



Flos Carmeli

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

Spring 2024

Volume XXXIV No. 2

From the President's Desk

By Maxine Latiolais, OCDS – President of the Provincial Council

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

After the rigors of the disciplines of Lent, let us embrace Easter joy!!! We pray that the Lenten Season has been a time of deep reflection, and that it has brought you many graces. As we now begin to celebrate the Easter Season let us rejoice in remembering that we are Resurrection people filled with the joy of celebrating our Risen Lord!

REMINDER Oklahoma Provincial Workshops!

The workshops will be held in Wichita, Kansas on May 17, 18, & 19, 2024. Registration/check-in will begin at 11:00 am on Friday, May 17. 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 were sent out directly to the presidents of the communities. Because of the available space at the retreat center, the PC has made the decision to allow each community, study group, and GID to send two members to the Provincial Workshops. This will be a wonderful opportunity to connect with other communities within the Province and discuss common concerns. For the workshops, at least two people (possibly three if there is space) from each community, study group, and GID can attend the workshops. Not everyone who attends the workshops is eligible to attend the Plenary Meeting. An email was sent to the presidents of the communities explaining this. If you have any questions about this, please contact me. For the Plenary Meeting, 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. Only one member from a study group can attend. Only professed members will be able to attend the Plenary Meeting. GID members cannot attend the Plenary Meeting.

Congress Coordinator. The PC is continuing the search for a 2027 Congress Coordinator (possibly more than one coordinator) before we can even consider having a 2027 Oklahoma Province Congress. Please pray for this need and that the right people will be called to this ministry and generously respond.

May the Risen Lord Jesus Christ bless you with His peace!

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

**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*



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

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Carmel,

May the Grace and Joy of the Risen Lord shed light upon your communities!

As we enter this graced-filled season of Easter and prepare ourselves for the celebration of Pentecost, I would like for us to reflect on this season of renewal.

As we take in the various shades of green, the flowers, the spring rains, the warming winds, and all the externals of spring renewal, they should also lead us to reflect upon the interior renewal to which this season calls us.

I would like to start with re-citing Fr. General's 2006 Letter *Pastoral Care of the Secular Order*:

“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

and to this I would like to add for us the closing prayer from our LOH for Easter Morning:

“God our Father, by raising Christ your Son you conquered the power of death and opened for us the way to eternal life...”

As we enter into the Easter season, I would ask that all communities reflect on these two citations – since the spirituality of the Order is founded upon a prayer life of “a loving personal relationship” with our Heavenly Father through the Spirit of His Risen Son, and that relationship is the source from which flows our “work” in the world, each community should reflect on the communal relationships as they currently exist.

One of the great Teresianists of our time, Fr. Maximilano Herraíz, says that “*Prayer is transforming*. Prayer is the person's renewing force. It generates the new man.”² The consequence of contemplative prayer is a growing awareness of the “self” and the areas in our life where we need to address any lack of virtue. This is the transforming aspect of our prayer relationship with Christ. It is in the examination of our relationships and the awareness of our need to grow in them that generates the “new” us. Prayer then, according to our Carmelite understanding, is a transformative relationship with the Lord that helps us to grow in the virtues. These virtues are then exercised in the way we relate to those around us, especially in the relationships within the community to which we belong.

“How do I currently experience my community life? What have been the areas of growth? What are the areas that still seem to challenge us and need grace and growth?”

Is there anyone in my community that I tend to “think less of” or someone that I consider myself “more” when in comparison to them?

Our Holy Mother understood that the prayer relationship with the Lord is to be one of “friendship” [*Life* 8,5], this then is the basic key to understanding our

(Continued on page 3)



†
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.

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

(Continued from page 2)

approach to prayer. But then this begs a few questions to consider: What is the level of friendship that exists in our community? What are the dynamics of friendship that I consider? How do I define friendship? Can I objectively evaluate my capacity for intimacy that is necessary for true friendship? Am I capable of being considerate of others and their needs and limitations?

