

Flos Carmeli

Oklahoma Province
Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

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From the President's Desk

By Claire Bloodgood, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council

Hello Carmelites,

Praised be Jesus Christ – now and forever.

Here's what's happening lately –

The formation workshop in San Antonio was well received. Nearly every community and Study Group was represented. We will be creating "Best Practices" articles to share what we learned. See "What's New on the Provincial Website" on page 11.

Inter-Provincial Council meeting in Columbus Ohio

I'll be sending out an update via email to the presidents after the Washington Province Congress.

As of this writing, we plan to discuss the unified formation program in depth with our General Delegate Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, the Provincial Delegates, and the three Provincial Councils. We will be looking at what we have so far and determining our next steps.

Also on the agenda is coordinating congress frequency with the other provinces.

Oklahoma Province OCDS Congress

We are looking at venues for our 2021 OCDS Congress. More on that as we finalize plans.

Start thinking about what congress job(s) your community would like to be responsible for. More to follow.

Rest in Peace

You are aware of the passing of Fr. Raphael Kitz on June 6, Sr. Ann Marie of the Piedmont Carmel on June 10, and Br. Bernard Joseph O'Niell on September 15, 2018. Please pray for them and for all our dear brothers and sisters in Carmel.



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From the President's Desk

By Claire Bloodgood, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council

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You are in our prayers as always.

Claire Bloodgood, OCDS

President, Provincial Council for the OCDS Oklahoma Province

On Behalf of the Council Members:

*Jo Ann Murphy, OCDS , John Stevens, OCDS,
Anna Peterson, OCDS and Mary Therese Bellman, OCDS*



Report of the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

Today is October 2 as I sit down before the blank slate of my computer screen to begin this report. And that can mean only one thing—that yesterday we celebrated the annual Mass of the Roses here at this Basilica, Shrine of St. Therese, the Little Flower. By the way, when Therese wrote of herself as a flower in the opening pages of her spiritual autobiography, she described herself not as a rose, but as a daisy. Yet somehow celebrating an annual Mass of the Daisies doesn't have quite the same ring. So, we stick with roses.

This Mass of the Roses is no doubt the most well-attended mass at the Basilica, outside of Easter and Christmas. We pretty much fill the church and have to set up chairs along the side aisles and down front. The photo to the right, if you can see any of its details, shows a church nearly full. The chairs in the front have yet to be taken, though. We're Catholics after all, and even a special mass like this one can't get us to change our ways. But by the time mass started, those seats, too, were filled—by those hoping to slide into a humble pew in the rear, hiding behind a pillar. But, as in the parable of the guests at the dinner party, the ushers directed them to come sit in the front. What to do, what to do, they thought panicking?



I also snapped a shot of the tomb chapel just before mass began so that you could see the gentle radiance—of flowers, banners, drapery—that adorns it. Fr. Luis Gerardo, pastor and rector of the Basilica, has a fine eye for decorating. The look is usually just right for the occasion—not overwrought, but rich, nonetheless, with a smidgeon of luxury.

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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Fr. Luis is also good at the Grand Liturgical Gesture—a GLG as it’s called in the literature. But as with his sense of decor, these gestures strike me as effective and moving, not overdone nor likely to cause distraction by calling too much attention to themselves.

The big moment at the Mass of the Roses comes at the end, following the final prayer. The choir sings that lovely anthem, written by Sr. Claire Sokol, OCD, of the Reno Carmel—I mean “The Cantic of Love.” As they do, a collection of young people, carrying candles, begins a procession down the center aisle.

A statue of St. Therese, laid out upon a kind of elevated gurney with roses encircling it—the statue is of Therese lying in state—then follows, wheeled forward slowly and placed at the head of the center aisle, just in front of the communion rail. Meanwhile, rose petals fall from above, drifting down to the sanctuary floor. [See photo at the left]

As potentially provoking of a rolling of the eyes as my description might seem, in the moment itself the gesture is quite beautiful, a true feast for the soul. Some shed tears. Others find their hearts elevated. Others feel their breath taken away. As for me, I get gleeful, as if I were a boy again. Standing in the sanctuary as I was, I tried to catch a few rose petals in midair, before they could hit the floor.

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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To honor St. Therese, patroness of our Province, let me offer the following. I've shared it with some of you already. But it's worth sharing with all.

It's a stanza from a poem by St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, the poem itself called "The Laws of Love." In it Elizabeth offers, as "laws" for us in Carmel, the varied examples of five holy women. And, to our surprise perhaps, first among them is Therese Martin, nun of the Lisieux Carmel.

This was in 1905, less than a decade after her death. And she, a not-yet-saint, is nonetheless being offered as a model of hiddenness in our lives of prayer. Notice, though, that what Elizabeth highlights as at the core of this hiddenness Therese exemplifies is not her Little Way, as one might expect, but her vocation "to be Love in the Heart of my Mother the Church."

The translation is by Alan Bancroft.

To love! Forgetting self, as did
The Angel of Lisieux: to be
Consumed, in (where her self was hid)
Her Loved One's burning fervency.
Therese had understood within;
Her great simplicity could tell.
His strong Love-message entered in:
"Come here, to my own Heart to dwell."



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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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Last Saturday was a full day for us. In the evening Fr. Ray Kelly, the Hallelujah Priest [shown here, at the right]—who got famous through a recording of him singing the Leonard Cohen song “Hallelujah” (with different words, of course), which was posted on YouTube (click here, if you want to see it, <https://youtu.be/XYKwgj5QViQ>) and quickly went viral—anyway, this past Saturday in the evening he gave a benefit concert at the Basilica. It was a fundraiser for us, and I think we did pretty well. Certainly the church was full.

Fr. Kelly’s musical style is a bit too “big” for me. Yes, he definitely goes for the big sound, while I had been hoping for an evening of gently lyrical renditions of traditional Irish tunes. No matter. Everyone enjoyed it.

Earlier in the day, we Friars attended the solemn profession of vows of Sr. An Theresa of the Sacred Heart, OCD—“An Theresa” because she is Vietnamese. She is a member of the San Antonio Carmel.



