

Flos Carmeli

Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse
Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Winter 2024

Volume XXXIV No. 1

From the President's Desk

By Maxine Latiolais, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

2024 – A New Year has begun, and surely it will be filled with many graces and challenges. Our prayer is that the gift of Christ will fill your hearts with peace and joy. May faith, hope, and love be your treasures in this New Year, no matter what happens in these uncertain times. May Jesus Christ always be your guiding Light!

2024 Visitations: Soon, letters will be sent out regarding the visitations that should be scheduled this year.

Provincial Workshops!

As members of the OCDS Provincial Council of the Oklahoma Province of St. Thérèse, we remind ourselves that our mission is to serve all members of the OCDS, individually and as communities, in order to strengthen and nourish the development of our Carmelite vocation, doing all we can to live the Gospel and bring our spirituality into the world. One way to serve the province is to provide triennial leadership workshops along with a Plenary Council meeting. The workshops will be held in Wichita, Kansas, on May 17, 18, and 19, 2024. The Workshops will commence in the early afternoon of Friday, May 17, with a full day on Saturday, May 18, and conclude at about noon on Sunday, May 19. Letters with specific details have been sent to the presidents of the communities. According to our OCDS Statutes, “Each community shall send two members: the President and an elected representative.” For further clarification of who should attend, see OCDS Statutes Section XXI: Plenary Council Meeting. The PC has made the decision to allow each community, study group, and GID to send two members to the Provincial Workshops.

We realize that many communities have their meeting date on the third weekend of the month, so make plans now with your 2024 calendar to allow attendance at the Provincial Workshop/Plenary Council meeting. The Plenary Council meeting is the time to bring issues to the attention of the entire province. It is also a wonderful opportunity to connect with other communities within the Province and discuss common concerns.

Increase in Provincial Assessment

In the annual letters that we sent to the community presidents in February 2023, we mentioned that we were considering increasing the member provincial assessment. After prayerful discussion and consideration, the PC has decided to increase the assessment to \$60 per member. The PC members have worked hard to keep costs to a minimum; however, the costs of everything have increased. Unfortunately, travel costs have increased, and

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From the President's Desk

By *Maxine Latiolais, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council*

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this coming year, the PC members will need to travel to Wichita for workshops and to Boston for the 2024 OCDS Congress, besides making visitations. See the letter from the PC on Page 9.

An important reminder

The Provincial Council (PC) is looking for a Congress Coordinator for the 2027 Oklahoma Congress. We are looking for someone who is organized and can work with others. If you feel called to this important position, please contact:

Denise Graham, PC Congress Liaison
by email at nellie_joey@yahoo.com or phone at 936-525-0476

Mary, Mother and Beauty of Carmel, intercede for us!

Yours in Carmel,

Maxine Latiolais, OCDS

**President, Provincial Council
for the OCDS Oklahoma Semi-Province
Council Members:**

*Barbara Basgall, OCDS, Karen Burton, OCDS, Denise Graham, OCDS,
and Lea Hawkins, OCDS*



**Report from the Provincial Delegate—
Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD
Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Carmel,

Grace Builds on Nature

Our Father General (V. R. Luis Arostegui) wrote a letter to the friars in 2006 entitled “The Pastoral Care of the Secular Order.” It was meant for the Provincials, Provincial Delegates, and those friars who were Spiritual Assistants to the Secular Order.



†
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.

He reminds us that the Secular Orders associated with the Mendicant Orders are a way by which the spirituality of the Order is brought into the life of the lay person in the world. “The spirituality of the mendicant Orders reflects elements or an element that belong to the essence of the Church in the world...Carmel’s charism is based on the place of a loving personal relationship between God and the person found in prayer. From that base flows the work to which Carmelites dedicate themselves.”¹

Father General reminds us that within the bonds of the relationship between the friars and the Secular Order, that the Secular Order enjoys a level of autonomy that was expressed even before the Manual of 1922, and that that autonomy exists in the areas of formation, leadership, and governance. But being the frail creatures that we are, autonomy can manifest itself in unhealthy ways:

“There are extremes that distort the autonomy given to the Secular Order: either excessive independence or excessive dependence on the part of the seculars; and on the part of the friars either lack of interest or desire to control.

In these extremes there is a failure or impossibility of collaboration under the direction of the legitimate superiors of the Order as outlined in the Constitutions. As well, there is the failure to develop the lay members of the Order to the stature and responsibility that the Church and the Order wish them to have. The Secular Order therefore remains trapped in a model that will not serve to present the Secular Order as adult and capable of representing to the world the spirituality of Carmel.”²

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1. V.R. Luis Arostegui, O. C. D., *Pastoral Care of the Secular Order*, 14 December 2006, p. 2.
 2. Arostegui, p. 3.

(Continued on page 4)

Report from the Provincial Delegate— Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

(Continued from page 3)

In order to achieve this delicate balance of an interested collaborative interdependence between the Friars and the Seculars, all under the guidance of the legitimate Superiors of the Order, and with the goal of forming the Seculars into the stature and responsibility that the Church/Order desires for them to have, we have recently adopted a new formation program for the entirety of the United States.

