



Flos Carmeli

Oklahoma Province
 Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Winter 2016

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From the President's Desk

By Mary Kay Daniels, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council

Dear Faithful Companions in Carmel,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

May our contemplative prayer lives bring the fruit of peace to our world, beginning in our families, our Church and within our communities.

The PC wishes to extend to each of you a heartfelt well wish for a joyful and prosperous year ahead!

Our 2017 Congress planning is going great! Thank you to every person and community for pitching in! God's goodness to us is overflowing! Certain tasks remain to be tackled, so please jump in if you haven't already done so. Since we're working as a team, there's plenty of support and resourcefulness available for all projects. The theme for our Congress will be "**Our Vocation Is Love.**" Be sure to soak in Coordinator Kathy Rasmussen's informative update in this issue, and get in touch with her if you haven't already. Thank you!

Updating and revising the Statutes and Formation Guidelines are going strong.

We've just finished visitation assignments for 2016. Communities and study groups to be visited will be hearing from us very soon.

Important financial news: The annual Provincial Council assessment per OCDS member has been \$40 each year since at least 2000. At the Plenary Council Meeting in 2011 in Lafayette, the proposal was put to the presidents and representatives of the OCDS communities of our Province to raise the dues and it was approved. In reviewing finances for the next year, 2012, the Provincial Council determined that there were enough funds to delay this increase. In the years since then, this continued to be the case. The Provincial Council was, in fact, able to cover travel expenses for visitations the last few years. In the intervening time, we have had a decrease in membership as our member population has aged. This means that the income from the annual assessment has fallen.

Additionally, the Provincial Council prudently provided financial support for the one time only, 5th Centenary Celebration of Holy Mother Teresa, to which members from the entire Province were invited to Houston to participate, at a minimum cost.

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From the President's Desk

By Mary Kay Daniels, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council—

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Consequently, the Provincial Council has determined that in **2016** it will be necessary to move forward with the increase that was approved in 2011 by the Plenary Council.

The 2016 assessment will be \$50 per active member of each OCDS community in the Province.

As usual, the assessment is due at the end of **March 2016** and should be sent as one check from each community with the total funds. This check should be made out to the **OCDS Province of St. Therese** and sent as follows:

**OCDS Province of St. Therese
c/o Barbara Tinervia, OCDS Central Office Administrator
9515 E. 99th St.
Tulsa, OK 74133**

This will be the same time that each community will send in an updated roster and their 2015 Annual Financial Report. You will receive a letter that outlines what to include and a sample financial report.

*Brightest Blessings in Carmel and
Best Wishes for a Bountiful 2016,*

Mary Kay Daniels, OCDS

President, Provincial Council for the OCDS Oklahoma Province
On Behalf of the Provincial Council :

Claire Bloodgood, OCDS,

Kathy Dewine, OCDS,

Jo Ann Murphy, OCDS, and

Chris Wood, OCDS

Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

As I begin this report it is Christmas Eve. But as you read it, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day have both come and gone. I hope the Christ Child smiled on you. I can't say yet if He did on me. He hasn't arrived yet.

The New Year, too, as you read this, has snatched us all up and hauled us away, willy-nilly, into 2016. A belated wish for a happy and prosperous new year to all of you.

The photo on the right is my attempt at a Christmas vignette to start this report. It's Mt. Carmel Center, of course. But from a distance the building itself could pass for the City of David, set high atop a hill. And the empty road leading up to it awaits, first, the shepherds, then the magi. The grass may be green, yes, but then, "Unto us a Child is born." So, why not? And the low-hanging clouds overhead are the soles of the sandals of angels. The photo is as Christmassy as it gets.



Hasta la Vista, Centenary Year

The Centenary year came to a fitting close for me at the OCDS National Congress in Milwaukee. I was at first a bit grouchy about having to attend this Congress and so having to be away from my province and my brothers on this all-important date of October 15.

But once I arrived, in Milwaukee, and once the fellowship and fun and fine talks and liturgies began, I changed my mind. It was a delightful and memorable way to close the Centenary. Thank you to all who organized the Congress, to the Washington Province for hosting it, and, of course, to Holy Mother for offering us the occasion.

On the big feast day itself all the Congress attendees, over 500 of us, loaded into buses—note the plural, *buses*, there being a fleet of them—and made the relatively short trip out to Holy Hill, the flagship foundation of the Washington Province. This Shrine competes nobly with our Province's own flagship foundation, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio, running a close second.



On the way there we learned of the history of this sacred site, which sits atop one of higher hills in Wisconsin—which, believe me, isn't saying much. Still, the site is very prominently placed, and one can see the church steeple from miles around.

It is an especially prominent place, most importantly, because, from the time of the first settlers in the area, the hilltop was known as a place of healing. This was well before the Carmelites arrived. But under their direction and presence, which dates from the second decade of the 20th Century, the Shrine, as a place of pilgrimage, has become truly impressive and, yes, prominent.

The main church sports two churches actually, one above and another below. Plus there's the shrine chapel itself, off to the side. It is dedicated to Mary under the title Our Lady, Help of Christians.

There's also a path up the hill to the church that follows the Stations of the Cross, making the ascent just that much more devout for those who attempt it. And once you've arrived, as a fifteenth station, you find a gift shop to greet you.

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By *Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.*

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As for the monastery of the friars, which is an impressive structure in its own right, it lies behind the main church, yet attached to it. And then there's the bell tower—the steeple of the main church—let us not forget that. One can climb it, up and up, endlessly, following a winding staircase that becomes increasingly narrow as you ascend, with a railing that, in places, doesn't even reach to the waist of someone as tall as I.

I was wearing my habit, of course, and so was courting the possibility of tripping on the hem of my tunic as I climbed, something we friars have regularly to be careful about while climbing steps. [Oh, there's a homily in there somewhere—how we friars find it so easy to trip on the hem of our tunic while ascending.] If I had tripped, of course, well, I probably wouldn't be here writing you this report right now. So, you can rest assured I made it to the top safe and sound.

Along the way to the top of this bell tower, I was accompanied by some Seculars from Alexandria, LA, who cheered me on. Thank you. And once on top—and it was windy and cold up there—I was rewarded with some truly magnificent, panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. Since it was mid-October in Wisconsin, the trees were gloriously adorned in their fall colors. [See the photo on Page 3].

The mass itself—the one marking the close of the Centenary—lived up to the occasion. The church was full to the brim, the music was glorious, the solemnity was, well, solemn, and there was one concelebrator from the Oklahoma Province who really stood out, being by far and away the handsomest of the priests up around the altar. Or was it just the Carmelite good-nature and cheerfulness aglow on his face? Be that as it may, it was a happy occasion for all, and everybody's face glowed.

Inter-Provincial Council meets for not the first time

There is such a thing as an Inter-Provincial Council. It is comprised of representatives of the three Provincial Councils from the three Discalced Carmelite Provinces in the US. The three Provincial Delegates also sit in, offering up profundities as needed.



The Council has no real authority. It is simply an opportunity for sharing and mutual support among the three Provinces. Of course, should some matter of common interest or concern arise, there is always the possibility for collaboration between the Provinces.