Our Holy Mother stated that for the prayer to be genuine, it had to be built upon virtue especially the virtues of charity, detachment, and humility [*Way of Perfection* 4, 3]. In my Easter renewal of my baptismal vows, in my Easter renewal of my promise— do I take into consideration my own growth or lack of growth in these virtues? St. Teresa also asks of us to be amiable, and magnanimous. Are these qualities present in my community? Do I in any way help to contribute to these qualities in the way that I relate with those in my community?

The next point of consideration is that quote from the prayer of Easter Morning ... “by raising your Son, you conquered the power of death...”

The aspect of “death” I would like for us to reflect upon is this – the less that I am willing to give myself to my community, the less I am willing to grow in the virtues of charity, detachment, and humility in my relationship with members in my community and the more I am contributing to its limitations, the more I am contributing to its stagnation, and therefore the more I am contributing to its death.

We all have preferences and biases to overcome, it is the enslavement to these preferences and biases that leads to personal and communal stagnation. There are situations in which our preferences and biases are such an intimate part of our understanding of things that it is difficult for us to be aware of these obstacles. Our continuing growth in prayer, and virtue in the context of our baptismal vows and our commitment to our Charism requires that we be willing to examine ourselves as well as free ourselves from these preferences and biases because they prevent our own spiritual growth as well as hinder the spiritual growth of the community to which I belong and to whose growth and life I have promised myself.

May the Grace of the Risen Lord guide us into the new Pentecost of our commitment to the Lord as we follow the example of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, model of contemplative faith.

In Him,

Fr. Stephen Sánchez, OCD

¹V.R. Luis Arostegui, OCD, *Pastoral Care of the Secular Order*, 14 December 2006, p. 2.

²Herraíz Garcia, 62.

Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse – 2023 PC Financial Report

OCDS Province of St. Therese Provincial Council Financial Report - 2023

Balance as of January 1, 2023 \$68,612.77

Income:

Visitation expenses paid by communities	\$4,440.00
Provincial dues collected	\$39,000.00
Donation	\$475.00
IPC from other Provinces	\$4,500.00

Total Income: \$48,415.00

Expenses:

Visitations	\$10,635.33
PC Orientation	\$7,777.71
Chapter Meeting w/friars	\$3,115.03
IPC Meeting	\$9,865.44
OCDS General Secretariat Assessment	\$5,000.00
Provincial Delegate	\$5,000.00
Leadership Workshop	\$1,825.00
2024 OCDS Congress	\$500.00
Postage	\$10.65
Office supplies	\$74.32
COA pay	\$4,008.00
PC website charges	\$679.09
Social Media/Teams	\$818.87
Misc. expenses	\$1,475.49

Total Expenses: \$50,784.93

Ending balance as of December 31, 2023 \$66,242.84

Rev.2.15.24

The Carmelite Promise and Catholic Service Organizations

Submitted by Lea Hawkins, OCDS

The nature of the Carmelite charism naturally calls out to the Marthas and Marys with hearts for prayer and service. It is expected that these individuals would also be drawn to a broad array of service organizations seeking to make a difference in our world. A question frequently asked is whether there is a conflict between certain organizations that require a type of “promise” and the Carmelite Promise. In an effort to clear up some of this ambiguity, we take a look at the elements of the Secular Carmelite Promise as put forth in the Legislation and how it is distinguished from other “service” organizations associated with the Catholic Church.

