



Flos Carmeli

Council members encouraged to attend April workshop

The Provincial Council regrets to announce that the OCDS Workshop for presidents and directors of formation planned for April 19-22 in Houston will be the ONLY workshop offered this year.

Please try to send at least one person from your community to the workshop. Preference should be given to presidents or directors of formation who have not attended a previous workshop. Alternatives to consider could be council members or secretary.

The Workshop will begin at 4 p.m. Thursday, April 19, 2012, and will end with lunch on Sunday, April 22. It will be held at the Cenacle Retreat House in Houston. The Cenacle Retreat House is located at 420 N. Kirkwood Road in Houston, which is a straight shot off I-10. Accommodations accessible to persons with disabilities are available.

Since space is limited, only the first 30 people who sign up will be accepted. A waiting list will be created as necessary. The cost per attendee is \$300. The fee provides a private room with a hall bathroom and meals.

Please contact Provincial Council member Dorothy Mansen at 1-817-914-8983 or 1dot-and2bob@sbcglobal.net to register by March 1.

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Provincial Delegate's Report

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, OCD

It is New Year's Day as I write. Happy New Year to all of you. May God keep each of you in his love throughout the coming year. Of course, he will do that, we can count on it. Rather, it is really up to us to set aside the time each day to acknowledge that fact and rest our souls in it, whatever life may hold for us.

This new year will bring a noteworthy initiative to the Secular Order in our province. The work which Pat Darby has been doing will be expanded and developed through the hiring of a new Central Office Administrator. The Provincial Council is presently going through an evaluation and selection process and hopes to have someone in place to take up the job by the end of January. The Council, myself included, will be meeting in Dallas on February 9-12. The plan is to have the new Central Office Administrator attend this meeting and there receive a needed orientation, familiarizing them with their duties.

Almost all of you have generously agreed to pay up to an additional \$20 in annual dues if indeed that's what's needed to finance this new position. We may not need that much. Chris Wood, who serves on the Provincial Council, is presently using his experience and expertise in the business world to carry out a formal assessment of our provincial finances and prepare a working budget. In doing so, he and others on the Provincial Council are seeking ways to reduce costs. One such way is, of course, to send out the *Flos Carmeli* electronically to as many as possible. Doing so would entail significant savings. The Provincial Council will be letting you know what change there may be in your annual dues in the next issue of the *Flos*, if not perhaps before. For the time being, the dues remain the same—\$40 for the year.

On a personal note, I thank all of you for your concern and prayers, for the masses offered and cards sent, as I've undergone my treatment these past couple of months. My symptoms are pretty much unchanged, although the doctor assures me that I should begin seeing improvement soon after the first of the year—which, come to think of it, is today. So, I have that to look forward to.

And on another personal note, I am fully installed in my new residence at the Basilica in San Antonio. I like it here. I like the city itself and, of course, living and working at the Shrine. Moreover, having such a full community to live and pray with—altogether we are, when everyone is here, three students, the student director, the superior/pastor, his two parochial vicars, the provincial, and myself—has been a joy and a real boost to my vocation. So, if it matters to you to have a contented and so pliable provincial delegate in place, your wishes have been granted.

We have for over a month now been using the new translation of the *Roman Missal* at mass. The transition here at the Basilica has gone remarkably well. I hope your experience, in your own parishes, has been similar. As for my personal reaction to the changes, for what it's worth, there are of course some changes I like quite a bit, others I find simply peculiar, requiring time to get used to, and others that seem to me not an improvement, but a poorer or weaker choice of words or phrasing. Stylistically I don't generally prefer the latinizing tendency of the new translation. To give a simple example of what I mean by latinizing, there is the use in the Eucharistic Prayers of the word "charity," derived from Latin via French, in place of the good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon root word "love." But it's a minor complaint, and more a matter of taste than anything. I'll get over it.

The one latinized word choice, though, that will probably always irritate me a bit is the use of word "chalice" in the words of consecration where the word "cup," as we used to say, does just as well. Indeed, "cup" is a perfectly good English word, while the word "chalice," again derived from the Latin via French, carries connotations that I don't consider altogether fitting at this point in the Eucharistic Prayer, namely, where the priest is recalling the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper. No matter. The friars, of course, are well

aware of my objections in this regard. And so, as is our practice with each other, they tease me about it. For example, they will ask if I'd like another "chalice of coffee" at breakfast. There's nothing like community to keep things in perspective.

I have been asked to write something about the *Provincial Council*. In referring to the Provincial Council, you probably think I have in mind your own Provincial Council, the one that serves the Secular Order in the province. But I'm referring to a different one, namely, the Provincial Council of the friars. Many of you may not be aware of it, but there is such a thing. We friars have a council that assists the provincial in his work. It is this Provincial Council that I've been asked to share with you about.

Our Provincial Council consists of the four friars, who serve as councilors, and the provincial himself, of course. The provincial acts as president. Our *Constitutions* mandate this Council and define its membership and overall responsibilities, although only in very broad terms. The *General Norms*, on the other hand, set out in greater detail the particular matters it is meant to address and the procedures it should follow. Its responsibilities as thus spelled out in the *Norms* are still, though, rather limited and consist mainly in making assignments to various offices in the province and then making changes later as needed. But this is only the basics. Each province has its own often unwritten practices and customs for what the Provincial Council is supposed to do and how the provincial is expected to work with it and through it. What I will say about the Provincial Council, therefore, is in some measure specific to how it functions in our Province of Oklahoma.

Before I take up that topic I should say, first, that the Provincial Council is elected at the time of the triennial Provincial Chapter, usually as the first order of business. In this it is sort of like you in your communities as you elect your council following the election of the president. In our case, as in yours, the councilors serve a three-year term and can be reelected once. As for the election process, it is the custom in our province for the newly elected or reelected provincial to nominate those friars he would like to see serve with him on the Council. In my experience, these nominations are almost always followed, and the nominated friars then elected by the friars attending the Provincial Chapter. Provincial Councilors are elected in order and are ranked accordingly. This ranking can be significant on certain rare occasions, beyond simply being a point of pride and prestige for the councilor. (I'm joking, of course.) The First Councilor, for example, is also the Vicar Provincial and serves as provincial whenever the provincial is away from the province or, for some reason, is unable to serve.

For this present triennium our Provincial Council consists of: Fr. Stephen Sanchez, First Councilor and Vicar; myself, Fr. Bonaventure, Second Councilor; Fr. Ralph Reyes, Third Councilor; and Fr. Luis Gerardo Belmonte, Fourth Councilor. I also act as Council Secretary, which means that I take minutes at our meetings, then publish them in redacted form later, and generally assist the provincial when it comes to official correspondence and the like. You can see that serving on the Provincial Council is not a fulltime job, although it can require some work. But a friar on the Council also has other responsibilities.

In our province—according to our practice—the Provincial Council tends to meet quite frequently, usually every other month. In this way it can act as a consultative committee that assists the provincial closely. These meetings easily run two full days. We discuss and deliberate over all sorts of things, at times the issues being rather intense. These topics include: ongoing projects and initiatives in the province, new proposals coming from within or from without the province; the state of each house in the province; our overall finances; issues regarding our community life and spiritual observance; problems individual friars may be facing; and of course the formation of our novices and students. Just what we discuss and how we discuss it, though, will depend in large part on how the provincial chooses to use the Council. In our province, as I said, the custom and expectation has generally been that the provincial will consult with his Council quite a bit and pretty thoroughly, running most everything through it.

There are three specific areas where the Council acts in a more formal way as a kind of governing,

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authoritative body. First, there is the area of the formation of the temporarily professed, that is, of our students. Just as with your own councils, our Provincial Council does the evaluation and makes the discernment of our students as each student prepares to renew his vows each year. (Our students renew their vows annually for at least five years.) This direct oversight of the evaluation/discernment process is true only for the students, not for the postulants or novices, whose evaluation/discernment is handled by the provincial working in collaboration with the local formation community—for example, the novitiate house, when it comes to novices.