Discernment

For this desire of the Church to be accomplished within the Secular Order, administration at all levels (local council, OCDS Provincial Council, Provincial Delegate/Provincial) must all look with greater interest and commitment to the formation of the individual members of the Secular Order.

The General Delegate of the Secular Order, Father Ramiro Casale, OCD, in his forward to the new National Formation Handbook for the OCDS states:

“Formation is an essential part in the life of the secular members of the Discalced Carmelite Order. According to the *Ratio Institutionis* of the Secular Order, it is essential that formation programs include the areas of human, Christian and Carmelite formation (Cfr. 13-15) ...

The Discalced Carmelite Order promotes an integral formation that helps people to harmoniously integrate the different dimensions of their being. Human formation is the base of all formation...self-knowledge is essential and should never be neglected (Cfr. *Life* 13,15) A good human formation helps people to know themselves and others better as they develop the capacity to be more aware of the dynamics that play an important role in their relationships with themselves, others, God, and their environment.” [Emphasis added]

The administration, at all levels, has the very difficult but necessary task to truly investigate the capacity of every aspirant to be “formed.” Of course, each one of us believes this of ourselves, but true discernment is not me trying to convince my formators that I have “a call,” but discernment is about the individual and the local council (which represents not only the larger community but also the larger Order and therefore the larger Church) to enter into dialogue and examine the possibility of a vocation.

The Formation Handbook cites the Ratio on Human Formation:

Ratio 13: Human Formation develops our:

- Ability for interpersonal dialogue, mutual respect, and tolerance
- Readiness to the possibility of being corrected and to correct others with serenity
- Capacity to persevere in our commitments³

3. Formation Handbook: Specific Guidelines for Formation in the United States: The Responsibilities of Councils, Formators, Candidates, Groups, and Communities, p. 8

(Continued on page 5)

Report from the Provincial Delegate— Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD *Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse*

(Continued from page 4)

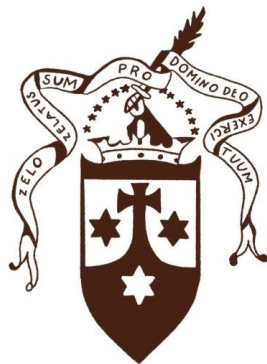
But these qualities in the candidate must be met in a formator who “fosters openness, approachability, readiness for dialogue and patience, and should always have a warm and welcoming attitude.”⁴ This requires that the formators themselves have a solid human formation upon which the other layers of vocation have been built, as well as the capacity to ask the hard questions of the candidates, and with the utmost charity truly seek the well-being and the proper place of the candidate within the larger Body of Christ, whether they enter into further discernment with us or must seek their discernment elsewhere. It is one thing to be attracted to Carmelite Spirituality and quite another to be called to live the charism with others, in community, and thereby must be capable of all the human skills needed to build community.

May Our Lady of Mount Carmel, faithful disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ, intercede and enlighten us as we continue to follow her example.

In Him,

Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD

4. Formation Handbook, p. 10



**Report from the Provincial Council—
2023 OCD.OCDs Calendar**
Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

**PROPER CALENDAR OF THE ORDER OF DISCALCED
CARMELITE FRIARS OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL**

Promulgated in Rome October 15, 2023
Includes Specifics for Oklahoma Province OCDS

JANUARY

- 4 – *Saint Kuriakose Elias of the Holy Family Chavara, priest*
8 – *Saint Peter Thomas, bishop*
9 – *Saint Andrew Corsini, bishop*
27 – *Saint Henry de Osso y Cervello, priest*

FEBRUARY

- 4 – *Blessed Marie-Eugene of the Infant Jesus Grialou, priest*
24 – *Blessed Josepha Naval Girbés, virgin*

MARCH

- 18 – *fast day for OCDS*
19 – **St Joseph, Patron of Our Order - Solemnity**

APRIL

- 17 – *Blessed Baptist Spagnoli, priest*
18 – *Blessed Mary of the Incarnation (Barba Acarie), religious*
23 – *Blessed Teresa Maria of the Cross Manetti, virgin*
28 – *Blessed Maria Felicia of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, virgin*

MAY

- 4 – *Blesseds Angelus Maria Prat Hostench and Lucas of St Joseph Pujol, priests and martyrs, and companions, martyrs*
16 – *Saint Simon Stock, priest*
22 – *Saint Joachina de Vedruna, religious*
25 – *Saint Mary Magdalen of the Incarnate Word de' Pazzi, virgin – Memorial*
29 – *Blessed Elia of St Clement Fracasso, virgin*

JUNE

- 7 – *Blessed Anne of St Bartholomew, virgin*
12 – *Blessed Alphonsus Mary of the Holy Spirit Mazurek, priest and martyr, and companions, martyrs*
14 – *Saint Elisha, the prophet*
14 – *Blessed Mary Candida of the Eucharist Barba, virgin*
26 – *Blessed Mary Josephine of Jesus Crucified Catania, virgin*