[No, the photo to the left is not one taken during the profession on Saturday. These are Carmelite nuns, and the sister in white is on her way to her profession. But Carmelite sisters no longer wear these sorts of veils over their faces—looking to my eye like a Carmelite burqa. They once did, yes, but I don’t know of any Carmel, except for excessively traditional ones—those dedicated to holding down the fort, keeping the faith, managing the museum—that still do.]

Such professions are always a happy occasion, as most of you know from your own experience. On this occasion, the chapel was filled with family, among whom was an uncle-priest. A good part of the ceremony, especially the music, was in Vietnamese.

Perhaps the high point of the ceremony was the statement Sr. An wrote and read at the end. It was beautifully done. I asked her for a copy, which I hope to post on our Provincial website. It expresses sister’s deep sense of gratitude and blessing, then offers a fine statement of her vision of the vocation. Sister is clearly mature beyond her years and brings to her community a remarkable joyfulness—she’s always smiling—and acute intelligence.

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

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

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One thing I like to attempt from time to time in writing poems or other jottings- down is to capture the experience of listening to music. I don't mean that I try to describe in words the music as it unfolds. Rather, I let my imagination roam alongside the music. It's like drifting downstream in a boat—the stream being the music in this analogy—while looking at the scenery that lines the riverbank as it passes—it being the play of my imagination.

A few days ago I attempted this exercise by listening to some music and sketching out the following two poems. It's not like I wrote the two poems, all at once, in finished form, as the music swam about me. Instead, while listening, I let images flare up within me, then wrote them down. Later, I turned off the music and began the serious work of revising and reshaping these stray thoughts, trying to turn them into something resembling a poem.

These two poems are difficult to follow perhaps. They will strike some of you as largely nonsensical, in a Through-the-Looking-Glass sort of way. It's simply not possible to read them as one would, say, a passage from a novel. They evaporate pretty fast under the light of rationality. But they do conjure up a sense of place, for one— a sense of being somewhere of great natural beauty, standing there lost in wonder. There is also a sense of movement, of things going on around you. The second poem even hints at an interior struggle to understand the music, if one doesn't take the word "struggle" too seriously. Above all the poems are meant to express delight and joyousness, as when rose petals are falling all around you.

While Listening to Music—Two Poems

1.

Grieg or Gershwin—Who Can Say?

Small tufts of grass sprout up, and a wrought iron gate
Flies open. The domed palace can't be far. There

It is—look how faultless it appears, how happy the waves
That swarm the sea-besprinkled shore, the wet sand

Padding the soles of their feet. Sunlight everywhere
Steps forth, ever ready to delight in our human brashness,

The barking pekingese of our needs. *Music is the aura*
Through which I must learn to find my way, nourishing myself

On it, hoping to embody its joy. It is everything I could ever
Want, every indulgent, enduring field of quietness

That flowers to my left or to my right. If, by noon,
Morning's haze has staggered backwards, like bystanders

Ringling a bar fight, then I shall be able to see the white path,
Lined with even whiter stones, stretching out before me

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

(Continued from page 7)

Like a promenade of whistlers encircling the feet
Of the fabulous gazebo erected on this velvety surplus

Of lawn. It is the veil of paradise itself, approaching
As imperceptibly as a distant sail grown fat on salty air.

My mind emerges into the perfection of this beauty,
And I grope along amid its shimmering harmonies,

The dank prison cell of sleep falling away, leaving me
Freed of every illusion dark sorrow once secretly imposed.

2.

The Schubert Impromptus

I can't step any nearer without falling in.
Birds dart upward, trailing behind them streamers
Of bluish air as they break free and burst
Into song. How helpless my heart's longing has become

To hold these glad creatures close to the breast
Wrapped in the folds of its introversion, O mother
Of promised peace. No trees here, only the breezy
And shifting shapes of this forest at whose edge I now dwell.

I take up the task of keeping my balance somewhat
As one might a social cause. It's impossible
To know just where to start, and how, going forward,
To focus one's efforts in a manageable, methodical way,
There are so many factors to consider all at once.

So I build a hut and declare myself a hermit; I give myself
Over to the realm of the mute world, its face turned
Towards the sun. It can't say, of course, just why
It stands here like this; I have to put the question for it. But
To whom? Whole books have been written on this subject.

Before you know it, I've lost my balance
And toppled in. I have to let the words look deep
Within themselves and rely on their own inner strength
To carry them forward, pulling me along as they go:

*... The vine tugs at the holes of a bamboo flute
Sending out fat leaves to signify its quest not just for
Ripeness, but rifeness—it wants rifeness, musically
Defined and loosed on the air. The idea of grape clusters,*

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

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

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Interspersed amid variously sized silences, soon follows.
From now on, the music says, wine will freely flow;
I have saved the best for last, don't you think?

Recently our Holy Father Pope Francis made official Catholic teaching the moral stance that the use of the death penalty by the State is to be always and everywhere rejected and opposed. This determination has undoubtedly brought a big smile to the face of Dorothy Day. Here, in this photo, she is shown in a more serious, even sober mood, taking a stand—or a seat actually—at some sort of protest, perhaps a peace rally. Ensnared in her seat, her slight frame heavy with determination, she refuses to budge. You can see the pistols on the hips of the two men in front of her. One would assume they're law enforcement. But she's clearly not threatened by them.



And lastly, as a final word—let it be known that even tall people can be creative persons, despite the fact that St. John of the Cross was probably less than 5'—or so they who knew him say. On other hand, Sergei Rachmaninoff [in the photo here] towered high at a lanky 6'6". His river-delta-sized hands could easily stretch to an octave while playing the piano, probably even to an octave and a half. It is from the likes of him, and the few other tall artists history has offered up, that I draw encouragement, inspiration, and hope.

Communities' Questions & Answers

Compiled by Claire Bloodgood, OCDS, on behalf of the Provincial Council

Question:

We were wondering how we are supposed to pray for Carmelites in our province who have passed away. We weren't sure if we are supposed to pray the Office for the Dead for them, or just include them in our usual intercessions at our meeting?

Answer:

Thank you for asking. The short answer is to remember them in prayer at your next meeting. The Office for the Dead is not required.

The Statutes section VII say:

2) At the first meeting following news of the death of a member of the province (including friars and nuns), the community shall pray for the deceased member.

3) Deceased members of the entire Order should be remembered in daily prayers, especially on the feast of All Souls of the Carmelite Order (November 15).