Second, the Provincial Council acts as a finance committee for the province. This oversight pertains to the finances of the province as a whole, not to the finances of the individual houses. The Council, though, does have some general oversight responsibility for the finances of the individual houses. It receives and reviews biannual reports and budgets submitted by each of the houses. But as for the province's own accounts and investments, the Provincial Council constitutes the official board of the non-profit corporation under which we have been established, namely, the Discalced Carmelite Friars of Oklahoma, Inc. As a corporation, we are of course recognized by the state as having all the rights and privileges of full personhood. I'm not sure if that means that we, the Discalced Carmelite Friars of Oklahoma, Inc., also possess an immortal soul.

Lastly, the Provincial Council serves as the personnel board of the province. At the beginning of each triennium it reviews the situation in the provinces, looks at all the slots that need to be filled, and decides who best might fill them, at least at this time. In doing so it takes into consideration each friar's needs, age, gifts, and past experience, as well as the composition of community in each house that would result from this arrangement. It is a delicate task, and I always compare it to building a house of cards. But somehow the Council manages to accomplish it. Then it officially notifies each friar of his assignment for the coming triennium.

So, there you have it, a brief description of our (the friars') Provincial Council and of what it does, generally speaking. You can see some common traits with your own local councils especially, although not so much with your own Provincial Council, which has a somewhat different role and function in the province. All in all such councils are characteristic of how authority operates in religious institutes. While authority rests at the top, with the provincial in our case, that authority can never be exercised in abstraction or isolation, as if from above. It must flow out of some sort of process of consultation and collective deliberation. Our Provincial Council helps provide just such a way of assuring that this consultation happen

Report of the Provincial Council

Somewhat in keeping with the format of the last Report of the Provincial Council, each PC member has been asked to submit a bit about what has been going on in their PC world.

Visitations always take top priority, of course. Communities visited were Alexandria, LA, Austin, TX, Chattanooga and Knoxville, TN.

Letters for 2012 visitations should be going out in the next few weeks. Councils may want to look at their last visitation report to see what types of things the visitor would like to know about their communities. Study Groups are visited every other year and Canonical communities every three years.

Central Office Administrator Mary Kay Daniels was the PC member responsible for accepting resumes from, and communicating with, those interested in the COAA position. As Mary Kay mentions we have some awesome applicants. Hopefully, by the next Flos Carmeli we will have someone in place in this position.

Spring Workshop: Dorothy Mansen is accepting reservations for the Workshop for Presidents and Directors of Formation to be held in Houston in April. **Checks for workshop registration should be made out to “Dorothy Mansen”.** In deciding who to send to the workshop priority should be given to those who have not attended a workshop before. Dorothy and her husband Bob will also be our hosts for the PC Workshop planning meeting to be held in Dallas in February. Above and beyond to invite a bunch of PC folks to your house for three or four days.

Flos Carmeli: Dorothy Ashley is compiling a list of contact persons to receive the Flos electronically and make paper copies of the Flos for their fellow community members. If you have not sent Dorothy the name of a contact person willing to accept this responsibility please do so. **You may email this information to Dorothy Ashley at carmelite57@yahoo.com**

Last but not least: Thanks to the technical expertise of Chris Wood we had our first video conferencing PC meeting. Since we do most of our communicating through email and it was a real treat to hear the voices of our fellow PC members.

Following are comments submitted by your other PC members.

Henrietta Albright

Dorothy Mansen: Here we are starting a new year having hopefully fulfilled all that was in our Father’s will for us to accomplish last year.

After traveling many miles last year I have been able to spend the last 6 weeks at home with family preparing for the celebration of the Incarnation. The last 2 Visitations of the 6 that I made last year were in October, one in Knoxville and another in Chattanooga, TN. What a joy it was to see old friends and to meet still more of our sisters and brothers in Carmel. Mary Kay Daniels joined me in Knoxville for her introduction to the rubrics of Visitations. What a blessing it was for me to have her along. We were greeted ever so

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warmly and in no time at all Mary Kay was applying her many talents to the content of the weekend. It was easy for me to tell that all of you were also busy preparing for our dear Savior's birthday as my email slowed down a whole lot. Aside from reviewing the resumes that the Provincial Council has received and registering members who are planning to attend the workshop in April, work is also going to prepare an agenda for a meeting of the PC in Dallas this February to organize the April Workshop sessions. I am looking forward to spending this important weekend with the presidents and formation directors from as many communities, study groups and groups in discernment that will make the trip to Houston. As you may know, these workshops take place only every three years and afford councils to learn how to better function. There is always a great exchange of ideas between all who attend and all are reluctant to part at the conclusion of the weekend. The registration deadline is March 1st. May all of us look forward to the season of Lent as an opportunity to draw closer to our Lord, Jesus Christ..

Chris Wood: I made my first solo visitation to the Alexandria Louisiana community the first weekend in November. It was a great experience for me, and a wonderful opportunity to get to know the community members there and to observe how they are living out their Carmelite vocation. Over the past couple of months I've also been working on the budget projections for 2012 especially considering the addition of a Central Office Administrator who will be hired in the first quarter to handle administration of the finances and various other OCDS activities for the province. Also, during the last quarter the Provincial Council did a trial run of a free virtual (online) meeting capability that we hope will help facilitate our collaboration and future deliberations. While this technology shows some promise there are a few kinks that still need to be worked out. This will continue to be a focus for me as we move into the new year.

Prayers and good wishes for a happy and healthy New Year!
Chris

Mary Kay Daniels: What a joy to meet everyone in Knoxville's Transfiguration Study Group and Austin's Community of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross! Both study group and community are vibrantly thriving; both are blessed with dedicated and exceptionally effective Councils. The hospitality extended to me couldn't have been more heartwarming. I shadowed the world's best mentor Dorothy Mansen while visiting the Transfiguration Study Group this past October, then did my first Visitation to the Community of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross in Austin, in November. I couldn't have been blessed with more beautiful and Spirit-filled Carmelite experiences.

Gathering and studying the resumes for those applying for the Central Office Administrator position, and corresponding with our applicants, is another activity I've been immersed in. Carmel is blessed with some very talented members! I'm looking forward to the interviewing process and hoping that we have a new Administrator by mid-January.

Finally, when I volunteered to look into St. John of Avila's life for this issue's "Flos" article, I had no idea I would be making a new spiritual friend who I wish to share with you. Holy Mother Teresa thought very highly of him for good reason. Not only did John impact the church constructively by improving formation

for the priesthood and developing schools of catechesis, but his letter-writing ministry to people was extraordinary. In a letter written “To A Lady, On Confidence in God,” John wrote: “May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with you. If we would not offend God, there are two points on which we must be particularly careful – one is, that we should love His goodness, and the second is, that we should trust in His mercy... Cast away, then, all doubts, faintheartedness and misgivings, for the merits of the Passion are ours, because Christ gave them to us and we are His...”

May we radiate Christ's Fullness of Peace to the world.

Mary Kay

Dorothy Ashley: Greetings to you in this special season of our Lord's birth! Since the fall edition of the Flos, I have heard from about half (20) of our Communities/Study Groups who have given me a contact person's name to email the Flos Carmeli to. Presidents, if you have not yet sent in the name and email of contact person from your community or study group who will be designated to receive the Flos Carmeli electronically and distribute it to all other members either by email or by making hard copies for members without email, please so do before the end of February. My email address is carmelite57@yahoo.com.

Besides compiling email lists of contacts from each community and study group I have compiled an email list of all the friars. Before becoming a member of the Provincial Council I had not heard of or met most of the friars, brothers or students of our Province. I am excited to announce that in future editions of the Flos, beginning with the spring edition of the Flos Carmeli, we will “meet” a friar, brother or student. As part of this feature we will provide information on the friar's availability and topics for retreats or days of recollection.