JULY

- 12 – *Saints Louis Martin and Marie Azelia (Zelie) Guerin, spouses*
13 – *Saint Teresa of Jesus (of the Andes) Fernandez Solar, virgin – Memorial*
15 – *fast day for OCDS*
16 – **BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL, PATRONESS OF CARMEL – Solemnity**
17 – *Blessed Teresa of St Augustine and companions, virgins, and martyrs*

Report from the Provincial Council— 2023 OCD.OCDs Calendar Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

19 – fast day for OCDS

20 – **SAINT ELIJAH, PROPHET AND PATRON OF CARMEL – Feast**

23 – Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Grace – *Memorial*

24 – Blesseds Maria of St Francis Borgia, Maria Sagrario of St Aloysius Gonzaga, and companions,
virgins and martyrs

27 – Blessed Titus Brandsma, priest and martyr

28 – Blessed John Soreth, priest

AUGUST

7 – Saint Albert of Trapani, priest – *Memorial*

9 – Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, virgin and martyr – *Memorial*

18 – Blesseds Leonard (Jean-Baptiste Duverneuil), Michael Aloysius (Michel-Louis Brunard), and Hubert of
St Claude (James Gagnot), priests, and companions, martyrs

25 – Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified, virgin – *Memorial*

26 – Transverberation of our Holy Mother Saint Teresa of Jesus

SEPTEMBER

1 – Saint Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Redi, virgin – *Memorial*

11 – Blessed Maria of Jesus Lopez Rivas, virgin

17 – **SAINT ALBERT OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP AND LAWGIVER OF CARMEL – Feast**

30 – fast day for OCDS

OCTOBER

1 – **SAINT THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS, VIRGIN AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH – Feast**

In the Oklahoma Province – Solemnity

14 – fast day for OCDS

15 – **HOLY MOTHER SAINT TERESA OF JESUS, VIRGIN AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH – Solemnity**

30 – Blessed Mary Teresa of St Joseph Tauscher, virgin

NOVEMBER

5 – Blessed Frances d’Amboise, religious

6 – Saint Nuno of the Blessed Virgin Mary Álvares Pereira, religious

7 – Blessed Francis of Jesus Mary Joseph Palau y Quer, priest

8 – Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity Catez, virgin – *Memorial*

13 – fast day for OCDS

14 – **ALL CARMELITE SAINTS – Feast**

15 – All Carmelite Souls – *Commemoration*

19 – Saint Raphael of St Joseph Kalinowski, priest – *Memorial*

29 – Blesseds Denis of the Nativity Berthelot, priest, and Redemptus of the Cross, religious, martyrs

DECEMBER

11 – Saint Maria Maravillas of Jesus, virgin – *Memorial*

13 – fast day for OCDS

14 – **OUR HOLY FATHER SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH – Solemnity**

16 – Blessed Mary of the Angels Fontanella, virgin

Report from the Provincial Council— Small OCDS Calendar Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

30	Bl. Mary Teresa of St. Joseph Tauscher, virgin
15	HOLY MOTHER SAINT TERESA OF JESUS, VIRGIN AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH—S
14	<i>Fast day for OCDS</i>
	For the Oklahoma Province—S
1	SAINT THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS, VIRGIN AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH—F
	October
	<i>Fast day for OCDS</i>
30	
17	SAINT ALBERT OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP AND LAWGIVER OF CARMEL—F
11	Bl. Maria of Jesus Lopez Rivas, virgin
1	St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Redi, virgin— M
	September
26	Transverberation of our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus
25	St. Mary of Jesus Crucified, virgin— M
18	Gagnol, priests, and companions, martyrs (Michel-Louis Brunard), and Hubert of St. Claude (James Leonard (Jean-Baptiste Duverneuil), Michael Aloysius St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, virgin and martyr— M
7	St. Albert of Trapani, priest— M
	August
28	Bl. John Soreth, priest
27	Bl. Titus Brandsma, priest and martyr

November

5	Bl. Frances d'Amboise, religious
6	St. Nuno of the Blessed Virgin Mary Alvares Pereira, religious
7	Bl. Francis of Jesus Mary Joseph Palau y Quer, priest
8	St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Catez, virgin— M
13	<i>Fast day for OCDS</i>
14	ALL CARMELITE SAINTS—F
15	All Carmelite Souls— C
19	St. Raphael of St. Joseph Kalinowski, priest— M
29	Bls. Denis of the Nativity Berthelot, priest, and Redemptus of the Cross, religious, martyrs

December

11	St. Maria Maravillas of Jesus, virgin— M
13	<i>Fast day for OCDS</i>
14	OUR HOLY FATHER SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH—S
16	Bl. Mary of the Angels Fontanella, virgin

24	Bls. Maria of St. Francis Borgia, Maria Sagarrio of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and companions, virgins and martyrs
23	Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Grace— M
20	ST. ELIJAH, PROPHET AND PATRON OF CARMEL—F
19	<i>Fast day for OCDS</i>
17	Bl. Teresa of St. Augustine and companions, virgins and martyrs
16	BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL, PATRONESS OF CARMEL—S
15	<i>Fast day for OCDS</i>
13	St. Teresa of Jesus (of the Andes) Fernandez Solar, virgin— M
12	Sts. Louis Martin and Marie Azelia (Zelie) Guerin, spouses
	July
26	Bl. Mary Josephine of Jesus Crucified Catania, virgin
14	Bl. Mary Candida of the Eucharist Barba, virgin
14	St. Elisha, the prophet
12	Bl. Alphonsus Mary of the Holy Spirit Mazurek, priest and martyr, and companions, martyrs
7	Bl. Anne of St. Bartholomew, virgin
	June
29	Bl. Elia of St. Clement Fracasso, virgin
25	St. Mary Magdalen of the Incarnate Word de' Pazzi, virgin— M
22	St. Joachina de Vedruna, religious
16	St. Simon Stock, priest



