

Flos Carmeli

Oklahoma Province
 Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Winter 2019
 Volume XXIX No. 1

From the President's Desk

By Claire Bloodgood, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council



Hello Carmelites,

Praised be Jesus Christ – now and forever.

Hello Carmelites,

Here's what's happening lately –

Fond farewells ...

Our much-loved **Mary Bellman** has stepped down from the Provincial Council due to health concerns. Mary will continue as our webmaster, for which we are enormously thankful.

You are already aware that our dear **Barbara Tinervia** has stepped down from the Central Office Administrator (COA) position to attend to family responsibilities.

Please keep Mary and Barbara in your prayers. We are grateful for their time with us. Both have been a great blessing to us personally and to the province. They will be greatly missed.

And a welcome ...

Please welcome **Kathy Rasmussen** as our new COA. Most of you know her from her work as Coordinator for our 2017 Congress in San Antonio. While Kathy has some big shoes to fill, she is certainly up to the task. Her contact information has been sent to the local Council Presidents.

Visitations:

The 2019 visitation letters have been sent to those communities and Study Groups that are due for a visitation this year.

Visitations in one form or another have been standard practice in the Church since its early years and continuing down to the present day, especially in religious orders and institutions.

In keeping with Article 41 of our Constitutions, each OCDS community is to receive a pastoral visitation from the Provincial or his delegate. In our Province, the Provincial has delegated this duty to the OCDS Provincial Council. It is written into our Provincial Statutes sec. XXII.4.

Our purpose in making a visitation is to support the OCDS Community in its Carmelite life and strengthen its connection with the Order. The visitor represents the Provincial of the Friars and comes with the authority of that office.

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Update on the US OCDS formation guidelines:

This past year, the US formation guidelines task force worked on defining the main themes and goals for each level of formation. The three provinces have approved the work done so far.

Fr. Alzinir Debastiani OCD, General Delegate to the OCDS, directed that the next step is to identify supporting materials for each level of formation. The end goal is to create handbooks for each year of formation which would include these resources. The team is starting on the aspirancy handbook with the goal of having a rough draft completed by June 2019.

Another assignment for the team is to develop standard guidelines for local councils on welcoming inquirers, including how to pre-screen for admission to aspirancy.

OCDS Congress frequency:

The results of the survey the Oklahoma Province ran last year were that 95% of respondents prefer having our OCDS Congress every six years. The Washington Province did an informal survey and got pretty much the same answer. The members of the California/Arizona Province want to continue to have congresses every three years.

The Inter-Provincial Council (IPC) was able to come up with a plan that respects the needs of all three US provinces. CA/AZ will keep their current cycle of congresses. There will be no congress in election years. Washington and Oklahoma Provinces will alternate every three years.

Like this:

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
CA/AZ		OK	CA/AZ		WA	CA/AZ		OK	CA/AZ		WA

Rather than have a National Congress every ten years, all will be thought of as US congresses. OCDS members are welcome to attend as many congresses as they like.

Our province will no longer have the Plenary Council meeting during the congress. See below.

A few of the other topics discussed at the 2018 IPC meeting were:

Welcoming inquirers from the US military. One concern was frequent moves because of changes in assignments. On the up side, they are close-knit and eager to share spiritual resources with one another. The harvest is ripe. Given the good that comes from exposure to Carmelite spirituality, the consensus was to let them come if they are able to attend the meetings and don't worry about possible transfers.

† Memorare

Remember,
O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that
anyone who fled to thy
protection, implored thy help, or
sought thine intercession was
left unaided.



Inspired by this confidence,
I fly unto thee, O Virgin of
virgins, my mother; to thee do I
come, before thee I stand, sinful
and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word
Incarnate, despise not my
petitions, but in thy mercy hear
and answer me. Amen.

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Formation materials in other languages. We discussed online sources, such as Amazon France and Amazon Mexico. Here's one worth knowing about, the Documents of Vatican Council II in many languages.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm

Technology. Many local councils are using cloud storage sites to store and share documents. Conference-call council meetings are popular, but meeting face to face is important too. More and more communities are creating websites, which is especially useful for reaching out to younger people.

E-breviary. None of the provinces has a written policy on the subject. The general opinion was that members in formation should learn to use the printed book.

2019 OCDS Congress:

The California/Arizona Province is hosting the 2019 OCDS Congress June 20th to 23rd at the DoubleTree Hotel in Ontario, California. Registration is now open.

<https://www.2019ocdscongress.com/> **Space is limited so register early.**

2019 Inter-Provincial Council meeting:

The next IPC meeting will be hosted by the California/Arizona Province. It will be held on the two days just prior to the Congress. If there are issues you feel need to be brought up with the other US Provinces, please let us know.

2020 leadership workshop and Plenary Council meeting:

We plan to combine these two events for convenience and cost-effectiveness. The current target date is early fall, after the new Councils have had a chance to settle in. We will share the details as they develop. We will be asking the local Councils for suggested topics and agenda items.

2021 OCDS Congress in the Oklahoma Province:

Please see Congress Coordinator Laura Durant's letter on Pages 26-30 for more detail.

Every community in the Province is naturally expected to help in some way. If there is a specific job your community prefers, speak up sooner rather than later.

The Provincial Council members very much appreciate your prayers for us as we strive to serve you. You are in our prayers as always.

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 Jillison Parks, OCDS*



Report of the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.



Merry Christmas, much belatedly, to all of you. But every day in Carmel is Christmas, right? Yes, we live in a kind of eternal now, and I'm taking it as an excuse for being something of a slacker with respect to Christmas itself. Thus, my slackerliness becomes a Holy Slackitude. [To the left, notice the Holy Family enjoying a moment of quiet slackliness-become- slackitude together.]

And it's also a new year that's inserted itself into the air we breathe, the ground we walk on, the sky we huddle under. 2019—it seems only yesterday that we were stocking up on canned good and bottled water in preparation for the looming Y2K apocalypse-that-never- materialized. And to think that that was 19 years ago. In Carmel every day is not just Christmas, it's a daydream.

Anyway, happy and blessed new year to all of you. For us friars the year holds high promise. And I'm kind of optimistic that by this time next year, as we begin 2020—which is not just tomorrow, but *the future*—we as a province will be in a significantly better place than we are now. (More on that later.)

The photo to the right is of one of many ornament-like decorations that adorned a simple wood-frame-shaped Christmas tree on display in the lobby of a hotel I stayed at during my travels in December. The ornament is quite pretty, in a folksy sort of way, as a depiction of Mary holding the Christ Child. Inexplicably, Mary has wings, shaped like a butterfly's, or maybe a moth's. It seems not only was Jesus born that night, coming forth like a light in the darkness, but that Mary his mother broke free and began to soar.



The build-up to Christmas—otherwise known as Advent—tends to be overcrowded here at the Basilica. For starters, there's the Solemnity of Immaculate Conception, an important day for the universal church.

Then, here in San Antonio, there's the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which often supplants Christmas in grandeur, importance, attendance, overall solemnity. There are special songs to be sung, costumes to be worn, stories to be acted out, other pious practices to be fervently kept, and, of course, food to be enjoyed. Receptions follow everything and often include that Mexican hot chocolate—it has a name—which is different than what I grew up with, and better.

The friars keep Christmas, too

[To the right is the spread—cheese and crackers mostly—that our superior, Fr. Luis Gerardo, prepared and set out for us following Christmas Eve Mass.]

*Angels we have heard on high,
Rockin' around the Christmas tree...*



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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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[And at right is a close-up of the Manger/Nativity Scene —i.e. creche—in the church, which merited many ooh's and ah's this year.]

*O come, all ye faithful,
Santa Claus is comin' to town...*

Reorganization of our ministry to you

You may have heard of the slow, delicate process we friars are engaged in presently, a kind of Dark Night, geared towards bringing our structures of life and ministry—the way we do things, the way we work, the way we fulfill our Carmelite apostolate— more into conformity with our charism—that is, with our living water, source of our spiritual maturity, such as it is. In this process we are inching our way towards actual, concrete decisions, and you should be hearing about them as the triennium saunters along.

Our ministry to the Seculars, a responsibility we have from our Constitutions, as well as from the spirituality and communion we share with you—this ministry is necessarily included in this process of reorganization and renewal. With the help of your Provincial Council, I've been drawing up a proposal for how best to structure our ministry to you. I've got a draft in place and have presented it to our Provincial Council. Before long I'll be able to share it with all of you and ask your comments. I don't know when it may go into effect.

Our Provincial, Fr. Stephen, has three concerns, or goals, behind this reorganization. First, he wants us friars to do the best we can in fulfilling our spiritual and pastoral responsibilities to you, given our clear limitations. That means prioritizing and refocusing our efforts. How can we *best* serve you? You don't need us for administration. You can do that yourselves. You need us for pastoral advice and spiritual formation. So, leaving governance to you, let us find a way to be more available to you for advice as needed and for assisting in your formation, initial and ongoing.



is a great help to you in living the charism truly and faithfully and in better understanding and interpreting the spirituality, something necessary to living it, of course.



