where it stands now I would say that we will go forward with this proposal. The question that remains is how much money we will have to work with in doing so. To answer that question, I need from you your input and response.

Job Description: Central Office Administrator

MAINTAIN RECORDS FOR:

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Community/Study Group Council Directory
Isolate Listing
Individual Community/Study Group Rosters
Email addresses for FLOS CAMELI mailing

FINANCIAL:

Record of dues from Communities
Review yearly financial statements from Community/Study Group
Issue checks for Provincial Council expenses
Maintain bank account
File tax reports to IRS (?) / Manage non-profit for OCDS of Oklahoma Province
Financial statements from Congress
Annual Budget Report

VISITATION:

Notify Communities and Study Groups of Visitations (in Jan.)
Record assignments of visitors
File reports

COMMUNICATIONS:

Inquiries from:
 Prospective members
 Transfers (TOC)
 Province to Province
 Isolates

Questions from Communities/Study Groups

WORKSHOPS / RETREATS:

Facilities
Speakers- contact
Compile list of OCDS speakers/subjects
Collection of Fees
Financial Report

FLOS CAMELI:

Maintain email addresses for individuals
Archives of past publications
Death Notices
Information and photos from Communities/Study Group
Compile data from surveys

RESOURCE MATERIALS:

Listings of:
 Books/articles in current use
 Spanish Promise Documents
 Web Sites and Links
Orders/ inventory for OCDS Legislation books

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Bright Beginnings: New Provincial Council meets with Friars

A letter from the Provincial Council

Warmest Greetings, Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

Early in June our newly elected Provincial Council gathered and met in San Antonio. It was a graced moment of mutual joy and anticipative service, just enjoying becoming acquainted and truly appreciating Our Lord's perfect creativity in putting us together to be of service

Perhaps our best news to share is that **Father Bonaventure Sauer** was reappointed to continue as our Provincial Delegate. **Father Bonaventure** has been a superior mentor and so helpfully perceptive that we feel so very blessed and most appreciative of his re-appointment.

Also great news: **Henrietta Albright** from Baton Rouge, LA, was elected to be our new Provincial Council President and **Dorothy Mansen**, from Grand Prairie, TX, will also be continuing on from the previous triennium. Both **Henrietta** and **Dorothy M.** are serving their second triennium, as Provincial Council members commit to serving for six years. **Henrietta** and **Dorothy M.** provided an informative overview of the Provincial Council responsibilities and gave updates regarding Communities within our Province. New members, including **Dorothy Ashley** from Jackson, MS, **Christopher Wood**, from Houston, TX, and **Mary Kay Daniels**, from Sioux City, IA, were warmly welcomed and deeply appreciated **Henrietta's** and **Dorothy M.'s** resourceful mentoring and leadership throughout our four days together.

Our **previous OCDS Provincial Council President Elizabeth Korves** joined us for a special dinner during which we acknowledged her substantial and valuable contributions to our Secular Communities. We continue to be most grateful for all she has accomplished from writing the original version of our Statutes and sharing her strong leadership skills to the facilitating of many constructive Visitations to enhance our OCDS communities from the very inception of the PC in 2002.

We also wish to extend heartfelt gratitude to **Martha Burchard** who served on the PC for the past year and a half, for all of her diligent work and wonderful contribution to the communities she visited. Gratitude is also extended to volunteer Karen Harris, who has generously served as Provincial Council Secretary since 2008. To **Elizabeth, Martha** and **Karen**, we will miss you big time! May God continue to bless you always in all ways!

Regarding Visitation updates: During the past few months, **Elizabeth** conducted successful Visitations in our Communities of Conyers and Sioux City. **Martha** did a productive Visitation in Cedar Rapids. **Dorothy M.** completed Visitations in Lafayette and McAllen, and will soon be the Visitor for Waco, followed by Georgetown and Knoxville, with **Mary Kay** shadowing

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in Knoxville. **Henrietta** will be visiting in New Orleans with **Dorothy A.** as a shadow, in San Antonio with **Chris Wood**, and then finish the year with Houston, Therese of the Child Jesus and Holy Face and Natchez/Vidalia. **Mary Kay** will be doing a Visitation in Austin in November. **Chris** will be doing the Visitation for Alexandria. **Dorothy A.** will be doing the upcoming Visitation in Baton Rouge.

Council discussion focused on our Province's need to hire an OCDS Central Office Secretary and on the Dismissal Statute. We are also in the midst of planning duplicate workshops for Presidents and Directors of Formation during the spring of 2012, which will be held in Atlanta and Dallas. Visitors who visited Communities following the 2008 duplicate workshops observed that Communities who participated in the workshops seemed to have had better functioning Councils and Communities over the last triennium than Communities whose leadership did not participate.

