

CARMEL CLARION

OCDS NEWSLETTER
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INTERVIEW WITH FR. ANTHONY MORELLO, O.C.D.

While on his visit to Milwaukee during Holy Week Fr. Anthony Morello, OCD, the Councilor General for the Secular Order, spoke about the following topics for the CLARION (after his photo was taken at our breakfast at which you can see he was in a joyful mood).

Secular Order Ritual. The new ritual for the Secular Order has been completed in Spanish. It is now in the process of being translated into other major languages for submission to the Congregation for Worship. Then it can be released for printing and distribution.

Common Apostolate. It is an ideal to have a particular apostolate in which the majority of the members of a community or group can participate. Even though the ideal may not be able to be achieved at once yet the members can begin to collaborate in smaller projects. But always keeping in mind that, although they are essential, still they are secondary to the primary contemplative goal of our vocation in Carmel.

Community. Fr. Phillip Bainz de Baranda, OCD, our General Superior, reminds us that "communication creates community." Many times this is quite difficult but it is a very good place to begin our apostolate: dealing with our own community members.

Catholic Laity. Cardinal Hume of England, in his talking with Fr. Morello last November about the role of Carmel in contemporary society, mentioned that Carmelites should study, encourage and help create a contemporary Catholic laity.

Professionals. Archbishop Rembert Weakland, OSB, DD, of Milwaukee, mentioned to Fr. Morello that there is a need to affirm professional laity in their role as lay Catholics; consult them in their respective fields of competence; and challenge them to bring and integrate the Church and Kingdom into their areas of professionalism.

Papal Documents. Fr. Morello challenged us to study the new "Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity," which is an overflow of the Decree on the Laity of Vatican II and the study from the Synod on the Laity. The CLARION will attempt to quote from these papal documents but the fuller texts can be found in the diocesan newspapers and used in formation classes.

CLARION. Lastly Fr. Morello wished to publicly congratulate the CLARION's founder, Fr. Bill Healy, OCD, and all who have worked to make it the successful publication it is turning out to be.

VIEWPOINT - An Alternative to Centering Prayer

Clarence E. Williams, Jr., OCDS

In a recent edition of your publication, *The Priest*, I read an article pertaining to "Centering Prayer," a concept adopted by Father Pennington. I say adopted because it is just a different name for an age-old practice of recollecting one's self, getting in touch with one's feelings, relaxing and just relieving built-up anxiety.

I have read Father Pennington's books, viewed his videos and used his audio tapes on Centering Prayer. I have great respect for his work and an even greater admiration for him because he is a Vicar of Our Lord. His presentation of the concepts of Centering Prayer are very clear and precise and I don't think I have read or experienced any techniques that can rival it for the purpose of recollecting one's self.

Not our goal

Father Pennington made the statement in his article that "The Carmelites have missed the boat." He was speaking in reference to St. John of the Cross and his methodology of the Dark Night to reach "Union with God" through a contemplative state.

After having studied St John and being a Carmelite, I wanted to examine his statement and objectively evaluate its merits.

First, I would like to point out that recollection in order to achieve contemplation is not necessarily the goal of the Carmelite community nor that of St. John of the Cross. Recollection and contemplation can be reached in a variety of ways, but contemplation for contemplation's sake is not, nor should it be our goal.

One can reach a state of contemplation and contemplate nothing, as many of the Oriental Gurus do, or we can contemplate abstract and non-sensical things as many modern seekers do using a variety of methods including Centering Prayer.

The goal of the Carmelite is "Union with God," a loving awareness of the presence of God under and in all circumstances, especially adverse circumstances. Centering Prayer may or may not be an effective method for those seeking "Union with God." What works for some may not work for others.

CONTEMPLATION is a secret, peaceful and loving inflow of GOD into the soul, if unhindered, fires the soul in the spirit of love. St. John of the Cross

The method of St. John of the Cross works for everyone who seeks with good intention and perseverance. The reason, or at least in my opinion, that Father Pennington feels somewhat negative about the methodology of St. John of the Cross is, he doesn't truly understand him.

I, too, experienced this frustration until I read St. Therese, the Little Flower. Although she probably would have difficulty with the principles and concepts which St. John puts forth, she is the perfect living example of his whole methodology.

Anyone attempting to understand St. John of the Cross should first read St. Therese, the Little Flower. Then the simplicity of what St. John is saying comes home loud and clear.