The Carmelite Order, together with Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Trinitarians, represent the five original surviving mendicant orders recognized by the Second Council of Lyon (1274), each with distinct identities. “The great Teresian Carmelite family is present in the world in many forms. The nucleus of this family is the Order of Discalced Carmelites: the friars, the enclosed nuns, and the seculars.” (Constitution Preface). Constitution Art. 1 states that “Secular Carmelites, together with the friars and nuns, are sons and daughters of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus. As a result, seculars share the same charism as the religious, each according to their particular state in life. It is *one family* with the same spiritual possessions, the same call to holiness, and the same apostolic mission.” The teachings of Teresa of Jesus on prayer and the spiritual life are “essential to the formation and life of the Secular Order” (Const. Art. 7). Members are faithful men and women who choose to live out their Baptismal Promise in the world according to the spirituality presented in St. Teresa’s teachings. The Secular Order is also a juridical part of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, with legislation approved by the General Definitory in Rome. It abides by the authority of the Friars of the Order, who are responsible for the communities in their Province. It is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church because its members declare (Promise) to God and the Order to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ, according to the teachings of St. Teresa of Jesus in the spirit of the Evangelical Counsels and The Beatitudes. This “Promise,” with its Constitution and Statutes, is ecclesial in that it is recognized by and subject to the laws of the Church (Canon Law). Someone who is not a member of the Catholic Church cannot be a member of the Secular Order. They must have the capacity to receive the Sacraments freely. This “declaration” tells God or another, in this case, The Order of Carmel, that they will or will not do something, and it is binding in conscience according to the intention of the individual who obligates himself. Promises are made in charity, with seriousness, depending on one’s ability to fulfill those promises and the harm that is caused to others by not keeping one’s word. With this understanding, organizations in service to the Church that do not have the binding of a “Promise” to a particular spirituality simply remain service organizations and do not pose a conflict with the Carmelite Promise other than possible conflicts on the calendar. However, one who makes a Promise to Carmel is bound to prioritize this promise over other forms of service. The categories of some such organizations recognized by the Catholic Church are as follows:

1. *Ecclesial Movements and New Communities* such as The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, The National Cursillo Movement, Opus Dei, and Regnum Christi. (USCCB.org/laity)
2. *Confraternities and Fraternal Orders*: Catholic Daughters of America, The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher, The Knights of Columbus, The Order of Malta, and the Knights of Peter Claver. (USCCB.org/laity)
3. *Apostolates and Ministries*: ACTS Ministries, Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), and Legion of Mary, Magnificat. (USCCB.org/laity)
4. *Third Orders and Religious Affiliates*, while engaged in acts of service for the Church through their various apostolates, are not considered “service” organizations in the Church but actual members or affiliates of their respective Religious Order. Together with the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites (OCDS), is The Society of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity (SOLT), The Secular Order of the Servants of Mary (Servites), Maryknoll Lay Missionaries, Lay Dominicans, Franciscan Tertiary of the Immaculate, and Augustinian Secular Fraternities. (USCCB.org/laity)

Considering the ecclesial nature of the commitment, one cannot be a member of more than one “Third Order” at the same time with different charisms, spiritualities, and constitutions. All would suffer. The fact is that the call to Carmel is a vocation...a specific call from God, who guides us on the journey best suited for our salvation and mission in the world. As our beloved Fr. Aloysius Deeney often said, “Carmel is more of a responsibility than a privilege.” It is not one of many accomplishments to list on a resume, but a personal call from God to live a life of contemplative prayer and apostolate according to the teachings of St. Teresa of Jesus, which demands sacrifice, commitment, and transformation... a journey well worth making.

News from the Province – OCDS Community of the Triumph of the Cross Georgetown, Texas

Submitted by Marianne Gonzales, OCDS

The Triumph of the Cross Community of Georgetown, Texas, welcomed Brother Joel Giallanza, CSC, as retreat master from October 13-15, 2023, at the Cedarbrake Renewal Center. Brother Joel spoke on Nurturing a Pilgrim Heart: “I Will Follow You Wherever You Go.”

Brother Joel said that to have a pilgrim's heart, we must follow Christ when He calls us. His call is to a place where there is no security, and there is a cost in what we must leave behind. We have no place to call home because our true home is with God in Heaven. On our journey we travel on the path with others, and we help each other to reach our destination. We walk by faith and put our complete trust in Jesus.