This Inter-Provincial Council meets every year during the day and a half just prior to the Congress, wherever that Congress is held. This year, of course, it was in Milwaukee. We worked hard and were rewarded for it with some truly helpful and substantial exchanges.

Here we are, pictured above, after a good day's work. You can see Mary Kay Daniels [in front on the left] and Claire Bloodgood [in front on the right]. I'm poking up in the back, like a sore thumb, with Jo Ann Murphy just in front of me. And in the very center, where she feels most at home, is Kathy DeWine. So, our province was well represented, both in number and in quality. You can also see Fr. Alzinir, the General Secretary—who attends these things, accumulating merit by doing so—second from the right in the back row. The light just behind Claire Bloodgood's head is, of

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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course—or so I'd like to believe—Holy Mother herself. Notice that Teresa's smiling. It seems that we behaved like good children.

The fun continues—our provincial retreat

Each year during the third week in October we friars gather at Marylake—our monastery near Little Rock—for our annual retreat. Thus, this year, following the Congress in Milwaukee, I flew directly to Little Rock—well, not exactly. You see, I happened to be flying on the day that US Air, which had been bought up by American, made the official switcheroo. I think the personnel were handling the changes fine. It was the computer system that was having a hard go of it and getting thoroughly confused. So, checking in, making connections, it was all a bit of a nightmare. But I did arrive—a day late, but eventually.

Anyway, our retreat goes from Sunday evening to the following Saturday morning, giving us five full days of retreat. This year we were unable to find a retreat master. So we gave ourselves our own retreat, with four friars being assigned one day apiece, leaving one day free for a hermit day.

All the talks pertained in one way or another to the theme of community life. Fr. John Magdalene Suenram spoke on empathy, drawing from Edith Stein for the most part. Fr. Ralph Reyes offered reflections on the Jacob stories in Genesis. But instead of the usual he based his thoughts on insights and understandings and traditions found in Jewish rabbinical spirituality. Obviously his reflections approached these stories from a quite different perspective for us.

Fr. Sam Anthony Morello spoke on the psychological and spiritual issues involved in our growth towards more authentic interpersonal relations. He turned for help to the schema developed by Fr. Adrian Van Kaam. And lastly I served up some silliness about how the contemplative experience of God transforms us in our relationships with others. I drew for this from "The Fifth Dwelling Places" of *The Interior Castle*.

So you can see we did pretty well for ourselves. And I mean that. We did. Moreover, besides the presentations themselves, there was good discussion that followed each.

At the close of our hermit day, which we kept on Wednesday, we had a special mass to honor our jubilarians of the year. This is a longstanding tradition with us. This year Fr. Henry Bordeaux celebrated his Golden Jubilee of Profession and Frs. Gregory Ross and Jerome Earley their Silver Jubilee of Profession. After mass we gathered for good spirits and good food.

In the photo to the right you can see us gathering for our post-mass banquet. At the head table is, from right to left, Fr. Jerome, Fr. Henry, Fr. Gregory, and the three jubilarians. Lastly, never to be outdone, our Fr. Provincial Luis sits calmly to their left, gazing out over his flock. Oh, yes, and further along is Fr. Jorge, soaking up the limelight, while seated down table, digging into his salad, is Fr. Marion.



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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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A few parting thoughts

(1) I have been the victim of violent crime, more than once, and on one occasion I was sure that I was going to be killed, execution-style. While it's true that we Americans--especially we white Americans--live pretty sheltered lives, yet the possibility of violent death is always there. It's part of being human--namely, our being subject to the fact that violence can kill us. And in becoming human Jesus accepted that fact. He didn't make himself invulnerable. Indeed, in case anyone needs reminding, Jesus died a violent death.

We, too, aren't invulnerable. We're human. And while I hope a violent death never overtakes me, as a matter of fact it very well may. All I can do is try not to let the fear of it, at least as a possibility—a slim one, though not a non-existent one—seep in and muddy my spirit. And I certainly don't want to be someone who goes about fear-mongering among others.

(2) Terrorism, as a specific kind of violence, is nothing new in human history. During the days of Jesus, for example, there was a group of Jewish nationalists who were called the *sicarii*--or "dagger men." These dagger men were notorious for rushing upon a crowd and knifing people they deemed to be collaborators with the Roman occupation.

The matter came close to home for Jesus. There's good reason to believe that *Iscaiot*, in the name *Judas Iscaiot*, is an Aramaic form of precisely this term, suggesting that Judas may have belonged to this group, the *sicarii*, at some point.

Of course, the matter came even closer to home for Jesus. He himself was a victim of terrorism, specifically of the sort practiced by the Romans. Crucifixion was a very public and prolonged form of torture meant primarily to terrorize a subject population. And, in Jesus's case, it seems to have worked, at least at first. His disciples fled in fear.

What makes terrorism different today, of course, is our wide and easy access to a whole host of destructive, deadly weapons that can wreak havoc in so short a time. But that's true of so many things in modern life, the difference is usually one of scale and technological means. The tendency of a group to use violence to accomplish its goals is unchanged. Jesus spoke to it, and we need to listen to Jesus and not to anyone else.

(3) The year 1492 was an important one in the history of Spain. Of course, we all know how that was the year Columbus sailed the ocean blue. But it was also the year in which, by edict, all Moors and Jews had either to convert to Christianity or leave the Spanish realm. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel wanted their kingdom to be one for Christians only.

Of course, just because one converted didn't mean one was "truly" Christian. One still had Moorish or Jewish blood in you, and who knows where that might lead? The temptation to backslide was literally lurking in one's very flesh and blood. Thus, the Spanish Inquisition was set up, more by the crown than by the church, to safeguard against such potential apostasy among the "newly converted."

St. Teresa's grandfather was Jewish, as you know. He converted, then left Toledo for Avila in order to begin a new life for himself. Strictly speaking, Teresa should not have been allowed to enter the Incarnation as a young woman. The laws of "pure blood"—and there were many of them, of various sorts—dictated that there had to be at

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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least five generations of Christians in one's family tree before one could become a religious. Obviously the law was not always enforced. Thank goodness it wasn't enforced in the case of young Teresa de Ahumada.

Religion can be a powerful means to define and enforce social and national cohesion. There are also ideas people propagate about "purity" of some sort—who's a "true" American and who's not, for example. These, too, are used to enforce social or national cohesion. Catholicism, when it is true to itself as Catholic, obviously has to resist any and all such notions. We are of the human family, and what unites us is that *for which* we live, the Kingdom of God—present nowhere, yet potentially everywhere.

(4) Lately I've been rereading the poetry of Jessica Powers, known in Carmel as Sr. Miriam of the Holy Spirit, OCD. [Pictured below] If you don't know who she is, well, invite me to give you a retreat or day of recollection, and you'll soon find out. Now that the centenary is behind us, and I can put Holy Mother back on the shelf for another 500 years, I want to take up as my personal project the poetry of this Carmelite nun. It's a rich subject for reflection and as a basis for conferences.

So, recently reading some of her poetry, I came across the following. I'll let the poem speak for itself.

THE LITTLE NATION

Having no gift of strategy or arms,
No secret weapon and no walled defense,
I shall become a citizen of love,
That little nation with the blood-stained sod
Where even the slain have power, the only country
That sends forth an ambassador to God.