In addition to tackling the work at hand, we were grateful for the opportunities to pray together in the convent chapel and at the Basilica of the Little Flower, St. Therese of Liseaux, in San Antonio. The St. Elijah Chapel in the basement of the Basilica reminded us of a cave where Elijah cultivated his powerfully intimate relationship with God. We wished we had more time just to be with Our Lord there.

On the last day of our meeting, we attended the Triennium Friars Chapter Meeting. **Dorothy M.** presented an overview of all of the Provincial Council's activities and projects in the past three years. Then **Henrietta** facilitated a discussion with the Friars about various matters that concern the relationship of the Friars and the Seculars. Being with the Friars reminded us of the beauty we all share being one Carmelite family, particularly when our friar brothers extended such loving hospitality by providing a celebrative feast for dinner following our afternoon discussion. Both the Friars and the Seculars have a genuine desire to work together to accomplish the Mission of the Order and to nurture the relationship that exists between the Seculars and the Friars.

The proposal for a Central Office and Administrative Secretary for the Secular Order of the Province was presented at the Chapter and discussed with the Friars. They see the need for such a position and support the OCDS Provincial Council as they further explore the proposal with the Seculars of the Province.

We look forward to being with everyone at our upcoming Congress! Thank you to our Lafayette committees who have been working so hard to prepare the gathering.. Each person's presence and best effort makes for a rich and memorable moment together. May all of your travels be safe and blessed. See you in Lafayette!

May God bless you and keep you.

Henrietta, Dorothy M., Dorothy A., Chris, Mary Kay

Plan budget to include 2012 council workshops, PC urges

All OCDS community Presidents and Formation Directors are invited and strongly encouraged to participate at the Oklahoma Province's duplicate workshops, which will be offered in both Dallas and Atlanta areas, in April and May of 2012. While specific dates, times and meeting places are in process of being determined, each community is being asked to prepare financially ahead of time by planning in their budgets for sending both the President and Formation Director to the spring workshop, whichever one is closest to your community location. The same basic contents will be covered at each workshop, thus the description of being a "duplicate" workshop.

The duplicate workshop is offered once each three years (triennium) and supplies invaluable resources, useful discussions, question/answer sessions, prayer time and supportive conversation to benefit their councils and communities. Among topics explored are provincial formation guidelines, discernment issues, OCDS legislation, how healthy councils function, your community apostolate, Liturgy of the Hours, how the Provincial Council works for the OCDS and specific community concerns. Attending the workshops is certainly more important than attending our Congress as the information presented and shared targets specifically the everyday needs of our communities in the Province.

Costs in 2009 were approximately \$300 per person for food and for 3 nights in dorm-style rooms with community rest rooms/showers at a local retreat center, in addition to their transportation expenses incurred.

Visitation reports from this past triennium show that councils and communities represented at the workshops during this time period seemed to fare better than communities from which nobody attended. Should it be impossible for both President and Formation Director to attend, Council members may substitute. The PC looks forward to each community council sending 2 members.

Thank you, Lafayette!

The Provincial Council would like to take this time to thank the two Lafayette, Louisiana OCDS communities, Mary, Mother of Grace and St. Joseph, Guardian of Carmel for the terrific job they did on the Sixteenth Regional Congress. What magnificent blessing Our Lord so generously gave to all of us. Every aspect of the entire Congress was delightful. The beautiful sunflowers reminding us to always turn to the Son. The opportunity in the midst of all the celebration to visit with Him in adoration. The selection of wonderful speakers including Fr. Aloysius Deeney. The beautiful liturgies, music and sense of community and the chance to visit with our fellow brothers and sisters in Carmel. Our thanks also to the nuns for so generously opening the monastery for the tours. Last but not least, the Cajun music and dancing. Thank you all for a magnificent job well done.

Photos from the 2011 Congress



The Planning Committee for the 2011 Congress take a bow. They are, from left, Anita Trahan, Gerald Alford, Elizabeth O'Neill, Jeannine Meaux, Lea Hawkins, Nelda Tweedel and Loretta Glod.



Loretta Gallager of the Washington DC Province led the Washington DC delegation in a patriotic song that invited everyone to attend the 2012 Congress in Boston

Rather John Michael and Henrietta Albright, our new PC president, relax before heading home.