For members of your own community:

VII.1.d: Those unable to attend the funeral shall participate in a Mass and receive Holy Communion for the deceased, or remember the deceased in prayer, preferably by reciting the Office for the Dead.

We encourage you to please pray privately for our fellow Carmelites as soon as you hear about their passing. The Office for the Dead is a liturgical prayer and very appropriate. There is a spiritual union among persons praying the Office, even when they are not physically together.



PC Channel—New on the Provincial Website! - Fall 2018

Submitted by the Provincial Council

New on the Provincial Website (Summer 2018)

Updated Best Practices

- *Please remember that Best Practices are not binding as policy. They are offered by way of suggestion and may be adapted to local needs.*
<http://www.thereocds.org/best-practices-2/formation/>
- Sample formation syllabi (two of them!) adapted from the Little Rock Community and the Tulsa Study Group. *(These are offered only as examples of what is working for other communities. Local Councils are responsible to implement the Provincial Formation Guidelines in ways that work best for their community.)*
- The formation workshop talks, as promised.
- *Updated:* Apostolate of Carmelite Seculars
<http://www.thereocds.org/best-practices-2/apostolate/>

Formation materials

- Three studies of the Beatitudes by OCD authors.
<http://www.thereocds.org/formation-materials/study-guides/>
- Links to Discalced Carmel in Mexico and Quebec, so that communities can find out where to get formation materials in French and Spanish.
- Links to formation materials in French, Spanish, and Korean. Community and Growth is online in Spanish! We will be adding more links as we find them.
<http://www.thereocds.org/formation-materials/resources-for-non-english-speakers/>

OCDS Spiritual Corner - The Spirit of Formation

Submitted by Mary Bellman, OCDS

In thinking about the spirit of formation I'd like to borrow a quote from T.S. Eliott: "*We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.*"¹

The journey of formation is certainly an experience of *personal* exploration. It's one that requires a balanced approach and a clear plan. Legislation and guidelines are necessary, but if they're *all* we focus on, it's possible to become overwhelmed by the details and lose sight of our destination. How many of you while following directions got so focused on making the right turns that you forgot where you were going?

Or imagine trying to put a puzzle together without knowing what it's supposed to look like at the end. You wouldn't have a clue how the pieces relate to one another and before long you'd probably like to throw the whole thing out the window. Think of this as an attempt to describe the outside of the formation puzzle box.

So, what *is* on the outside? I'd like to propose the following 4-part image. Formation is information plus environment and the faithful practice of prayer that lead to the gradual transformation of the person.

Each of these pieces (Information, Environment, Prayer, and Transformation) are necessary parts of the picture. Without even one, the image is incomplete. They each build upon and complement one another. Ideally, they should enable the person to live out and share the Carmelite Charism.

Information

As we all know, the study of information is a necessary and important part of the process of formation. Study, as stated in *Vita Consecrata*, "is an expression of the unquenchable desire for an ever-deeper knowledge of God, the source of light and all human truth."² Everyone in our communities should have this desire for a deeper knowledge of God and our formation sessions (at every level) should be a response to this desire.

We can't form someone in the Carmelite Charism without a program of study. It's the basic structure around which we plan our formation sessions and how we plan for when clothings and promises will happen.

Obviously, there are certain things we must read and learn. But what information we choose to pass on is really the easiest part of the picture isn't it? The various books are already conveniently laid out for us in our Provincial formation guidelines. We already know that in the various stages of formation, candidates will read certain Carmelite works. In no way do I slight the importance of reading when I say that it isn't *all there is* to forming someone in the Charism.

¹ T.S. Eliot, Anne Hodgson, and Philip Mairet. *Little Gidding*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1942).

² John Paul II, Pope. *The Consecrated Life: Vita Consecrata: Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops and Clergy, Religious Orders and Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life, Secular Institutes and All the Faithful On the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and in the World*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1996), #98.

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OCDS Spiritual Corner - The Spirit of Formation

Submitted by Mary Bellman, OCDS

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The following part of the picture, environment, is an equally important but often overlooked part of formation.

Environment

Whether we realize it or not, we are also formed by the influence of people around us and in our communities for better or for worse. St. Teresa of Avila speaks of this so often throughout her writings. In her early years she tells us of how, in speaking with other young people she “listened to accounts of their affections and of childish things not the least bit edifying; and, what was worse, I exposed my soul to that which caused all its harm.”³

That’s a very powerful statement coming from Teresa. She also says that it frightened her “sometimes to think of the harm a bad companion can do, and if I hadn’t experienced it I wouldn’t believe it.”⁴

She also had good influences in her life which helped her greatly. One Father from the Society of Jesus was especially helpful to her. Teresa said, “In all that he said it seemed to me, according to what was impressed upon my soul, that the Holy Spirit was speaking through him in order to heal me.”⁵ “From such experience I understand the great profit that comes from good companionship.”⁶ How many of us can relate to her experience?

In addition to people, events in our daily lives *also* form us. How many of you have had an experience in your life that deeply impacted you such as joining the Order, meeting your spouse, having a child, or receiving a cancer diagnosis? *Did that not change* your prayer life, what you read, and the way you interacted with others?

In our communities we must be good companions of one another. A person’s community may be the only positive and encouraging influence in their lives. It is our responsibility to provide members with an environment that encourages their continual growth and transformation. Serious thought and consideration should always be given to how we spend our time together each month as a Carmelite community.

What’s the environment of your community like? If someone were to visit your community for a day, what would they have to say? How do you treat one another? It’s often said that people will forget your name, but they will always remember how you made them *feel*. Are we being the good influences in one another’s lives? Is our community a nurturing place? Are we good examples of the Carmelite vocation to one another?

³ St. Teresa of Avila, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, and Otilio Rodriguez. *The collected works of St. Teresa of Avila. Volume 1, The Book of Her Life, Ch 2, Para 2.* (Washington (D.C.): Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1987).

⁴ Teresa, *Life*, Ch 2, Para 4.

⁵ Teresa, *Life*, Ch 24, Para 16.

⁶ Teresa, *Life*, Ch 2, Para 5.