Renouncing self and crying out to evil
To end its wars, I seek a land that lies
All unprotected like a sleeping child,
Nor is my journey reckless and unwise.
Who doubts that love has an effective weapon
May meet with a surprise.



A Carmelite Response to Terrorism

By Jo Ann Murphy, OCDS

It seems we are bombarded daily with reports of violent terrorist attacks around the world, and, more recently, in our own country. It is all too easy to become prey to manipulation and fear-mongering. As Carmelites we must not get caught up in this culture of fear, which may lead us to an “us against them” mentality that separates us from our ultimate goal of transformation in Christ. How did Christ Himself act in the face of evil? He trusted in His heavenly Father and asked for forgiveness for those who crucified Him. We must first of all embrace and love those who have been seduced into destroying other human beings and pray for them as we would for our own children and loved ones. It is love alone that has the power to change hearts. Next, we must trust totally in our heavenly Father who is always with us and who protects us as the loving Father He is. Childlike faith and trust in our heavenly Father is essential. This is the little way of St. Therese. She teaches us that our heavenly Father is powerless to resist absolute confidence in Him.

But what is it we actually believe, when we believe with childlike confidence in our heavenly Father? That our heavenly Father will keep us from bodily harm? That our country will not have another terrorist attack on its soil? No, this type of belief that certain earthly things will or will not happen is misdirected. Is it possible that these types of beliefs are motivated by self-interest, especially a desire to avoid suffering? The belief we need to have is that God will protect **us** against evil. We must embrace those who have fallen prey to lies and deceit and love them as God loves them, for they are all made in the likeness of God. We must desire that God protect them first and foremost against the evil that has seduced them into destroying other human beings. In the Our Father, we pray the words, ‘deliver us from evil.’ “Us” means not just me, not just my family, not just my country, not just our allies, but the whole of humankind. The sword we are to wield in the fight against terrorism and violence is the two-edged sword of **faith** and **love**.

Our Carmelite vocation teaches us the way of faith and love, the way of absolute confidence in the Father, that He is present with us, that He will protect us from evil. We **believe** He will protect us from the evil of being self-interested, from only caring about our own families, our own welfare, our own country. He will protect us from being indifferent to the sufferings of others. He will show us how to live more justly. He will help us to understand more fully the relationship between our using more of the world’s goods than we need and the despair that fuels terrorism and violence. Yes, when we pray, “deliver us from evil,” we must mean first of all the evil that can seduce and deceive us individually. When we can pray from a position of faith and love, only then will we be able to wield the two-edged sword that will bring about the Kingdom of God.

So, my fellow brothers and sisters in Carmel, let us set fear aside and:

Shout for joy and take [our] rest.

Let the praise of God be on [our] lips

And a two-edged sword in [our] hand (Ps. 149)



Familial Visitations Alternate with Formal Pastoral Visits

By Mary Kay Daniels, OCDS – On Behalf of the PC

To provide a prayerful and substantive visitation for each community and study group in the name of the Provincial, PC members have the present schedule of meeting with assigned communities every three (3) years and study groups every two (2) years. The purpose of a visitation is to build up the local community and study group, providing it with pastoral care, support and resources. Visitations are mandated by our Constitutions and based upon and within our love for Our Lord and our Carmelite Discalced Secular Order. We most often make suggestions and recommendations to enhance a community's well-being or to resolve a challenge. A very high percentage of our visitations has elicited positive feedback and touching gratitude from communities. We consider it a blessing when we can be helpful, and it's always a joy to meet more of our Carmelite Secular companions. We see ourselves as here to serve you.

As we continue to update the Statutes, a first draft of which will be sent to all communities for input once complete, we have discovered through reflection upon our visitations and follow-up discussions, that when a community is thriving, there is really no necessity to do a formal Pastoral Visitation in another three years. Formal Pastoral Visitations require a significant amount of preparation time by both community to be visited and visitation.

Therefore, the PC has created the Familial Visitation. The Familial Visitation focuses on the well-being of the community at the moment of the visitation. For preparation, the community is asked to send to the visitor a brief summary of what has happened within the community since their previous visitation, and to list any present concerns and challenges the community would like to have addressed. The community is also asked to supply the visitor with two (2) previous months' worth of meeting and Council minutes and an agenda for the upcoming visit. The visitor will attend the community meeting and then follow-up by meeting with the community's Council. For Familial Visitations, the visitor should not be expected to do a conference or presentation as often requested for a Pastoral Visitation, but will inform the community of Province-wide happenings. There is no requirement for interviews in a Familial Visitation either. However, if the Council requests, a member can be interviewed by the visitor. The president will include this time in the schedule for the meeting day. As you can see, the preparation required by the community for a Familial Visitation is much less than for a formal Pastoral Visitation.

We have also discovered that the visitor still must do essential preparation work for these Familial Visitations, which can be very time consuming. Therefore, it remains reasonable to provide the visitor with a stipend as a token of thoughtfulness for all of the time and effort put into doing the visitation, again just as if a friar were visiting.

We are proposing a change in our Statutes to do Familial Visitations every other time when all is well with a community. This means that formal Pastoral Visitations will be conducted every six (6) years and halfway in between there will be an informal Familial Visitation. If the community is experiencing particular challenges and a formal Pastoral Visitation for the community would be more appropriate than a Familial Visit, this would be done at the discretion of the Provincial Council.

Familial Visitations Alternate with Formal Pastoral Visits

By Mary Kay Daniels, OCDS – On Behalf of the PC

The Provincial Council has concluded that all bi-annual (every two years) visitations to study groups will remain as formal Pastoral Visitations.

Members of the PC remain ever so grateful for the thoughtful hospitality and generosity of heart received from the communities and study groups we visit. Thank you for your great goodness to us. Be assured of our commitment to work diligently on your behalf.

May God bless you all as we go forward together into the New Year!

Please keep members of the PC in your prayers. Thank you!



2017 San Antonio Congress -- With God's Grace We're On Our Way!

Hello Again Faithful FLOS Readers,

Unfolding before us is another beautiful gift of grace from Our Lord—

our upcoming 2017 Provincial Congress in San Antonio

The San Antonio Community selected the Omni San Antonio Hotel at the Colonnade for our upcoming Congress to take place November 2-5, 2017, because of its distinguished quality of hospitality and attentive care for its guests, lovely accommodations including very clean and comfortable hotel rooms with swimming pool, health center, and very appropriate ballrooms for our plenary sessions together, as well as for our banquets, very **reasonable prices** unmatched by any other local venues, and the food there has been experienced to be delicious! All in all, a real winner!

An excursion to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower to pray the liturgy and tour this holy edifice will provide a particularly meaningful and unique enrichment for this Congress. Under consideration is another excursion to explore the Missions Trail at the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

Enjoy reading what follows and allow yourself a big smile from the heart as you reflect upon the warm invitation before you to join our spiritual family for a very special prayerful, enriching and delightfully interactive gathering. Our dream is that every OCDS in our Province finds a way to be with us for the Congress in 2017.