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Father Bonaventure's Congress talk, Part 3

Father Bonaventura Sauer, OCD

*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 it has needed to be printed in three installments. The following is the third and last installment. The first and second were published in the summer and fall issues respectively of the *Flos Carmeli*.*

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

(5) Using the Imagination to Practice Mental Prayer

In Chapter 26 of *The Way of Perfection* Teresa moves a bit beyond the topic of practicing mental prayer by joining it to vocal prayer and begins to set forth a simple method of mental prayer that involves using one's imagination. It's not an elaborate, sophisticated method, one that goes from point to point in an exercise of detailed introspection. No, it is, as with all I've talked about so far, a simple way of trying to keep ourselves in God's—or, in this case, in Christ's—presence, if perhaps only briefly, while avoiding distractions as best we can.

Chapter 26 of *The Way of Perfection* opens this way:

As is already known, [when we begin our prayer] the examination of conscience, the act of contrition, and the sign of the cross must come first. [n.1]

Yes, it does matter how we prepare ourselves to enter into prayer. And, to that end, Teresa suggests an examination of conscience, followed by an act of contrition, then the sign of the cross. These actions strike me as having been taken from the ritual practice of going to confession, which of course we're not doing when we enter into prayer. In their essence, though, they suggest that we begin by acknowledging our sinfulness and therefore our need of God to help us draw near to him. We then conclude this acknowledgment formally with an act of contrition, asking God's mercy. Then, of course, we start our prayer by invoking the divine name—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and marking ourselves with the sign of the cross, a baptismal gesture that recalls our having been sealed as members of Christ's body.

Of course, there are other ways one might prepare oneself to pray. The essence of the matter seems to me threefold.

(1) We need to set aside the worries and preoccupations of the day and still ourselves inwardly. No, we're not trying to achieve a state of inner peace. We're only taking a moment to inwardly step aside from the day's occupations. Making a sign of the cross and taking a few deep breaths might be enough most of the time.

(2) We also, as we begin our prayer, need to remind ourselves that we are about to come into the presence of God, before whom we are sinners. A simple self-reflection, rather than a full-fledged examination of conscience, might be enough, for we probably shouldn't go at it too long. The point is not to meditate on our sinfulness. It's just to remind ourselves of it and acknowledge our need of God's mercy. Nor

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are we preparing ourselves to go to confession. Thus, there's no point in enumerating our sins. That would be a distraction. In fact, in place of an act of contrition we could recite a short psalm instead, such as Ps 130 or 131.

(3) Lastly, as we come into God's presence and acknowledge our unworthiness, we need to do so ultimately by calling upon God's love and mercy and then trusting in God who first called us to himself. Again, reciting a short psalm as an act of contrition is also a way of praising God's mercy. Or simply saying, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner," might be enough. Or, given the fact that we belong to a Marian Order, the opening words of the *Magnificat* would be a wonderful way to start one's prayer: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant." Other NT verses come quickly to mind: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you; live on in my love." Or: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

One could write down a few such verses on a small card to have them ready at hand. It is my belief that being thus deliberate and purposeful about our prayer by introducing into it such simple yet expressive ritual-like practices is not unimportant. It can give our prayer texture and character. We don't just throw ourselves into prayer willy-nilly, come what may. We approach it with deliberation and cultivate it with care and purpose just as one would a garden. It deserves no less

Be that as it may, the point is to set other things to one side and then to set ourselves down in God's presence while acknowledging that we do so not on the basis of our own worthiness but because of God's love. And since we are praying—that is, since we are engaged in an act of prayer—we need to do this with some sort of action in order to express it to ourselves before God. Teresa suggests an examination of conscience, then an act of contrition, then the sign of the cross. I have offered some other suggestions. Nothing is sacrosanct. It's up to you to develop your own practice—once you've grasped the point or purpose that is at stake.

So we are set to begin prayer. What follows next? Teresa continues in chapter 26 of *The Way of Perfection*:

Then, daughters, since you are alone, strive to find a companion. Well what better companion than the Master Himself? . . . Represent the Lord Himself as close to you . . . If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able—as they say—to get away from Him; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere. Do you think it's some small matter to have a friend like this at your side? [n.1]

We are to make an effort, using our imagination, to find in the Lord—and here Teresa has in mind specifically Jesus—a companion, someone to be with us in this quiet moment of inner solitude. More concretely, we are to *represent*—or *make present*—to ourselves this companion Jesus, now close to us, at our side. And we are to do so with love, with feelings of love. Teresa then assures her sisters that, with the Lord's help, this practice will become easier and easier, more and more an ingrained habit. We will learn to practice the presence of the Lord in all kinds of moments throughout our day-to-day business, even at work, and not just in prayer. The Lord will be our ready friend and companion.

What Teresa seems to have in mind here, beginning in prayer and potentially spreading out into life, is something like "practicing the presence of God"—or, in this case, of Jesus. Prayer, then, serves as a kind of practice ground in which to strive to acquire this habit. We do have the ability to use the imagination to conjure up a sense or feeling of someone being present with us, even though they aren't, not concretely. We may

not have an image or picture of this person in our minds. We're not using the imagination to create an inner visual image of the person, only a kind of feeling of the person's presence that then focuses our attention on him or her as though this person were actually, physically, there. It's still a work of the imagination, but without images. And we can use it to summon up a sense of the presence of, say, an absent spouse. Thus, we can also use it to summon up a sense of the presence of Jesus.

And Teresa recommends this practice as a simple form of mental prayer which can help to still and focus the mind. She writes:

O Sisters, those of you who cannot engage in much discursive reflection with the intellect or keep your mind from distraction, get used to this practice! Get used to it! See, I know that you can do this; for I suffered many years from the trial—and it is a very great one—of not being able to quiet the mind in anything. But I know that the Lord does not leave us so abandoned; for if we humbly ask Him for this friendship, He will not deny it to us. [26.2]

Teresa confesses to speaking from experience here. She says that she herself struggled in this way. Yet a simple interior act of imagining the Lord present was something she could do, although certainly she had to work at it. But she could vouch for its effectiveness as a practice of prayer.

In n.3 of this same chapter, she offers a few further indications of what she has in mind by this practice. It is a lengthier quotation. She says:

I'm not asking you now that you think about Him or that you draw out a lot of concepts or make long and subtle reflections with your intellect. I'm not asking you to do anything more than look at Him. For who can keep you from turning the eyes of your soul toward this Lord, even if you do so just for a moment if you can't do more? . . . Well now, daughters, your Spouse never takes His eyes off you . . . Is it too much to ask you to turn your eyes from these exterior things in order to look at Him sometimes? Behold, He is not waiting for anything else, as He says to the bride, than that we look at Him. In the measure you desire Him, you will find Him. He so esteems our turning to look at Him that no diligence will be lacking on His part. [26.3]

Again it's not a form of meditation Teresa is suggesting here. We're not thinking *about* Jesus, or meditating over something about him—some mystery, or teaching, or story. In fact, it's not a thought *about* Jesus at all. It is what we might call the thought *of* Jesus himself, of his very presence, that here and now engages us. Thus, it is truly an act of prayer, not an act of personal reflection or introspection. Teresa invites us, very simply, to "look at Him" with "the eyes of the soul," even if only for a brief while. It is of course to be the gaze of one who loves resting in the loving gaze of the one he or she loves. Indeed, there is a tender, yet rather intense intimacy to such a moment, which is perhaps part of the reason why we can't sustain it for very long. It presses against us, so to speak, and we press back, pushing it away.