Loud and clear

Meditation and contemplation have always held a fascination for the human race. This is especially true of our own generation as evidenced by the popularity of different therapeutic techniques, some of which are bizarre at first glance, such as "Primal Scream Therapy" and others which fit into the category of "Centering Prayer" such as "Relaxation Desensitization" and "Yoga."

The reasons for this age-old and continuing interest in methods to achieve contemplation, peace, nirvana, etc., are varied and complex but can be summed up by stating that water seeks its own level. More simply put, our minds and bodies seek a state of equilibrium or harmony. A recollected state or contemplative state most closely resembles this harmony. This state, however, is not to be confused with "Union with God."

The human being is made in the image and likeness of God and is created to be one with Him. Accepting this statement as a given, we can then say that the

further we get from Him the more anxiety pervades our system to create a state just the opposite of harmony.

So, even though a contemplative state in a limited way resembles "Union with God," it is not to be confused with this blessed state, which is a gift from God himself.

Conversely, the closer we get to God the more at peace we are within and without.

In fairness to Father Pennington let me just say once again that his presentation of Centering Prayer can be useful to many who are seeking Union with God. I encourage everyone to experiment with Centering Prayer. As St. Teresa of Avila relates, however, it may be that some other method works better for some than others. St. Teresa herself said that she had to have spiritual reading material with her in order to reach a state of contemplation and even then it took her 20 years.

I would truly like to discuss the essence of the day-to-day living of St. John of the Cross with Father Pennington someday. The Little Flower, St. Therese, truly lived the Dark Night each day of her life. The connotation that Dark Night normally brings is negative, but when understood, it is just the opposite.

Unheard of

I am a member of the Carmelite community, "Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners," in Milan, Michigan.

This is a federal prison and I am sure the first order of Discalced Carmelites of the Secular Order in a federal prison. We have nine members and are growing slowly but surely. We are very active and filling our promise as best we can in the environment we are in.

Our spiritual advisor and the Catholic chaplain here is Father Clair Dinger. Our Lady has blessed us with a real saint. He says Mass for us seven days a week (this is unheard of in any other prison I know of). We have the Blessed Sacrament on display five days each week for the men to come and visit. The community says the Rosary with Father Dinger three times a day every day. We have a Holy Hour once a month in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and we meet once a month to study Carmelite Spirituality (especially St. John of the Cross).

God has blessed me with the opportunity to come into the Catholic Church (six years ago) and I hope to be able to serve Him in a worthy manner.

Before coming to prison I was a school psychologist in Alaska and had a private practice in Fairbanks. Prior to that I was a social worker as a Captain in the United States Air Force. I am a 1975 graduate of the Graduate School of Social Work in Omaha, Nebraska.

Give my regards to Father Pennington and I sincerely hope he doesn't see this viewpoint as being critical of him personally.

Taken from the magazine THE PRIEST, March 1989.

THREE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS ORDAINED PRIESTS THIS YEAR



Francis Xavier Cotter, O.C.D. On March 18th at St. Theresa's Parish in Revere, MA, a suburb of Boston, Francis was ordained by Cardinal Bernard Law, D.D. Francis is a native of Revere; a graduate of U-Mass-Amhurst; he had been in the Army Intelligence Unit in Germany. After his discharge he worked in local law enforcement as deputy sheriff. He still likes hunting.

He entered Carmel as a postulant at Holy Hill, WI; had his novitiate at Brookline, MA; his theology at the Dominican Theologate in Washington, DC; and finally his deaconate at Sts. Peter & Paul in Elmira, NY. As a Deacon, Francis had been spiritual assistant to the group in Endwell, NY, as one of his ministries.

Father Francis Cotter is interested in retreat ministry, especially using our Carmelite Saints. He is now stationed at: The Common, in Peterborough, NH.

Jude Peters, O.C.D. On April 8th, at the Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians, Holy Hill, WI, Jude, a native of Uniontown, PA, was ordained by Archbishop Rembert Weakland, O.S.B., D.D. Jude is a graduate in religious studies from St. Francis College in Loretto, PA. He taught religion at Deibal High School in Connellsville and at Bishop McCort High School in Johnston. He entered Carmel as a postulant at Holy Hill; took his novitiate there also; and his theology at The Catholic University of America, Washington DC.