Brother Joel and Triumph of the Cross Members

News from the Province – OCDS Community of the Triumph of the Cross Georgetown, Texas

Submitted by Marianne Gonzales, OCDS

The Triumph of the Cross Community of Georgetown, Texas, celebrated the profession of Geri Lynn, who made her Definitive Promise on January 13, 2024. Fr. Kyle Nestrta, Parochial Vicar at St. William Catholic Church in Round Rock, Texas, presided over the ritual, which was held during Mass at Santa Rosa de Lima Catholic Church in Andice, Texas. A reception followed for Geri, who was joined by family and friends.

Father Kyle Nestrta led a Day of Reflection afterward with various selections from the book *Divine Intimacy*. One selection spoke of making reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for our sins and as a way of consoling the Heart of Jesus, who loves us so much. Father said we are not called to heroic sacrifices but simply to endure the sacrifices and sufferings of everyday life. He said we can offer ourselves as victim souls of reparation by avoiding sin, by prayer, by voluntary mortifications, and by being entirely submissive to God's will. The day concluded with Adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.



Geri Lynn and Fr. Kyle Nestrta

**News from the Province – St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face -
OCDS Study Group
Houston, Texas**

Submitted by Virginia Fraguio, OCDS

The St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face Study Group of Houston, Texas, announces with joy and gratitude to the Lord the Rite of Admission and Clothing with the ceremonial scapular of the Order, Emma Stratten, on February 3, 2024. The rite took place after Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr. Christopher Plant at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church.



Left to Right: Chris Wood, Fr. Christopher Plant and Emma Stratten



Left to Right: Fr. Christopher Plant and Emma Stratten

News from the Province – OCDS Community of Mary, Mother of Grace

Lafayette, Louisiana

Submitted by Lea Hawkins, OCDS

On October 15, 2023, the Community of Mary, Mother of Grace, Lafayette, Louisiana, celebrated Rituals in the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, admitting Lona Carroll to the First Promise. Father Conley Bertrand, Spiritual Assistant, presided over the ceremony.



Fr. Conley Bertrand and Lona Carroll



Millie Dufrene, President; Lona Carroll;
Fr. Conley Bertrand

News From the Province – OCDS Community of St. Joseph, Guardian of Carmel Lafayette, Louisiana

Submitted by Marella Trahan, OCDS

On October 15, 2023, The Community of St. Joseph, Guardian of Carmel in Lafayette, Louisiana, held their Ritual Ceremony with Fr. Conley Bertrand, Spiritual Assistant, present to receive the Definitive Promise of Marella Trahan, First Promise of Emily Buller, and Kathy Comeaux receiving the Scapular of the Secular Order.



Left to Right: Kathy Comeaux, Marella Trahan and Emily Buller



Left to Right: Fr. Conley Bertrand, Kathy Comeaux, and Emily Buller

News From the Province – OCDS Community of St. Thérèse, The Little Flower Lawrenceville, Georgia

Submitted by Jan Nerone, OCDS

On January 13, 2024, the St. Thérèse, the Little Flower Community, celebrated Rituals where Steve Bevans received the Scapular of the Secular Order of Carmel, and Becky Malmquist made her Definitive Promise.



Left to Right

Front Row: Feliciana del Rosario, Joyce Hanley, Steve Bevans, Becky Malmquist, Louise White

First Step: Annie Grace Bassage, Jan Nerone, Angela Martin, Marie Thérèse Zigui

Back Row: Elizabeth Uhle, Julie Armaganian, Fr. Kevin Hargaden, Karen Burton, Lu Gesuelle,
Clarence Landry

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News From the Province – OCDS Community of St. Thérèse, The Little Flower Lawrenceville, Georgia

Submitted by Jan Nerone, OCDS

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Becky Malmquist and Fr. Kevin Hargaden



Steve Bevans and Fr. Kevin Hargaden

News From the Province – OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified McAllen, Texas

Submitted by Iris Rodriguez, OCDS



Members of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified and Cameron County GID
with
Fr. Bill John Melancon

On March 9-11, 2024, the communities of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified and its Cameron County GID were treated to a retreat by Fr. Bill John Melancon. The topic of the retreat was *Let Nothing Disturb You*. The retreat took place at the Holy Spirit Retreat House at Holy Spirit Parish in McAllen, Texas.