Discalced Carmelite Calendar

Including OCDS Fast Days

Promulgated in Rome October 15, 2023
includes Specifics for
Oklahoma Province OCDS

The key: S = Solemnity; F = Feast
M = Memorial; C = Commemoration; No initial = optional memorial

January

4	St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, priest
8	St. Peter Thomas, bishop
9	St. Andrew Corsini, bishop
27	St. Henry de Osso y Cervello, priest

February

4	Bl. Marie-Eugene of the Infant Jesus Griolou, priest
24	Bl. Josepha Naval Girbés, virgin

March

18	<i>Fast day for OCDS</i>
19	ST. JOSEPH, PATRON OF OUR ORDER—S

April

17	Bl. Baptist Spagnoli, priest
18	Bl. Mary of the Incarnation (Barba Acarie), religious
23	Bl. Teresa Maria of the Cross Manetti, virgin
28	Bl. Maria Felicia of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, virgin

May

4	Bls. Angelus Maria Prat Hostench and Lucas of St. Joseph Pujol, priests and martyrs, and companions, martyrs
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Report from the Provincial Council— Provincial Assessments *Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse*

The OCDS Statutes Sec. XIV.5 states, “The Province shall collect an annual community assessment to help cover expenses of the Central Office, Provincial Delegate, and Provincial Council. The assessment for each community is made according to the number of its members. A portion of these funds shall also be forwarded by the Central Office to the General Secretariat of the Secular Discalced Carmelite Order to support its functioning. A portion may be sent to the Carmelite Institute of North America or a similar organization for Carmelite studies. The Central Office will send out a notice of assessment each year in January. The assessment is due by March 31 of that year. The annual assessment does not apply to aspirants or members on Leave of Absence. The Local Council may request the Provincial Council to be relieved of the assessment for members who are incapacitated or not in regular contact with the community. If a member has dropped all contact with the community, the Local Council may remove the member from the community roster and be relieved of the assessment for that individual. The member’s permanent record is to be updated accordingly, and a copy sent to the Central Office.”

The Friars have determined that certain activities are necessary for the Province to function effectively. Provincial visitations are important and necessary to manage the flow of information between the Friars and communities. These visitations require extensive travel, planning, and resources. As it stands, the stipends provided by the communities are to help “defray” the costs of the Provincial Council members on these visitations, not to cover them completely. Other expenses incurred by the Province include hosting or traveling to Inter-Provincial Council meetings, attending OCDS Congresses (Provincial Delegate and PC), and other large events sponsored by the Province. Please be assured that all details for these activities and events are scrutinized, and every attempt is made to travel in the most cost-effective way, considering the overall expense to the province and communities. With that in mind, the Provincial Council has determined the need to increase the Annual Provincial Assessment can no longer be deferred. Therefore, the 2024 Provincial Assessments will be **\$60** per Active Member. One way for communities to help defray the means to meet Provincial Assessments is to engage in fundraisers. In addition to the Statutes, a **Provincial Policy** is written to address the ability of each community to hold local fundraisers, with consideration for Local Diocesan Guidelines, to assist with the Provincial Assessment and other financial needs of the Community.

The Policy states, “Fundraising for *legitimate* community projects and *special/extraordinary needs* is appropriate but must be approved by the local council before such fundraising begins. Please note that however worthy the cause may be, fundraising is not to be done for outside interests and causes.

*Fundraising projects should not be a frequent or ongoing burden on the community members.

*Fundraising projects should not reflect negatively on the spiritual dignity of the community.

*Fundraising projects should follow any requirements or guidelines set out by the local diocese.

A Community Budget (3 years) is helpful in planning these expenses and activities so as to allow each community to function freely and without restrictions. The Provincial Delegate and Council thank you for supporting our efforts to keep our Province functioning smoothly and in service to the Order and the Church.

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Teresa of Jesus,
Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

Submitted by Martha Hanley, OCDS

The Cedar Rapids Community of St. Teresa of Jesus, along with Msgr. Russ Bleich, Spiritual Assistant, attended a retreat at New Melleray Abbey in Dubuque, Iowa.



Pictured Back Row (From Left): Bill Wilkinson, Julie Dohrmann, Cindy McElliott, Rosann Sorenson, Lorraine Bailey, and Msgr. Russ Bleich, Spiritual Assistant.

Front row (From Left): Mary Pat Wilkinson, Anita Griebel, Laima Jaritz, and Gineal Schrunk.

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of The Infant of Prague,
Dallas, Texas**

Submitted by Judy Treadway, OCDS

Rosemary Schell, OCDS, celebrated the 70th anniversary of her Definitive Promise on September 8, 2023, on the Nativity of our Blessed Mother.