As a deacon at Holy Hill Fr. Jude was engaged in the many ministries of the Shrine of Our Lady Help of Christians. He plans to remain there and work in the Shrine.



Dennis Geng, O.C.D. On April 29th, at St. Florian's in West Milwaukee, Dennis was ordained by Bishop Leo Brust, D.D. Dennis, a native of southern California and a graduate in economics from USC, entered the Air Force and was stationed overseas in Greece. He then entered Carmel as a postulant at Holy Hill, WI, where he also took his novitiate. He finally took his theology at the Catholic University in Washington DC.

As a deacon at St. Florian's Dennis had many ministries in the parish and school. He was also the spiritual assistant to the Secular Order groups in Manitowoc and Green Bay in Wisconsin and at Iron Mountain and Caspian in Upper Michigan. Father Dennis Geng plans to remain at St. Florian's and to continue his many ministries in Carmel.



EDITORIAL

How Lay Carmelite Communities Start and Grow.

During the Pentecost Season, as we are made aware of the work of the Spirit among the People of God, it might also be beneficial to reflect on how the Spirit usually works on our Secular Order Communities.

The Secular Order is an "association" of the faithful even though at times it seems like the Spirit is calling one to "solitude in the desert as the hermit type." The Isolated members are so classified because there is no community nearby, not because they are passing through a "solitude stage" in their life.

In some area of the Church there may be a few who become interested in a community of OCDS. Some may have already taken their Promises, either as members of a nearby community or group, or as Isolated members. This of itself does not mean that they are being called to form a new community at this time. There may not be enough members who are ready or disposed to undertake the responsibilities of a new group. The reasons why a member is Isolated, e.g., poor health, may continue to prevent him or her from joining a community even though it is started in practically their back yard.

There are many steps or stages in the gradual establishment of a new OCDS community. Usually one of the key determining factors is distance: it is too far to travel to the nearest existing community on a regular monthly basis. Another can be the number of interested individuals in a given area. As a new group begins to gel in a given area, sometimes there is a little friction with other neighboring communities. This is one of the ordinary human dimensions of the Church. As long as individuals try to do what is best for the whole Secular Order and not just look at their own self interests there is usually constant progress despite some temporary setbacks or hurt feelings.

The first stage of organization is usually some casual meetings of the interested individuals, some of whom may be professed members, either Isolated or from a nearby community. At times a group spontaneously arises without contact with any other OCDS member. They meet together informally, without officers, formation director or ability to know and interpret the Rule of Life and ensure that it is observed.

Some times the group takes on the traits of a "prayer group" as they share their enthusiasm and appreciation of the saints of Carmel. The meetings are usually held in the home of one of the interested members. After many informal meetings and a sense of coalescing as a community, some steps are taken to move on toward the next stages of organization.

The next stages of organization usually involve the conscientious setting up of regular activities as called for by the Rule of Life. These can be found in "The Commentary On The Rule" by Fr. Michael Griffin, OCD. Sometimes the group begins to hold their meetings in a more public location to facilitate liturgical celebrations, and possibly to neutralize any

undue influence the private location may have had. They set a regular time each month to meet and some part of the Rule of Life is read and discussed at each meeting. A core group usually evolves into the first council members. They should seek out a spiritual assistant, a Discalced Carmelite if at all possible, and have him/her confirmed by the Provincial Delegate.

The formation director is usually the key person which now allows the group-in-process to take in new members without being dependent on the formation director of a nearby group or the Secretary for the Isolated Members. Many communities spend decades in these stages. There is an obligation for the Council, or one appointed by them, to see that some publicity is done to let the People of God know that their organization exists and is open to new membership.

Canonical status is one of the traits of the final stages of organization. It presupposes all the above mentioned requirements. A minimum of twelve professed members are also required. A formal letter from the Bishop with his blessing is also required. The following additional traits are usually found in the final stages of organization:

The sharing of leadership by peaceful elections, twelve monthly meetings with reasonable exceptions, the ability to work through personality differences, prudent judgment by the Council on the discerning of new candidates for admission, an annual retreat and seasonal days of recollection, and a good grasp of the Charism of Carmel.

I mention this last point because some groups may have some members who may have been good members of some other Catholic lay organization but who may later show partial or total resistance to change to the charism of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites. They may have been fine members at the time of their admission so they naturally were not screened out, but admitted into the group. But later on they can, if not challenged to continue their change, have a negative influence on the spiritual growth of the community.