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Father Bonaventure's Congress address

*I had the privilege of giving one of the presentations at the Regional Congress in Lafayette this past June. Many found the presentation helpful, and a few asked if I might publish it in the *Flos Carmeli*, thereby making it available for others to read. I've decided to follow their recommendation. Due to its length I will need to publish it in three installments.*

Part 1

Chapter 19-26 of *The Way of Perfection*, Lafayette Congress

Part One

Recently I read a short article about a study conducted at the U. of Massachusetts Medical School. It utilized both psychological testing and neurological brain scans—you know what I mean—to monitor over a period of time people who regularly practice some form of what the study called *mindfulness*. By *mindfulness* was meant, as the article defined it, “the practice of paying attention to the present moment without thinking about the past or the future, and without making judgments about the present moment.” We might also call it a kind of self-forgetfulness, where one tries to be simply present in the here-and-now in an attentive yet open and relaxed way. While such mindfulness is certainly not in itself the same thing as mental prayer, it does seem, humanly speaking, to be of a piece with that inner state of relaxed, quiet, peaceful, yet attentive recollection we Carmelites strive for in our practice of prayer.

Interestingly this study—along with other studies of a similar sort, of which there are not a few—this study found that such a regular practice of mindfulness can have noticeable health benefits. Since it helps reduce stress and anxiety and the problems they cause, it can help reduce high blood pressure and high cholesterol and improve the functioning of the immune system. Moreover, when it comes to the mind and to personality traits, it can strengthen memory and imagination and help make us more empathetic and patient towards others and less doctrinaire and rigid, or insistent, about ourselves and our personal likes and dislikes.

Again, for us who practice not just mindfulness but mindfulness for the sake of prayer—of trying to be with God in the here-and-now—such results don't seem particularly surprising, whatever one may think of such studies generally. Just as the life of prayer flows out of life, out of our relationships with others, with created things, and with the self—as St. Teresa elaborates on through the first 18 chapters of *The Way of Perfection*—so prayer, authentic prayer, flows back into life, enhancing our well-being, both physical and psychological, and of course remolding us over time into more compassionate and respectful, less aggressive and demanding persons.

It is my task, a happy one, to speak with you about chapters 19-26 of *The Way of Perfection*. Having addressed herself to what you might call the practice of life, St. Teresa of Jesus, our Holy Mother, now turns explicitly to the practice of prayer. These chapters, though—that is, chapters 19-26—are a bit scattered and unwieldy. Thus, for the sake of this presentation I am going to take as my theme, my focus, precisely this notion I opened with—namely, *mindfulness*. It is a struggle we all face in our practice of prayer from the very beginning. How do I stay attentive, alert, and present in prayer? How do I remain mindful since, after all, I am trying to practice *mental*—which is to say, *mindful*—prayer? How do I, therefore, at least as best I can, avoid dis-

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tractions? How do I avoid, literally, absentmindedness, letting my mind wander off absently, taking me with it? This is my theme.

(1) A Word on Vocal prayer

As St. Teresa turns her attention in chapter 19 to prayer—or to what we might call, in concrete terms, “the act of praying”—she of course begins at the beginning. As I see it, for Teresa this beginning is twofold. One, there is the question of *what* we are doing, what is this act of praying that we’re engaged in. Second, there is the question of *how* we are doing it, in what frame of mind, or with what inner disposition. The expression “frame of mind” is probably best here—in what frame of mind are we praying?—since for Teresa it is a question, at least at the beginning, of the working of the mind when we are praying. But by “mind” we are to understand not just the intellect, the human power to reason and conceptualize. No, we should understand “mind” in the broader sense of awareness or attentiveness. Are we praying with awareness? Are we paying attention to what we are doing? Are we praying with mindfulness?

Thus, the twofold question, the *what* and the *how*. As for the first, the *what* we are doing—since we are at the very beginning, prayer is taken in its simplest form. Very simply it consists of the act of reciting prayers or prayer formulas, which is to say, vocal prayer. This seems almost a given, and Teresa assumes it. The first and foundational way of praying is vocal prayer. If we ask *which* prayers, Teresa seems generally to have in mind the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary*—the two prayers which, along with the *Glory Be*, comprise the rosary, and which are the two prayers every Catholic knows by heart. There are of course other prayers, collected in prayer books or found in the appendix to a missal, which likewise are familiar and traditional, and which can be learned and recited by heart or, at least, taken up and recited in an habitual way—although that is part of the problem with vocal prayer. In reciting composed and possibly memorized prayers, we are apt to let our minds wander.