As Teresa further discusses this simple practice of imagining Christ present, she takes it a step further and begins to modulate the mood or character of his presence. It's as if one were to seek out the company of Jesus according to one's own emotional or personal needs at the time. Thus, in n.4 of chapter 26 she suggests:

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If you are joyful, look at Him as risen. Just imagining how He rose from the tomb will bring you joy. [26.4]

Or further on, in n.5, she writes:

If you are experiencing trials or are sad, behold Him on the way to the garden: what great affliction He bore in His soul; for having become suffering itself . . . Or behold Him burdened with the cross . . . He will forget His sorrows so as to console you in yours, merely because you yourselves go to Him to be consoled, and you turn your head to look at Him. [26.5]

Teresa does spend more time on the suffering Jesus than the joyful one. Indeed, she speaks of the image of the suffering or sorrowful Jesus—or, more precisely, of our imaginative conjuring up of a sense of the suffering Jesus being near or with us—she speaks of him as of a sympathetic friend one can turn to in one's own troubles. And she then invites her sisters, in n.6 of this chapter 26, to speak to him from the heart:

Not only will you desire to look at Him but you will also delight in speaking with Him, not with ready-made prayers but with those that come from the sorrow of your own heart, for He esteems them highly. [26.6]

Here mental prayer, understood as holding the Lord close in our minds, turns into a free, unscripted praying, a kind of conversing with the Lord, which Teresa assures her sisters the Lord values greatly.

But, of course, invoking the suffering Jesus can also serve to put our own sufferings in perspective. However bad we may think they are, our Lord endured worse. Teresa writes:

Consider carefully the fatigue with which He walks and how much greater His trials are than those trials you suffer, however great you may want to paint [your own trials] and no matter how much you grieve over them. [26.7]

There is a playfulness to what Teresa is doing here, and to my mind it comes close to seeming silly at times. And one could push it to the point of making it silly. Moreover, in this matter of how we picture Jesus—or at least of how we sort of project our feelings upon him, be they happy or sad—we're getting away from the practice Teresa is recommending—namely, to look at Jesus with the eyes of the soul and to do so with love. Thus, to talk of Jesus as risen or as suffering seems to me just another way of talking about Jesus as one who is empathetic to our human condition, who is with us in the ups and downs of life, and who promises us final happiness while he walks with us and consoles us in our present trials and difficulties. As we conjure up or invoke Jesus' presence with our imagination, then, we can do so with confidence because we know he is with us as one who loves and understands us no matter what. Thus, this sort of prayer, as simple as it is, has an affective, personal, even interpersonal quality to it. It may be brief, and distractions may soon overwhelm our efforts to hold Jesus close. But even

in its fleeting duration it can touch us deeply.

Teresa does at this point in chapter 26 recommend using an image or painting—a small icon or holy card—one that moves us or depicts Christ in a way that is significant and expressive for us. In n.9 she writes:

What you can do as a help in this matter is try to carry about an image or painting of this Lord that is to your liking, not so as to carry it about on your heart and never look at it but so as to speak often with Him; for He will inspire you with what to say. [26.9]

Again the idea seems to be not to meditate over the image so much as use it to gather ourselves into Christ's presence in a way that moves us to love or devotion. If we are doing it in the course of our practice of mental prayer, we might, having looked at the image for a bit, then close our eyes and simply be with Christ, if only briefly. The image would thus be an aid to our imagination as we try to hold Christ near.

In this context Teresa also mentions taking a book into prayer. It's sort of a default setting or fall-back position for her. When all else fails, read a book, slowly, attentively, reflectively. It's better than letting the mind wander here and there aimlessly. Here's what she says:

It is also a great help to take a good book written in the vernacular in order to recollect one's thoughts and pray well vocally, and little by little accustom the soul with coaxing and skill not to grow discouraged . . . our soul and our thoughts are so accustomed to wandering about at their own pleasure—or grief, to put it better—that the poor soul doesn't understand itself. In order that it get to love remaining at home once again, a great deal of skill is necessary. If little by little this is not accomplished, we shall never do anything. [26.10]

As you can see, the issue for Teresa is once again distraction, our inability to grow still and turn inward and be alone with ourselves and God. Attentive, reflective reading of a text, something with a little substance, of course—we're not talking about newspapers or popular novels—can help us strengthen our ability to focus the mind and be more attentive, receptive, thoughtful persons. It's of a piece with trying to grow in our capacity to listen closely and well. Teresa's advice here is also a reminder to us as Carmelites that study is an important part of formation in our spirituality.

At its heart it seems to me that what Teresa is describing here is mental prayer as an act of trying to pay loving attention to Jesus. We still ourselves and try to remain mindful of the fact that Jesus is here. We use our imagination to then sort of feel or sense that presence. Of course, Jesus isn't physically, manifestly, objectively present as, say, a friend might be for whom we would readily drop everything in order to attend to him or her in an expression of our friendship. But we believe Jesus is present, and we can imaginatively project that presence before us, so to speak, and thus sustain an awareness of it, if only for a short time.

We're not talking about having a vision or of anything particularly mystical—although prayer is always mysterious. But this effort to project Jesus' presence is for us an act of love, of care, of wanting to be with Jesus, of wanting to have him in our lives. It is an act of faith, hope, and love, and an expression of our personal commitment to live in relationship with Jesus as master, friend, guide, companion, Lord. Thus, it is a practice of Christian discipleship, flowing out of our spiritual lives and into our prayer. We are with the Lord, whom we love and serve, in this passing moment of interior intimacy. In time what

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might be difficult, elusive, and seem a bit strange will get easier and more regular and sustained. And in that way this practice can serve as a foundation in our own efforts for the beginnings of contemplative prayer.

There is much more to be gleaned and pondered from these chapters 19-26 of *The Way of Perfection*. I have focused on what I have, giving it the particular twist I've given it. And, for better or worse, I'm going to leave it at that.

My intention has been to talk about prayer—or, concretely, the act of praying—in as nitty-gritty, nuts-and-bolts a way as possible given this format. As Secular Carmelites you have pledged yourselves to try to make 30 minutes of mental prayer each day. Okay? But what is mental prayer, and how do I go about it? What specifically do I do? I've tried to address these questions in some small measure, using precisely those passages of these my assigned chapters of *The Way of Perfection* that seemed to me most conducive to this end and, as it were, rich with practical suggestions and pointers.

Of course, viewed humanly, mental prayer is *our* effort to open ourselves inwardly to receive the experience of God's presence in the here-and-now, an experience which God alone can bestow, of course. And without that experience—without, that is, fulfilling itself in the contemplative experience of God—mental prayer, no matter how diligently practiced, can come in time to seem merely tedious, a waste of personal energy, a spiritual failure. We grow frustrated, our efforts seeming dry and pointless, claustrophobic or closed in on themselves. We are tempted to give up. But Teresa assures us that God will not refuse us the gift of himself if—as we are called to do in the gospels—we keep watch in prayer for his coming.

Let me close, then, with these words of St. Teresa from chapter 25 of *The Way of Perfection*:

To keep you from thinking that little is gained through a perfect recitation of vocal prayer, I tell you that it is very possible that while you are reciting the *Our Father* or some other vocal prayer, the Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation. By these means His Majesty shows that He listens to the one who speaks to Him. [25.1]

Letter from the General Definitory

Each December, the General Definitory—sort of like a Provincial Council for the General—meets to review the year and make plans. This year they issued the following letter.



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELIANI SCALZI

Corso d'Italia, 38

00198 Roma – Italy

DEFINITORY LETTER (11)

+ December 21, 2011

Dear brothers and sisters in Carmel:

PEACE.

The entire Definitory met in Rome for its eleventh session from the 16th – 21st December; Father General, Saverio Cannistrà, presided.

After reports from Fr Saverio, Fr Emilio and Fr Augustine about recent pastoral visits carried out by them to the Provinces of Paris, Andalusia and Malabar respectively, we moved on to study the situation of some of the Centres dependent on the General House.

Fr General continued the various meetings with the Discalced Carmelite professors of the Teresianum, as also with the President, Fr Joseph Varghese Maliakkal and the Vice-president, Fr Silvano Giordano. Our principal preoccupation is to find staff to take over from the Discalced Carmelite professors who, for reason of age or other circumstance, must retire from teaching or reduce their work load. During the Definitory, Fr General mentioned possible candidates who, in the future, could be incorporated into the professorial staff. In collaboration with the authorities of the Faculty and the superiors of those contemplated, the necessary steps will be taken in due time to bring about their incorporation.