[The photo to the left was taken before mass on December 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I had mass at the nuns —the Carmelite nuns here in San Antonio—that morning, a real treat, and the photo is of the liturgical decoration they set up before the lectern/podium in the sanctuary. You can see the flag draped over the lectern itself, the really quite gorgeous statue before it, the roses, of course, and the dash of blue, a sarape. It's a taste of how tastefully, beautifully, and creatively the sisters keep their chapel.]

Back to the matter at hand, the second of the three concerns or goals of the reorganization, namely, how can we get more friars involved in this ministry? This would be an improvement both for the friars and, let us hope, for you the Seculars. Your Provincial Council has expressed the belief, gained from their experience working with the OCDS communities of the Province, that regular and varied contact with the friars

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

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But the same is true for us. Getting to know and work with the Seculars is a gift our life in the Order offers us. You might even say it's also a crucial means provided us by our Carmelite family to help in being better Carmelites. Thus, the more every friar has a chance to be a part of this ministry, the better he will be as a friar.

Lastly, if one of our primary goals is to improve community life, then no friar should be so overextended or caught up in work that they feel they have to sacrifice all other aspects of the vocation because of these needs. Thus, we friars need to collaborate in fulfilling all our apostolates. And, when it comes to our apostolate to the OCDS, while a specific friar needs to bear the title Provincial Delegate and fulfill its responsibilities, and that for reasons of your legislation and ours—beside, the General would never approve our not having an OCDS Provincial Delegate—yet we want to create a kind of committee of (most likely) three friars who will work together to cover the many OCDS communities of the Province, so to speak. This rearrangement will be the most obvious change in our planned reorganization

Stay tuned. You'll be hearing more in the near future.

This intention to recognize and promote the autonomy of the Secular Order extends to the General House as well. And one way the General House, in the person of OCDS General Secretary, Fr. Alzinir, is trying to do that—to promote your autonomy—is by asking you to collaborate across provinces. We friars are being asked to form a single novitiate for the whole of the US, for example.



[To the left is a photo I took prior to Christmas Eve Mass at the nuns in San Antonio. They had decorated the chapel beautifully, and with Carmelite simplicity, and I had the privilege of presiding at this Mass and gave a truly forgettable homily, although I enjoyed giving it. You'll notice in the photo—the altar, with candles, and a tree in the background, in the far corner, and in front of the altar, Mary as a bride and Joseph dressed for a Cowboys game. Mary is cradling the baby Jesus in her lap. Believe me. If you squint you can see him, a light in the darkness.]

Back to the discussion I dropped above. In your case, in order to promote regional collaboration, the IPC—the Inter-Provincial Council—has been asked to prepare a single uniform set of Formation Guidelines for the OCDS that would be adhered to by all three provinces in the US. This kind of collaboration in the area initial formation is not unique to you, the Seculars, but is being encouraged, even insisted on, by the General everywhere in the Order, with the nuns, friars, and Seculars. In fact, the Holy See is encouraging it. It helps foster both unity and mutuality—a sense of belonging to the Order, that is—and the accountability to the charism that goes with such belonging.

Thus, as Jo Ann Murphy, OCDS, of the Austin community and a member of the Provincial council says, “We Seculars have been directed to come up with a single Formation Program; also the IPC [Interprovincial Council] has agreed to do away with Regional OCDS Congresses and just have national ones, promoted by all three provinces.”

Please don't resist these developments. They are for the good of the Order.

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Report from the Provincial Delegate

By Father Bonaventure Sauer, O.C.D.

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[Below, a parting "wheeeeeee!" The photo of kids sledding in the snow is of a hill—in fact, *the* hill—in Fairview Park, Decatur, IL, where I used to go sledding on winter days. The hill was steep and forbidding at the time. Now not so much. Either way, winter was made for young boys. Or that's how I remember it. Stay well. Stay warm.]



Records Management Update

Compiled by Jo Ann Murphy, OCDS, on behalf of the Provincial Council

Records Management Update

Approximately one year ago, a new Records Management process was launched. The goal was to reduce the number of forms in use in the Province with a single Permanent Record Form for each individual OCDS and to switch from paper to an electronic copy that can be stored and searched centrally by the Central Office Administrator.

The vision was to have each Community name a Records Manager to keep a folder of that Community's electronic Permanent Record Forms. Rather than burden the Records Manager with the responsibility of creating and filling out the forms for each person, it was intended that the Permanent Record Form Microsoft Word document be emailed to persons within the Community, have them fill out the form, then email it back to the Records Manager. The Records Manager would check to see that the status was listed correctly and that the document was filled out correctly, then place it in the records management folder. After collecting the forms, the Records Manager was to upload the contents of that folder to their folder on PCloud. It is also intended that each member accept responsibility for making sure the information in their Permanent Record Form is kept up to date, especially contact information and status within the community. Whenever a change occurs, the member is to update their copy of the Permanent Record Form and send it via email to their Records Manager.

So far 18 Communities have succeeded in uploading all their records to their folder on PCloud. However, of these 18, 4 Communities have placed additional files on PCloud that are not the Permanent Record Form. For instance, Transfer Request and Acceptance Forms are not kept on PCloud; but are placed in the Community's paper files. It is sufficient to indicate on the individual's Permanent Record Form that they have transferred into or out of the Community.

Fifteen Communities have not been able to upload any records to PCloud, and I will be working with you early this year to help you comply with the new Records Management Policy. The goal is to try and get this accomplished by April. To help out, I will be creating a group email list for all the Records Managers. In this way, you can receive the help and support you need for any issues you may encounter or questions you have. **Please send your name, the name and location of your Community/Study Group/GID together with your email address if you are a Records Manager to me at jmurphy12513@gmail.com.**

Each year there are various changes that occur within the Province. Some Study Groups become canonically established, some GIDs disband, some Study Groups disband, etc. Consequently, the pull-down menus on the Permanent Record Form that contain the list of Communities and Study Groups need to be updated each year to reflect the changes. Early each year, an updated copy of the revised Permanent Record Form will be distributed to the Records Managers. **Forms that are already filled out do not need to be changed. The revised version will be used for new records that are to be filled out in the future.**

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Records Management Update

Compiled by Jo Ann Murphy, OCDS, on behalf of the Provincial Council

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Here are some questions and answers that may be helpful:

- *If we have successfully uploaded all our Permanent Record Forms to PCloud, do we still need to send in a count of the number of persons in each status to the Central Office Administrator with our dues?*

Yes! The Central Office Administrator needs to know how you computed the amount of dues owed and she needs to have the names and contact information for all members of your Council as well as your Spiritual Assistant. The Permanent Record Form does not contain information about who is President, Formation Director, etc., so this information is sent to the COA, who makes a Directory for the Provincial Council. However, the number of Aspirants you list, etc., should match the data on PCloud.

- *Do the electronic Permanent Record Forms replace the need to maintain paper records within our Community?*

No, each Community should also keep a paper copy of the Permanent Record Form and any Transfer Request and Acceptance Form in their files. The electronic version is to act as a backup in case your paper files are lost (this has happened!). After a person has made Definitive Promise, no other forms or information should be kept in their paper file if they are still part of the Community. In the case of a Dismissal, documentation showing that the procedure required by the Statutes has been followed is kept permanently in the paper files.

- *What do we do about persons in our paper files that are no longer with our Community?*

After you have successfully uploaded Permanent Record Forms for all those who are current members of your community, then the Record Manager should go through the paper files and fill out a Permanent Record Form for each person who is no longer a member of the community and who is not eligible to be an OCDS. It is not necessary to worry about contact information, if you do not have it. The main thing is to capture the person's name and fill out the section that states whether the person who has left is eligible or ineligible to join another OCDS Community. **Do not keep these forms separate from your other OCDS Permanent Record Forms in PCloud, ie, do not put them in a subfolder. The Status field indicates who is/is not a current member of your community.**

- *Are there any paper forms that should be mailed to the Central Office Administrator?*

No! Paper forms are no longer mailed to the COA. When an individual Permanent Record Form is updated and placed in the OCDSRecords folder by the Records Manager, it will automatically get updated on PCloud the next time all the Community records are uploaded.

New PC Member

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



Jillison Parks

Announcing Our New PC Member

The Provincial Council is pleased to welcome Jillison Parks of the Savannah Study Group as its newest member. Jill will be completing Mary Bellman's term of office.

Jill has served her community as Formation Director, Council member, secretary, retreat coordinator and Web master. She also designed the logo and built and maintained the Web site for the 2014 OCDS Congress in Atlanta.

Jill has been a creative services consultant specializing in graphic, print and information design since 2009. Prior to that, she was the Director of Digital Communications for Georgia Tech's Savannah Campus, and was the co-developer of two elective engineering courses in Sensors, Perception and Information Design. She is currently redesigning the Web site of the Diocese of Savannah.

Annual Provincial Assessment, Community Roster, Financial Report

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

FYI, Annual Provincial Assessment, Community Roster, Financial Report

Your OCDS Councils were sent the following information in January 2019. They will take care of the details. Members do not need to take any action except as requested by their Council.