All the best to you and yours,

Mary Kay Daniels

President, Oklahoma Province Provincial Council

"Our Vocation Is Love"

2017 San Antonio Congress -- With God's Grace We're On Our Way!

The Omni San Antonio Hotel is located in the heart of the Colonnade Center which is home to a variety of boutique shops, and dining within walking distance! Our four-diamond, luxury hotel captures the essence of the city with impeccable service and charm. Overlooking the rolling Texas Hill Country, and downtown city skyline, our 20-story high-rise is close to the area's most exciting sites and attractions!

Omni San Antonio Hotel Highlights:

Currently ranked #15 out of 353 San Antonio Hotels on www.tripadvisor.com
Only Four-Diamond Luxury Hotel in San Antonio offering Complimentary Airport Shuttle and Free Parking! \$6 Million Dollar Guestroom Renovation completed in May 2013
Fourteen Restaurants within walking distance
Home of the Rooftop Honey Bee Apiary and Organic Herb & Vegetable Garden!



Hotel Location is 8 miles from the San Antonio International Airport with Complimentary PAX Airport Shuttle.

ROOM RATES

Single Rate	Double Rate	Triple Rate	Quad Rate
\$125.00	\$125.00	\$135.00	\$145.00

(Does not include state and local taxes)

2017 San Antonio Congress -- With God's Grace We're On Our Way!



The **Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower** is one of the grandest buildings in San Antonio — which highlights the missionary work of the Discalced Carmelite Friars.

The Basilica has the stature of being the ‘most beautiful church in San Antonio and is filled with significant works of fine art. Nationally it is the most artful and magnificent church built in honor of St. Theresa of Lisieux.

After spending significant time at the Basilica, we will be celebrating holy Mass, then back to the Omni for a joyous and festive celebration.

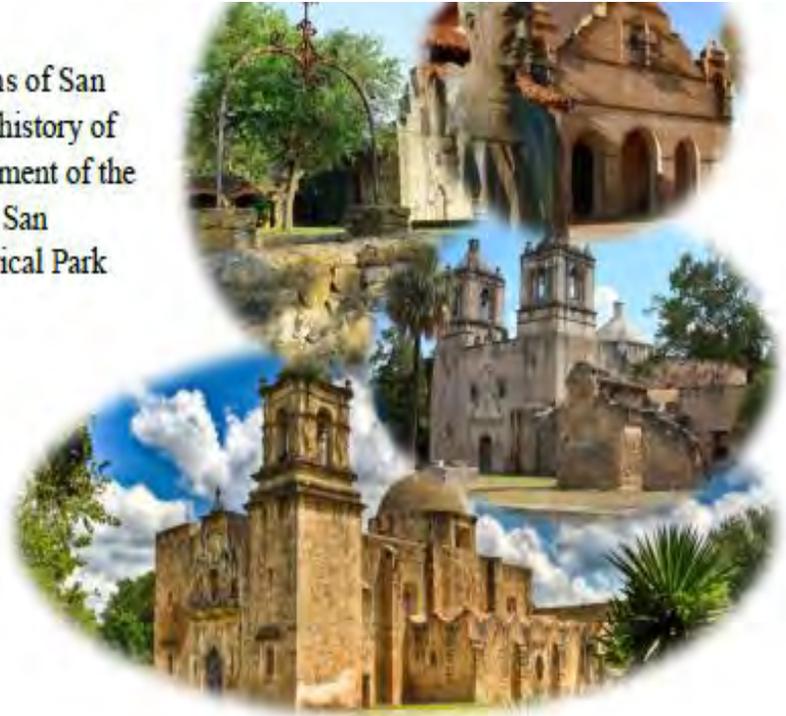
Perhaps the most treasured work of art at the Basilica is a painting of St. Therese created by the saint's sister, Celine (Sr. Genevieve of the Holy Face).

The painting was a gift from the Discalced Carmelite Nuns at the convent of Carmel in Lisieux, France.



2017 San Antonio Congress -- With God's Grace We're On Our Way!

The Missions Trail: The missions of San Antonio are a main factor in the history of Texas and the core of the development of the city of San Antonio. In 1983, the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park was established.



Location/Attractions: 15 minutes/12 miles from River Walk, the Alamo and El Mercado (Market Square. 3 minutes/1 mile to the Medical Center; Convenient to I-10 and Loop 410; 8.5 miles from the Basilica (Little Flower); 5 minutes/3 miles to Six Flags Fiesta Texas Theme Park; 5 minutes/5 miles to the North Star Mall (the largest mall in SA); 5 minutes/5 miles too the Shops at La Cantera; 12 minutes/10 miles to La Villita (arts/crafts community w/26 shops and three restaurants; 25 minutes/18 miles to Sea World. (Complimentary hotel shuttle to all locations within 5 miles.)



2017 San Antonio Congress -- With God's Grace We're On Our Way!

~ CONGRESS 2017 UPDATE ~

by Kathy Rasmussen, Congress Coordinator

I'd like to begin by thanking the many individuals who have reached out to me over the past several months in support and love. Please know that your encouragement, feedback and inspirations are more precious to me than gold and are always welcome.

We will be 'spotlighting' different communities in each quarterly FLOS who have generously come forward with a servant's heart to share their gifts, talents and skills in planning and coordinating our upcoming Congress. We humbly and gratefully extend our appreciation to the following two communities for the 'love and charity' they have extended to each of us in the Oklahoma Province.

THANK YOU!



San Antonio OCDS Community

Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Therese



Under the leadership of Susan King, President, the San Antonio community has graciously risen to the occasion by heading up the Venue Team, Liturgy Team B and Special Events Team for the Congress 2017. They are eager to warmly welcome each of us to San Antonio!

A special 'thank you' to our friars, Fr. Gregory Ross and Fr. Marion Bui (pictured above) for their fervent support to this community and to all Carmelite seculars. Blessed be God!

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another
as good stewards to God's varied grace.

~1 Peter 4:10 ~

Oklahoma City OCDS Community

The Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus



Barbara Basgall, President, and the Oklahoma City community have been busy gathering, discerning and selecting the top Congress Theme contenders. Because of the many 'theme' recommendations that were submitted, this was not an easy task.

After much prayer and thoughtful discussion, and touching in with the PC for thoughts, the Oklahoma City Community is pleased to announce that the theme for Congress 2017 will be -

"Our Vocation is Love"

When God crowns our merits, he is crowning nothing other than his gifts.
-St. Augustine-

2017 San Antonio Congress -- With God's Grace We're On Our Way!

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step in faith. The Provincial Council is very grateful to the following communities who have made that 'step' by volunteering in faith to serve as team leads and support teams.

<u>Congress Teams</u>	<u>Community Team Lead</u>	<u>Community Support Teams</u>
Audio & Visual	Lafayette, LA (combined communities)	
Fundraiser		Sioux City (leading a project)
Hospitality	McAllen, TX	Omaha/Lincoln, NE Lawrenceville, GA
Liturgy (Team A)	Jackson, MS	San Antonio, TX St. Louis, MO (Congress Prayer)
Liturgy (Team B)	San Antonio, TX	Mobile, AL (Adoration Room)
Program	Austin, TX	
Registration	Georgetown, TX	Birmingham, AL (Tote Bags)
Speakers & Presentations (Team A)	Atlanta, GA	
Speakers & Presentations (Team B)	Dallas, TX	
Special Events	San Antonio, TX	
Theme & Logo	Oklahoma City, OK	
Vendors & Vendor Room	Tulsa, OK	
Venue	San Antonio, TX	
(*) Prayer Warriors	Little Rock, AR	



TO FORM IN FAITH...
TO SHARE OUR GIFTS...
TO BUILD COMMUNITY.