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OCDS Spiritual Corner - The Spirit of Formation

Submitted by Mary Bellman, OCDS

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We cannot expect a person to learn what it means to be a Carmelite by *only* having them read John of the Cross or Teresa of Avila. I cannot stress enough that *no amount of reading* will make someone a Carmelite. That is why our time spent together in community and in conversation with one another is so important in formation. It's the example and interaction of members in the community that often speaks the loudest to someone. As stated in *Vita Consecrata*, we must realize that the "...chief instrument of formation is personal dialogue..."⁷

To reiterate, what it means to be a Carmelite is passed on by interaction and example in addition to information. That's why attendance at meetings is so important. Our goal is not to produce scholars of Carmelite literature, but Carmelites who continue to seek the face of God. There is a *huge difference* between the two.

If problems develop within your formation program, don't forget to look at the community atmosphere. What are your gatherings like? Is the environment hospitable, encouraging, and open? Are people able to freely express their ideas, questions, and concerns? Are the formation sessions fostering or stifling growth? Do we honor the unique spiritual journey of each individual or do we try to force them into a mold of our own making? These are things we cannot lose sight of in the formation of our members.

No community is perfect of course; but we try to do our best. St. John of the Cross reminds us: "Keep yourself from setting your thoughts upon what happens in the community, and still more from speaking of it *except to the proper person at the proper time*...For if you want to ponder on all that happens you would always discover something amiss even if you lived among angels."⁸ How true that statement is; but we do the best that we can.

A word of caution though; in thinking about formation, we must be careful not to leave out the next part of the picture; the role of personal prayer. As stated in *Vita Consecrata*, "the urgent need for appropriate and necessary training can turn into a frantic quest for efficiency, as if" it all "depended primarily on human means rather than on God."⁹ Therefore, the role of prayer in formation cannot be neglected.

⁷ John Paul II. #66.

⁸ St. John of the Cross, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, and Otilio Rodriguez. *The collected works of St. John of the Cross, Precautions*, (Washington (D.C.): Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991). #3

⁹ John Paul II. #38.

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OCDS Spiritual Corner - The Spirit of Formation

Submitted by Mary Bellman, OCDS

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Fostered by Prayer: The Story of Elijah

To look at the role of prayer I'd like to use a metaphor that occurred to me one day while doing some reading on Elijah. I love the story of Elijah and its imagery. It speaks so much to me about the spirit of Carmel, formation and prayer. We don't know much about Elijah's origins from scripture, but we can still use his example for inspiration.

After his announcement of the drought God commands Elijah to go to the brook Cherith and there hide himself. Elijah spends his days and nights waiting by the lonely stream in the desert. *He was not told* when God would give him further instructions. He is simply left there *alone* in a state of total dependence on God. As Adrienne Von Speyer wrote "Taken as a whole, Elijah's public life is one single act of being there."¹⁰

Elijah learned and practiced total reliance on God by *staying near that stream* which provided him with water. But God knew that Elijah would need food as well, so he sent ravens to him twice a day with something to eat. Through this experience Elijah was *most certainly being formed* for his mission. There was no room for pretense or ego here. In his situation Elijah *would die* if God did not provide for him.

Let's try to apply the figures and symbols in this story to our own lives and *specifically* to the process of formation.

- We have Elijah as the person in formation.
- Think of the water flowing through the stream as the connection to God through a life of prayer.
- Think of the ravens bringing nourishment as formators. (I apologize to you formators but remember ravens are highly intelligent!)

We must realize in this picture, that of primary importance *is the stream*. You'll die *a lot faster* without water than without food, especially in the desert. In addition to instruction (*the food the formators bring*), we must be sure that those under our care know how important the life of prayer is (*the stream*). Without this, *all the reading and meetings in the world will do them little good*.

In prayer we come to know our dependence on God and we grow in virtue which enables us to truly see ourselves and one another. As Fr. Mark O'Keefe pointed out "Without prayer and prayerful self-reflection, we remain ignorant of who and what we truly are."¹¹

¹⁰ Adrienne Von Speyer. *Elijah*, translated by Brian McNeil, C.R.V., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 8.

¹¹ Mark O'Keefe, *The Way of Transformation: Saint Teresa of Avila on the Foundation and Fruit of Prayer*, (Washington (D.C.): Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2016) , p. 37.

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OCDS Spiritual Corner - The Spirit of Formation

Submitted by Mary Bellman, OCDS

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It's very hard to form a person who has no idea who they are. According to Thomas Merton "Every man has a vocation to be someone: but he must understand clearly, that in order to fulfill this vocation he can only be one person: himself."¹²

Formation requires honesty and openness on the part of the person being formed. They must have the capacity to commit to journeying with the Lord *and* with the community. You can't choose only one companion. Both God *and* the community must be with the person as they make the journey.

Formation is a time of conversion. We must have the capacity for self-reflection and accepting feedback. Until a person at least becomes willing to take an honest look inside, much of what they read can bounce off or not sink in.

We've all experienced how re-reading the Carmelite Saints is different every time. At different places in our lives we've come to know ourselves better and the words take on a deeper meaning. This change is due in part to our continuous formation through prayer which is a *fundamental part* of the Carmelite Charism.

As Fr. Deeney states: "This interest in learning to meditate or inclination to meditate is fundamentally characteristic of any Secular Carmelite. It is perhaps the most basic."¹³ He also states that "Carmel has a mission. Carmel's mission is that we know God so that God may be known."¹⁴ Let's do our best to make sure those in formation, and we ourselves, *never forget* how important prayer is.

Teresa of Avila teaches us that prayer is transformative. "Well, let us speak now of those who are beginning to be servants of love. This doesn't seem to me to mean anything else than to follow resolutely by means of this path of prayer Him who has loved us so much."¹⁵

Our goal in all of this...the passing on of good information, providing an encouraging environment, and in fostering prayer, is in some way to help prepare the path for the transformation of the person. Our great Carmelite Saints were truly transformed people and we can see just how effectively they passed on the Charism.

¹² Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978) p. 133.

¹³ Aloysius Deeney, *Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites*, (Washington (D.C.): Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2009) p. 115.

¹⁴ Deeney, p. 18.

¹⁵ Teresa, *Life*, Ch 11, Para 1.