During the first quarter of each year, the Province collects an annual community assessment to help cover expenses of the Central Office, Provincial Delegate, and Provincial Council. (Statutes, Section XIV). The assessment is paid by one check from the community's bank account.

A quick-reference guide that will help Councils more easily determine which members are to be included in the assessment may be found on the OCDS Provincial website under Policies & Norms.

<http://www.thereocds.org/policy/provincial-policy/>

If a community has previously received an assessment waiver for an infirm member, that waiver remains in place. If a community has infirm members who need a waiver and have not previously been given one, the local Council can request one from the PC.

It's also time for the community roster and the financial report to be sent to the Central Office.

A template for the financial report may be found here: [financial report template](#)

All of these are due by the end of March.



Congress Chronicles

March 31, 2017

Announcing the **2019** OCDS West Regional Congress



June 20-23, 2019



Ontario, California
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel



Sponsored by the
Alhambra OCDS
Community and
the Alhambra
OCDS Group



General Delegate's Letter - Winter 2019

Submitted by the Provincial Council

It is time to walk... Where and how?

Fr Alzinir Francisco Debastiani OCD

Translation from Portuguese by Lucienne Delaquiz OCDS

We are children of the Church, God's pilgrim people in history. Mary, Mother of Jesus, became a pilgrim to the house of Elizabeth, in keeping the traditions of her people and in the footsteps of her son Jesus, the great Pilgrim, who, from the bosom of the Father and with the power of the Holy Spirit, walked down the roads of Palestine preaching the Good News of the Kingdom.

The Order of Carmel was born of pilgrims who went to the Holy Land and established themselves on Mount Carmel, embarking on the paths of the spirit inspired by prophet Elijah and the Holy Virgin Mary.

We of the Discalced Carmelite Order have a Holy Founder, Teresa of Jesus, known as "andariega" (the walker). Just like her, and very often with her, Saint John of the Cross walked the roads of Spain and the paths of the spirit to spread around the message of the Beloved, who "wounds the soul with his love" and stimulates it "to leave itself and all creatures behind", following the path's course from the "nothing" to the "everything" which is God. Particularly, with our foundress Teresa, "let us also learn to be pilgrims", so wrote Pope Francis.

The Church now invites us to look up to the saints and realize that "a great cloud of witnesses" (Hebr 12:1) impels us to advance constantly towards the goal. (Francisco, *Gaudete et exsultate* =GE, 3).

Under the motto "*It is time to walk*", the 2018 OCDS Congress invites us to be pilgrims with our saints. This phrase was collected at the end of the life of the Saint by Blessed Anne of Saint Bartholomew and is an incredibly ever-actual program of life. It reminds us that Teresa walked more than six thousand kilometers of roads in the XVI Century Spain. A geographic walk for sure, but above all a walk with spiritual attitude in which Teresa is Master and Doctor. We, therefore, are eager to learn from her.

And I wonder and now ask to myself and you: *How are we going to walk guided by Saint Teresa? Where will she lead us?*

We will seek for answers in Her writings, in the Magisterium of the Church and of the Order, as well as in today's world, and we will certainly find secure indications to keep on our journey... Consequently, we want to continue being led by the Holy "Andariega" who encourages us saying: "*Es tiempo de caminar!*" "*It is time to walk!*" I will recall her recommendations before setting out upon this road (1), then, we will see where she wants to lead us (2), how to walk on this road (3), identify and overcome obstacles found along the way, (4) and, finally, keep on walking with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

¹Francisco, Letter to the Bishop of Avila on the occasion of the Vth century of St. Teresa's birth, October 15, 2014.

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General Delegate's Letter - Winter 2019

Submitted by the Provincial Council

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Before setting out upon this road...

Getting off to a good start is a must. Teresa teaches that on this journey to God, we must be very resolute (W 23,1). We must always move forward without becoming weary, only thus can we identify, fight and overcome the obstacles encountered on the road of prayer (L 11, 12-15 W 20,2; 21,2; 23, 4-5; 2 IC,6). It is a resolution which leads to triumph over attachment to the body and fear of losing health (W 11,5).

Another key advice for the whole journey is to *keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus* (W 16,7; 6 7; 7IC 4.8). This will allow us to follow his example of love, for He is the “Captain of Love” (W 6,9).

Living in humility/truth draws us closer to God (L 12, 4). When someone is humble, even experiencing great difficulties, he will keep on going, leaving everything in God's hands (3IC 1,7). Humility is the virtue that conquers the heart of our Lord (4IC 2,8). This virtue always goes together with that of fear of God and detachment from self (W 10,3). Human beings are inclined to pick the best place even when following Jesus, but the humble person will always sit down in the lowest place to lovingly and cheerfully go about serving others (W 17,1; 18, 4-5). In our relationship with others, this implies determination to unconditionally forgive any wrong done to us (W 36). Such disposition and full surrender of oneself will lead to the highest perfection one can reach: the true union of our will with the will of God, loving Him and having a genuine love for others in spirit and in deeds (5 IC 3,8-9-11).

There is a proverb which says: “If you want to go quickly, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together”. Saint Teresa experienced the truth of this statement since on several occasions she would fall and stay put for not having anyone near to help her out (cf L. 7,22). This is why she encourages us to journey accompanied since “it is a great evil for a soul beset by so many dangers to be alone,” and also “because people trouble so little about things pertaining to the service of God that we must all back each other up if those of us who serve Him are to make progress” (L 7, 20,22). She even proposed a pact of mutual help among “we five, who now love each other in Christ” (L 16,7).

In summary, to set out upon the road according to Holy Mother, it is important to have *lofty ideals*. It is worth recalling the following advice:

“Have great confidence, for it is necessary not to hold back one's desires, but to believe in God that if we try, we shall little by little, even though it may not be soon, reach the state the saints did with His help. For if they had never determined to desire and seek this state little by little in practice, they would never have mounted so high. His Majesty wants this determination, and He is a friend of courageous souls if they walk in humility and without trusting in self. I have not seen any cowardly soul or any of these who under the pretext of humility remain along the bottom of this path who do not take many years to advance as far as these courageous ones do in a few. I marvel at how important it is to be courageous in striving for great things along this path. For though the soul is not yet strong enough, it nonetheless takes flight and goes very high although like a little fledgling it soon tires and stops” (L 13,2).

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General Delegate's Letter - Winter 2019

Submitted by the Provincial Council

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Where does Saint Teresa want to lead us?

I think that, before all, Saint Teresa intends to guide her readers to live a profound experience of friendship with God. She admits that many are the roads that lead to God (W 17, 1; F 18,6). However, none of them are without consolation, for the Lord offers living water to those willing to fulfill His will (Cf John 7, 37; W 20,1; 32,9).

Discovering that God is a friend who, in his human nature in Jesus, became so close to people was the source of her happiness. "Oh, what a good friend You make, my Lord! How You proceed by favoring and enduring. You wait for the others to adapt to Your nature, and in the meanwhile You put up with theirs! You take into account, my Lord, the times when they love You, and in one instant of repentance You forget their offenses" (L 8,6; cf. L 22,17). From the moment she encounters Jesus, she starts "another and a new life" (L 23,1). She "cannot understand why it is that people are afraid to set out upon the way of perfection," which is that of prayer (L35,14). Starting from her own experience, she gives us a true prayer mystagogy so that we can correspond to God's friendship.

Just like friendship among human beings varies in intensity and evolution, so does prayer understood as friendship with the Lord. Love for each other, detachment from all created things and true humility, give us the essentials to live this friendship. The practice with "determined resoluteness" (W21,2; 2 IC 6) of those three virtues together with the ardent desire to drink the living water promised by Jesus to whoever believed in Him (John 7, 39) and carried his own cross after Him is the exact measure of our love for our Lord (Cf. W 32,7).

Based on her own experience of the mercy of God in her own life, Teresa encourages us to trust Him who "never gets weary of giving and never can His mercies be exhausted" and comes to the coherent conclusion: "let us, then, not grow weary of receiving" (L 19, 15). After her conversion (1554), she was favored with the "consciousness of the presence of God" in her life (L 10,1).

Notwithstanding her "miserable habits" and sins, she discovers God's freely-given and unconditional love for her and this takes her way above the limits of theology and catechism of her time. She can also recognize in her own life "God's great goodness" (L 4,10) and was very "conscious of His very presence" deep inside her (L 18,15; Rel. 18,1; 40) which will lead her to discover Christ as if "wholly sculptured" in her very soul (cf L 40,5).

Based on this, we naturally come to another fundamental feature of Teresian spirituality: her experience with Christ. She goes a long way: at first with prayer affectively contemplating Jesus in some passage of the Gospel, "spending time with Him" (CF L 9). And He reveals Himself to her and becomes "the living Book" which accompanies, speaks to her and instructs her, and what's more He is risen, He lives! (Cf. L 27 – 28). Finally, she realizes that in her innermost self she is His image (L 40,5). Her encounter with the risen Christ is a progressive experience, similar to that of the first disciples as related in the Gospel.