2017 San Antonio Congress -- With God's Grace We're On Our Way!



A CALL TO ALL WITH A SERVANTS



There are still some important Congress teams that have not been claimed by a community: therefore, we are now asking individual OCDS members to prayerfully consider taking a 'step in faith' by sharing their gifts in any of the following 'areas of expertise.'

Please prayerfully assess your God-given gifts, talents and abilities and contact:

Kathy Rasmussen ("KR") ocdsprojectplan2017@gmail.com
(1-254-780-6047)

if you are willing to assist (or know of anyone with these talents) in any of these areas.

TEAM	SPECIFIC NEED(S)
Art & Environment	Crafters, creative designers, a natural interest or expertise in table décor and/or liturgical preparation.
Financial Accountability	An individual with proficient Excel skills to track and maintain online registration with the support of the Registration Team.
Fundraising	A single community to head up one fundraising project; or individuals with fundraising experience and/ or creative ideas for fundraising projects (i.e., Congress logo, T-shirts, friar sponsorship, corporate sponsorship, raffles, etc.) (* Grantwriter(s) to work with Kathy Rasmussen - (grantmakers have been identified.)
Publicity	Graphic artists, artists, print designers, writers (to create website announcements, registration brochure, Congress update bulletins, email blasts, design signs/banners...and more.
Website	Website developer, webmaster, assistance with maintaining our Congress website.

Please join your Carmelite brothers and sisters by praying unceasingly for the success of our 2017 Congress. It is only by God's Grace that we will find the strength and courage to take each step in faith together.

(* If you have any other gift that would support the success of our Congress, please don't hesitate to contact Kathy Rasmussen .



PRAYER OF PREPARATION FOR CONGRESS 2017

to

The Blessed Trinity

Dear Heavenly Father,

We humbly place ourselves before you today and acknowledge our total dependence on your Grace and Wisdom.

Help us to focus on our main objective for uniting as a Carmelite family: to establish a sense of community and solidarity as we combine our ideas and efforts in planning for this and future Congresses.

Enlighten us, as we move forward with this new collaboration for bringing our communities together in charity and evangelization.

Assist each one of us in our own spiritual growth, as we share our Catholic Faith and Carmelite Charism with others.

Advise us in our concerns, worries and doubts and open our minds and hearts to have a child like faith and trust in your perfect plan for us.

Instill in us confidence and perseverance as we move forward. in the words of our Father General: "Let us walk together!"

Inspire our members to acknowledge and be generous with their talents, gifts and resources.

Grant that we may honor our heavenly Mother and Patroness, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and all our Saints with a Congress pleasing to you and to them.

St. Joseph, please provide for and protect us in our endeavors.

May the Holy Spirit guide us to know your will for us, so that everything that we do will be for your greater honor and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

- Susan King -



There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit, there are different forms of service but the same Lord.

1 Cor 12: 4-5

Testimonial Letters—Who, What, When, Where, Why

By **Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.**

I'm striking out on a road here with many potholes and possible wrong turns. But forward I go. I need to write something on this topic just for the sake of general understanding. I also have a few suggestions to make at the end.

What I'm referring to as a "testimonial letter" also goes by the alternate name "letter of suitability." It can have other names as well—as, for example, "a pain in the neck." But as the Bard once said, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." It's all the same thing, no matter what the name, and it all smells the same.

The whole thing goes back to the sex abuse scandal of 2002, and specifically to the adoption of the *Dallas Charter* in the wake of that scandal. No, it's not as if the church had done nothing along these lines prior to 2002. For example, our province had a sexual misconduct policy from the mid-1980s onward, as well as certain protocols for how a friar visiting from another province was to be "cleared" or "vetted" or "vouched for" by an official letter from his own provincial—what essentially amounted to a testimonial letter, testifying that the friar was in good standing in the Order and had never been credibly accused of sexual misconduct. But the US bishops had never, prior to 2002, banded together to address this matter and establish *minimal* standards for all US dioceses. That is what the *Dallas Charter* accomplished.

Notice that I said *minimal* standards. Yes, the *Dallas Charter* set the floor, the minimum, of what a diocese should do. Since then—since 2002—each diocese or archdiocese has added on and built above this floor its own house of rules and regulations, policies, procedures, and protocols. In some dioceses the policies are pretty intricate—in fact, more intricate than *The Interior Castle*, though never so lovely to move around in. In others the legal construct is pretty simple—a bungalow, if you will. There's a lot of variation from one diocese to the next.

Of course, we religious would like a little greater uniformity in these procedures and protocols, seeing how we move around a lot and travel here and there in our ministry. We also have our rights and autonomy as religious which need to be respected. But that's too much to be expected, and in the end, when it comes to navigating this labyrinth of red tape, the question usually is one of whether or not the provincial wants to engage in a staring match with a particular local bishop about this or that requirement or policy he is imposing, and that's usually not something worth fighting over. Thus, we religious generally cede the ground to the prerogative of the local bishop.

Do I have you confused? My topic is testimonial letters, no more, although these letters do have to be seen within the larger context of diocesan policies regarding clerical sexual misconduct. But let's get back to the limited topic of testimonial letters.

Each diocese or archdiocese has some sort of procedure or policy or protocol for how it "vets" priests who come into the diocese to engage in ministry of any sort. This "vouching for" is done primarily, although not exclusively, through a letter officially testifying on the priest's behalf—hence, a testimonial letter—that comes from the Ordinary or Major Superior of the visiting priest—his own bishop, if he's a diocesan priest, or his provincial or Major Superior, if he's a religious—and is sent to the bishop of the diocese where he will be conducting his ministry.

Each diocese can have slightly different requirements in this regard. Of course, the letter, in whatever form it takes, is a legal document, and its purpose is essentially to absolve the local bishop of any responsibility should the visiting priest misbehave in some sexually inappropriate manner while in the diocese.

Alas, some dioceses have used this issue of priestly sexual misconduct to enact policies and procedures of a wider scope and purpose. Along with clergy—diocesan or religious—they have procedures for vetting

(Continued on page 21)

Testimonial Letters—Who, What, When, Where, Why

By **Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.**

(Continued from page 20)

religious sisters or brothers or lay persons in ways that are not strictly limited to concerns of possible professional sexual misconduct. Thus, the process has in places come to be used as a kind of screening process conducted by the local chancery office.

But let's set that aside, which is way beyond anything that needs concern you. Instead, let me conclude by offering the following few suggestions.

You are inviting a priest—religious or diocesan—or a religious sister or brother, or a lay person, to come to your community to give a day of recollection, or a retreat, or a conference or talk or two, or—in the case of a priest—to lead you in mass, etc. That's the situation.

(1) Please do not assume that the person you're inviting will take care of the testimonial letter needed on his or her own. Please make sure that this is done.