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OCDS Spiritual Corner - The Spirit of Formation

Submitted by Mary Bellman, OCDS

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Transformation of the Person

The path to transformation is unique to each person and there's little I can say here only that I am still on the way myself. Ultimately, *only the grace of God* can transform hearts, and this is driven by a committed life of prayer. Transformation is a life long journey that reaches into every part of us.

As stated in *Vita Consecrata* "Formation should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in behavior and intentions. Precisely because it aims at the transformation of the whole person, it is clear that the commitment to formation never ends."¹⁶

Transformation is difficult, but there is always hope for us. Fr. Deeney reminds us that "It is impossible to live a life of prayer, meditation, and study without changing."¹⁷ Thanks be to God. May God give us the grace to never pause for too long on our own journeys and the grace to be of service to those travelling with us.

The desire to be of service to others is a natural result of our continual transformation. "The more profoundly one is immersed in God, so much the more is one obliged to go out of self, that is to go toward the world, to bear into it the divine life."¹⁸

To be of service to those in formation is a serious responsibility and requires perseverance and prayer. "At no stage of life can people feel so secure and committed that they do not need to give careful attention to ensuring perseverance in faithfulness; just as there is no age at which a person has completely achieved maturity."¹⁹

"Formation then is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women." Therefore, "those in charge of formation must be very familiar with the path of seeking God, so as to be able to accompany others on this journey."²⁰

¹⁶ John Paul II. #65.

¹⁷ Deeney, p. 18.

¹⁸ John Sullivan, *Holiness Befits Your House: Canonization of Edith Stein: A Documentation*, (Washington (D.C.): Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2000). p. 15

¹⁹ John Paul II. #69.

²⁰ John Paul II. #66.

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OCDS Spiritual Corner - The Spirit of Formation

Submitted by Mary Bellman, OCDS

(Continued from page 17)

In looking for potential formators you should be looking for people of prayer and humility. If someone is shy or reluctant to lead, I wonder what kind of mental picture of a formator they have? Do they understand that they don't need to be great scholars or perfect Carmelites? Remind formators that the Holy Spirit will provide for them *if* they leave room for Him. All they need to do is their best and He will take care of the rest.

Formators don't have to be perfect. A good dose of humility and humor will go a long way. *It's ok to make mistakes.* As Teresa of Avila points out "Here, my daughters, is where love is to be seen: not hidden in corners but in the midst of the occasions of falling. And believe me that even though there may be more faults, and even some slight losses, our gain will be incomparably greater."²¹

I can personally say that I've never learned so much about myself until I became a formator and especially later as President. There's no doubt in my mind about how the grace of God provides as long as you let Him lead. We shouldn't forget that "...what is required of each individual is not success, but faithfulness."²²

And don't forget the three virtues Teresa always emphasizes as foundational to growth in prayer: Love of Neighbor, Detachment, and Humility.²³ They are important for everyone but a formator should especially keep them in mind.

To close I'd like to rephrase the words of T.S. Eliot that we began with. We shall not cease from *formation* and the end of all our formation will be to arrive where we started and know *ourselves* for the first time.

²¹ St. Teresa of Avila, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, and Otilio Rodriguez. *The Collected works of St. Teresa of Avila. Volume III, The Book of Her Foundations, Ch 5, Para 15.* (Washington (D.C.): Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1985).

²² John Paul II. #63.

²³ St. Teresa of Avila, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, and Otilio Rodriguez. *The collected works of St. Teresa of Avila. Volume II, Way of Perfection.* (Washington (D.C.): Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980).

OCDS Spiritual Corner— What Carmel Means to Me

Submitted by John Stevens, OCDS

Carmel provides me with identity and purpose. I cannot precisely explain or describe it except to say it is grounded in the sense of Carmel as a place and to tell you that it is felt and lived as a dynamic reality that changes as I move through life. My answer to the question "What does Carmel mean to me?" is not the same today as it was five years ago and will be different five years from now, God willing.

Carmel is a place of the heart wide open. It must become that space where the Lord can work His miracles of peace and love and reconciliation which the world now so desperately needs. This is my sense of our purpose.

Carmel is a paradox—a garden in the desert. I seek the beauty and grace of the Lord as a flower seeks the sun and the rain. Though I do not entirely agree with Dostoyevsky that "beauty will save the world," I believe I have been called to the beauty of Carmel which can help to save it.

Beauty, however, does not push away the ugliness of the world. Pain is part of the beauty. Pain pries the heart open and makes it shine into the darkness. When discouragement and disillusionment come into my life, community and the world, I do not push them away because they are also part of my identity and purpose.

Carmel is the place where love is stronger than death. Each Carmelite soul is a flower which blooms in the desert.



PC Channel—Book Review

From ICS Publications Website

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

"Pious Recreations"

Thérèse of Lisieux (the Little Flower)