With regards to CITeS in Avila, we also studied their present situation, by analysing their need of personnel, academics, etc.

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On 10th December, we held a meeting here in Rome on the Deserts in Europe, convoked by Fr General, at which the Definitors from this continent took part and Provincials interested in the subject, either because a Desert exists in their circumscription, or because they plan to establish one. During the Definitory, we examined the content and conclusions of this meeting and decided that Fr Saverio should send a letter to the whole Order on this matter.

As is our custom, we dealt with matters referring to religious, monasteries and convents. In this regard, we discussed the opening of two new missionary outposts, in China and Sri Lanka. For China, there is already a team of two missionaries who are preparing themselves to begin the foundation; the Definitory had asked the Province of Korea to take responsibility for this mission. As for Sri Lanka, there is not yet anything definite that we can share with you.

Fr Albert Wach presented to the Definitory the first steps taken by the Commission created by the Centre of the Order for the revision and study of the agreements between Provinces for sharing personnel, which is becoming more frequent. In January 2012, the Commission will hold its second meeting.

We are particularly concerned for the nuns' monastery in Tangier. As you know, almost from the beginning of the sexennium, Fr General entrusted Fr Emilio Martinez to approach the various monasteries and associations for the purpose of finding help for this community, which at the moment is in a difficult situation with regards to personnel. Alas, all his efforts were in vain, since, for one reason or another, for the moment no monastery or association committed themselves to send help. After Fr Emilio's recent visit there, the Definitory decided to make some further attempts, in the hope of arriving at a solution that would avoid closing the monastery. Amongst other reasons, we were drawn to take this decision by the great poverty of the Archdiocese of Tangier, which greatly needs this foundation of the Teresian Carmel.

In studying these and other particular cases, we turned to consider the situation of the Order and the way to respond to sustaining and spreading it: on the one hand, the difficulties our brothers and sisters in particular regions encounter because of the lack of vocations are evident; on the other hand, we see areas in which a notable increase in vocations is well responded to at the present time and is a guarantee of a healthy future; finally, we are wanted in regions where there are not yet Carmelite presences, or are too tiny to open a mission there.

If we take as our sole criteria the number and age of the religious, we could think that the future of the Order lies in the South and the East, given the sociological situation of countries in the North. But the question arose amongst us: would not the counter values of relativism, consumerism and individualism, which we consider in great part responsible for the vocational and community crisis which our Order suffers in some areas in particular and which religious and Christians suffer in general, would they not also arrive in the above areas sooner or later, and create the same problems for them?

How did the Order respond in the past to the demands of sustaining and expanding its apostolic mission? Initially, the Provinces took on this duty without the General Government being too involved. Later on, with the establishment of jurisdictions such as General Delegations, the Centre of the Order became even more directly involved in this area.

Perhaps a new model could be put in place that combines both strategies: things are always simpler when a Province, or a Federation in the case of our sisters, takes responsibility for sustaining or expanding our mission. However, the involvement of the General Government can help in overcoming problems arising from insertion into different cultures and can encourage collaboration between Provinces, which is so necessary in order to face up to this task in a globalized world.

As an Order, we are called to continue deepening those values which unite us, rather than the differences which separate us. Before all, it is necessary not to lose hope, since the influences of materialism and relativism can hold us back. What is most important is to search for the right answer to each situation, filled with a spirit of confidence in God and the desire to serve him alone, which was so characteristic of our Mother, Teresa of Jesus. We are certain that reading the Book of Foundations this year, will help us once again to find the key to reply to these challenges as Teresian Carmelites, in accordance with our charism.

Number 161 of our *Norms* gives us guidelines to the direction we should take. It says: “New houses of the Order shall not be established nor retained, unless a sufficient number of religious can be assigned to maintain our special way of life and to provide apostolic service in a suitable manner, taking into account the needs of the church and the appropriate expansion of the Order.”

So then, what is essential is not the volume of expansion but its quality, that which is tied to our identity.

The reduction of monasteries and convents that some countries suffer is generally accepted as a tragedy and we are inclined to say to ourselves, “we are vanishing”. But we should profit from this situation in order to concentrate, in turn, on a way of life that permits the development and making obvious of a clear and profoundly Teresian identity. We are not talking about retreating in disorder as the result of a defeat, rather of regrouping ourselves, drawing out the advantages of this unfavourable situation and turning them into the possibility of renewal and change. As has occurred in other religious families, this can also lead to an increase in vocations, drawn by a way of life that is attractive and clearly identifiable.

Vitality is shown today, mainly through the choices we make in reference to the way of living our charism, as much in community as personally. In the Ariccia Extraordinary General Definitory, our Major Superiors gave us very clear guidelines: “Teresa wanted a community that was capable of living according to a logic that was not mundane, inspired by the Gospel and in friendly relationship with Christ, precisely for love of the world, since the “world in flames” needed it. Love and service to the world is only possible if we do not conform ourselves to the world. We sincerely believe that to strengthen our identity it is necessary to be able to live in a healthy relationship of love with the world. We must be our own selves in such a deep and convincing way that we are able to lose ourselves to the advantage of the other. For this to happen, to be open to the other, to what is different, it is necessary at the same time to be deeply and convincingly nourished by our Christian, religious and Carmelite vocation. As in the life of the Trinity, mission is nothing but expansion, and in a certain sense the deepening of the original relationships of belonging, to which it is necessary to turn constantly in order not to exhaust its dynamism” (*How are we to live?*” *Teresian Community for the Church and World of Today*, p.15).

Fr Emilio, who is in charge of organizing the 2015 Teresian Centenary, presented us the plans that continue to unfold in its regard. Concerning this, we were happy to receive the news that the Secretary of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, Mons. Juan Antonio Martínez Camino, Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid, had been in direct communication with our Fr General. He advised us that the Episcopal Conference had decided to declare the year 2014 as a Year of Prayer for all the dioceses in Spain, with Saint Teresa of Jesus as Patron, and that it joined itself with the Order in petitioning the Holy Father that this declaration be extended to the Universal Church.

We evaluated the work of the International Commission for the Centenary, fostered by the Centre of the Order. For the purpose of speeding up its work, we decided to renew the commission. The new structure will be planned at the meeting the Directive Committee will chair in Avila in February.

In this Definitory it was decided to create a General Secretariat with a triple objective: to make aware and motivate the members of the Order concerning the celebration of the Centenary, supporting the Circumscriptions, monasteries and convents in carrying out formative, pastoral and cultural activities; to make the civil and cultural authorities aware, in order to gain their collaboration in organizing various events concerning the Centenary; to raise funds for producing these activities. Fr Pascual Gil Almela was appointed by the Definitory as Secretary General for the Teresian Centenary, and as such, coordinator of this Secretariat.

With regards to financing the Centenary, costly in these times of crisis, the Centre of the Order decided to set aside €60,000 yearly, beginning in 2012. As needs be said, the Secretariat will try to seek financing from public and private institutions. Despite this, the collaboration of Provinces monasteries and convents is considered vital and necessary. In a letter dated 13th May 2011 sent to the Order, Fr Emilio sought initial help to set in motion some projects described in the letter. In brief, we will be informed how much was received and the expenses involved. We can disclose that, despite the generosity of many friars

and nuns, Fr Emilio made it evident in his report to the Arricia Extraordinary General Definitory that the amount received is still insufficient.

For this reason, we continue to appeal to your generosity, in the certainty that you will never see your help as an expense, but rather as an investment in a spiritual good of enormous value to the Order: sharing our Teresian Charism and the person of Saint Teresa during her centenary year. We are confident that this initial investment will do more than recoup the costs, not only through the spiritual and material benefits that can be garnered, but once the plans are set in motion, armed with a serious program of international character, we can approach public and private institutions for notable financial help, which will be of benefit to the Order throughout the world.