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From this we can understand the great importance given to the Humanity of Christ in Teresa's message. In practice this becomes a personal relationship with Him by grace, by love and by imitation made possible thanks to the continuation of His presence in the Church through the Eucharist. It is also thanks to this presence that Teresa achieved a living sense of the Church for which she fights and ardently defends.

In short, Teresa reminds us that the goal and aspiration of Christian life is the fullness of life which is Christ. She describes it in the 7th Mansion of the Interior Castle. This is why it is so important to follow this advice: read at least twice a year the seventh Mansion of the Interior Castle of Saint Teresa. In so doing we will maintain alive the ideal of Christian perfection according to the Holy Mother!

How to walk on the road proposed by Teresa

We have the advice about how to set out upon the road and we also have the goal to reach. The question now is how should we walk along this road?

Undoubtedly, the attitudes previously seen apply to the whole spiritual path (resoluteness, prayer, following Jesus unconditionally, humility, search for truth, the intention of friendship and conformance to Christ etc.). Now, in this third moment of our reflection, I would like to add a few essential guidelines of Holy Mother on this our journey to holiness, which are also recommended by the Magisterium of the Church in the exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* (=GE, March 19, 2018). In this apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis wants to remind us of the call to holiness the Lord made to each one of us at Baptism (cf GE2).

In the third chapter of GE, Jesus is shown to us as the ideal of holiness, especially as the Man of the Beatitudes. Holy Mother encourages us to walk the whole road fixing our eyes on Jesus, having Him always at our side, desiring to live in friendship with Him, learning to love just as He did, our "true Friend". "We must look at His life -- that is our best pattern. What more do we need than to have at our side so good a Friend, Who will not leave us in trials and tribulations, as earthly friends do? Blessed is he who loves Him in truth and has Him always at his side" (L 22,7; Cf L 15,13; 6 IC 7,13).

In this sense, one of Teresa's prayers is quite memorable, and we could well say that it is the prayer of the disciple who follows Jesus unconditionally:

"I desire to suffer, Lord, all the trials that come to me and esteem them as a great good enabling me to imitate You in something. Let us walk together, Lord. Wherever You go, I will go; whatever you suffer, I will suffer" (W 26,6).

Chapter IV of GE presents the "signs of holiness in today's world". Let us look at them in the light of Teresian doctrine.

"The first of these great signs is solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us" (GE 112); is remaining anchored in God's faithful love. Such an attitude will allow us *not to be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good* (Romans 12,21). This implies in being vigilant to *combat our aggressive and selfish inclinations* (GE 114), keep meekness of heart and develop the ability to remain silent in the face of failings and faults of others. The path to holiness also includes humility and patience in the midst of suffering (CF. GE 115-121). All these signs seem to echo the recommendations of Holy Mother, the

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certainty that “God alone is enough”, that He “does not change”, as well as her unconditional attachment to Jesus.

The Holy Father had already mentioned joy in his message to the Bishops of Avila for occasion of the V Centenary of Saint Teresa's birth recalling its importance for us today. According to him, Teresa's joy springs from the awareness that

“God becomes joyful with us. And feeling his love, a contagious and evident joy was born in the Saint that she radiated around her. This joy is a journey that must be followed throughout life. It is not instantaneous, superficial, tumultuous. It must already be sought by “at the beginning” (Life 13, 1). Express the inner joy of the soul, it is humble and “modest” (cf. The Book of Foundations 12, 1). ... For this reason, St Teresa's joy is neither selfish nor self-referential. Like that of heaven, it consists in the “joy in the rejoicings of all” (The Way of Perfection 30, 5), placing oneself at the service of others with unselfish love. As she told one of her monasteries in difficulty, the Saint would also tell us today, especially the young: “Do not stop going cheerfully about!” (Letter 284, 4).

As a natural consequence joy brings a sense of humor which naturally flows from a grateful heart, from living in communion with those surrounding us, from sharing and communicating, from rejoicing in the good of others (Rm 12,15; 2 Cor 13,9) (Cf. GE 126-128). Here we recognize Teresa, for she is the saint of good humor. We have an example of this in the good-humored comments she makes to participants of a discussion, or also the nicknames or pet names she uses in a sweet and affectionate way to hide people's identity during a period of uncertainty due to the threat of abolishment of the Teresian reform. The following excerpt from the book of her Life gives us a glimpse at her sense of humor in a question of certain rules of etiquette in letter writing in effect at the time.

“I repeat that indeed I didn't know how to live. Here is a poor tired soul: it sees how they command her to keep her thoughts always on God and they insist it is necessary to do this in order to free oneself from many dangers; on the other hand, it sees it mustn't miss any fine points in the world's rules of etiquette lest it become an occasion of temptation to those whose reputations are based on these details. These rules weary me, and I was never done excusing myself, because I couldn't help -- even though I studied the matter -- but to make many mistakes. For, as I say, in the world these mistakes are not taken lightly. And is it true that religious who should be held excused in these matters are in fact excused? No, it is not; it is said that monasteries must be schools of etiquette and that these things should be known. I for one certainly cannot understand this. I have thought that some saint said the monastery should be a school for the instruction of those wanting to be courtiers in heaven -- and this has all been understood backward. It is right for anyone who cares about heaven to have a continual solicitude about pleasing God and despising the world. It is beyond me how anyone can have so much concern about pleasing those who live in the world by means such as these, which are so changeable. If you could learn the rules once and for all, you could let the matter pass. But just for the titles of address on a letter there's need for a university chair, so to speak, to lecture on how it's to be done. For sometimes you have to leave a margin on this side of the page, sometimes on the other; and someone who's not usually addressed as magnifico must be then addressed as illustrious” (L 37, 9-10).

²Cf. *Humorismo espiritual*, em in *Dicionário de S. Teresa*.

³Cf. *Criptônimos*, in *Dicionário de S. Teresa*.

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Boldness and passion stand out as the third sign of holiness today. They are two attitudes which arise from the Risen Jesus in the life of people and of the Church. Jesus stays with us to the end of the world (Mt 28:20; Mc 6,50). His presence infuses courage, boldness, enthusiasm, freedom to speak out, apostolic fervor (*parrhesia*) thus manifesting the presence of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who instills courage and impels us to go beyond our own limits. History is under the light of the risen Jesus who conducts it, just as He conducts the Church and the individual beyond themselves (Cf GE 129-139).

Such boldness and courage are clearly visible in Saint Teresa. They naturally come from her experience with the risen Christ (L 28,3; 29,4; OC 6,9,3; 7,2,1). Listening to the words spoken to the disciples in the Gospels and which now are addressed to her in difficult times of uncertainty, insecurity and fear, infuse her with peace, enthusiasm and strength. Favored by the vision of the risen Jesus present in the Eucharist, she gets new vitality and courage to face the work of the foundations.

“O Wealth of the poor, how admirably You know how to sustain souls! And without their seeing such great wealth, You show it to them little by little. When I behold majesty as extraordinary as this concealed in something as small as the host, it happens afterward that I marvel at wisdom so wonderful, and I fail to know how the Lord gives me the courage or strength to approach Him. If He who has granted, and still does grant me so many favors, did not give this strength, it would be impossible to conceal the fact or resist shouting aloud about marvels so great.” (L 38,21).

Another example of *Teresian boldness* is her attempt to comment on the *Canticle of Canticles* at a time when women, and people in general, had no access to the Bible. Or still defending the value of meditation when theologians discouraged the practice to uneducated simple people. (W 22-23). Above all, Teresa instills a holy daring in her nuns in the pursuit of holiness.

“God deliver us, Sisters, when we do something imperfect, from saying: “We're not angels, we're not saints.” Consider that even though we're not, it is a great good to think that if we try, we can become saints with God's help. And have no fear that He will fail if we don't fail. Since we have not come here for any other thing, let us put our hands to the task, as they say. May we presume to use everything we learn about greater service of the Lord in His favor. The presumption I would like to see present in this house, for it always makes humility grow, is to have a holy daring; for God helps the strong and He shows no partiality” (W 16, 12).

Everything comes from the power of God: “O greatness of God, how dost Thou show thy power by giving courage to such an ant!” (F 2,7), exclaims Teresa in view of the foundations she was undertaking. The fourth sign of holiness in today's world according to the Holy Father is a journey in community. We recalled at the beginning how Teresa suffered for having to walk alone with no one to help her out when she fell. Pope Francis in his message for the V Centenary of Holy Mother's birth had already mentioned this value in Teresa.

⁴“... porque traer este cuidado quien es razón le traiga continuo en contentar a Dios y aborrecer el mundo, que le pueda traer tan grande en contentar a los que viven en él en estas cosas que tantas veces se mudan, no sé cómo. Aun si se pudiera aprender de una vez, pasara; mas aun para títulos de cartas es ya menester haya cátedra, adonde se lea cómo se ha de hacer, a manera de decir; porque ya se deja papel de una parte, ya de otra, y a quién no se solía poner magnífico, se ha de poner ilustre” (V 37,10).