Fr. Bill John Melancon, OCDS

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News From the Province – OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified McAllen, Texas

Submitted by Iris Rodriguez, OCDS

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The Council of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified with Retreat Team members from GID
with Fr. Melancon

Top Row: Linda Garcia-Councilor, Cathy Magness-Councilor, Joe Connors-Councilor.

Bottom Row: Retreat Team: Moses Losoya-GID John Stevens-GID,
Clarice Jones-President, Diamantina Herrera-Formation Director,
and Fr Bill John Melancon, Retreat Master.

News From the Province – OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified McAllen, Texas

Submitted by Iris Rodriguez, OCDS



On December 23, 2023, Carmen and Antonio Lopez from the Community of Saint Mariam of Jesus made their Definitive Promise at Holy Spirit Catholic Church. Rev. Andy Gutierrez presided over the ceremony, and members of their family and their Carmelite family were in attendance.

Pictured starting second from left are Councilor Linda Garcia, Formation Director Juanita Diamantina Herrera, Antonio Lopez, Carmen Lopez, Rev. Andy Gutierrez, and President Clarice Jones. Surrounding them are several members who attended this joyous occasion.

News From the Province – OCDS Community of Our Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Submitted by Barbara Basgall, OCDS

A Bittersweet Ritual

On January 20, 2024, the Oklahoma City OCDS Community of Our Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus celebrated the Rite of Admission for Carol Lahman and Stephanie Willis along with celebrating the Ritual with Renée Winkeljohn making her First Promise and Candida Haraughty and Oscar Staudt making their Definitive Promise. Father Raul Reyes, OCD, Spiritual Assistant, presided over the ceremony. Mass was concelebrated by Father Luis Castaneda, OCD (Father Provincial), and Reverend Alex Kroll, son of Stephanie Willis. Father Reyes was the main celebrant. Sr. Veronica Higgins, CST, provided the music.

We were very blessed to have our Father Provincial show up minutes before the ritual to join us in the ceremony. The Oklahoma City Community has always been blessed to celebrate these rituals and retreats by the Carmelite Fathers, usually at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Thérèse Parish (Little Flower Parish). Our community began in 1937, and the Carmelite Friars have always been an active and spiritual support. It is with great sadness that we realize that this was our last ritual with the Friars in residence in Oklahoma City. To our Friars: our hearts, love, and prayers go out to you wherever you reside. Thank you for everything you have done for us and will continue to do for us. May God bless every one of you.

Oklahoma City OCDS Community.



**Our Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, January 20, 2024**

News From the Province – OCDS Community of Our Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Submitted by Barbara Basgall, OCDS

Community Pays Tribute to Outstanding Member

The Oklahoma City OCDS Community of Our Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus conveys our sincere appreciation to Vicky Caudell for her outstanding service over the past 38 years to Carmel, our Community, and the Dallas OCDS Community. Vicky has always been eager to help in any way possible. She has served this community as Formation Director, Councilor, Retreat Master, Formator, and Treasurer. She was Secretary at Mount Carmel Center in Dallas, Texas, and served as a Formator for the Dallas OCDS Community of the Infant Jesus of Prague. Due to health issues, Vicky is now infirm and truly missed by all in our community. We thank her for her example of what it means to be a Carmelite.



Vicky Caudell

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

Submitted by Lenora Everett, OCDS



On March 2, 2024, three members of the OCDS Study Group of Our Lady of Confidence and St. Joseph in Savannah, Georgia, made their First Promise at St. James Catholic Church.