Judy Treadway and Rosemary Schell

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Theresa of Avila,
Gulfport, Mississippi**
Submitted by Linda Randolph, OCDS

Members of the Community of St. Theresa of Avila, Gulfport, Mississippi attended a Social at the St. James Fall Festival on October 14, 2023, ending the day with a 4:00 p.m. Vigil Mass in Gulfport, Mississippi.



**News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity,
Tulsa, Oklahoma**

Submitted by Barbara Tinervia , OCDS

In June and August of 2023, the St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Study Group in Tulsa, Oklahoma, joyously celebrated the Ritual of Clothing and Definitive Promise. Father Bryan Brooks celebrated the Ritual with Janet Buedden and Christine Miller receiving the Ceremonial Scapular of the Order and the profession of the Definitive Promise by Bill Johnston, OCDS. In August, Father Alessandro Calderoni officiated the Definitive Promise of Maria Gonzales, with Brother Vladimir Guadalupe, OCD in attendance.



Formation Director Teresa Sweedyk, Janet Buedden, and Christine Miller

(Continued on page 14)

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity,
Tulsa, Oklahoma**
Submitted by Barbara Tinervia , OCDS

(Continued from page 13)



Bill Johnston



Brother Vladimir, OCD, Maria Gonzalez, and Father Alessandro Calderoni

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of The Holy Spirit,
Mobile, Alabama—Annual Retreat**
Submitted by Karina Schubert , OCDS

The Community of The Holy Spirit of Mobile, Alabama, and members from the Communities from Jackson, Mississippi; Birmingham, Alabama; Houston, Texas; and Panama City, Florida, attended a Retreat at The Visitation Monastery in Mobile, Alabama. After navigating through and around several obstacles in preparation for the event, much prayer, and great trust in God, all members experienced a very blessed and fruitful time. The communities collectively understood that when we experience troubles and difficulties in life, it means the Master Craftsman is at work, trying to bring out the best in us. Community member Yvonne Butler received the Scapular of the Order during the weekend.



**News from the Province — OCDS Community of the Transfiguration,
Knoxville, Tennessee**

Submitted by Mark Calvert , OCDS

The Knoxville Community of the Transfiguration celebrated the First Promise of Marlene Karwowski on December 17, 2023. Father Neil Blatchford, Spiritual Assistant to the Community, presided at the ceremony.



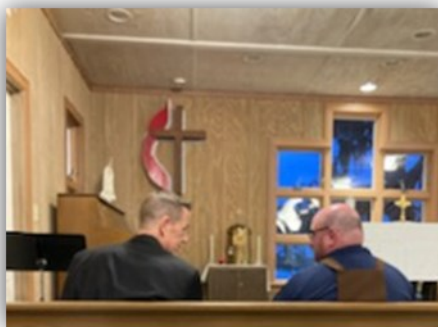
Father Neil Blatchford, Spiritual Assistant and Marlene Karwowski Valerie Ponce, Formation Director, and Mark Calvert, President are in the background

News from the Province — OCDS Community of Our Lady of Confidence and St. Joseph, Savannah, Georgia

Submitted by Maria R. H. Carrera , OCDS

On November 3, 2023, the Community of Our Lady of Confidence and St. Joseph, Savannah, Georgia, celebrated the Rite of the Definitive Promise at their annual retreat.

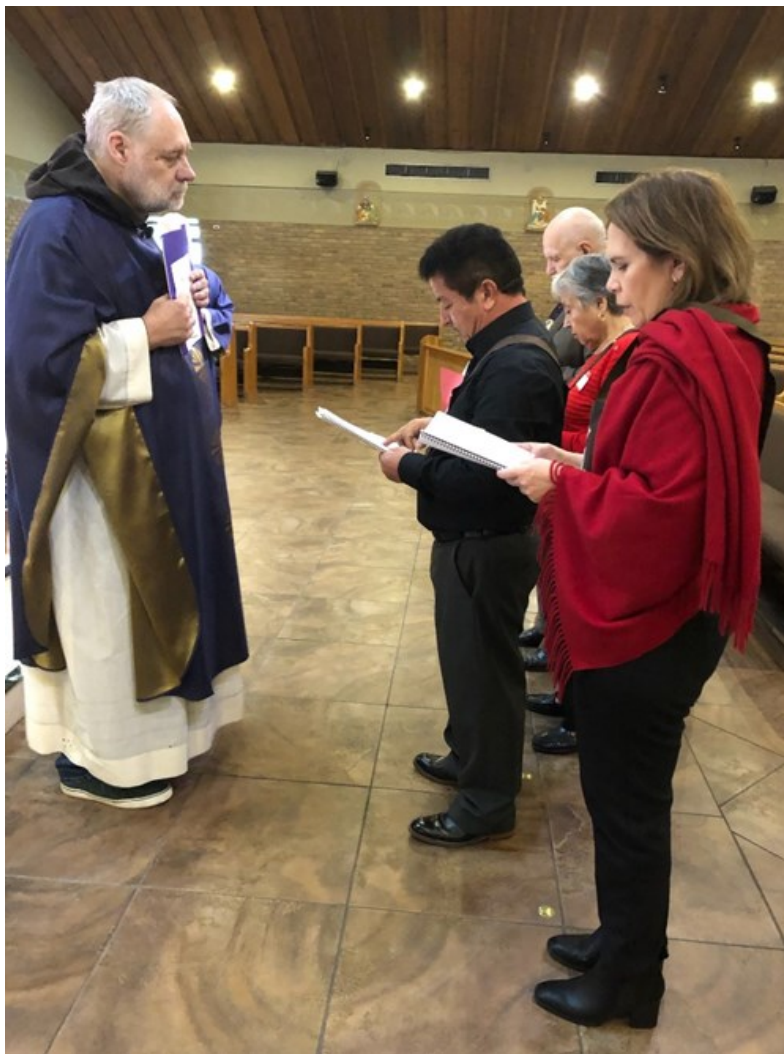
The Most Rev. Bishop Stephen D. Parkes D.D. was the celebrant of the Rite and received the Definitive Promise of Father Daniel F. Firmin, JCL, VG, Pastor of Saint James Church, Savannah, Georgia. May God guide him through his spiritual journey.