Translated by Susan Conroy and

David J. Dwyer

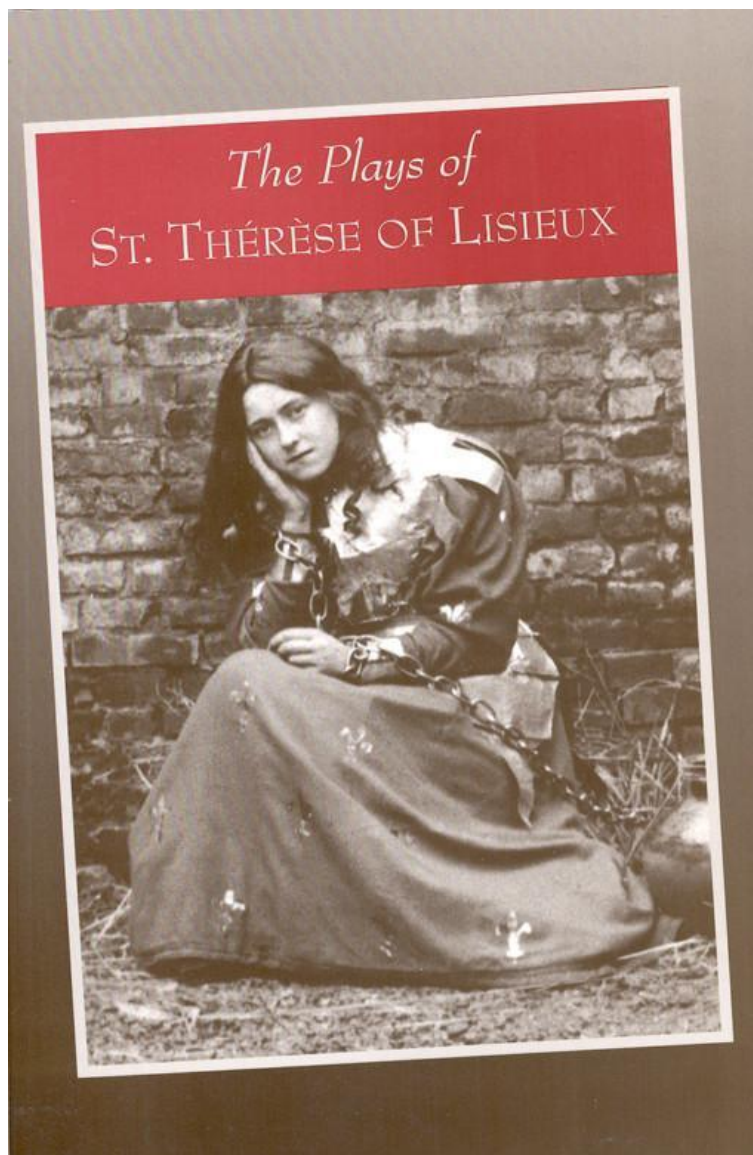
Over a period of about three years toward the end of her life, St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897) was asked by her Carmelite superiors to compose eight "theatrical pieces" for special occasions in her convent. She did not consider them mere trivial amusements. On the contrary, Thérèse invested herself wholeheartedly in the writing and performance of these little dramas, which provided a welcome opportunity to articulate her growing spiritual insights and share them with her religious community. Here we find echoes of her great themes; some were developed at greater length than anywhere else in her writings: Mary of Nazareth and Joan of Arc, humility and the "little way", confidence and love, and so much more.

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News from around the World—Superior General’s Letter - Fall 2018

Submitted by the Provincial Council



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES

Corso d’Italia, 38

00198 Roma – Italia

SEXENNIUM 2015-2021 – LETTER N° 14

Rome, September 14, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

We send our warm and fraternal greetings at the conclusion of the General Definitory’s quarterly meeting which took place in Rome from September 3rd to 13th. The seven definitors were present, Father General presiding.

The life of the Order (friars, nuns, and seculars) continues to move forward in the various regions of the world, characterized by the desire to respond day by day with renewed fidelity to the Lord who has called us to form part of the family of the Teresian Carmel. We joyfully remember recent events such as the Beatification of our sister, Maria Felicia of Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament (“Chiquitunga”), celebrated on June 23rd in Asuncion, Paraguay. At the same time, we pray with Christian hope for our brothers and sisters that have died during these past weeks; among them, we want to remember especially Father Tomas Alvarez, who contributed with his profound and serene wisdom to a better knowledge of the life and work of Teresa of Jesus.

We also bear in mind the severe flooding that occurred a few weeks ago in India, especially in the state of Kerala, where some of our convents were affected, and to a greater extent the region’s population. In dialogue with our provinces of that region, we have decided to send some financial assistance to carry out the more urgent repairs and social assistance they are already offering with great generosity.

The main subject matter of our meeting those days was the rereading of the Constitutions which the General Chapter in Ávila set as a priority for the 2015-2021 sexennium. The Definitory met with members of the international committee, who presented the results of the first stage of that project together with some reflections on the development of the process and the responses received. The Definitory thanked the committee for the great job done to date in preparing study guides for the communities as well as collecting and reviewing the responses from the circumscriptions.

Using the material collected and in rich dialogue with the committee, the Definitory prepared the program and fundamental guidelines for the work of the next Extraordinary Definitory which will take place in Goa, India, from February 3rd to 11th, 2019. The meeting announcements have been sent to participants, and over the next few weeks, the *Instrumentum laboris* of the meeting will be prepared. We recall that the primary task the General Chapter set for the Extraordinary Definitory was a decision regarding the text of the Constitutions, for which three possibilities were proposed: to rewrite them; to revise them; and / or redact a charismatic-type statement. We request that circumscriptions that have not yet sent the summary of the answers to study guide 12 (Evaluation and Proposals), do so before November 30th.

In the meantime, we encourage all friars to continue forward with determination toward a true renewal of our life which is the fundamental objective sought after in the work on the Constitutions. The itinerary followed up to now has allowed many friars to return to a direct contact with the Constitutions and, through personal reflection and dialogue within the community, grow in awareness of the fundamental elements of the Teresian charism and the way in which we are carrying them out in practice.

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OCDS Spiritual Corner—Superior General’s Letter - Fall 2018

Submitted by the Provincial Council

(Continued from page 21)

Another important topic in our dialogues was to follow-up on the different circumscriptions based on information from the definitors in charge of each region. During the past weeks members of the Definitory continued their work, sometimes interspersed with a few days of summer holiday. For example, Father General visited Hungary, Brazil, and Holland; participated in the retreat of European students in Fatima; and celebrated the Teresian jubilee year in Alba de Tormes and Ávila. Father Agustí participated in a formation retreat of Discalced Carmelite nuns in Paris and visited some communities of friars and nuns in Catalonia. Father Łukasz accompanied students in formation for the second novitiate in Salamanca. Father Mariano was in the Philippines during the months of July and August visiting several communities of friars and nuns, occasionally offering reflections on the *Cor orans* instructions. In the community of Jaro, Iloilo City, he made the triennial pastoral visitation at the request of the local bishop.

Father Johannes Gorantla reported on his pastoral visitation to the Province of Malabar, which took place from July 1st to August 28th. It is the oldest province of India and recently has undergone considerable growth in numbers. Currently, it has a total of 181 solemnly professed, of which more than half are less than 50 years old. Additionally, there are 56 with simple professions and 8 novices. There are 29 houses, including the regional vicariate of North Malabar and the Provincial Delegation of Ranchi. It is a large province with a good number of activities. One of the remarkable aspects of this province is its dedication to the specific apostolate of the Order and to the dissemination of our spiritual patrimony, especially through the six centers of spirituality. The province has the Church’s largest printing press in India, a large publishing center where one of the editions of the *Osservatore Romano* is printed and several spiritual writings and documents of the Holy See are translated and published.