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“We cannot undertake this journey alone, but together. For the reformer Saint, the path of prayer passes by the way of fraternity in the bosom of the Mother Church. Her providential response to this, born of divine inspiration and of her feminine intuition, to the problems of the Church and of the society of her time was to: to establish small communities of women who, by imitating the “Apostolic College”, followed Christ, living the Gospel in a simple way and supporting all the Church with a life made prayer.”

In GE, the pope states that the community is the risen Lord's theological space in which we are sustained by listening and sharing the word of God and celebrating the Eucharist together. A community reflects the beauty of the Trinitarian communion where the little details lived in love develop fraternal communion which in turn fosters our mission and protects us from consumerist individualism that tends to isolate us (Cf. GE 140-146).

What Teresa wanted for her communities was a style of fraternity in friendship “all must be friends with each other, love each other, be fond of each other and help each other” (W 4,7). It is a fraternity which especially aims at helping one another in moving forward on the way of prayer and spiritual life, to advise and to enlighten one another as to the things of this world (L 16,7). The human aspect goes hand in hand with the spiritual purpose of Teresa's communities. She calls it a recreational and fraternal style which applies to the first friars as well (F 13,5). It is a style which helps counterbalance the rigor of long hours of prayer. It also serves to provide “a bit of relief in complying with the austerity of the Rule” (F 13,5) and shows deep humanity, a happy and festive spirit of a life with God and with brothers and sisters (cf. W 41,7).

Finally, the fifth and last sign of holiness in our days is *the need for prayer and adoration*. In the school of the Carmelite Saints, this characteristic reinforces the need to live prayer, the presence of God in all circumstances, the silence to always remain in the presence of God and listen to his voice. It is a prayer that does not flee from the contact of others or from the problems of current history. Prayer translated into supplication and petition shows trust in God and love for our neighbor and intercession express our fraternal concern for others. The prayerful reading of God's word is another type of prayer which easily becomes a lamp for our steps and a light for our path, transforming our lives. It is in the Eucharist that the word attains its greatest efficacy, since it is the encounter with Christ himself, who is the living Word with whom we renew our covenant and allow him to transform our lives (Cf GE 147 – 157).

Prayer is a constant in all of Teresa's works. In one way or another she encourages us to earnestly dedicate ourselves to prayer. She shows the advantages of such a practice because she wants to convince us that “there is no place here for fear” so that we might “make good use of such a blessing that comes from prayer founded on humility” (L 8,5 and 10,5).

4. Identify and overcome obstacles found along this road...

The signs of holiness we have already mentioned require us to be vigilant and “walk in the love and fear of God” which “will make us quicken our steps” while looking “where we are setting our feet”. “These are two strong castles from where we can wage war on the world and on the devils,” says Holy Mother (W 40,2).

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In turn, Pope Francis reminds us the need for living a spiritual life today bearing in mind that to be genuine it requires spiritual combat, vigilance and discernment (GE Chapter V). It is a battle not only “against the world, a worldly mentality and our human weaknesses, but it is also a constant struggle against the devil” (GE 159). Saint Albert had already mentioned in The Rule urging us to “put on the armor of God to “be able to extinguish all the darts of the evil” (cf. 19-2017-19). To be alert and trustful means to use “the powerful weapons that the Lord has given us: faith-filled prayer, meditation on the word of God, the celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, sacramental Reconciliation, works of charity, community life, missionary outreach” (GE 162). Only thus shall we be protected against spiritual corruption, which confines us in “a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness” leading us to fall into a state of dull lethargy and lukewarmness (GE 164 – 165).

On the other hand, Teresa recommends the ordinary aids given by the Church: religious books, sermons, sacraments, etc. (Cf. 5 IC 2,3).

She furthermore provides the criterion for spiritual growth which is not to flee from trials and struggles:

“... I am certain that those who reach perfection do not ask the Lord to free them from trials or temptations or persecutions or struggles. This is another very great and certain effect of the contemplation and the favors His Majesty gives, and of the Lord's Spirit rather than an illusion. On the contrary, as I have said a little while ago, these persons desire, ask for, and love trials. They are like soldiers who are happier when there are more wars because they then hope to earn more. If there is no war, they receive their wages but realize they won't get rich” (W 38,1).

She herself experienced all this reality and puts us on guard against the devil's temptations, such as that of false humility which led her to abandon prayer of friendship with our Lord (L 25, 13; 30,9), or fear to begin mental prayer, very diffuse in the Spanish environment of the 16th century (L8,7; W 21 39,7 etc.), or still attachment to honors and social conventions (L2521; 35,15; W 2,6; 36,4). All these are obstacles to the spiritual journey.

Growing in the use of discernment has always been important and continues to be even more so today. Due to the great possibilities of action and distraction the world presents to us, we have an imperative need for the wisdom of this virtue. “It is a means of spiritual combat for helping us to follow the Lord more faithfully,” which exercised daily helps us recognize God's timetable, and the promptings and means of his grace (GE 169). It is also a supernatural gift which is obtained by prolonged prayer, which requires silence to better perceive the signs of God, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in His own light, ready to listen to Him, to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us (GE 171-172).

Thus, all aspects of life are lived under the eye of God and the Spirit of the risen Lord liberates us from rigidity. In this way, we grow in freedom, in accepting the cross which makes life a gift, a leaving ourselves behind in order to carry out our personal mission for the good of others (Cf GE 174-175).

Were we to scrutinize the life and writings of Teresa, we would soon see how she sought help to discern the mystical graces and act in conformity with the will of God. She was very concerned “to strive

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to walk ever in the truth before God and man” (6 IC 10,6). Teresa lived everything in prayer, in compliance with the Word of God and in faithfulness to the Church. Therefore, she conformed to whatever God asked of her carrying out her mission and finally “dying daughter of the Church”.

Pope Francis points out various other obstacles to holiness in today's world. Standing out are: *individualism* which cause us to be enclosed within ourselves and our own ideas; *hedonistic consumerism*, allowing ourselves to be caught up in superficial information (GE 108); *moral relativism* (GE 102) and being content with a mediocre Christian life; living by appearances even in the religious sphere, with no sincere concern about living in friendship with God.

Modern cultural reality also presents obstacles to holiness, which Francis was able to detect: “a sense of anxiety, sometimes violent, that distracts and debilitates; negativity and sullenness; the self-content bred by consumerism; individualism; and all those forms of ersatz spirituality – having nothing to do with God – that dominate the current religious marketplace” (GE 111). Furthermore, he speaks of two other ideologies which lead to harmful errors: to separate Gospel demands from personal relationship with the Lord, from interior union with him, from openness to his grace and “to suspect the social engagement of others, seeing it as superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist” (GE 100-101). Finally, he recalls two subtle enemies of holiness, which in one way or the other continue to plague the Church to this day. They are Gnosticism and Pelagianism that can lead us astray on the road to holiness (GE 35-62).

Within the Order, an evil observed in many members is that of lack of the sense of belonging to the Order. There also is an inadequate understanding of the purpose of the OCDS, which is a consequence of poor formation. Finally, we are faced with the modern “liquid identity” without commitment to the reality of others, society, the Church and even the Community.

⁵*Gnosticism* (GE 36-46) presumes “a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings, » (GE 36); it is a vain superficiality which closes the mind of the gnostics to their way of thinking absolutizing their own theories forcing others to submit to their own way of thinking. They confuse knowledge with holiness and think themselves superior to others who do not know. Of course, they also do not embody the reality of the Gospel in life and, therefore, lose completely the sense of the mystery of God.

Pelagianism (GE 47-62) replaced knowledge or the intellect by the human will, by personal effort, forgetting that salvation depends on God who shows mercy (Rm 9,16) and that “he first loved us” (1 Jo 4,19). With type of mindset, the pelagians “trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style” (GE 49). There are still other aspects highly appreciated by the Contemporary pelagians, namely, “justification by their own efforts, the worship of the human will and their own abilities. The result is a self-centered and elitist complacency, bereft of true love. This finds expression in a variety of apparently unconnected ways of thinking and acting: an obsession with the law, an absorption with social and political advantages, a punctilious concern for the Church's liturgy, doctrine and prestige, a vanity about the ability to manage practical matters, and an excessive concern with programs of self-help and personal fulfilment” (GE 57).

⁶ João Paulo II, *Homilia no IV Centenário da morte de S Teresa*. Ávila, November 1, 1982. *Pelagianism* (GE 47-62)

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It is time to walk... with our eyes fixed on Jesus, “the Way and the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14,5).

I would like to end this reflection reminding the relevance and importance of our Holy Mother's words: “it is time to walk,” the theme of this 2018 OCDS Congress.

A first call to do so had already been made by Saint John Paul II in his homily in Avila on occasion of the IV Centenary of the death of Saint Teresa of Jesus, when he said:

“Teresa of Jesus, who knew very well the difficulties which are found on the way, invites us to walk with God in our hearts. To guide our route and reinforce our hope, she transmits us a task which was the secret of her life and mission: “Keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, our only good” (1IC 2,11; cf. W 2,1; porque 7IC 4,8).⁶

More recently, Pope Francis, in a message on occasion of the V Centenary of the birth of Saint Teresa, wrote the following:

“These were the words St Teresa of Ávila said shortly before her death, which summarize her life and become for us, especially for the Carmelite Family... a precious legacy to be treasured and enriched”.