(2) It would be good, then, to know generally the requirements of your diocese. The pastor of the parish where you meet might help. Your spiritual assistant might know. Or some other priest of the diocese whom you may know personally. Consult with this person.

(3) I would suggest you not call the chancery office, unless absolutely necessary. It's often best in these matters to let sleeping dogs lie.

(4) Inform the person you're inviting of what the diocese expects. Importantly, give him or her a name, address, and phone number of the person at the chancery office who oversees these things. An email address is, of course, helpful.

(5) Send this information by email to the person you're inviting. If there's a date by which the testimonial letter needs to be received, let the person know.

(6) Once you've done all of this, you've basically done your job. Now it's up to the person you've invited to contact his or her Superior or Provincial and get the needed forms or letters sent in to the right office by the right time. You might, of course, check back in and ask how it's going.

So, there you have it. It's a complicated matter. I've tried to explain generally what testimonial letters are, where they come from, and why. For many of you none of this is new or unusual. If you're active in your parish, there are similar policies in play that you've had to endure. I simply want to encourage you, one, to understand the matter and, two, to be proactive about it. If you're inviting a friar or priest or anyone from outside your diocese to minister to your community, then part of that invitation is assisting him or her in getting "cleared."

Well, as Holy Mother might say, "God walks among the pots and pans."

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

I am wishing you that the joyful proclamation of the Angel in the Holy Night be true in your Christmas celebration and the Year of the Mercy:



*(Foto: Natività, Gagliardi,
Catedral de Anagni.)*

"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; _for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. _And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" (Lk 2,10-14).

Fraternally,

Fr. Alzimir Francisco Debastiani OCD

Delegado Geral para a OCDS

Casa Generalizia Carmelitani Scalzi

Corso d'Italia, 38

00198 – Roma – Italia

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STJ 500 - Centenary Commemorative Book

The OCDS Province of St. Therese / Oklahoma

Reflections of members from the years of
preparation, formation, anticipation and
of our Holy Mother's 500th birthday year

Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Friars, and Seculars are invited to compose your reflections and send them to the Provincial Council in care of [Kathy DeWine - kcwd111@gmail.com](mailto:kcwd111@gmail.com) - with the

SUBJECT: 2015 COMMEMORATIVE BOOK FOR OKLAHOMA PROVINCE.

In your own words, please share a reflection about the way in which the Holy Spirit has drawn you into a deeper commitment: to the Church, to our Order of Carmel, to your own community and / or to living the life in family and larger community, during these recent years of:

preparation, formation, anticipation, and celebration.

Be as brief as you can, please, and send only one entry per person or community. Include your name and the name / city of your community. The entries will be edited as needed, but content will not be changed.

A poster was created for the 2015 Houston Conference which will be combined with the Commemoration Book for the Provincial archives.

your sister in Carmel,

Kathy DeWine, OCDS

member of the Provincial Council



STJ 500 - Centenary of the Birth of Saint Teresa of Jesus

A Reflection on the long celebration of St. Teresa's 500th Birthday

St. Teresa was determined that her family would be good friends of Jesus, since, as she said, he has so few! Well, I think our holy mother must be pleased by the proliferation of Jesus's friends who have continued to be called to Carmel. There are many highlights of these 5 years, not the least of which, for me, has been making more Carmelite friends from all over the country and beyond! I was privileged in 2013 to participate in a pilgrimage led by Fr. Daniel Chowning, OCD to Avila and other places where St. Teresa lived and worked. It was especially poignant for me, as my mother was born in Spain and I had never been there. One of our elderly nuns I met there was from Mother's region of Almeria, so we declared ourselves cousins. Her name is Sr. Maria Teresa ... the same as both my Spanish great-grandmothers, whom I never met, and of course the names of my mothers: biological Maria; Mary Mother of God and my mother; and our holy mother Teresa.

Another privilege which coincided with this time of celebration was my appointment to the Provincial Council, an appointment which I agreed to with much fear and trepidation because of limited skills and knowledge of the "facts" of Carmel ... and because I'm old! God is good; he has been providing further formation in the models and mentoring of our other PC members: Jo Ann Murphy, Claire Bloodgood, Mary Kay Daniels and Chris Wood, and our Office Administrator for the OCDS in the province, the amazing Barbara Tinervia.

More new friends in Carmel. Along with the good people on that council, I get to meet more sisters and brothers in Carmel during Visitations with communities around the province. Each community has its own distinctive manifestation of the Discalced Carmelite family, just as my home community has in Knoxville, TN. Always, some very good people who share at our core this Catholic contemplative and apostolic little way of Carmel. I am discovering that, along with the Teresian virtues of *humility, detachment and charity* which most of us are still growing into - the virtue of hospitality is also common among Carmelite Seculars, and '*fraternal communion*' has rightfully been added to the numbers of our Constitutions, an essential component of our friendship in Carmel.

The 2014 Atlanta Congress was held in a hotel a block from the church where my husband and I were married 51 years before, so I was back in familiar territory in that little piece of Atlanta, as well as in the midst of so many more of Jesus's friends. The National Congress in Milwaukee was all the planners could have hoped for ... a grand **STJ 500** Main Event for our country's Secular Carmelites. The highlight celebration for me, however, was the somehow more intimate and joyful celebration of the Houston Conference around the actual date of Teresa's birth. What was it about Houston? Even our friars who spoke seemed to feel the greater intimacy, as if they were just speaking to friends, sisters and brothers in Carmel. Their presentations were so personal and so profound, there was this camaraderie ... inexplicably like being in the midst of one's best friends in Christ.

A woman I met on the last evening of the Milwaukee Congress put it in a good light for me, this distinctive vocation we enjoy, and too often take for granted. She told me she had come to this national OCDS Congress to get an idea what Carmel was all about. Her sister had been a Carmelite Secular. They had never been close. She admitted she had never understood her sister. She used to tease her that her only hobby was going to Mass! The Congress was her gesture of reconciliation with her sister who had died early in the year. She had been unable to attend her sister's funeral, so when she learned of the Congress, she decided to go in her sister's honor. Tears welled up in her eyes as she told me with appropriate emotion: "This has been so good, such a surprise. Not only do I feel as if I have met Saint Teresa of Avila ... but as if I have met my sister for the first time!"

Carmel has been a true homecoming for me; God has seen fit to draw me into an Order where I feel most at home with my Catholic sensibilities and such a diverse lot of sisters and brothers with whom I hold in common this wondrous charism of taking God at his word when he says: "I call you my friends."

Kathy DeWine, Knoxville, TN Group of the Transfiguration

News from around the Province

2015 World Congress in Avila, Spain September 21 - 27

Four Council members of the community of San Juan de la Cruz, of Houston, Texas attended the World Congress in Avila, Spain, from September 21st till 27th.

Teresa of Jesus, Heritage of Humanity was the name of the Congress.

We were very honored to hear great speakers from many places in the world, including **Fr. General Saverio Cannistra OCD**, speak about our Holy Mother Saint Teresa of Jesus. All the speakers spoke of her Humility and Love of Our Lord as an example for us to follow. Each speaker spoke about different areas of her life that showed us a complete life experience that St. Teresa of Jesus led.

Each one of us that attended this great world congress were highly impressed and blessed with all the knowledge we received.