Of course, one could expand on the possible repertoire of vocal prayers to the point that it might include *lectio divina* and meditation on spiritual texts as well. But that, it seems to me, would be strange. Vocal prayer is something different, both in intention and experience, from meditation and *lectio divina*. For example, vocal prayer is not defined simply by the fact that the words of the prayer are given rather than made up, creating thereby the problem that, in reciting them, our minds might tend to wander. With meditation or *lectio divina* there is also this same difficulty of distraction. But vocal prayer seems to have as its intention that we say or recite this or that prayer *as an act of praying*, as a way of speaking directly to God, with our minds fixed on God. With meditation or *lectio divina*, on the other hand, the intention seems different, something more like—to engage in spiritual reflection, or to ponder a sacred text, or to use one’s imagination in order to move one towards insight. Thus, with vocal prayer distraction interferes with our sense of being with God and speaking to him. Distraction during the practice of meditation or *lectio divina*, on the other hand, interferes with our keeping to the steps of the method we’re trying to follow. The mind wanders off on its own, and we stray from the path, so to speak.

Thus, by vocal prayer let’s limit ourselves to the act of reciting a given prayer as a way of speaking to God. Why this act serves as the foundation for the life of prayer in all its forms and developments and progressive stages seems to

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Father Bonaventure's address cont.

pretty obvious, at least for Catholics. Protestants might have a different experience. This experience of vocal prayer also reveals from the start, as I said above, what the problem is that we encounter in it—and this of course is the problem Teresa addresses in these middle chapters of *The Way of Perfection*. The problem is inattentiveness or distraction, letting the lips do the talking while the mind takes a walk. Thus, we become disengaged not only from what we are saying but, more importantly—and this is the crucial point—from what we are doing. Distraction in vocal prayer takes us away not just from the words of the prayer itself that we are reciting, but also, and importantly—and indeed, fatally—from the very fact that we are praying.

In other words, the issue of *how* we're making our vocal prayers, in what frame of mind we're saying them, is not just one of absentmindedness, a lack of mindfulness, with respect to what we are saying, that is, to the words of the prayer itself. Indeed, when it comes to vocal prayer, our understanding of the words themselves *as we say them* may not be all that crucial. For example, in reciting the *Our Father* or *Hail Mary* the question of our understanding of each word or phrase as it passes our lips may not be all that important or significant, although we do need a basic understanding of them, of course. The prayers aren't gibberish. But the point of understanding, of awareness and attentiveness, of mindfulness—and this seems to be the point Teresa insists on, for it is her primary concern in speaking of vocal prayer—the point is our being or remaining mindful in the course of the prayer of just *who it is* we are addressing and *who we are* who are doing the addressing. In other words, the prayer is meant to be a means to a relationship. We are trying to be present to God and let ourselves become aware of his presence to us. Thus, the worst kind of absentmindedness or distraction when making vocal prayer is when we lose attention to the fact that we are praying. Our lips are reciting the words of a prayer but our minds are elsewhere. We are no longer praying.

(2) Distraction in Prayer

My topic is, then, to put it succinctly, vocal prayer prayed with attentiveness or mindfulness to the fact that we are praying, considered as a way of praying which we might take to be the basic, foundational practice of prayer in the Teresian Carmel. In a moment I will offer a summary of the practice drawing on a passage or two from *The Way of Perfection*. But first let me address further the problem of distraction. It too has a basic, foundational role in the practice of prayer as Teresa discusses it. Indeed, I mentioned above the distinction between vocal prayer and both meditation and *lectio divina*. Teresa recognizes this distinction and, in a manner of speaking, offers vocal prayer *with mindfulness* as an alternative to meditation. What leads her to offer this alternative is, of course, the problem of distraction. Let me turn to Chapter 19 of *The Way of Perfection* to pursue the matter further.

Of course, distraction is not a problem unique to prayer. We're at mass listening to the readings, or at a regional congress listening to a somewhat dusty and diffuse conference, or we're reading a book, or having a conversation with a friend, and of course the mind wanders, our attention wavers, and we inwardly disengage from what's going on. In one sense, this is fine. Among other things it has to do with how the mind works. There's a lot going on in the mind of which, at any given moment, only so much occupies our awareness. If that weren't the case, then our mental processes would be pretty sterile, mechanical, and tedious. On the other hand, mental distraction can be a hindrance and liability. We don't pay attention. Thus, we

don't truly interact. We're not doing what we're doing when we're doing it. Moreover, this kind of absentmindedness can be an obstacle to cultivating inner stillness, self-forgetfulness, and that peace of heart so important to contemplative life and prayer.