At the beginning we said that we have a founder known as the “saintly walker”. She knew the roads, very often arduous, cold covered with snow, or with unbearable heat. But, above all, her life is important because she went beyond the borders and paths of the spirit then known. That is why she is master in spiritual life and a doctor of the Church! To this date she continues to urge us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the “Captain of Love”.

Finally, I would like to remind you of one more advice given by our Holy Mother. Seeing that God always helped and favored her, she is confident that He will free from danger anyone who wants to live Christian perfection:

“Since, my Lord, we see that You often free us from the dangers in which we place ourselves, even in opposition to You, how can one believe that You will fail to free us when we aim after nothing more than to please You and delight in You? Never can I believe this! It could be that because of other secret judgments God might permit some things that must happen anyway. But good never brought about evil. Thus, may what I have said help us strive to walk better along the road so as to please our Spouse more and find Him sooner, but not make us abandon it; and encourage us to walk with fortitude along a road that has such rugged mountain passes, as does that of this life, but not intimidate us from walking through them. For, in the final analysis, by proceeding with humility, through the mercy of God, we will reach that city of Jerusalem, where all that has been suffered will be little, or nothing, in comparison with what is enjoyed” (F 4,4).⁷

Fr. Alzinir Francisco Debastiani OCD

Rome, July 24, 2018

⁷“Así que esto sirva de procurar caminar mejor el camino, para contentar mejor a nuestro Esposo y hallarle más presto; mas no de dejarle de andar. Y para animarnos a andar con fortaleza camino de puertos tan ásperos, como es el de esta vida; mas no para acobardarnos en andarle. Pues, en fin, fin, yendo con humildad, mediante la misericordia de Dios, hemos de llegar a aquella ciudad de Jerusalén, adonde todo se nos hará poco lo que se ha padecido, o nonada, en comparación de lo que se goza” (F 4,4).

OCDS Book Review— Listening to Edith Stein
Wisdom for a New Century—*From ICS Publications Website*

A Collection of Essays

(Carmelite Studies 12)

Edited by Kathleen Haney

In addition to exploring and dialoguing with others in the history of philosophy as well as her contemporaries, Edith Stein—Teresa Benedicta of the Cross— (1891-1942) has added her own voice to some of the fundamental questions that have been taken up by great minds over the centuries, from Aristotle to Aquinas and beyond. Stein did not simply bring together the work of the various great philosophers and theologians; rather, she delved into their work after having first wrestled with the topics themselves.

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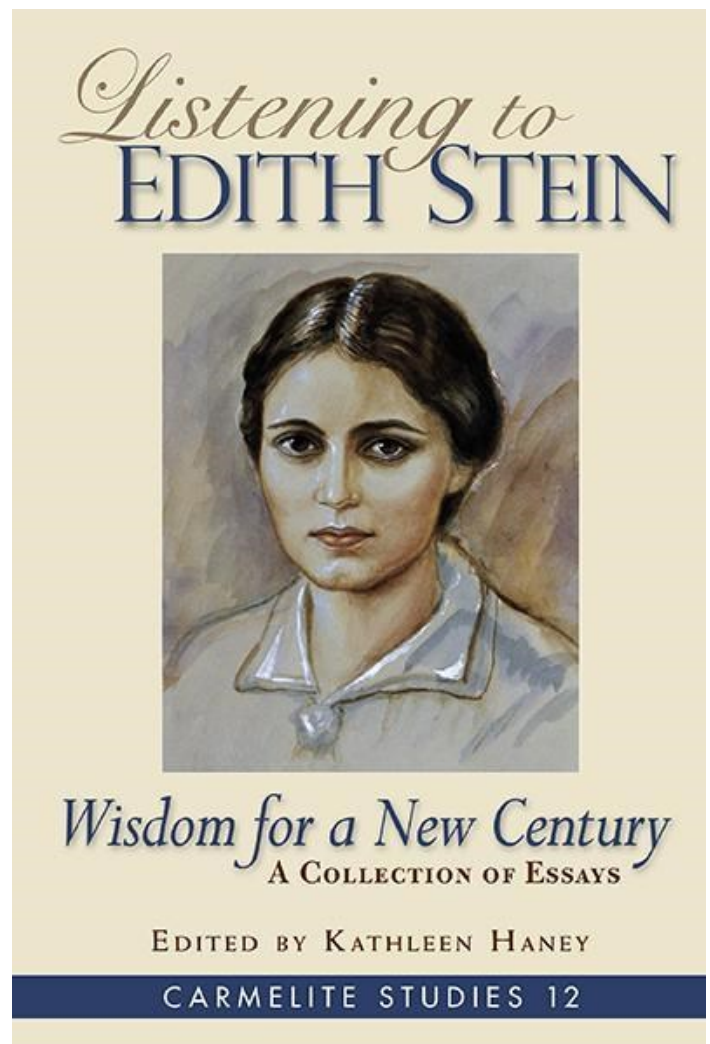
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Meeting of the Latin American Association of Carmelites



The 4th conference organized by the Latin American Association of Carmelites (ALACAR) was celebrated in Santo Domingo from November 6th through 11th. The Fathers General of Carmel, Saverio Cannistrà, OCD, and Fernando Millán, O.Carm., were present. The theme chosen to inspire the reflections was: “Yesterday’s martyrs for today’s Latin American Carmel: Archbishop Romero, Edith Stein, and Titus Brandsma.”

Approximately 120 participants – laity and religious, male and female – from almost all Latin American countries, met in the Santa María of Altagracia Retreat House to allow themselves to be enlightened by the lives, witnesses, and messages of these three persons, whose martyrial offerings surpasses the frontiers of space and time.

The Carmelite Missionary, Sandra Henríquez, opened the conference with the topic, “Edith Stein, by the sign of the Cross: The Christian martyrdom of a daughter of Israel.” Father Saverio Cannistrà followed with a presentation titled, “The participation in the love of Christ in the martyrdom of Edith Stein.” The Salvadoran Carmelite bishop, Oswaldo Escobar, prelate of the diocese of Chalatenango, presented the figure of Archbishop Romero, the Saint of the poor. And lastly, Father Fernando Millán presented the figure of Blessed Titus Brandsma with the topic, “Sanctity from the starting point of humanity.”

These have been providential days to re-create the fraternity of Carmel at the same moment in which we renew our commitment to be witnesses of Jesus who suffers in the dehumanization of those who are persecuted and marginalized, but who triumphs at the same time by the surrender of our martyrs.

Province of St. Thérèse Restructure Update

It is a great joy to announce that two additional postulants recently entered the Province, bringing the number to four. It had been some years since we had any postulants in training. Forming these young men is now a central concern for the Province. They bring renewed hope of reversing the decline.

The Province has been proactively working to both continue to grow its numbers and to respond strategically and realistically to declining numbers. As the Province has decreased rapidly recently, the 15 friars have been facing the challenge and necessity of change. Over the past 18 months, they have been actively working to identify tactics to becoming more financially viable while renewing their commitment to their mission. Which elements are essential and sustainable long-term, and where is change needed?

This process began in April 2017. Fr. Daniel Chowning, OCD, the official representative of the friars' Fr. General, visited the friars to help them assess their operations and to support their effectiveness. He challenged them to think creatively about how to remain faithful to their charism as contemplatives while balancing the demands of their various ministries.

In response to that meeting, the friars engaged a consultant, Fr. Al Bradley, who is a Redemptorist priest, to guide them through a process self-examination and reflection. These consultations are funded by a grant from the National Religious Retirement Office in Washington, DC.

Throughout last winter and spring, the friars continued to deliberate among themselves about decisions they face. One concern Fr. Stephen has for the Province is the relationship of the structures in the province to the friars' religious life and how they can live their charism to the fullest. "Are we 'feeding' our structures or are our structures 'feeding' us?" he asked.

For example, serving a parish presents challenges for the friar communities because of the difficulty of balancing the constraints of an active parish with the hours of prayer and silence that are foundational to the Discalced Carmelite contemplative life.

This past June, a Province-wide meeting in San Antonio brought the group together with Fr. Al again. They took a hard look at their charism and calling to live together as a Carmelite family. They also considered their capacity to continue their current ministries and questions of monastery stewardship.

The assignments of friars was a primary consideration. They carefully assessed leadership roles to ensure that each friar is strategically placed to make the best use of his gifts and training. In looking to the future of the Province, the friars are also working to strengthen their ability to continue to attract new vocations and to form postulants.

Fr. Luis Castañeda has been assigned as Postulant Director and Superior of the monastery in Oklahoma City, where the current postulants are studying English, Discalced Carmelite spirituality and the religious life.

Fr. Ralph Reyes has been assigned as assistant formator of the postulants and as pastor of the parish in Oklahoma City. Fr. Jorge Cabrera-Marrero is moving from Oklahoma City to the Mt. Carmel Retreat Center, where he can better use his licentiate in spirituality.