Dr. Fco. Javier Sancho, Director of CITEs " Universidad de la Mistica" was Master of Ceremonies.

Picture: right to left: Anita and Ernest Mendoza OCDS, **Fr. General Saverio Cannistra OCD**, Margaret Nunez OCDS, **DR. FCO. JAVIER SANCHO**, and Mary Cano OCDS



News from around the Province

Mass of the Roses – 2015

Submitted by M. Engler

What can one say that is new or different about an annual event that is always jubilant and spiritually uplifting? It is a challenge to author an account that readers will find fresh or dissimilar from years past. In a year that began with the Canonical establishment of Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, included beautiful new vocations to the Carmelite Sisters' Community and celebrated St. Teresa's 5th Centenary, it is almost too good to believe that the 2015 Mass of the Roses would equal such a grace-filled year. However, this time, perhaps more so than previous years, the celebration was particularly joyful and awe inspiring.



The Mass of the Roses which takes place the first weekend in October at the Covington Monastery in Covington, LA, always commemorates The Little Flower, St. Therese'. St. Therese' is a beloved Saint that is venerated by all in the Carmelite community and many devotees throughout the Catholic Church. She is adored by men and women alike for her "Little Way" and the little children simply love sharing the blessed roses that are her iconic symbol with the congregation.

This year, however, we also commemorated the 500th anniversary of the birth of St. Teresa of Avila. Many celebrations in honor of St. Teresa occurred throughout the country for her 5th centenary beginning in October, 2014. The Mass of the Roses in Covington, LA was a final gala for all those in attendance to enjoy.

St. Therese' and St. Teresa must have interceded for the impeccable day for us. The weather was picture-perfect; skies were clear and everyone who attended basked in the light of a gorgeous morning full of music, smiles,

peace and love. Sister Grace played the flute in duets with Erin Wilson. Elizabeth Rizzo was the Mass Cantor and Soloist. Mass was offered by Reverend Ephrem Arcement, OSB.

After Mass, guests were in no hurry to leave. They lingered graciously for a time conversing, taking pictures, shopping, and delighting in the fare that was provided by donors and the Community. Visitors had a wide variety of things to consider while shopping. Volunteers had grown plants, sewed, knitted, crocheted, painted, baked and cooked items that were sure to please everyone.

It is safe to say, that The Mass of the Roses as celebrated in 2015 will be long remembered and hard to top!



News from around the Province

St. Teresa's 5th Centenary In the Archdiocese of New Orleans

Submitted by M. Engler

The New Orleans Carmelite Communities united together in the first of several events in 2015 to commemorate the 5th Centenary of the Birth of St. Teresa of Avila at the Mount Carmel Convent Motherhouse in New Orleans on January 17.

Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit Secular community from Covington, LA joined the New Orleans Secular community for a day of recollection and retreat. Our retreat master was Father Jerome Earley, OCD. Father offered the retreat entitled Memory and Imagination According to St. Teresa. Using the human condition as the basis for starting- like a lense through which we were looking – Father Jerome took us on a marvelous journey through St. Teresa's teachings on the subject. We learned about the images of Christ that St. Teresa used in her life and the numerous uses of images, symbols, pictures, and gestures as a way of interpreting reality. We were reminded that images help us to gain a clearer understanding of the meaning being conveyed and they come



from our memories. The retreat concluded with a positive message of being grateful for our memories because they form the basis for the theological virtue of Hope. Father Jerome's talk that day was eloquent and inspiring; it initiated the 5th Centenary year for all in attendance with enthusiasm and love for Holy Mother's life and works.



Our second event was a festive birthday celebration for St. Teresa on Saturday, March 28 at the Covington Carmelite Monastery. Father Jerome Earley offered Holy Mass for the Sisters, New Orleans Community and the Covington Community in the Guardian Angel Chapel. After Mass, we enjoyed a potluck social. We were entertained by the Sisters who sang beautiful songs to the delight of all in attendance.

Our third event occurred in June at the St. Joseph Abbey in Covington, LA. Father Jerome Earley returned as retreat master for the weekend retreat which was also devoted to St. Teresa. Father spoke about five key themes offered by St. Teresa in her teachings –

Determination, Detachment, Self-Knowledge, Devotion to the Sacred Humanity of Christ and Spiritual Friendship. Among the many profound messages conveyed by Father Jerome during the weekend retreat, I was struck by his characterization of St. Teresa as being "...determined to imitate God with detachment, humility and divine love...and...to be of service for God's glory, the good of the Church and for souls." The retreat offered all attendees a deep look into the soul of St. Teresa and Father Jerome was an excellent guide. All of Father's talks were recorded and can be viewed on this website: <https://covingtonsecularcarmel.shutterfly.com/stj500th>.



(Continued on page 28)

News from around the Province

(Continued from page 27)

The Grand Celebration of St. Teresa's Fifth Centenary was celebrated by the Archdiocese of New Orleans on Saturday, June 20 at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Shrine. Holy Mass was offered by Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond and concelebrated by Father Gregory Ross, O.C.D. Father Gregory, offered two retreats in which he spoke about the life of St. Teresa. His talks can be viewed on the website at this location: <https://covingtonsecularcarmel.shutterfly.com/stj500th>.



We were treated to a concert by a New Orleans Quartet – Musica da Camera – which is the oldest surviving early music organization in the country, founded in 1966 by director Milton G. Scheuermann. They played a wonderful selection of music which would have been popular during the lifetime of St. Teresa of Avila. They sang the songs in Spanish and played instruments that would have been used at that time. It was quite unique and entertaining. The video of their performance can be viewed at the same website above.

We concluded the Grand Celebration with Benediction and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It was a peaceful, reverent close to a beautiful day that truly honored Holy Mother's birth, life and lasting legacy. Five hundred years after St. Teresa's birth, her spirit continues to speak to all of us and causes us to unite in ways that bring joy and beauty to the world. Thank you, Holy Mother!

Members of the Community of
St John of the Cross and
St Anthony from Baton Rouge
attended the New Orleans
500th Centenary Celebration of
St Teresa's Birth
June 20, 2015



News from around the Province

On September 26 2015 the Most Holy Trinity had its annual retreat at the Cenacle Retreat Center. The day included Mass, an hour of Mercy, the rite of Admission, the rite of Temporary Promise and of course Morning and Evening Prayer. Fr. Stephen Sanchez gave two conferences under the title of “The Call to Integration” which were wonderful reflections on the challenge to Christian living and being – *how do we live the gospel in a culture of comfort and entitlement?* The community is very grateful to Fr. Stephen for accepting our request for the day and for giving such helpful insights into living lives of Christian integrity.

Trina Moss and Vanessa Hamm were clothed in the Scapular and Teresa Demary and Bridgette McMillan made their Temporary Promise.

Submitted by:
Elizabeth Ogilvie, O.C.D.S.



PARTICIPANTS IN CEREMONIES

- Trina Moss (L) and Vanessa Hamm (R) after being Clothed with the Scapular

PARTICIPANTS IN CEREMONIES

- Teresa Demary (L) and Bridgette McMillan (R) during the Mass with the Rite for Temporary Promise



News from around the Province

OCDS Community in Baton Rouge St John of the Cross and St Anthony

Ceremonies were held on October 11, 2015 at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, Baton Rouge, LA

PARTICIPANTS IN CEREMONIES

- Joan Pitre making her Definitive Profession
- Jim Shelley Clothing Ceremony
- Reverend Nutan Minj IMS. Officiating
- Robert Connor making his Temporary Profession



Submitted by:

Dana Barton, O.C.D.S.