Based on the analysis of the situation of the province, the Definitory made some recommendations and decisions to prioritize the charismatic identity as Discalced Carmelites in its life and activities. The Definitory ardently recommended that greater attention be given to discernment of the numerous vocations and the quality of initial formation. As for the finances, we observed that there is an urgent need to strengthen the financial autonomy of the houses by encouraging a more decentralized financial administration. Following the recent determinations of the General Definitory regarding members living outside their own territory, the Province is asked to continue its efforts to curtail individual presences. Another important issue about which a decision has to be made is the Regional Vicariate about which arose some doubts. During the upcoming months, Father Johannes will maintain direct contact with the province to help the provincial government in executing the decisions that were made.

Father Daniel Ehigie made a pastoral visitation to the General Delegation of the Congo from August 2nd to 31st. It has 55 religious (40 work in the Delegation, seven serve other circumscriptions, two are pursuing higher education, and six are in diverse situations) and 36 candidates in initial formation. The median age is 46 years. They have seven communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) and in the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville). The pastoral and social work of the Delegation is noteworthy. There is particular dedication to the apostolates of spirituality, the parish, and schools. In general, the people and local churches are very appreciative of the work. A good part of the energy is invested in formation, taking into account the considerable number of vocations. The visitor recommended that due attention continue to be given in this area; for example, favoring the formation of its own formators and avoiding that they accept other commitments that are incompatible with the work of formation. On the other hand, he highlighted the great number of projects and initiatives underway in the delegation, albeit inviting them not to add to the work and new constructions without adequate discernment. Some houses in the Delegation need improvements and maintenance, which calls for carrying out sound financial management.

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Submitted by the Provincial Council

(Continued from page 22)

The Definitory decided to take the necessary steps to constitute the Delegation of the Congo as a Commissariat. Over the next few months, the corresponding Statutes and decree of erection will be prepared.

For his part, Father Daniel Chowning reported on his stay in Iraq from June 17th to 24th. It was a continuation of his recent pastoral visitation to the Province of Paris. He was able to see first-hand the current, complex realities of the Carmelite presence in the region, which dates back to the year 1623. At this time, there is only one religious, Father Ghadir, as well as Bishop Jean Sleiman (archbishop of the Latin-rite Catholics), some Discalced Carmelite Seculars, and a group of ten consecrated women that make up the private association Our Lady of Mount Carmel. With their efficient help, Father Ghadir divides his work between the monastery in Baghdad and the spirituality center in Duhok (Kurdistan). They provide a valuable spiritual and social service to the Christians remaining in the region despite the harsh persecutions of these times. Fr. Ghadir is also vicar general of the archbishop and oversees the reconstruction of St. Joseph Catholic School. It is an important task to strengthen our presence in Iraq with at least one or two more religious who can consolidate and increase the meritorious work being carried out.

The Definitory heard Father Alzinir Debastiani’s account of his visit to the Cities of God, which was requested by the Father General. It is a beautiful, social undertaking born in the Province of Colombia, particularly thanks to the efforts of Father José Arcesio Escobar, that has recently undergone notable growth. At this time, many people and various entities – among which are some religious congregations – collaborate with the project. On the other hand, some of the people involved have expressed the desire to organize themselves into new forms of consecrated life. Without a doubt, we must thank the Lord for this admirable reality that is offering valuable material, human, and religious help to so many people and at the same time ensure that it has the guidance and necessary instruments to provide for a satisfactory future. Along these lines, we will look for a way to establish the most fitting relationship of the Cities of God with the province and the Order, in its organizational and juridical aspects as well as its charismatic aspects.

As is the current practice of the Definitory, we are asking the circumscriptions to send a report about the implementation of the Definitory’s instructions one year after their pastoral visitation. The objective is to follow up more directly and help the provincial governments improve the life and apostolic action of the religious. We thank the Province of Colombia and General Delegation to Argentine for the reports we received from them and about which we commented in our meeting. The respective definitors continue maintaining contact with other provinces that have already received their pastoral visitation (Andhra Pradesh, Oklahoma, Portugal, Sicily, Central Italy...).

Together with Father Jérôme Paluku, Secretary General for Missionary Cooperation, the Definitory has kept up an ongoing dialogue with Mrs. Veronique Vogel, head of Kirche in Not (Aid to the Church in Need) for southern Asia. That institution offers economic assistance to Church entities for religious and pastoral projects. Among the current beneficiaries are some of our most needy provinces and monasteries. We expressed our gratitude for the availability and earnestness of the help they offer and reflected with her upon some criteria to keep in mind in order continue our mutual collaboration.

As is the custom, our Bursar General, Father Paolo De Carli, presented the Generalate’s current statements of accounts. The economic situation remains stable. We thank the various circumscriptions of the Order for all the contributions we have received, as well as the generosity of several monasteries of nuns. Together with Father Jean-Joseph Bergara, Procurator General, we also analyzed the current situation of the processes under way at the Holy See regarding some friars of the Order.

On a different note, we appointed Father Albert Wach as superior of the Teresianum community (permanent community) for a new triennium; Father Gianni Evangelisti as its bursar; and Father Gustavo Prats

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Submitted by the Provincial Council

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as superior of the Seminarium Missionum (community for specialization), as well as the respective first counsellors of those communities and the International College.

Among other issues we face as we look to the future, we remember that 2020 is the year of the first centenary of the death of Saint Teresa of Los Andes, a good occasion to recognize her witness of Carmelite life. The committee formed by the counsel of the Commissariat of Chile and the counsel of the Federation of Discalced Carmelite Nuns has already met to begin preparations for the celebration of the Centenary.

We greet the Discalced Carmelite nuns in a special way as they continue the process of adopting the new guidelines of the Church for contemplative life, also with the help of the Father General. On July 16th, he sent them a long letter presenting the implementing instruction *Cor orans*, and on October 1st, he will present another letter in which he strives to respond to some queries and doubts that have been posed regarding the application of that document.

We finished our meeting at a time in which the Church is at the threshold of the Bishops’ Synod on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.” We pray that Carmel throughout the world will also know how to be close to the youth to accompany them in their search for God and help them respond to his call.