Left to Right: Anna Sudomerski,
Donna Barr, and Maria Rocio Carrera



**News From The Province – OCDS Community of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus & St. Raphael Kalinowski of St. Joseph
Sioux City, Iowa**

Submitted by Karen Luft, OCDS



Left to Right: Fr. Feierfeil, Tracy Adams, Brenda Miller, Mary Kallsen, Fr. Gilde, Cecilia Lang

On October 14, 2023, the Community of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and St. Raphael Kalinowski of St. Joseph celebrated the Rite of Definitive Promise at Our Lady of the Incarnate Carmelite Monastery in Sioux City, Iowa, with Fr. Feierfeil and Fr. Gilde, Spiritual Assistant, concelebrating for the intentions of our community. The Carmelite nuns generously made the relics of St. Thérèse, St. Teresa, and St. Raphael Kalinowski available for veneration. It is a 31-year lineage of devoted Discalced Carmelite Secular Carmelites that have brought us to the Community we have today.



Left to Right: Brendan Burchard, Fr. Gilde, Karen Luft, Brenda Miller, Amelia Wilken, Colette Morrison, Mary Kallsen, Martha Burchard, Theresa Wunschel, Tracy Adams, Wavie Greigg, Mireya Guzman, Cecelia Lang, Adele Weiland

The Carmelite Examen

Submitted by Lea Hawkins, OCDS

Through the Examen, we come to learn the voice of the Good Shepherd. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me...a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” (Jn 10:5, 27). The Examen, different from an Examination of Conscience (more aimed at preparing us for the Sacrament of Reconciliation by identifying sin, confessing it, and being made whole again), is to learn to identify the *movements of the Holy Spirit*...who moves us toward all that we were created to be and guides us to become saints. “Call to me, and I will answer you; I will tell you things great beyond the reach of your knowledge” (Jer 33:3).

Through the Examen, we become gradually more aware of how the Holy Spirit moves through our lives as we interact with others. We also have dark angels, our own wounded nature, sinful inclinations, and the world’s evils to contend with 24 hours a day. The Examen teaches us to sort through those voices so we can more readily follow the voice of The Good Shepherd. It teaches us to resist temptations and be free from what seeks to lure us away from the voice of the Shepherd. In growing familiarity with His voice, we are able to draw closer to Him, build a relationship, and dispose ourselves to a more contemplative nature.

There are no hard and fast rules to the Examen...only a fluid process with five simple steps.

First, we must *quiet ourselves* and become mindful that we will be doing one thing- leaving out all other distractions. We mentally place ourselves in God’s presence... conceptually shutting the doors that we’ve opened throughout the day, leaving only the door to one room open...I call it the “Throne Room.” Although we are constantly in His presence, our minds don’t always sense it. We have to align our thoughts with God purposefully. This can take a few moments, but it is essential. Patiently allow the Holy Spirit to embrace us and rest with Him.

Secondly, with a sense of gratitude, *we look at all the ways we have been blessed* from the moment we wake up. Having quiet time to pray, listening to the birds singing outside, and receiving a sweet text to start the day are all simple things that we can be grateful for because they are all gifts from God. We put ourselves in a place of genuine truth. Because, often, life invades our minds, and all we can see are our “To Do” lists, everything we’ve done wrong or haven’t gotten to yet. The bigger picture is that God has blessed us in many small ways...We can walk; We can hear...We ask for His presence and the guidance of His Holy Spirit. This is not a time for self-analysis or mentally beating ourselves up for past mistakes, and it’s also not an opinion poll. What do I think about what I’ve done? We are seeking the grace of the Holy Spirit to see ourselves the way He sees us. A brief prayer like, “Come, Lord Jesus,” ... or “Come sweet Spirit of God,” can be enough to draw us into an awareness of His presence.