Finally, just because a community has had the official canonical recognition this does not mean that they are now free of all the past stages of growth and development. Quite the contrary. Many issues tend to periodically reoccur and must again be dealt with as in the days of old. This provides an opportunity for those who entered before 1979 (the up-grading of the Secular Order by the Holy See) to also receive some of the new formation that is given to the new candidates, formation they themselves had not received when they entered.

In closing it can be seen from page one that we are all constantly being challenged by the Order of Carmel to grow as the Spirit renews the face of the earth each Year of the Lord.

The CLARION file needs constant up-dating. If anyone who has already received the Scapular and has not received the April Issue, please let your leader know. Also all those who have changed their addresses since they gave their names to their community, please let us know.

The Editor

CARMELITE RETREAT MASTERS FOR OCDS

There are many types of retreats. Some are the weekend live-in for about \$70.00. Others are only on Saturday and Sunday, for about \$25.00, and the members eat breakfast and supper at home and commute. Some others have a one-day retreat for about \$15.00. Then there is the additional cost of the transportation of the retreat master and this can be high if he has to come from quite a great distance.

The topics and conferences usually cover the areas for better and prayerful Christian living. Others specifically deal with the concerns of lay Carmelites, especially as contained in the writings of our Saints. The style of presentation can lead either, toward silent reflection, or toward group discussion or seminar style.

Retreats are held at the Holy Hill Retreat House and at The Common. Retreat masters are also available at our other monasteries. They will travel to your group if their schedule permits. Please write for details on their availability. Some names are listed below. This is only a partial listing.

Holy Hill Monastery, 1525 Carmel Road, Hubertus, WI 53033. Frs. Fred Alexander, and Peter Roberts.

St. Florian's Monastery, 1233 South 45th Street, West Milwaukee, WI 53214. Frs. Bill Healy, Patrick Farrell, Theodore Centala, Denis Read, and Dennis Geng.

The Common, 174 Old Street Road, Peterborough NH 03458. Frs. Anthony Haglof, Paul Fohlin, Francis Cotter, Gabriel Gates and Br. Dermot Conlon.

Sts. Peter & Paul, 161 High Street, Elmira, NY 14901. Fr. Larry Daniels and Br. Edward O'Donnell.

Carmelite Monastery, 514 Warren Street, Brookline, MA 02146. Frs Bruno Cocuzzi, Matthias Montgomery and Paul Trementozzi.

Carmelite Monastery, 2131 Lincoln Road NE, Washington DC 20002. Frs. Marc Foley, Kenneth Stansky, Gerard Taylor and Albert Tittiger.

Carmelite Hermitage, P.O. Box 429, Hinton, WV 25951-0429. Frs. Regis Jordan and Phillip Thomas.

RETREAT AND CONGRESS SCHEDULE

Retreat Schedule. We have had some requests for a retreat schedule. This would be very useful for the members who are not able to attend the annual retreat of their group and are looking for another Carmelite retreat nearby.

The Isolated Members are interested in the Carmelite Retreats within reasonable driving distance. A retreat can be the occasion for an insight into the "province dimension" of the Secular Order, as was the listing of all the names in the last issue of the CLARION.

So, please notify the editor about six months in advance of your retreat of the particulars so they can be typed into the issue before the retreat. Now we need details to go into the September issue for the late fall and winter retreats.

Below is a partial listing of the Carmelite Retreats this summer and early fall.

June 17; Columbus OH; Fr. Patrick Farrell, OCD; write: John Myron, Columbus Community, 301 Zimmer Drive, Dayton, OH 45324.

June 23-5; Emmitsburg, MD; Fr. Marc Foley, OCD; write Marita Dean, St Joseph OCDS-Wash, DC, 202 Lexington Dr, Silver Spring, MD 20901.

Sept 15-7; Brighton, MA; Fr. Theodore Centala, OCD; write: E. Grace Crook, Roxbury Chapter, 130 Lexington St, SJH #301, Watertown, MA 02171.

Sept 22-4; Rhode Island; Fr. Theodore Centala, OCD; write: Edith Shade, Barrington RI Community, 73 Kay Street Newport, RI 02840.