What does St. Teresa have to say about this sort of distraction? Well, she recognizes it and wants to address it. At the very beginning of Chapter 19 of *The Way of Perfection*, there is a lengthy passage which speaks of the practice of discursive meditation, so common in Teresa's day, utilizing books designed for that purpose. Here's the passage. It's rather long, so bear with me:

There are so many good books written by able persons for those who have methodical minds and for souls that are experienced and can concentrate within themselves that it would be a mistake if you paid attention to what I say about prayer. As I say, there are books in which the mysteries of the Lord's life and Passion are divided according to the days of the week, and there are meditations about judgment, hell, our nothingness, and the many things we owe God together with excellent doctrine and method concerning the beginning and end of prayer. There is nothing for me to say to anyone who can form the habit of following this method of prayer, or who has already formed it, for by means of so good a path the Lord will draw him to the haven of light. And through such a good beginning the end will be reached. All who are able to walk along this path will have rest and security, for when the intellect is bound one proceeds peacefully. [n.1]

You will notice Teresa has a favorable view of this practice, which as a practice of Christian Catholic meditation we are all familiar with, at least in general terms. You will notice, though, that Teresa says that these books and this practice are “for those who have methodical minds,” who are experienced and “can concentrate within themselves.” She feels that the practice is a good, secure path. “All who are able”—which may not be everyone—“all who are able to walk along this path will have rest and security, for when the intellect is bound one proceeds peacefully”—which is a most interesting statement, in my view, the idea that we proceed peacefully in prayer when the intellect is thus bound. Yet despite everything that recommends this practice, Teresa is not interested in writing about it, adding yet another book to the literature already available. Her concern rather is to write for those unable to practice this sort of meditation. She wants to write about the practice of prayer for people of a different interior disposition, persons for whom this method doesn't work.

Teresa's intended audience, in other words, is those whom she describes in this way. She probably counted herself among them. The passage is from n.2 of chapter 19:

There are some souls and minds so scattered they are like wild horses no one can stop. Now they're running here, now there, always restless . . . This restlessness is either caused by the soul's nature or permitted by God. I pity these souls greatly, for they seem to be like very thirsty persons who see water in the distance, but when they want to go there, they meet someone who prevents their passing from the beginning through the middle to the end. [n.2]

This inner restlessness and distraction indeed do seem to *Continued on page 14*

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Father Bonaventure's address cont.

impede progress in prayer towards that living water of contemplation for which we thirst. I think we all can attest to that fact. But Teresa speaks as well of another significant concern. This restlessness and inner distraction can cause us to lose heart and give up trying to pray. That, for her, is the biggest danger—that we will tire, get frustrated with ourselves, concluding we don't have what it takes to be a person of prayer, and then stop trying. And Teresa wants to encourage and inspire her sisters, and us, to be persons of determination and perseverance in our prayer life. She also, in these chapters of *The Way of Perfection*, wants to offer tips for how to proceed and try to conquer this restlessness, rather than letting ourselves be conquered by it.

More photos from the Congress



Kathy Dewine (at left), president, and Anita Gouge, director of formation, of Knoxville, Tenn., were among attendees.



Presidents and representatives of all communities and study groups in attendance at the congress met Friday night with Father Bonaventure and the Provincial Council for a Plenary Council meeting to be updated on matters of concern to Seculars in the province.

View more photos of the Congress at this address:

<http://www.ocds2011congress.com/index.cfm?load=page&page=24>

Summer 2011

Letter from the Definitory

Rome, 13th May, 2011

Dear brothers and sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

PEACE.

As you know, Fr General has appointed me, as a member of the Definitory, to take charge of coordinating and organizing the events for the coming Teresian Centenary in 2015, which will also include celebrations for the IV centenary of the beatification of St Teresa, which will occur in 2014. With this in mind, the Definitory General created an international commission which has already begun working on the preparatory stages.

Amongst other things, an International Congress on the *Book of her Life* was celebrated in CITEs, Avila – the Acts have already been published; and this year, the second congress will be held from 29th August to 4th September on the *Way of Perfection*. As last year, it will be possible to take part in the proceedings via internet. The Web page www.paravosnaci.com continues on in seven languages. It provides the opportunity to share news, reflections and formation material on St Teresa's writings, for the purpose of stimulating spiritual and intellectual preparation for the Centenary. As members of the Teresian family, we are all invited to use the site, on which can also be found news of the different events taking place or being organized in the monasteries, convents, OCDS fraternities and other Carmelite groups.

Among the short and medium term plans, the Order is preparing at least three documentaries: one on Saint Teresa as a writer, another on the situation of present-day Carmel, and another on Teresian spirituality.

Work is going well on preparing a theatrical work on St Teresa, which we hope will have its premiere in Spain in 2012. Depending on how well this production goes, it could also be possible to produce it in other countries.

We are also working on a new translation into English and French of Teresa's writings, to be published in economical editions for use in disadvantaged regions and particularly in missionary areas.

The Centre of the Order hopes and has the desire to program, or help in coordinating four international congresses: for Central Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Among our objectives, in cooperation with the community of Discalced Carmelite friars in Avila, is to restore and tidy up the monastery church which, as you would know, forms part of the house where Saint Teresa was born. Particular attention will be paid to the chapel of her birth. In the V Centenary of her birth, it is difficult to imagine a tribute more worthy and enduring to Saint Teresa than to restore the place where she came to be.