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Province of St. Thérèse Restructure Update

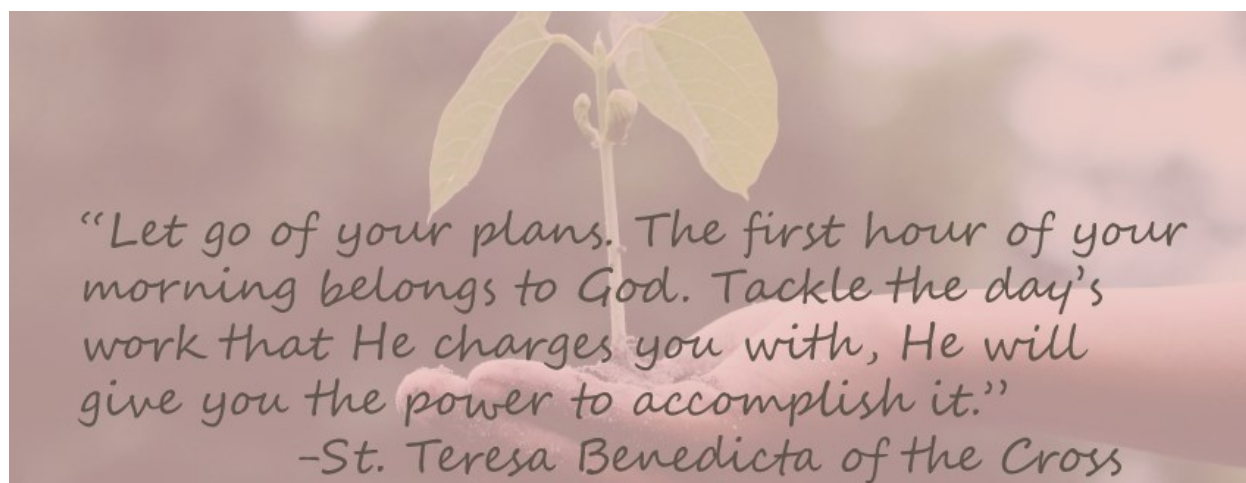
(Continued from page 25)

The friars ask for your prayers for them as they continue to strengthen their operations, and for the postulants and new vocations to the Province.

Sincerely,
Susana Cantú
Executive Director, Province of St. Thérèse



2021 CONGRESS INAUGURATION



It is with great joy that I announce, on behalf of the Provincial Council, planning for the 2021 Congress has begun!

We will continue the very successful collaborative model of planning that was used for the 2017 Congress led by then Congress Coordinator, Kathy Rasmussen. This model will once again allow all communities to be involved in the planning and implementation of the Congress.

Congress Coordinator Introduction

My name is Laura Durant, *Laura of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, and I'm a member of the St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Community in Austin, Texas. My husband, John, and I have been married for over 10 years, and live in Leander, Texas just outside of Austin. We have a very spoiled 7-year-old bulldog, Winston, whose photos take up the majority of my Facebook timeline.

While completely humbled by God's call to fulfill the role of the Congress Coordinator, and knowing I have very big shoes to fill, fortunately God has given me the gift of having Kathy Rasmussen as a dear friend *and* as a major part of the Congress Financial Planning Team in her role as Central Office Administrator.

I ask for your prayers so that I surrender myself fully to Our Beloved's call, obeying His every command and fulfilling His every wish so that His will is done for the 2021 Congress.

As Carmelites, let us begin to pray together for the successful planning of our Congress. I humbly ask that this prayer become a part of your monthly meetings for the success of our 2021 Congress. It is only by God's grace that we will together find the strength and courage to take each step in faith together.

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News from around the Province—2021 OCDS Congress

Submitted by Laura Durant, Congress Coordinator

(Continued from page 27)

Jesus, we surrender ourselves into Your Heart, so Your Love may shine through us and spread throughout all the world.

We give ourselves to You, abandoning ourselves into Your Loving embrace so that under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Holy Spirit fills us with the inspiration, dedication, devotion and grace needed to work together with Your Love in our hearts.

We entrust this Congress and all that will come – the joys, the difficulties, the obstacles and the blessings – to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. May she guide our every step, every word, and every action, so this Congress is blessed by the example of her perfect humility and surrender and all who prepare and attend this Congress are under her mantle of loving protection.

Jesus, give us the courage to surrender ourselves wholeheartedly to You, fearlessly answering Your call, holding tight to Your cross and embracing ours knowing it will lead us to union with You, which is our heart's deepest desire.

2021 Congress: When and Where?

I am excited to announce the 2021 Congress will be held in the great city of Houston, Texas during the Fall of 2021!



(Continued on page 29)

News from around the Province—2021 OCDS Congress

Submitted by Laura Durant, Congress Coordinator

(Continued from page 28)

We are currently in the process of gathering proposals from different venues in the Houston area. **A huge Thank You to Chris Wood and the St. Theresa of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face Study Group** for leading the charge in gathering proposals as we work to determine a venue!

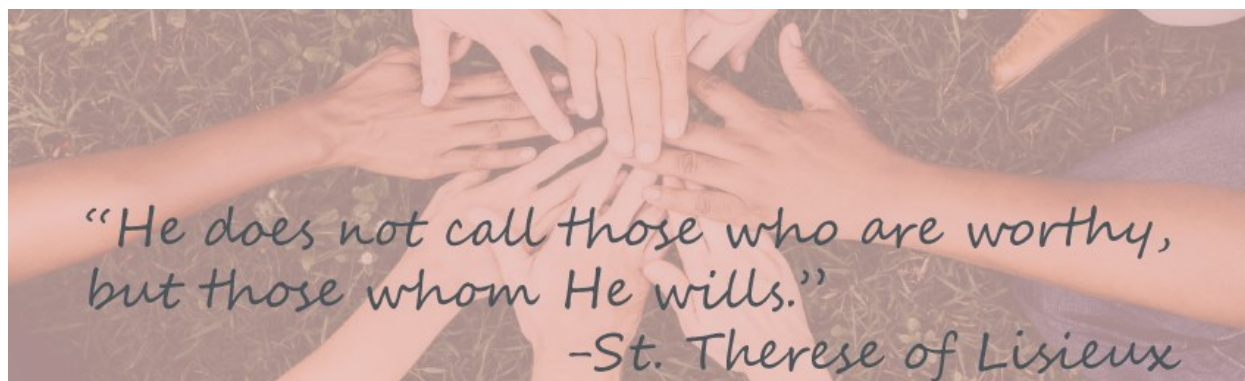
2021 Congress: What's Next?

Theme and logo. The theme and logo have yet to be determined – please stay tuned for further information to come!

Community involvement. Below is a list of Congress Teams that will be involved in planning the 2021 Congress. Please prayerfully discern how your community, and you as an individual member, are being called to be part of the planning and implementation of the 2021 Congress.

An email will be sent out to all Presidents with more comprehensive information on the Congress Planning Teams listed below to aid in the discernment process for your communities, including each Team's purpose and responsibilities. If you or your community is discerning to lead a particular area, please let me know. It's never too early to throw your hat in the ring.

2021 Congress Planning Teams



Financial Accountability Team

Will work with PC Central Office Administrator, Kathy Rasmussen. *We will, however, need an additional person to join this team.*

Fundraising Team

This may be a great opportunity for a few communities to collaborate on this important effort.

Liturgy Team

This team needs two (2) Communities – One (1) of the Communities must be in the Houston area.

Hospitality Team

Publicity/Marketing Team

Speakers/Presentations Team

Vendor/Vendor Room Team

Program Team

Registration Team

Special Events Team

Website Team

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News from around the Province—2021 OCDS Congress

Submitted by Laura Durant, Congress Coordinator

(Continued from page 29)

I invite you to contact me if you would like additional information on the teams via email (OCDSCongressCoordinator2021@outlook.com). Also, there will be a page added to the Provincial Website for the 2021 Congress that will include information regarding team responsibilities.

How will your community participate? If your community discerns that it is not able to take on involvement in the planning and implementation of the 2021 Congress, there are many, many ways you, individually or community-wide, can support our Congress. Please prayerfully consider financially sponsoring a speaker with their travel accommodations; serving as a prayer warrior; or making Carmelite related items for the Congress tote bag or to sell in the vendor room.

Community Leader. As you prayerfully discern community involvement, please also be thinking about appointing a Community Leader for the Congress. This person will be the primary contact for the 2021 Congress in your community and will participate on regular Congress planning conference calls. *(Please note Presidents will always be copied on all written communication.)*

I look forward to working in conjunction with everyone in planning the 2021 Congress. Stay tuned for more detailed information on Congress Planning Teams and other information by way of an email to all Presidents and the Provincial website.


My prayer for each of you is that you experience the love which flows freely and without reserve from the Merciful Heart of Our Beloved to those who surrender all to Him!

In His Heart,

Laura of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

2021 Congress Coordinator

OCDSCongressCoordinator2021@outlook.com



“Let us love, since our heart
is made for nothing else.”