Sept 29-Oct 1; Maryhill Retreat House; Fr Bill Healy, OCD; write: Mary Holmes, Maryhill, 260 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102. (616) 224-3615.

Oct 5-8; Holy Hill WI; write: Tony/Toni Latona, Midwest Regional Retreat, 1302 South 46th St., West Milwaukee, WI 53214.

OCTOBER 12-15: OCDS REGIONAL CONGRESS for the Central Jurisdiction: San Antonio, Texas. Lodging at the Menger Hotel (1-800-345-9285) is \$60 single, \$70 double. There is a \$75 registration fee, of which \$25 is due by August 31st deadline. Make check payable to: 1989 Carmelite Congress, and mailed to Mrs. Carmen Arispe, OCDS, 809 W. Summit, San Antonio, TX 78212. Telephone: (512) 734-3296.



Holy Hill

SOURCES FOR CARMELITE BOOKS & MAGAZINES

"Spiritual Life" 2131 Lincoln Road, NE, Washington, DC 20002. A Catholic quarterly published by the Washington Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars. Dedicated to fostering contemplative prayer and life. Subscription \$9.00 a year.

"Carmelite Digest" P.O. Box 3180, San Jose, CA 95156. A Catholic quarterly published by the California-Arizona Province of Discalced Carmelites. Dedicated to the publishing of articles by Carmelites about Carmelite topics for a greater appreciation of the charism of Carmel. Subscription: \$12.00 a year.

"Living Prayer" RR 2, Box 4784, Barre, VT 05641. A Catholic bi-monthly published at the Carmelite Monastery in Barre, VT. Living Prayer is dedicated to the fostering of contemplative prayer in the Church. Annual subscription: \$12.00.

"Desert Call" Box 119, Crestone, CO 81131. A Catholic quarterly published by The Spiritual Life Institute of America, a group of contemplative men and women following the Primitive Carmelite Ideal. Annual Subscription: \$10.00.

The Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2131 Lincoln Road, NE, Washington, DC 20002. This publishing house has put out new translations of the works of St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Jesus, St Therese of Lisieux, Bl. Teresa Benedicta, and Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity. They are available in most religious book stores but may also be obtained in quantity discounts for groups from the address above. Free list available.

Carmelite Monastery, 87609 Green Hill Road, Eugene, OR 97402. The Nuns have a book shop that specializes in Carmelite books, including the imports available from other English-speaking countries, e.g., England, Ireland and Australia. Free list available.

Holy Hill Gift Shop, 1525 Carmel Road, Hubertus, WI 53033. This Marian Shrine, run by the Discalced Carmelite Friars, has a bookshop section which has many books by Carmelite authors. Free list available.

Teresian Press, 2131 Lincoln Road, NE, Washington DC 20002. This press, under the leadership of Fr. Michael Griffin, OCD, has brought us such items as "Welcome to Carmel," "The Commentary on the Rule," a reprint of "The Spiritual Doctrine of Elizabeth of the Trinity" and soon other Carmelite books.

Carmelite Monastery, W267 N2517 Meadowbrook Rd, Pewaukee, WI 53072. Source for "The Little Book of Carmelite Spirituality and Practice," @ \$4.95 + \$1 for packing and postage. 20% off for 10 copies.

Madonna Enterprises, Dolores Grogan, 663 Del Roy Ct., Campbell, CA 95008. Specializes in items for OCDS: pins, breviaries, supplements, medals, scapulars, Rule of Life, and many Carmelite books. Free list available.

Clergy Bookservice, 12855 W. Silver Spring Drive, Butler, WI 53007. An apostolate of the Sacred Heart Priests & Brothers. One of the most complete religious book sources in the country. If they do not have it they will order it. Toll free number: 1-800-558-0580; 20% off on orders of over \$50, e.g. Book of Christian Prayer-Music Edition, 3 copies @ 23.50 for \$56.40.

"Apostolate Of The Little Flower" P.O. Box 5280, San Antonio, TX 78201. A Catholic bi-monthly by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of the Oklahoma Province. Purpose: to foster and spread devotion to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, The Little Flower, and to aid the Discalced Carmelite Fathers in their needs.

Carmelite Gift Shop, 8501 Bailey Rd, Darien, IL 60559. This is the main source for printed matter for the O.Carm. Lay Carmelites. There is no printed list.