**News from the Province — OCDS Community of San Juan de La Cruz,
Spring, Texas**

Submitted by Natalie Ocansey, OCDS

On December 9, 2023, Dahil Ayala, and Genaro Nieto, made their First Promise at St. James Catholic Church in Spring, Texas, with Father Bonaventure Sauer, OCD, presiding over the Ritual.



Father Bonaventure Sauer, OCD,
Genaro Nieto (in black), and
Dahil Ayala (in red)

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of The Most Holy Trinity,
The Woodlands, Texas**

Submitted by Belinda Mooney , OCDS

During the special Advent Party of the Houston area Secular Carmelite groups on December 9, 2023, John Comeaux and Mary Comeaux, made their Definitive Promise with Father Bonaventure Sauer, OCD, presiding. The Most Holy Trinity Secular Carmelite community meets at Saints Simon and Jude Catholic Church in The Woodlands, Texas.



John Comeaux and Mary Comeaux

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of Mary, Beloved of the Trinity,
New Iberia, Louisiana**

Submitted by Maxine Latiolais , OCDS

On Saturday, December 16, 2023, Mary, Beloved of the Trinity Community celebrated Rituals in the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites admitting to the Definitive Promise Ann Martin, and Maureen Buller. Father Bill John Melancon, OCDS, Spiritual Assistant, presided over the ceremony.



Left to Right: Ann Martin,
Father Bill John Melancon, and
Maureen Buller



Mary, Beloved of the Trinity Community

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of Mary, Beloved of the Trinity,
New Iberia, Louisiana**
Submitted by Maxine Latiolais , OCDS



Ann Martin with her family
and Father Bill John Melancon



Maureen Buller with her husband
and Father Bill John Melancon

News from the Province — OCDS Community of The Most Holy Trinity and St. Joseph, Houston, Texas

Submitted by Janice Miller, OCDS

It was with great joy that the Community of The Most Holy Trinity and St. Joseph, Houston, Texas, celebrated the 60th Anniversary of Canonical Erection on October 4, 1963. We are thankful to our founding members who answered the call to Carmel so many years ago. Father Marion Bui, OCD, graciously blessed the lovely commemorative anniversary pins given to each member of the Most Holy Trinity and St. Joseph Community.



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News from the Province — OCDS Community of The Most Holy Trinity and St. Joseph, Houston, Texas

Submitted by Janice Miller, OCDS

(Continued from page 22)

The blessings continued on this great day of October 28, 2023, with Father Marion Bui, OCD, presiding over the Definitive Promise of Mark MacGregor, and Jan MacGregor, leading into the “Day of Recollection.” Rev. Paul R. Chovanec, Spiritual Assistant, was present at the celebrations.



Father Marion Bui, OCD, Mark and Jan MacGregor, and Rev. Paul R. Chovanec, Spiritual Assistant

Interior Castle in Song of Songs
A reflection by Peter Chacon inspired by his formator and fellow candidates
OCDS Community of The Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

St. Bonaventure opens his book on the life of Christ with a reflection on Psalm 85:10, where Justice and Mercy are reconciled. He introduces the entire Pascal Mystery and the life of Christ with a passage likely written a thousand years before the Incarnation, and that, frankly, has no clear connection to Christ or his Old Testament types. What Bonaventure is reading in this verse is a prophecy of a time when God Himself will solve the dilemma of man being destined for eternal life and, yet, still needing to pay the wage of sin, death. Bonaventure presents Christ as the answer to what St. Athanasius framed as the divine dilemma. How is God's immutable Will to be in communion with humanity reconciled with God's immutable Justice that decreed man would "surely die" when he broke the covenant with God, his creator (Gn 2:17)? Jesus Christ is the answer. More specifically, Jesus pouring himself out in the Incarnation, then pouring himself out on the Cross is the answer. In Christ, Justice, and Mercy kiss. Since God's Will was man's full communion with the Blessed Trinity, Christ's work was only the beginning of the fulfillment of that will. He died once and for all to conquer death, but it was so that we might come to live in him (cf. Heb 9:28). We are called individually and corporately as the Church to join Christ. We are called to imitate him and likewise pour ourselves out and die to self. "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10:39). In the age of the Church, we are afforded the time to learn from our "one teacher" and give ourselves to fulfill this divine will (Mt 23:10). We fill up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ (cf. Col 1:24). St. Teresa of Jesus describes the whole of the spiritual life in the Interior Castle as the ordinary path each soul must take into union with Christ. I will describe it as the love story told in The Song of Songs. The whole mission of the Church and purpose of evangelization is to help souls, universally called to holiness, move through this poem to an end where Christ is in them and they are in Christ, surrounded by the Saints in heaven praising him.