Fr Attilio Ghisleri, the Bursar General, informed us of the financial situation of the Order. In coordination with Fr General, following the directions of the Extraordinary Definitory, they continued working in Israel and Italy in view to starting the “Stella Maris” project. Shortly, we hope to overcome the remaining difficulties that have arisen.

Finally, Fr George Tambala informed us of the preparations for the OCD Congress for Africa, which will be celebrated in Nairobi, Africa, from 6th to 10th of February.

On the 17th, we met with the General Council of the Order of Carmel, at which their General, Fr Fernando Millán presided. Apart from other questions, we discussed with our Carmelite brothers the possible collaboration in restoring Wadi-es-Siah, on Mount Carmel. We desire to cre-

Fr Saverio Cannistrà, General

Fr Emilio J. Martínez

Fr Albert Wach

Fr Augustine Mulloor

Fr Robert Paul

Fr Marcos Juchem

Fr Peter Chung

Fr George Tambala

Fr John Grennan

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NOTE: A separate Registration Form must be submitted for each person attending the Congress.

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Arrival date at Congress: _____ Transportation: Driving Flying

At the time of this printing, the Logan Express Shuttle is available from the airport to the Peabody terminal for \$12.00 one-way or \$22.00 round trip. For more information and the complete schedule, visit www.massport.com. Once at the Peabody terminal, call the Sheraton Hotel (781-245-9300) for complimentary shuttle transportation to the hotel.

Do you plan to commute daily to the Congress? Yes No

Do you plan to stay at the Sheraton Colonial Hotel? Yes No (First priority for confirmed registration)

If yes, *you are responsible for making your own hotel reservation.* Please contact the Sheraton Reservations Desk at (888) 627-7205 and ask for the OCDS Congress **discounted group rate of \$109.00** per room per night (based on availability). This rate will be guaranteed until July 16, 2012 and includes the nights of August 14 -19. **Due to space limitations, the Congress has a firm limit of 300 participants**, so it is best to submit Registration Forms and make hotel reservations as soon as possible in order not to be disappointed. You must have a **confirmed registration** in order to attend the Congress. Because the Congress must meet its contracted room and board quota, priority for confirmed registrations will go to those staying at the hotel. Confirmations will be sent via e-mail, phone or postal mail on a first-come, first-served basis. Once the hotel quota is reached, commuter applications will be processed and confirmed in the order in which they were received, depending on space available

Are you interested in a trip to Boston Harbor/Faneuil Hall on Friday night? (Extra cost involved, approximately \$35)
 Yes No

Please complete this Registration Form and mail it to the address listed below with your **non-refundable (but transferrable*) Congress Registration Deposit of \$150.00. Forms without this deposit will not be processed.** *For details, please contact Congress Chairperson

SAVE \$50! Total registration fee received before May 15, 2012: **\$300.00 (Balance due: \$150.00)**

Total registration fee received after May 15, 2012: **\$350.00 (Balance due: \$200.00)**

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PILGRIMAGE TO CARMELITE SPAIN

SEPTEMBER 12 – 20, 2012

\$2,599* PER PERSON (ADD \$119 DEPARTURE TAXES, \$400 FUEL SURCHARGE AND \$239 FOR OPTIONAL TRAVEL INSURANCE)\$3357 w/ insurance*

DEPART BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT

PROMOTER: THAIS FORREST, OCDS



DAY 1 USA / MADRID

Depart Birmingham airport for your overnight flight to Spain.

DAY 2 AVILA

Arrive early morning in Madrid where you will be met by your tour guide and transferred to Avila, the City of Kings and of Saints, completely encircled by 11th century walls. This is the birthplace of St. Theresa one of the greatest mystics of the Church. Celebrate Mass at the Convent of St. Theresa. (D)

DAY 3: AVILA

The walled city of Avila is most famous for being the home of St. Teresa, one of the only female doctors of the Church. Avila's atmosphere has changed very little since the days of St. Theresa, to whom the city is dedicated. St. Theresa, the great mystic, was the first woman to be named a Doctor of the Church. In the morning we will visit the city of Avila: the Cathedral, which contains many of St. Theresa relics; The crypt of the Convento of La Santa, built on the site of the house where she was born, is home to the most comprehensive museum dedicated to her life, and La Encarnacion Convent, the first convent she found. Dinner and overnight in Avila. (B,D)

DAY 4: AVILA / ALBA DE TORMES / SALAMANCA

After breakfast in the hotel, we will depart towards the city of Alba de Tormes. The town boasts of possessing the mortal remains of St Theresa of Avila in the church of the Carmelite Convent where her miraculously pierced heart rests in a glass reliquary. Continue to Salamanca. The group will enjoy an orientation tour of Salamanca, a famous university city, including a visit to the University, which was founded in 1223 by Alfonso XI of Leon. Also visit the Plaza Mayor and the famous Cathedral. Dinner and overnight in Salamanca. (B,D)

DAY 5 SALAMANCA / MEDINA DEL CAMPO / FONTIVEROS / SALAMANCA

Depart Salamanca for Medina del Campo. Visit the Carmelite Monastery. Continue our journey to Fontiveros, birthplace of Saint John of the Cross, where we will visit the Carmelite Convent and the Church of San Cipriano where St. John of the Cross was baptized. Return to Salamanca for dinner and overnight. (B,D)

DAY 6 SALAMANCA / SEGOVIA / MADRID

Early morning departure from Salamanca for Madrid. En route, stop in Segovia. Arrival to the city and sight-seeing tour with a local guide: Alcazar, Roman Aqueduct, Gothic Cathedral, San Miguel Church where the Catholic Queen Isabel was crown, the Carmel Monastery where St. John of the Cross is buried and the Corpus Christi Church, one of the most important synagogues in Spain converted into a Church in the XIV Century. Dinner and overnight in Madrid. (B,D)

DAY 7 MADRID / TOLEDO / MADRID

Depart Madrid in the morning for Toledo, one of Spain's most ancient and charming cities. Here you will visit the El Greco Museum, tour Old Town have lunch (on your own) together at a Parador perched above the city. Enjoy the afternoon wandering the quaint streets. There will be ample time to shop for Toledo's famous gold jewelry and cutlery. Return to Madrid for dinner at the hotel and overnight. (B,D)

DAY 8: MADRID

Today we have a half-day orientation tour of the beautiful capital of Spain. From your motorcoach you will see the Prado, the Royal Palace, and other important sites. Transfer to your hotel for the balance of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight in Madrid. (B,D)

DAY 9 MADRID / USA

Depart for Madrid Airport with same day arrival at New York area airport. (B)

Included Highlights:

- * **Airfare:** Roundtrip from Birmingham Airport.
- * **Accommodations:** 7 nights Superior Tourist Class Hotels (3 star hotels).
- * **Meals:** 7 Breakfasts & 7 Dinners
- * **Sightseeing:** As listed in the itinerary.

Also Included: Daily Mass, Airport-hotel transfers, hotel tips & taxes, baggage handling, Touring by Private Air Conditioned Motorcoach, Services of Professional Pilgrimage Escort.

*Price is based on a minimum of 20 passengers. Deposits encouraged by April 2011 (\$300.00)

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THAIS FORREST AT 1-205-424-9626

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Who was John of Avila?

By Mary Kay Daniels, OCDS

In the Epilogue of *The Life*, Holy Mother Teresa wrote, “I ask your Reverence (Garcia Toledo, O.P.) to correct it (her book) and have it transcribed if it is to be brought to the Father Master Avila,I urgently desire that he be asked for his opinion about it since this was my intention in beginning to write. If it seems to him I am walking on a good path, I shall be very consoled; then nothing else would remain for me than to do than what lies within my power.” (Paragraph 2)

It was important for Teresa to receive John of Avila’s approval of her work since, at the time, she considered him to be the most qualified person in Spain to judge spiritual matters. Sometime during the year of 1568, with difficulty, Teresa was able to get her manuscript of *The Life* delivered to Father Master Avila. After studying it, he returned it to Holy Mother with a letter of approbation and praise dated Sept. 12, 1568.