It is natural that the celebration of the Centenary should be accompanied by cultural activities. To organize these, each geographical area ought to set up a commission to promote these, and be in contact with the civil society and public authorities in order to stimulate this type of celebration. **I therefore request the various Conferences of Major Superiors, once they are set up after the provincial chapters, to constitute their own commissions for promoting this work and to tell the General House when they have done so, for**

(Continued on page 16)

Definitory letter cont.

the purpose of creating a network between them that would facilitate the steps to be taken for this purpose.

I share with you that the Order is going to present to the Holy See three important petitions: that 2015 be declared a Holy Jubilee Year in the city of Avila; that the Holy Father visit Avila and some other cities in Spain on dates to be determined by the Holy See between 2014 and 2015; and that 2015 be officially declared *a Year of Prayer*. For the first petition we are coordinating with Avila Diocese, while for the second we are working with the Spanish Episcopal Conference and for the third, we are also working with them and the Discalced Carmelite Bishops.

Pray to the Lord that we can accomplish these objectives.

Finally, in view of these projects, I would like to ask your financial support. Already, some monasteries and Federations of Discalced Carmelite nuns have made generous donations towards the Centenary. Naturally, the various promoting commissions and the International Commission, ought to seek to ally themselves with public foundations and institutions that could help us to finance the Centenary events. But experience tells me that it is always the family that most generously contributes towards getting such things off the ground and because of this I am turning to you.

In the web-page for the Centenary, www.paravosnaci.com, by clicking on the tab marked “donaciones”, you will find the details of the account, which I also copy here:

CONVENTO SANTA TERESA – CARMELITAS DESCALZOS (CENTENARIO)

IBAN: ES 21 20940001060009138500

BIC: CECAESMM094

I thank you in advance for your generosity and also for your prayers. United in prayer, let us ask the Lord that all the preparatory events and activities celebrating the Teresian Centenary go well, so that by them the Lord will pour out abundant spiritual goods over the Order, the Church and the World.

I take the opportunity to wish you a very happy Easter.

Your brother in the Discalced Carmel, all for Mary:

P. Emilio J. Martínez González, ocd

Vicar General

Finding Carmelite books—a partial list

Looking for Carmelite books?? While everyone is familiar with the books published by ICS, there are also some lesser known publishers/dealers. A couple of these are international and so would entail higher shipping costs but you might find books to add to your collection. Some of these are run by the Discalced Carmelites and some by the Calced. Some of the books they sell can be found via Amazon and other major booksellers but many are lesser known books that you'll not find from other sellers.

Carmel of Maria Regina

Book Dept

87609 Green Hill Rd

Eugene OR 97402

(no website)

Dhynavana Publications

A Unit of Carmel Jyothi

NGO

Cloistered Carmel Annex

14, Ali Asker Road

Bangalore-560052

The Carmelite Shoppe

1576 independence Dr

Northfield MN 55057

<http://www.carmeliteshoppe.com/>

Carmelite Media

1540 E. Glenn St.

Tucson, Arizona 85719

<http://www.co-store.com/carmelitemedia>

Epiphany Association Bookstore (carries Susan Muto commentaries)

<http://www.epiphanyassociation.org/bookstore>

Alba House

<http://www.albahouse.org/index.htm>

Carmelite Book Service

<http://www.carmelite.org.uk/acatalog/index.html>

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News from around the province

Compiled by Father Bonaventure Sauer, OCD

1. Austin, TX—submitted by Pat Tremko, OCDS

Nine of our members staffed a booth at *Godstock*, a weekend gathering for teens sponsored by the Diocese of Austin. [See photo at right.] It is held each year at the Eagles Wings Retreat Center in Burnett, TX. This year it took place on Saturday, April 30. Over 500 teens prayed, played, listened to bands, and attended Mass. They were given an opportunity to consider a wide variety of vocation possibilities.



The Austin OCDS Community of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross was blessed at its annual retreat this past April to have two aspirants admitted into formation. They are Kathy Bradner and Kathy Rasmussen. Two of our members—Rosie Garza and Sandra Larmeu—made their First Promise while on retreat while three others—Shawn Chapman, Rafael Quintanilla, and Dieu Van Dinh—made Definitive Promise. [See photo just below.] We congratulate them all.



Our retreat was held at the diocesan retreat center *Cedar Break*. Our retreat master, Fr Stephen Sanchez, O.C.D. spoke on the theme “An introduction to the Life of St. Teresa of Jesus: A Paradigm.” His excellent presentations truly pointed the Community to a deeper reading of the works of St. Teresa. We are grateful for this guidance as we study the writings of our Holy Mother.