The Interior Castle describes seven stages, or mansions, for a soul in a state of grace to pour itself out and allow Christ to enter into it and dwell there in a transforming union. Prior to entering the first mansion, it requires confessions and contrition. The soul must pass through three crises, the first being for the soul to acknowledge sin and its fallen nature. The bride of The Song of Songs models this when she says, "Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me" (Sg 1:6). Despite the ugliness of our sin, Christ the Bridegroom still thirsts for our souls. He says to the soul, "O most beautiful among women" (Sg 1:8). The first pouring out of the self is to acknowledge our complete and utter dependency on the mercy of God and realize that we cannot save ourselves.

After receiving sanctifying grace and the forgiveness of sin through our baptism, the first mansion the soul enters is vocal prayer, and what is vocal prayer but taking the Word and returning it back to God, the bridegroom. Whether it be the prayer Christ taught us, the Our Father, or the voice of the *Totus Christus* in the Psalms, the beginning of the path to union in Christ is vocal prayer. It is how we first begin to integrate our body in the worship of God. It is, in a way, another pouring out of self where we habitually sacrifice ourselves. We sacrifice our voices. The Song of Songs opens with a plea for that Word from his lips. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" (Sg 1:2). The spiritual sense of this plea is asking God to give us the words to pray to him as we ought. We do this by receiving his own words on our lips by the grace of his kiss. A necessary part of the evangelist's mission is teaching the believer, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the art of pouring oneself out in prayer.

We see the second and third mansions of mental prayer and affective prayer in the bride in Chapters 1 and 2. She thinks of Christ, meditating on his word. She desires after him. She says, "Tell me, whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock" (Sg 1:7). "Tell me," is her search for the Word. Christ responds by directing the soul to see him in the saints, his creation, and his Church. "Follow in the tracks of the flock" invites the soul to look to those saints who have gone before us to Christ (Sg 1:8). Christ's glory is also manifest in his "couch of green" that is, in his creation (Sg 1:16). And we find him in a house of cedar beams and rafters of pine (Sg 1:17), the Temple, and "beside the shepherd's tent" (Sg 1:8). During this part of the journey through the first three mansions, Christ holds the head and embraces the body of the bride (Sg 2:6), symbolizing Christ holding our body, reason, and will and guiding it to him. The part of the Catechist or

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Interior Castle in Song of Songs
A reflection by Peter Chacon inspired by his formator and fellow candidates
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Evangelist is to help show the believer how to read and hear the Word of the Bridegroom with the eyes and ears of the living tradition of the Church and her many shepherds through the years. It is sharing the founts of prayer.

In the fourth mansion, St Teresa describes how when our prayer life and worship are ordered body, mind, and will toward the bridegroom, we begin to receive infused contemplation in the prayer of quiet. Our voice is silenced, and instead, we hear “the voice of my beloved!” (Sg 2:8). At this point, when he comes to the soul, he asks her to pass through another crisis. “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away” (Sg 2:10, 13). Christ asks the bride to come with him and leave behind her worldly attachments. He comes to us, and we enter the dark night of the senses. The bride experiences this in Chapter 3. “I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him but found him not” (Sg 3:1). Yet despite the darkness, one moves through the “night” (Sg 3:1). The darkness passes and the soul finds Christ. “Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves” (Sg 3:4). The spiritual director helping bring souls to Christ serves the soul in this stage of the interior castle with encouragement in perseverance and prayer for fortitude. The dark night of the senses is a death of self and just as Christ supports the soul going through this trial, so the formator must also be committed to lifting up this soul.

In the fifth and sixth castles, the soul moves into full union and ecstasy. The soul is clung to Christ. “I held him and would not let him go” (Sg 3:4). Or rather, Christ clings to the soul. “I came to my garden, my sister, my bride” (Sg 5:1). Per St. Teresa, this betrothal results in one entering the dark night of the soul where consolations are lost, one is persecuted, and all one has to hold on to is the love of Christ. “I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone...they beat me, they bruised me, they took my veil” (Sg 5:6-7). Just as St. Teresa described, all the bride can do during this final crisis is think of the love between her and the bridegroom, as we read through Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Through this final test of absence and purgation of the faculties of the soul, we see the bridegroom, again, holding her and sustaining her. “His left hand is under my head and his right hand embraces me!” (Sg 8:3). Christ guides the soul through the dark night and the final embrace is the seventh castle, transforming union. “Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved” (Sg 8:5). The soul is a new, unrecognizable person in Christ. The active and the contemplative faculties of the soul, introduced in the beginning of the poem (Sg 1:4), come together. As St. Teresa says, our Mary and Martha are united. The soul says with St. Paul “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Ga 2:20).