St. John wrote to Holy Mother as follows: *“May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ our Lord be ever with you. I consented to read your book which was sent me, not so much because I considered myself competent to judge of such matters, as because I thought that, by the grace of God, its teaching might benefit me. Although I have had no leisure to study it as thoroughly as it deserves, yet, thanks be to God, it has given me great consolation, and it will be my own fault if it does not profit my soul...*

“It is not a book proper for everyone to read—the language requires to be corrected in some places and to be made clearer in others. There are things in it which, though useful to you in your own spiritual life, would not do for everyone to practice, for God guides some souls along extraordinary paths which are not intended for others. I have noted most of these passages and will arrange them for you as soon as possible, and send them to you without fail. If you knew the infirm state of my health, and how I am constantly employed in many necessary duties, you would, I am sure, be more inclined to pity me, than to accuse me of neglect.

“On the whole, your teaching of prayer is correct, and you may safely trust to it and practice it; the raptures too afford proof of being genuine. What you say about God’s teaching the soul without the use of the imagination, that is by interior or exterior communications, is safe, and I can find no fault with it... We should beg of God not to allow us to walk by sight, but to defer to the revelation of Himself and His saints until we reach Heaven, and we should ask Him to guide us whilst on earth along the common path by which He leads His faithful friends...

*“...It is written that “God is love” – and if He is love, He must needs be **infinite** love and **infinite** goodness, and it is no wonder that such love and goodness should at times bestow on certain souls an affection which confounds those who do not understand it. Although many know this by faith, yet, unless they have experienced it themselves, they cannot understand the affectionate, and more than af-*

fectionate way, in which God elects to treat some of His creatures...

“...Even though it be certain that the favours comes from God, yet do not let your mind dwell on them with complacency, for holiness does not consist in such things, but in a humble love of God and our neighbor. Fear all ways other than this, and practice humility, the virtues, and the love of our Lord...

“...The things of which you treat in your book happen to many souls in these times, and there is no doubt that they proceed from God, Whose arm is not shortened so that He cannot do now what He did in past ages: He chooses the weaker vessels the better to manifest His glory. Continue in this path then, but be watchful against robbers and pray for guidance. Thank God for having given you a love for Him, knowledge of yourself, and an attraction for penance and for the crossI cannot believe that I have written this by my own power, for I have none, but it is the result of your prayers. I beg you for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to pray for me to Him: He knows that I need it urgently, and I feel sure that is enough to make you grant my request. I must beg you now to let me conclude, as I am obliged to write another letter. May Jesus be glorified by all and in all! Your servant for Christ’s sake, Juan de Avila.” (Excerpts from St. John of Avila’s letter to Holy Mother Teresa dated Sept. 12, 1568. She received it Oct. 31, 1568.)

So who was this servant of Our Lord whom Holy Mother thought so highly of, that no other confessor’s opinion about ***The Life*** mattered as much as his? Was St. John of Avila a Carmelite? What can we learn from him today?

St. John of Avila (1499-1569) was beautified on Sept. 15, 1854, declared to be the patron of diocesan priests in Spain on July 2, 1946, and was canonized by Pope Paul VI on May 31, 1970. He was born the only child of his parents in the province of Toledo on the Feast of the Epiphany in 1499 in Almodovar del Campo, Spain. He studied law at the University of Salamanca (1513-1517), returned to his parents’ home where he lived in seclusion for a few years, then studied at the University of Alcala, known for humanistic studies, also in Spain (1520-1526). He was ordained a priest in 1526, during which time seminaries did not exist. Following his ordination, he went to Seville to prepare to travel to the new world to do missionary work. As he St. John of Avila catechized and preached in Seville, he impressed the priest with whom he lived and worked, Father Fernando Contreras, such that Father Contreras encouraged the Archbishop of Seville to have John do missionary work in Southern Spain since the Muslim domination had ended and there was a substantial need for evangelization at hand. John became popularly known as the “Apostle of Andalusia.”

In 1531, the Inquisition sent John of Avila to prison for his orthodoxy. Two years later, in 1533, the Inquisition absolved John of all charges and permitted him to resume his priestly ministry. While he was incarcerated, John began his major work, *Audi, filia*, a guide to the spiritual life, written for a young woman who was living a consecrated life under his direction. At this time he also deeply immersed himself in the study of the letters of St. Paul.

According to R. R. Abbot Gasquet, OSB, who wrote the preface to Letters of Blessed John of Avila, (Stanbrook Abbey, Worcester, Burns & Oates LTD: 1924) John was recognized everywhere as a special servant of God, a true director of souls desiring to walk the higher paths of perfection. He also preached with exceptional power. St. Francis de Sales in his *Treatise of the Love of God* referred to him as “the

learned and saintly preacher of Andalusia;” St. Francis Borgia as “the Great Master.” Holy Mother Teresa referred to him as “Father Master Avila.” St. John of Avila was 16 years older than Holy Mother Teresa. He was not a Carmelite.

John was regarded as a person who profoundly understood prayer and whose work was outstanding, especially during the mid-years of his ministry when he established schools at every level, including schools of doctrine for adults and children, and colleges which were the equivalent of our universities and high schools. John’s greatest interest and focus for ministry was the priesthood. He served as spiritual director for many priests, writing to them about their life and ministry and gave conferences on their vocation. John was convinced that reform of the clergy at all levels was the key to the reform of the church. He wrote two systematic documents for his colleagues in the hierarchy who were participating in the Council of Trent, the “Memorial” or “Memorandum” (1551) titled “Reform of the Ecclesiastical State,” and “Causes and Remedies of Heresies” (1561). He wrote a third document in 1563, a “Treatise on the Priesthood,” for conferences for priests. These works provided an overview of his theology of the priesthood and his vision for its reform.

John defined the priesthood in terms of its relationship to the Eucharist. Since the priest “offers bread to God,” as the one who celebrates the Eucharist, the priest must participate in the holiness of the Lord. John believed that the priesthood is God’s gift to the Church and that no man should dare to take the office on himself but must receive it as a call from God, verified by the Church through the bishop. John of Avila wanted to remedy two major causes that he saw to be corrupting the priesthood at the time: acceptance of unsuitable candidates for priestly ministry and poor formation. He emphasized the importance of diligent formation and education in an environment of prayer, virtue, and fraternal community.

Many of the ideas John presented in his Memoranda to the Council of Trent and his other writings on the priesthood are being lived out in the Church today, such as the existence of seminaries, his insistence that holiness of life is inherently necessary for the holy state of the priesthood and especially John of Avila’s guidance for every person interested in reforming the Church to first and foremost reform his or her own life to live in conformity to Christ. In his guide for the spiritual life, *Audi, filia*, he warned that eagerness for the reform of the Church is no guarantee of a divine call to bring it about, but that each person is called by God to the reform of his or her own life. His reform of the priesthood preceded Holy Mother’s reform of the Carmelite Order.

John became ill beginning in 1551, and was gradually forced to relinquish his missionary work. As his health continued to deteriorate, he spent the last years of his life in semi-retirement in Montilla, continuing to minister and write many letters to people from various professions, vocations and pastoral situations. St. John of Avila died on May 10, 1569.

May St. John of Avila prayerfully intercede for us, Holy Mother’s family members, as we try to live out our call to Carmel, fully and faithfully, each moment of each day.

News from around the province

Compiled by Father Bonaventure Sauer, OCD

1. Chattanooga, TN—submitted by Dorothy Mansen, OCDS

The photo to the right was taken the close of the visitation of the OCDS Group in Discernment, *Mary Immaculata*, in Chattanooga, TN. The visitation was in October. Pictured, from left to right are: Teresa Russo, Formation Director; Kathy Laurell, Coordinator; Virginia Blatchford, Mary Jo Koory, Ann Lee, and Dorothy Mansen, the Visitor.