News from around the Province

Triumph of the Cross Community

Submitted by Diane Gray, O.C.D.S.

On Saturday January 9, 2016 the Triumph of the Cross Community in Georgetown, TX was blessed to have a visit from Fr. Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

During morning prayer, he officiated as four members were clothed, Elizabeth Jimenez, Roberta Lindsey, Jamey Smrekar and Jackline Infinger.

During Mass, another member, Matthew Myer, made his Definitive Promise.

Afterwards, we had a celebration with family members and then Fr. Bonaventure gave a wonderful presentation on the poetry of Jessica Powers for our annual Day of Reflection.



PARTICIPANTS IN CEREMONIES

Back Row:

- Matthew Myer,
Fr. Bonaventure Sauer,
O.C.D.

Front Row:

- Elizabeth Jimenez,
Roberta Lindsey,
Jamey Smrekar and
Jackline Infinger

DAY OF REFLECTION

Fr. Bonaventure Sauer,
O.C.D.

Offering a presentation on
the poetry of
Jessica Powers



News from around the Province

Here's a lovely New Year's greeting received from the Jackson Carmel.

The sisters are, from left to right: Sr. L.J. Therese , Sr. Margaret Mary, Sr. Jane, Sr. Donna, Sr. Cecile, and Sr. Joan.

Submitted by:

Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.



Carmelite Obituaries

Wilma Robertson, OCDS



Community of St. Paul and John of the Cross, Birmingham, AL
Submitted by Thais Serio

Our beloved sister in Carmel, Wilma Robertson, passed away peacefully on October 22, 2015. She has a daughter who lives in MD and a step son and step daughter who lives in Texas and New York. Her memorial mass was on October 29, 2015 and it was beautiful and simple just as she requested.

Wilma joined our community and made her first promise on October 8, 2000 and her Definitive Promise on October 5, 2003. She took the name of Wilma Marie of the Annunciation, as she always said that is where it all started. She was born in Ohio but moved to Tennessee at “the Village” run by the Alexian brothers after her husband passing in 1994. While there she was active and served on some committees (helping seniors with their taxes etc.) always helping where needed and bringing a smile to those around her. Wilma always made it to our meetings driving all the way from Tennessee to Birmingham. She lit up the room with her smile and made everyone at ease. Due to health reasons, Wilma took infirmed status in 2007. She always kept in touch with the community attending retreats when able. She will be greatly missed by all us but we are content knowing she is looking down on us and at peace.

Jeanne Parella, OCDS



Community of St. Paul and John of the Cross, Birmingham, AL
Submitted by Sylvia Bresowar

Also our beloved sister in Carmel, Jeanne Parella, passed away Sunday, November 22, 2015. Jeanne moved several times during her life willing to go where her heart lead her. She served others as a registered nurse. After the death of her fiancé in World War II, she entered a convent in Seattle but did not take vows as her fiancé’s twin brother came and visited her and convinced her to leave and marry him.

While in Seattle, she entered into Carmel. She was clothed in Seattle before moving to Chicago where she took her Promise and Vows on February 12, 1955. Jeanne took the religious name Therese of the Child Jesus. This name suited her well as like the Little Flower she was known for her kind and gentle way.

After moving to Signal Mountain, Tennessee, Jeanne transferred to our community and traveled each month that she could to our meetings in Birmingham. For the past several years, she took Infirmed status. Jeanne lived at the Regency Retirement Village in Morristown, TN, where she had many friends and was known for her love for our Lord and being a strong servant of her faith.

Carmelite Obituaries

Geraldine “Geri” Conley, OCDS



Submitted by Wavie Greigg
OCDS Sioux City, IA

The Sioux City, IA OCDS Community of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus and St. Raphael Kalinowski of St. Joseph report the death Geri Conley on October 17, 2015 at the age of 67. Due to poor health, Geri was not able to attend our monthly meeting but as an Isolate served as our “prayer warrior”. Geri was Clothed in March 1994, made her First Promise in October 1996 and Definitive Promise in October 1999.

Geri enjoyed riding motorcycles and taught her son to ride at a young age. She was an avid reader wrote poetry, and loved the music of Elvis Presley. Geri had a great love for her God and was dedicated to her Catholic faith. She was known to serve others before serving herself.

Survivors include her son Shane Conley of Bronson, Iowa, brothers: Kenneth and James Conley, sisters: Jackie Conley and Kim Fiscus. Geri was preceded in death by her parents and son Stace Conley.



2016 OCDS Congress ~ San Jose, California
June 23-26

Theme: **"Bringing God Back into the World
through our Carmelite Mission"**

The Western Province is happy to announce that the official website for the 2016 San Jose OCDS Western Regional Congress has been published.

The address is: <http://www.2016ocdscongress.com>

Here is an excerpt from the website:

A Congress is the major event in the life of a Province each triennium. It is a "family reunion" beyond compare, a powerful spiritual experience which brings together Carmelite Seculars and Friars from all over the Province, the whole country, and the world.

The theme that the Western Province has chosen is provocative, and deliberately so. Of course God is omnipresent and omnipotent in the world He created! However, our secular society tries to "push Him out" of morality, education, health care, and politics. We selected this theme because we Secular Carmelites want "to bring God back into the world". We want to have a real impact on our society-- all the more in 2016, a presidential election year. We want this Congress to respond to Carmelite Seculars' yearning to live out our Catholic faith and Carmelite calling in our daily lives. We want to be inspired and strengthened to share Christ by direct evangelization in practical ways.

The fine San Jose OCDS Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is our host for the 2016 Congress. The dates are June 23-26, 2016. The Co-chairpersons are Emma Forlanda and Yolanda Rossy. We are praying and working hard for its success! We really hope that you'll be able to spend these days of grace with us!

Registration

Registration will begin January 1, 2016.

Early Registration: January 1 - March 19, 2016

Registration Closes: May 1, 2016

Thank you and Bless You!

In Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
Your Western Regional 2016 OCDS Congress Team

2016 San Jose Western Regional OCDS Congress

P.O. Box 3079

San Jose, CA 95156

Email: 2016ocdscongress@gmail.com



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 Jeannine Meaux at jtmeaux@cox.net

Parting Words

“One should consider the virtues and who it is who serves our Lord with greater mortification, humility, and purity of conscience; this is the one who will be the holiest. Yet, little can be known here below with certitude; we must wait until the true Judge gives to each one what is merited. In heaven we will be surprised to see how different his judgment is from what we can understand here below. May he be forever praised, amen.”

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Getting the *Flos Carmeli* to members

Community presidents, please remember that the Province no longer mails out copies of the Flos Carmeli to communities. It is the community's responsibility to get a copy to each of your members, either via email or by print. This includes all isolate, aged, or infirm members. Thank you!

Provincial Council for the 2014-2017 Triennium:

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Kathy DeWine, Knoxville, TN

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