While on retreat we held our community elections. Jo Ann Murphy was re-elected as president, with Pat Thompson appointed formation director, and Karen Phipps, Olga Lopez, and Sandra Grep elected to the council. [The council is pictured with Fr. Stephen, our retreat master, in the photo at the top of the next page.]



2. Baton Rouge, LA—submitted by Clarence Landry, OCDS

On May 15, 2011 Fr. Bonaventure visited the Baton Rouge Community during our monthly meeting. Because of a conflict at Our Lady of Mercy Church, where the community routinely meets, the meeting was held at Most Blessed Sacrament Church. As part of the meeting, Fr. Bonaventure celebrated Mass for the Community and presided over the Rite of Definitive Promise for Dana Barton and Karen Dower. [The photo to the left shows the newly professed, Karen Dower (left) and Dana Barton (right), with Fr. Bonaventure.] We thank God for Karen’s and Dana’s vocation.

Special thanks to Fr. Mike Collins, Pastor of Most Blessed Sacrament, for letting us use the Church and meeting room and to Deacon Don Musso for coordinating the use of the facilities.

At our April meeting the Baton Rouge OCDS Community of St. John of the Cross and St. Anthony held its elections. The photo at the top of the next page, taken following the Mass of Profession on May 15, shows the new council with Fr. Bonaventure. They are, from left to right, Pam Gaudin, Frances Locker (formation director), [Fr. Bonaventure], Carmelite Provine, Barbara Henry, and Clarence Landry (president).



News cont.

We have some sad news to share. Don Forbes, husband of our community member Myra Forbes, died this past June 7. They were married for 64 years. At Myra's request, OCDS Community members and the Holy Name Society of St. Thomas More Parish joined to recite a rosary at Don's wake.



3. Cedar Rapids, IA—submitted by Martha Hanley, OCDS

We are pleased to announce the profession of Definitive Promise this past April by Melissa Kuefler, OCDS, along with the admission to formation and clothing of Julie Doehrmann. The photo [at left] was taken at the time. Pictured are, in the back row, from left to right, Martha Hanley, Julie Doehrmann (the newly clothed), Mary Pat Wilkinson, Melissa Kuefler (the newly professed), Jean Hart, and Mercy Reyhons. Msgr. Robert Vogl, a member of our community, stands in the middle. And in the front row, from left to right, are Nancy Thompson, Cindy McElliott, Anita Griebel, and Roxann Sorenson.



News cont.

4. Visitations of Lafayette, LA, and McAllen, TX—submitted by Dorothy Mansen, OCDS

Dorothy Mansen, OCDS Provincial Councilor, conducted a visitation of the Lafayette community *Mary, Mother of Grace*, this past February. The photo below, taken at the time of the visitation, shows members of our community gathering in the chapel of the Carmelite nuns in Lafayette. Those who attended the Regional Congress in Lafayette will perhaps remember it.



Dorothy also made a visitation of the community of McAllen, TX, in March. The following photo of the community, with Dorothy seated in the front row middle, was taken at the time.



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News cont.

5. Tulsa, OK—submitted by Barbara Tinervia, OCDS

The Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity Study Group in Tulsa, OK, was very excited to have Fr. John Michael Payne [in photo below] come to Tulsa and present a day of recollection on June 18th. Father fittingly shared about Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity and celebrated Mass for us.

We would also like to announce that the Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity OCDS Study Group will be hosting its 2nd annual RETREAT on August 4-7. It will be held at Subiaco Benedictine Monastery near Clarksville, AR. The retreat master will be our own Fr. Bonaventure Sauer. It will consist of time for silence and solitude, daily Mass, private prayer, and the opportunity to gather in prayer with other OCDS members from our province.

The cost for a private room and for meals for the retreat is \$205.00. Space is limited. If you are interested, please contact Susie Spanier at sspanier@pfandg.com