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2. Conyers, GA—submitted by Chad Cooper, OCDS

We wish to announce the death of Bob Kelley, a professed member of the Secular Order and a much loved and long-time member of the Conyers community. Bob passed away this past December 2 due to complications from illness. We especially keep in our prayers his wife Rosanne, also a member of our community. Bob was buried in his native Boston while we and his friend here in Georgia celebrated a memorial Mass at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers on Saturday, December 10.

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3. Dallas, TX—submitted Maureen Lovelady, OCDS

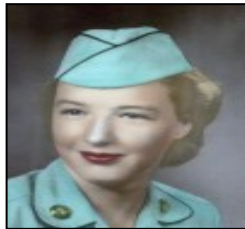
(a) Obituary Notice for Marilyn E. Grider, OCDS

It is with peace and gratefulness that we share the news of the passing of Marilyn Grider. She was honored to be one of the seven founders of the Lewisville Christian Community Action in 1973, which presently serves more than 12,000 families. It has grown from its meager beginnings as a bible study group searching for the true meaning of love to a staff of 150, with

2,500 volunteers, that offers more than 30 programs designed to give families the skills they need to help themselves in the future. CCA's mission is to minister in the spirit of Jesus Christ to the poor by providing comprehensive services that alleviate suffering, bring hope, and change lives. What a wonderful legacy Marilyn was privileged to nurture and grow. It is with no surprise, then, that in 2004 Marilyn (St. Benedicta of the Cross) decided to make her final promises in the Order of Carmelite Discalced Seculars, to live a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and to find there a spirituality for her interior life.

As noted by one of her close friends in Carmel, Susan McReynolds, OCDS: "We may have lost her human touch and the sound of her voice, but we now have a wonderful friend in heaven to pray for us as we pray for her. All I know is that, if there is a choir in heaven, Marilyn is raising her voice in song to praise her Lord."

Excerpt from the obituary originally published by Jaynes Memorial Chapel on September 7, 2011:



Marilyn Grider, 71, beloved Mother and Grandmother, was born October 3, 1939, in San Antonio, Texas, to parents Ruben and Willie Eichacker, and passed away September 5, 2011. She is preceded in death by her husband, Billy Joe Grider, who died in 2002. A University of North Texas alumna, Marilyn is survived by three children and five grandchildren.

Marilyn served in the Army from 1959-1964 as an e-ray technician and later became a registered nurse for 15 years. She was one of seven founders of CCA in 1973 in Lewisville, Texas, where she and her family lived for many years. Marilyn became a member of the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order in Dallas in 1996.

(b) Obituary Notice for Agnes Mahon, OCDS (of the Lamb of God)

Agnes was born in Baltimore, MD, on September 3, 1912, of Irish and German ancestry, the fifth and last child of her family. She attended Catholic schools and was awarded honors for her intelligence. The full scholarship that she received was to attend St. Joseph's College in Emmitsburg, MD.

She then went on to receive a Masters in Education from Notre Dame University in 1961 and a Masters in Religion/Theology at the University of Detroit, a Jesuit school, in 1971. During her college years she played basketball on the varsity team at St. Joseph's, received a journalism award, a State Oratorical Contest award, and besides all this was an avid golfer.



At an early age, Agnes knew that she was not to marry, but rather to give her life to Christ in the celibate state. She believed that meant becoming a nun, and so she tried to enter The Sisters of Service of Toronto at the *Marie Reparatrix* Convent in Detroit. This was not to be.

For 22 years she taught in the parochial schools of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese in various capacities as teacher, principal, and guidance counselor. She went abroad for two years of training at *Notre Dame de Vie*, Vaclause, France, with Fr. Marie Eugene, the author of “I Want to See God” and “I Am a Daughter of the Church.”

Her Many Apostolates:

- Veteran Mission Units, Baltimore, MD, for which she received the Grand Cross Award.
- Catholic Evidence Guild, Baltimore MD.
- Assisted in founding the Immaculate Heart of Mary Society with Fr. John Ryan, SJ.
- Catholic Action, Archdiocese of Baltimore, for which she received the Archbishop Curley Award.
- Opened and operated a Mission School in Indiana, Grades 1 through 6.
- Director of Religious and Adult Education, Hospital Chaplain, Eucharistic Minister, Lector, and for fifteen years on Diocesan Marriage Tribunal in Ft. Worth, TX.

Agnes found her vocation in Carmel and made profession in the Secular Order on February 2, 1947, at the Carmelite Monastery in Washington, D.C. In 1954, Fr. Albert Berk, OCD, introduced Agnes to Frances McLoughlin, who was searching for her own vocation. She too joined the Secular Carmelites and, in March, 1954, Frances traveled with Agnes to France for study at *The Secular Institute*. That began a lifelong friendship that was a blessing for both of them. They lived many years at St. Francis Village, a retirement home in Crowley, TX, and each received their “crown and cross” through this friendship, admired and loved by all who knew them.

Agnes died peacefully on November 30, 2011, at the age of 99. She had served as President, Master of Formation, and Lecturer in the Dallas OCDS community through various terms from 1976 to 1996. She possessed a passionate temperament and was the sort of person one does not forget. Her most outstanding trait and motivation in life were her devotion and faithfulness to the love of her life, Jesus Christ.

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Winter 2012

4. Little Rock, AR—submitted by Jennifer Perkins, OCDS

On October 8 Pat Taylor [second from right in the photo at left] was clothed in the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel during Mass at Marylake. Her aspirant director is Nancy Lowry [at her right]. Jennifer Perkins (Jennifer Mary of the Holy Rosary) and Amy Hawley (Amy Mary Therese of the Divine Mercy) [on either side of Fr. Raphael is photo] made first promises, becoming members of the Carmelite Secular Order. Their formation director is Mary Armstrong [at left]. Father Raphael [center] was the celebrant at Mass. We had a beautiful potluck luncheon in celebration afterwards as we all enjoyed the special time together.



On December 10 Ronnie Adams (Veronica of the Trinity) [in photo below, along with Fr. Raphael] made vows of Chastity and Obedience to God in the hands of the Superior of the Order of the Teresian Secular Carmel, represented by Fr. Raphael, at the monastery of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Little Rock. It was

a beautiful ceremony. We then had our Christmas party with the Nuns, sharing a potluck lunch. We had so much fun, and the Sisters seemed to enjoy our cooking. We all enjoyed being able to celebrate and visit with each other as we looked forward to the birth of Our Lord.

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Winter 2012

5. Sioux City, IA—submitted by Wavie Gregg, OCDS



On July 16 the Sioux City OCDS Community celebrated the clothing of two new members, Yvonne Llera and Theresa Wunschel [pictured at left]. A reception followed in our community meeting room, with family and friends invited to join the celebration.

Also, our Sioux City OCDS Community enjoyed this past September a weekend retreat with Fr. Stephen Sanchez, OCD, stationed at Mt. Carmel Center in Dallas. The topic of the retreat was “St. Teresa of Avila, *Her Life*.” With expertise Fr. Sanchez helped us explore the challenges St. Teresa faced and so come to appreciate our Holy Mother the more.

Below is a photo of our community, taken at the time of the retreat, with Fr Sanchez seated among us.



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.

“From then on my desire to be very poor increased. And I felt freedom in having so little esteem for temporal goods, for the lack of these goods brings an increase of interior good. Certainly, such a lack carries in its wake another kind of fullness and tranquility.”

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Wanted: Host for 2014 Congress

Would your community consider hosting the 2014 Oklahoma Province Regional Congress? . If your community would like to consider undertaking this service for the Province please contact Henrietta Albright at Halbrig@aol.com for an information packet. The community hosting the Congress is provided with substantial start up funds for pre-congress costs. We would like to have a host community named by the end of 2012. Thank you for your best consideration.