Next, *we begin to review our day*. From the moment we opened our eyes, our day was filled with various stimuli. So, at the end of it, we “replay” it through our mind like a film. “When I woke up, I went to pray in my front room, with the lights still off and my cup of coffee in my hand.” We let the video play slowly and give ourselves time to recapture the details. Otherwise, it’s like drinking water out of a fire hydrant...too much, too fast. If this frequently happens, and you have the time, break the Examen up twice a day. Then, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, identify, “*Where was God?*” Sometimes, one of the day’s Scripture Readings jumps out and makes us take notice. We discern that after breakfast, while doing dishes, sorting laundry, folding clothes...God was there...in the ordinary events of our day. Sometimes, certain occasions float to the top, and we say, “How did I miss that?” Or we recall that someone asked us to do something, and we may have said yes, but it wasn’t in the Spirit of God. It was perhaps with reluctance or just to pacify. This is how we review our day in the light of the Holy Spirit We perceptually identify all the moments where God was present and when He was not so that we become increasingly aware of living in His presence.

Step four is important in that we look at ourselves honestly; making no excuses...in the presence of our Merciful Father. It is important to assess not only where God was or was not present, but also *how we responded*. There is no one in the moment with us but Him. Sometimes, we hide, like our first parents did in the garden...which is not helpful. When we are in the presence of our Lord who loves us, who wants to heal

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The Carmelite Examen

Submitted by Lea Hawkins, OCDS

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us, who is eager to forgive us, we can confidently say to Him, “Lord, I made a mess today. Help me clean it up before I go to sleep.” And He does...by inspiring us in ways to do it! Sometimes, He may tell us to give it to Him...and “Poof,” just like that...it’s gone! At other times, He shows us our selfishness and nudges us to go back and make amends by, for example, calling up that friend we were snippy with to say, “I’m sorry I wasn’t totally there for you earlier, but I am now. How can I help?” He teaches us to be present to others like He is always present to us.

Finally, we *move on*. We look to tomorrow and how we can get a fresh start with Jesus...determined not to go through the day alone. This is also the time we look at specific things in our plans ahead...a difficult phone call, a promised favor we have been putting off, a visit with a friend, or caring for a neighbor... Whatever it is, we make a plan to do it *with* Jesus. We *ask* Him, “How would You have me do this, Lord?” Ask Him, and don’t plan it without Him. Ask Him how He would have us be *His disciples* because He is there in that moment ahead of us, knows what is needed and, mostly, what others need from us. This is also where we ask for His grace, making a *firm resolution*, which is essential. We often “know” what we should do...but lack the *grace* to do it! Success is not a given, and we may fall flat on our faces...but that’s not what’s important. What is important is that we do it *with His grace*.

This entire process is a prayer exercise... like all exercises, it takes time to develop and make into a habit. We expect that each one of our prayer exercises will be as different as each new day. It is about building a relationship with the Holy Spirit to grow closer to Him and more readily learn to recognize His inspirations. I recently found this prayer that resonates with me, which I have come to cherish:

“How gentle and loving is Your Presence, O Bride Groom Word, in the center and depths of my soul. Awaken and enlighten me, My Lord, that I may know and love the blessings you ever propose to me, that I might understand that You have moved to bestow blessings on me, and You have remembered me.”

You can make one up on your own or simply acknowledge His presence within you, and with gratitude, give Him thanks. He waits for us each moment to turn a loving gaze towards Him, and just like that ... He is there ... Our Faithful Friend.

(This article was inspired by a virtual retreat given by Sr. Regina Marie, O.C.D., and the Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart in Alhambra, California, in January, 2022. Her key thoughts and phrases are italicized for emphasis.)

Sr. Regina Marie Gorman, O.C.D. (2022, January 7). "The Examen" Virtual Retreat titled "Chosen: For Greater Things." Alhambra, California. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.comCarmeliteSisters>

Carmelite Obituaries



Barbara Kahn Henry, OCDS

March 3, 1934- March 5, 2024

Community of St. John of the Cross & St. Anthony

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Submitted by Frances Locker, OCDS

Barbara Kahn Henry passed away at the age of 90 on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Wednesday, March 13, at St. Agnes Catholic Church in Baton Rouge.