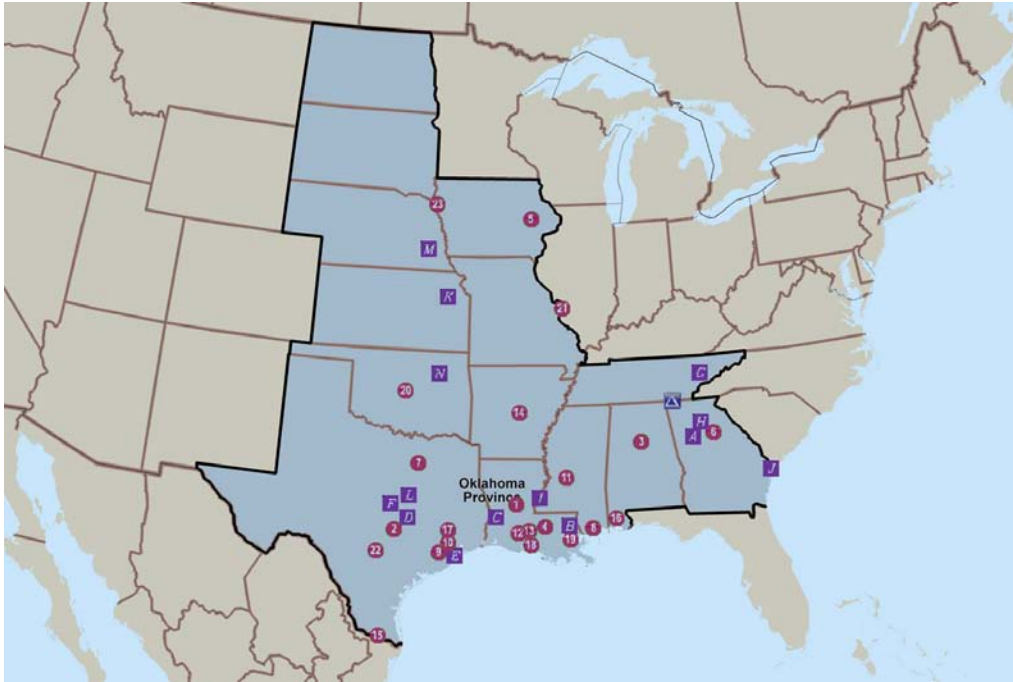


Carmel Clarion notice of defective CDs

Father Regis Jordan, OCD, of Carmel Clarion Communications has sent an alert that an error exists in two CDs available from Carmel Clarion. Affected are CD #20`, John of the Cross V. 2.0, and CD #202, Collected Works of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa. In these CDs, cross-references to the Bible do not work.

Persons who have these CDs are invited to contact Carmel Clarion Communications at carmelitecds@live.com or 877-845-4560 for replacement CDs.

OCDS in Oklahoma Province



Map Key

Communities

- 1 – Alexandria, La
- 2 – Austin, TX
- 3 – Birmingham, AL
- 4 – Baton Rouge, LA
- 5 – Cedar Rapids, IA
- 6 – Conyers, GA
- 7 – Dallas, TX
- 8 – Gulf Coast, MS
- 9 – Houston, TX – Holy Trinity
- 10- Houston , TX – San Juan
- 11 – Jackson, MS
- 12 – Lafayette, LA – MMG
- 13 – Lafayette, LA – St Joe
- 14 – Little Rock, AR
- 15 – McAllen, TX
- 16 – Mobile, AL
- 17 – New Caney, TX
- 18 – New Iberia, LA
- 19 – New Orleans, LA
- 20 – Oklahoma City, OK
- 21 – St Louis, MO
- 22 – San Antonio, TX
- 23 – Sioux City, IA

Study Groups:

- A – Atlanta, GA
- B – Covington, LA
- C – De Ridder, GA
- D – Georgetown, TX
- E – Houston, TX - #3
- F – Killeen, TX
- G – Knoxville, TN
- H – Lawrenceville, GA
- I – Natchez-Vidalia, MS
- J – Savannah, GA
- K – Topeka, KS
- L – Waco, TX
- M – Lincoln/Omaha, NE
- N – Tulsa, OK
- O- Chattanooga, TN

Summer 2011

Parting Words

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.

“Those who truly love God, love every good, desire every good, praise every good. They always join, favor, and defend good people. . . .Do you think it is possible for those who really love God to love vanities? No, indeed, they cannot; nor can they love riches, or worldly things, or delights or honors, or strife, or envy. All of this is so because they seek only to please the Beloved.”

From *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila , Volume Two* translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez Copyright (c) 1980 by Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites ICS Publications 2131 Lincoln Road, N.E. Washington , DC 20002-1199 U.S.A.
www.icspublications.org

Request to Study Groups

ATTENTION STUDY GROUPS: When submitting monthly minutes or profession requests to the Provincial Council could you please use the following format for the Subject Line. Minutes: City - month, year - Minutes Profession Requests: City - FP or DP - name of candidate Since we have fourteen Study Groups using this format will be very helpful in seeing that the information is stored correctly for review by the Provincial Council. Study Group minutes and Profession Requests should be sent to Henrietta Albright . Below is her contact information:

Henrietta Albright
11447 Cagle Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70811-1302
Hm: 225-774-8413
Cell: 225-315-8213
Halbrig@aol.com