Genesis tells us that man, like all creation, was created from nothing and that God then infused us with his own divine life. In choosing sin, we chose nothing over God. The consequence of this decision was humanity returning to the nothingness from which we were created. The second person of the Trinity, the Word, who was with God from the beginning and poured out creation as a free gift before the fall, paid the wages of sin that man was unable to pay by pouring himself out on Calvary, giving us the free gift of eternal life. For a soul to enter fully into the gift of that life, it must still pay the wages of sin, which is death, by moving through the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways into the loving arms of Christ. The Song of Songs tells of this journey and gives us a glimpse into the love that awaits the soul in heaven, where the true song of songs never ends. “O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it” (Sg 8:13). It is the job of all proclamation, evangelization, formation, and catechesis to shine light upon the way into Christ and help souls find rest in the eternal love that is God. Through Our Lady of Mount Carmel, with the intercession of Sts. Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, in Jesus Christ to whom belongs the kingdom and glory, now and forever, Amen.

This is a reflection on St. John of the Cross and for his Feast Day and dedicated to our community, The Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and in a particular way to our formator of Formation I, Year A, class, whose love and prayers we knew continually.

The candidates in formation.



JoAnn Grace Caniglia Reilly, OCDS

September 28, 2023

Community of St. John of the Cross and St. Paul

Birmingham, Alabama

Submitted by Thais Serio, OCDS

JoAnn Grace Caniglia Reilly, of Pell City, Alabama, passed away on Thursday, September 28, 2023. A Memorial Mass was held at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, October 6, 2023, at The Cathedral of St. Paul in Birmingham, Alabama. She made her First Promise on October 7, 1984, and was Definitely Professed on October 4, 1987. JoAnn was a devout Catholic with a love for the Holy Rosary and one of the original members of the Birmingham Discalced Carmelite Community.



Carol Theresa Rueter, OCDS

March 16, 1939-Nov 16, 2023

Community of St. Therese of the Child Jesus and St. Raphael Kalinowski of St. Joseph

Sioux City, Iowa

Submitted by Karen Luft, OCDS

A Mass of Christian burial was held at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Overland Park, Kansas, on December 9th. A Community Mass and Morning Prayer for the Dead was held on December 9th at Our Lady of the Incarnation Monastery, Sioux City, Iowa.

Carol received the Scapular of the Order in March 1990, made her First Promise in April 1992, and Definitive Promise in 1995.

Carol was a deeply spiritual woman with a radiant smile, and she filled the world around her with joy. She was drawn to everyone she met and loved to gather people together while she quietly sought out and supported whomever she saw in need.

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Susan McReynolds-Brunson, OCDS

September 27, 1957 – August 29, 2023

**Community of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
and the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

Dallas, Texas

Submitted by Susan Ortega, OCDS

Susan received the Scapular of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites in Dallas, Texas on October 16, 1994. She made her Definitive Promise on March 20, 2000, and her Vows on August 18, 2002. In Susan's last few years, she suffered greatly from severe medical problems. She offered her pain and discomfort to our Lord for her loved ones and our community members. May she rest in the arms of Jesus forever.

Parting Words

Flos Carmeli provides information for the Secular members of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in the Oklahoma Semi-Province, which has jurisdiction over OCDS members living in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas.

Oklahoma Semi-Province members wishing to submit articles for publication in the *Flos Carmeli* or for subscription information, please contact Lea Hawkins, Provincial Council *Flos Carmeli* coordinator, at flos.submit@gmail.com

The submission due dates for articles are:

Winter—January 1

Spring—April 1

Summer—July 1

Fall—October 1

Any OCDS member submitting an article must include their name, community name and location in the article.

WITH MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

The Blessed Virgin Mary accompanies the secular Carmelite and she “is present in a special way, most of all as a model of faithfulness in listening to the Lord and in service to Him and to others” (Constitutions 4).

Therefore, the vocation of the Secular Carmelite can’t be understood without the presence of the Virgin Mary. She is mother that protects and takes care, teacher that guides, encourages and educates, sister and friend that accompanies and inspires a type of community.

Mary is present always in each circumstance of our lives. The secular Carmelite is, like Mary, a contemplative, “faith pilgrim” that, preserving and meditating everything in his heart (Lk 2:19), allows that God may enlighten in his own time, the appropriate moment, each event in life. We also want to discover God alive in the present day in history, discerning together his paths and listening, like Mary, the desire of God to build his kingdom on earth.

Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD
Superior General, Discalced Carmelite Order
Twenty Years of Grace (except)
Letter to the Secular Carmel (OCDS), 15 August 2023

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:

Maxine Latiolais, New Iberia, LA, President

Barbara A. Basgall, Oklahoma City, OK

Karen Burton, Lawrenceville, GA

Denise Graham, Houston, TX

Lea Hawkins, Lafayette, LA