Fraternally,

Fr. Saverio Cannistrà, General

Fr. Agustí Borrell

Fr. Łukasz Kansy

Fr. Johannes Gorantla

Fr. Daniel Chowning

Fr. Francisco Javier Mena

Fr. Mariano Agruda III

Fr. Daniel Ehigie

14 Aug 2018

OCDS: admissions and promises in the Province of Lombardy



The house of spirituality of the Discalced Carmelites of the Province of Lombardy in Cassano Valcuvia (Varese, Italy), hosted a beautiful event June 9th and 10th. It can be characterized as historic, being the first time that members from different OCDS communities met in one place to celebrate ceremonies of admittance or promises, temporary and definitive, in the Secular Order. The communities that met in Cassano hailed from Bologna, Concesa, Lodi, Monza, and Parma.

It was a festival for the entire province, and a moment of formation was not lacking; Father Giorgio Rossi, OCD, was in charge of it, and he helped the brothers and sisters in attendance to reflect on the meaning and value of the secular life in Carmel and in the Church. He called us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ, following the advice of Teresa of Jesus, in order that He may obtain for us the gift of having his own sentiments.

News from around the Province — News from Lafayette, LA

Submitted by Lea Hawkins, OCDS

Blessings from Lafayette! The Community of Mary, Mother of Grace held its Spring Clothing Ceremony on May 20, 2018.

Donna Smith received the brown scapular of Carmel and was admitted to formation.



Pictured from the left are:

Fr. Conley Bertrand, OCDS, Jeannine Meaux, President, Donna Smith,
and Vicki Guilbeau, Formation Director

News from around the Province —News from Lafayette, LA

Submitted by Jeannine Meaux, OCDS

The Community of Mary, Mother of Grace, Lafayette, Louisiana offered a Day of Recollection to OCDS members, members of the “Women of Grace” group, and all who have a love of St. Therese of Lisieux, better known as the “The Little Flower of Carmel”, on April 28, 2018.

Definitive member, Karol Meynard, OCDS presented for discussion the writings of Fr. Marc Foley, OCD , “The Love That Keeps Us Sane: Living the Little Way of St. Therese of Lisieux”.

Fr. Foley offers practical advice, based on the life, writings and spirituality of St. Therese of Lisieux:

- **“The Sanity of Silence and Living the Little Way of St. Therese”**

Agitation and lack of peace tend to manifest itself in our spiritual life as well as our secular life. In our search for God and holiness, a kind of restlessness and anxiety take the place of the confidence and peace which ought to be ours. **Don’t let the voice of sin tune out the whisper of hope.**

- **“The Sanity of Practical Spirituality and Discerning God’s will in Everyday Living”**

God is inviting you into a deeper life of prayer so that He can fill you with a peace that surpasses all understanding; a peace that cannot be shaken by the difficulties of your life situations. God is inviting you to **LISTEN – SURRENDER – SERVE.**

- **“The Sanity of Loving Freely and the Divine Perspective of Charity**

Examples of how you can try to die a little every day to your selfish ways in loving response to Christ’s invitation to become more like Him. What does it mean to be a handmaid of the Lord. What are the three essential interior dispositions we must develop if, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are to be handmaids of the Lord in today’s world.



All Carmelite Souls

November 15, 2018



Just as the love of Christ and the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary have brought us together in a single family, fraternal charity unites those of us still striving to lead a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ in this world, and those already awaiting the vision of God in purgatory. Today the whole Order commends our departed brothers and sisters to God's mercy through the intercession of Our Lady, sure sign of hope and consolation, and begs for their admission to the courts of heaven.

Carmelite Prayer:

Lord, you are the glory of those who serve you. Look lovingly on our departed brothers and sisters, united in following Christ and his Mother by the waters of baptism and the bonds of Carmel. In your mercy grant them everlasting sight of you, their Creator and Redeemer. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

(<http://www.meditationsfromcarmel.com/content/all-carmelite-souls> — [Order of Discalced Secular](#) in St. Louis, Missouri)

Rest in Peace, Br. Bernard



Submitted by the OCD Friars of the Oklahoma Province

Nicholas Edward Louis O'Neill was born in Newcastle, New Brunswick, Canada on May 12, 1940. His parents were Mr. Louis Everett O'Neill and Mrs. Marie Josephine Murdock, both deceased. He was baptized at St. Mary's Church, Newcastle on May 26, 1940.

We know him as Brother Bernard. In 1982 he entered the postulancy of the Discalced Carmelite Friars of the Oklahoma Province of St. Therese. He began his novitiate on July 15, 1982 taking the religious name of Brother Bernard Joseph of Christ Crucified. Brother Bernard made his simple profession on July 16, 1983 and his solemn profession on July 16, 1988. Brother Bernard spent 16 years altogether at Marylake Monastery in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The last few years, Brother Bernard lived in St. Francis Village in Crowley, TX and St. Joseph's Residence in Dallas, TX where he died on Saturday, September 15, 2018. Brother Bernard had five sisters: Mrs. Marilyn Gallant, Peggy Boem (deceased), Betsy Smith, Heather Crawford (deceased), and Colleen O'Neill, and five brothers: Robert O'Neill (deceased), John, Donald, Michael and Patty. Brother Bernard is also survived by numerous nephews and nieces.

Please remember Br. Bernard in your prayers.



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 Jeannine Meaux at jtmeaux@cox.net



Novena Prayer to Saint Teresa of Jesus

O glorious and most compassionate St. Teresa, who when on earth received from your Divine Spouse that wonderful promise that He would grant you whatever you ask, we beseech you, now that you are with Jesus in Paradise, to intercede for us, and obtain for us the special favors which we so earnestly desire, if it be for the glory of God and the good of our souls. Amen
St. Teresa pray for us.

Beginners must realize that in order to give delight to the Lord they are starting to cultivate a garden on very barren soil, full of abominable weeds. His Majesty pulls up the weeds and plants good seed. (St. Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, Ch II, Para 3)

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 2017-2020 Triennium:

Claire Bloodgood, Georgetown, TX—President

Jo Ann Murphy, Austin, TX

John Stevens, McAllen, TX

Anna Peterson, San Antonio, TX

Mary Therese Bellman, Grand Prairie, TX