—St. Therese of Lisieux

News from around the Province —News from Mobile, AL

Submitted by Karina Schubert, OCDS

Annual Retreat and Promises

Our annual retreat was held on October 5-7, 2018 at the Visitation Monastery in Mobile, AL with Fr. Adam Gregory Gonzalez OCD being the retreat master. In addition to the Mobile OCDS Community of the Holy Spirit, there were members of the Jackson, MS and Fort Walton, FL communities in attendance. O. Carm. Seculars joined us for one day only on Saturday.

The theme of the retreat was “Going Back to Basics of Carmelite Spirituality” and Fr. Adam asked the retreatants to prepare by reading pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “Gaudete et Exultate”.

Fr. Adam handed out a helpful guide on determining what pages to use from the Liturgy of the Hours depending on whether it’s a regular (“ferial”) day, an optional memorial, a feast or a solemnity; a concise summary of the Teresian Method of Mental Prayer; and a complete list of Pauline citations in the “Primitive” Rule.



He also presented and blessed several prayer cards, including one of a beautiful icon “Rule of Carmel” (as shown). This icon represents St. Albert of Jerusalem handing the Rule to the prior of the early Carmelite hermits. The icon references the past by including the prophet Elijah, our spiritual father, and St. Paul, recognizing the many references to his letters in the Rule; and to the future by including St. Teresa. Our Lady of Mount Carmel is represented by the flower growing on the mountain.

Fr. Adam strongly encouraged silence, being recollected, as a hermit, emphasizing that it is an important part of our Carmelite charism. About three fourths into the retreat, Fr. Adam commented that our group did “okay” on silence, not bad, not great. However according to those who have been to the retreat for many years, this was the most silent this group has ever been! Many have found this retreat particularly fruitful.

At Mass on October 7th, Vivien Hecker and Starr Turk made their Final Promises, and those who made promises in the past renewed theirs.

(Continued on page 32)

News from around the Province —News from Mobile, AL

Submitted by Karina Schubert, OCDS

(Continued from page 31)



Incidentally, this same day the OCD nuns were celebrating the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Carmelite Monastery in Mobile on October 7, 1943 with a Mass of thanksgiving offered by the archbishop Thomas J. Rodi. A reception followed afterward at St. Joseph the Worker Building on the Carmelite Monastery grounds.



Minta Mary Dugas, OCDS

Isolate, Community of St. John of the Cross and St. Anthony
Baton Rouge, LA

Minta Dugas, 96, entered into eternal life on Friday, June 15, 2018. She was a native of Baton Rouge, LA and one of the earliest members of our community, having been clothed on May 12, 1981. She made her final profession on September 8, 1987. Minta had moved to Napoleonville, LA by this time and was an Isolate when she took vows on October 13, 1991.

Minta was unable to attend meetings because of age and distance, but she donated to the community and years ago, sometimes attended the community Christmas party. Two community members, Clarence Landry and Carmelite Province were able to visit her occasionally.

Minta always enjoyed receiving the minutes of the meetings by mail as well as Flos Carmeli. She loved her Carmelite vocation and remained as involved as she could be until the time of her death.

She is survived by numerous nieces and nephews, and was preceded in death by her parents, and six siblings.

Her long life, much of it spent in Carmel, was undoubtedly filled with much prayer and we are grateful that she was part of our community. May she rest in the Peace and Joy of the Lord.



Diann Pratt Derouen, OCDS

Community of Mary Beloved of the Trinity
New Iberia, Louisiana

Submitted by Bernadette Derouen, OCDS

Diann Prat Derouen went quietly to her eternal rest on September 29, 2018 after an illness. She was born on March 21, 1945 to Adolph and Lillie Pratt in Liberty, Texas and she was preceded in death by her parents and her sister, Juanita Pratt Baldwin. She was married to Raymond Derouen and of this union they had four children. She is survived by four children, six grandchildren, a brother and two sisters and their children.

Clothed in the Scapular of the Order of Carmel on December 18, 2005, Diann made her First Promise December 16, 2007, taking as her devotional title Veronica Who Wiped the Face of Jesus. She made her Definitive Promise December 12, 2010. Diann was devout in her studies and in her prayer life. She expressed a deep love and gratitude for all of her studies and applied the knowledge to her life of many sacrifices. She supported members as an effective listener and always showed a loving attitude to all. Diann was loved and is greatly missed by our community.



Gara Theresa Mae Manuel Anderson, OCDS

Mary, Beloved of the Trinity
New Iberia, LA
Submitted by Renee Arabie

Gara Theresa Mae Manuel Anderson was called home August 14, 2018.

Funeral services were August 14 at St Peter's Catholic Church, New Iberia, La, with burial in Holy Family Mausoleum. Gara, 76, suffered from Parkinson's disease for many years and passed at St. Joseph Hospice in Lafayette, La.

A founding member of the Community of Mary, Beloved of the Trinity, Gara was clothed on May 16, 1993, made her First Promise on May 17, 1995, taking the devotional name Mary Theresa of the Sacred Heart. She was definitively professed on December 20, 1998.

Gara served as extraordinary minister of Communion, catechism teacher, and choir member of St Peter's Catholic Church. A facilitator in the Come, Lord Jesus! Program, she also assisted its founder, Father Conley Bertrand, in creating additional groups across the area.

A loving wife, mother, and grandmother, Gara practiced kindness and spread joy. She identified her hobbies as speaking French and laughing. Gara was always ready with a new joke and ready to share handwritten cards with messages of encouragement from scripture such as "Let the peace of Christ control your heart," and "soyez et gentil," be wise and kind.

Gara is survived by her son, Benjamin "Chip" Anderson III, two daughters, Rebecca Provost and Mary "Libby" Clostio, and many grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her husband Benjamin Anderson, Jr., son Samuel Anderson, and daughter Miriam Anderson.

We in the Community of Mary, Beloved of the Trinity pray for you Gara, our friend and sister in Carmel. May your soul find eternal peace and rest in the love of God our Father.





Rita Ann Osterman

JULY 19, 1936—DECEMBER 9, 2018

Rita Ann Osterman was born July 19, 1936 in Indianapolis, Indiana to the late William and Helen Baglan Osterman and was called home December 9, 2018 in Mobile, Alabama surrounded by family. She was a member of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites with the chosen name, Mary Rose of the Cross (First Promise on October 1, 2011, Final Promise on October 4, 2014). Rita was a member of Our Lady of the Bay and a licensed barber. She was very involved within her faith and church family, a very devout Catholic and enjoyed dedicating her time to the church. Rita will be remembered forever in the hearts of all who knew her.

Rita was preceded in death by Phyllis Goff, William (Sonny) Osterman, George (Nick) Nickerson, Timothy Keinser, Kevin Keinser, Kenneth (Steve) Keinser, Helen and William Osterman and Rose Baglan.

Left to cherish Rita's beautiful memories will be her daughters; Kathy Hendrickson and Lorraine Miller, one son; Christopher Hendrickson, nine grandchildren: Sherry Williams, Christy Smithweck, Maria Howell, Jessica Gedek, Eric Gedek, Tracey Knott, Heather Hendrickson, Hilary Alkilani, and Krystal Hendrickson, five great-grandchildren: Ella Smithweck, Evan Smithweck, Zachary Williams, Vivian Williams, and Liam Stewart, sister-in-law; Peggy Osterman and first cousin; Gladys Carroll along with extended family members and a host of wonderful friends.

A member of the Holy Spirit OCDS community Karen White wrote the following farewell tribute:

"Farewell my sweet friend Rita, until we meet again.

Fifteen years ago, Ann Buttacio brought Rita to my home for a prayer service. She said this is Rita and she's looking for a prayer partner. Later she would say I not only got a prayer partner, I am blessed with a prayer group. Rita and I became very close. She had a devotion to St. Pio which inspired her to make a shrine in honor of him on my grounds. She loved the Divine Mercy. We would travel every two years to Stockbridge to participate. One day while praying in my Chapel, I was overwhelmed with the feeling I need to bring Rita to Carmel. I asked Paul if I could bring my friend for a visit and he said yes. That was all it took. Rita fell in love with Carmel. Everything was all about being a Carmelite and the Spirituality of the Order. Rita looked at everyone as a child of God. Even though our race is different, we were like sisters who could discuss our innermost thoughts. I will truly miss my friend."

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

“To be a child of God, that means: to be led by the Hand of God, to do the will of God, not one’s own will, to place every care and every hope in the Hand of God and not to worry about oneself or one’s future. On this rests the freedom and the joy of the child of God. But how few even of the truly pious, even of those ready for heroic sacrifices, possess this freedom. They all walk as if bent down by the heavy burden of their cares and duties. They all know the parable of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. But if they meet a person who has neither capital nor pension nor insurance, and yet lives without worrying about the future, they shake their heads as if that was something extraordinary. Indeed, if one expects from the Father in Heaven that He will always provide for the income and station in life which oneself considers desirable, he can be very much mistaken. Only then can the trust in God remain unshaken if it includes being prepared to accept absolutely everything from the Hand of the Father.”

*“The Scholar and the Cross,” The Life and Work of Edith Stein, p. 130
Hilda C. Graef*

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

Jillison Parks, Savannah, GA