Barbara was one of the original members of the Baton Rouge community, being clothed in the Scapular of the Secular Order on September 19, 1979, by Fr. John Michael Payne, OCD, at St. Anthony Catholic Church in Baton Rouge. She took the devotional name of Teresa of the Rosary.

Her First Promise was received by Fr. John Michael Payne, OCD, on September 18, 1981, at St. Anthony Catholic Church, followed by her Definitive Promise on September 8, 1984, in New Roads, Louisiana, with Fr. John Michael Payne again presiding.

She made private vows on December 15, 1985, in the presence of Fr. Ralph Liebst, CSSR, at St. Gerard Majella Church in Baton Rouge.

Barbara was devoted to her Carmelite community and used her many talents to serve wherever she was needed. She was the Formation Director, served on the Council for more than one term, was a Formator, and even participated from Florida, where she cared for her aging parents for several years by submitting material for ongoing formation and ascetic practices used by the community. She attended OCDS workshops, retreats, and congresses with great enthusiasm. She wrote the philosophy statement for and contributed to our Policy Manual. She had a tremendous love and devotion to St. Teresa. Her beautiful example will be long remembered in our OCDS community.



James (Jim) R. Burns, OCDS

May 25, 1931 – September 21, 2023

Community of Triumph of the Cross

Georgetown, TX

Submitted by Marianne Gonzales, OCDS

Jim Burns, 92, passed into eternal life on Thursday, September 21, 2023. Jim grew up in Rochester, New York and served in the Navy during the Korean War. He and his wife, Lee, were married 59 years.

Jim joined his wife in Carmel and was received into Formation on January 11, 2014, at 82. He was clothed in the Scapular of the Secular Order on January 10, 2015, and made his First Promise on January 14, 2017, under his devotional title of James of Jesus, Son of God. Jim remained an active member of the Triumph of the Cross Community for nine years, being placed on Infirm status just a few months before he passed.

(Continued on page 23)

Carmelite Obituaries

(Continued from page 22)

Jim loved his Carmelite family and always came to the meetings with a smile on his face, armed with a ready joke or story to tell that made us all laugh. Jim was deeply committed to his Catholic faith! He and Lee loved going to daily Mass at St. Helen Catholic Church, and he had a very active prayer life, even saying the Rosary daily up until his final days. Jim was truly a beautiful and loving Carmelite!

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Mrs. Joyce Evans Serpas, OCDS
August 2, 1939 – February 25, 2024

Our Lady of Prompt Succor
New Orleans, Louisiana
Submitted by Sally Veronica Vlosich, OCDS

Mrs. Joyce Evans Serpas, age 84, passed away peacefully early on Sunday, February 25, 2024, at her home surrounded by her loving children, during the praying of the Rosary.

A visitation was held at St. Bernard Catholic Church, St. Bernard, Louisiana, on Saturday, March 2, 2024, followed by the funeral Mass on the same day. Burial followed at St. Bernard Catholic Cemetery.

She was a dedicated member of The Discalced Carmelite Secular Order (OCDS) of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, New Orleans, Louisiana. Joyce was clothed in the Scapular of the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order on May 16, 1999, in the church at Notre Dame Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana. She made her First Promise on June 24, 2001. Joyce was inspired to take the devotional name of Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Her Definitive Promise was made on June 27, 2004. She served her community as a council member from 2002-2005.

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.



Everything is Grace

“Everything is a grace, everything is the direct effect of our Father’s love—difficulties, contradictions, humiliations, all the soul’s miseries, her burdens, her needs—everything, because through them, she learns humility, and realizes her weakness. Everything is a grace because everything is God’s gift. Whatever be the character of life or its unexpected events—to the heart that loves, all is well.”

– St. Thérèse of Lisieux



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