Carmelite Novitiate, Fr. Fergus Lickteig, O.Carm., P.O. Box 868, Middletown, NY 10940. A source for large 24 X 30 inch colored posters of Carmelite topics, such as: Elijah the Prophet, The First Chapel of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, etc.

Mt. Carmel Project, Carmelite Monastery, 5714 Holladay Blvd., Salt Lake City, UT 84121. Sr Damian of the Cross, OCD, project director, has video tapes and other information on the Mt. Carmel Project, an archaeological project of excavation, restoration and preservation of the ruins of the first Carmelite Monastery and first Chapel of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Sister also has some video tape information on the Shroud of Turin, another project she had worked on.

AUDIO CASSETTES (at most Religious Book Stores)

Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM, "The Way To Divine Union: Self Direction For Stages Of Prayer." Credence.

Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM, "St. Therese of Lisieux: The Experience of Love and Mercy." Alba House .

Sr. Vilma Seelaus, OCD, "The Mystery of Commitment" Alba House Cassettes.

Keith J. Egan, Ph.D. "Teresa's Way: A Praying Community of Friends." Alba House Cassettes.

Bishop Robert Morneau, DD. "Contemplation, Conversion and Creativity" Alba House Cassettes.

**OBSTACLES
TO GOD'S
GRACE
FOR
PRISON
INMATES**



Clarence E. Williams Jr., OCDS

For hundreds of years the criminal justice system has been attempting to deal with the problem of criminal behavior. The pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other. Rehabilitation verses punishment has been and continues to be hotly debated.

After having experimented for hundreds of years with a multitude of possible solutions to the problem the recidivism rate has remained virtually the same, about 80 percent. Neither rehabilitation efforts nor punishment have acted as a deterrent to an individual returning to his previous criminal behavioral patterns. It's obvious that something different and more effective has to be done if we are ever to make any headway on a permanent basis against socially unacceptable behavior.

Different Drummer

The psychological community is in general agreement that "socially unacceptable behavior is a manifestation of unresolved conflicts of an individual's past," i.e., fixation at a particular stage of development, regression to a particular time of trauma anxiety, etc.

Regardless of the many variables involved, it all boils down to the fact that the individual is acting out his aggression because he is marching to the tune of a different drummer and that tune is in conflict with society. He has set up barriers against any type of rational approach to his lifestyle. These barriers must be overcome by the psychological community and the Church working together. These barriers keep the individual from functioning in a profitable fashion for himself and society.

They are not only blocks to his inclusion in society as a productive member but even more importantly they are barriers to God's graces which are necessary for eternal life with God.

I feel the answer lies in removing these obstacles to God's grace in order to give the individual the opportunity to freely choose a different lifestyle.

Prison is probably the place least visible to the Church and the place is greatest need of her. The obstacles to God's graces anywhere are numerous and come in many forms, but the obstacles to grace

in a prison are as unique and varied as are the individual inmates.

There are common elements, however, which seem to cross the barriers among the majority of inmates and these are the ones I will attempt to focus on as far as their origin and history and the means to overcome them.

As a psychiatric social worker, M.S.W., and now as a federal inmate, I have had the unique opportunity to observe and to speak with numerous inmates over long periods of time. This is a decided advantage over an academic setting as I am not only able to hear what they say but I can observe how they live on a day-to-day basis.

I am only now able to write about my experiences because it has taken a long time to recognize my own personal obstacles to God's graces and begin to overcome them. This has allowed me to write with some measure of objectivity and, I hope, with some new insights which will be of benefit to my brothers who need to begin to discover their own obstacles to God's grace and do something about them.

To see Christ in all creatures is a gift and I plan to use that gift as well as God gives me the grace to do so. To begin writing of obstacles to grace as they apply to a prison, I will start by highlighting the two most common among the majority of men in prison.

One, total distrust of authority and two, low self-esteem.

Of course, these traits, distrust of authority and low self-esteem, are not a phenomenon singular to prison. They are common to society in general. In prison, however, there is such a concentration of individuals who manifest these traits that there is an obvious connection between these traits and those who are incarcerated.

It becomes even more obvious that these two problem areas must be understood and dealt with before one can hope to help an individual to be receptive to God's grace or to any program which seeks to help him toward self-actualization.

Common concerns of inmates are usually very simple, even narrow minded. Most of them are superficial concerns which manifest real needs, some conscious and some unconscious.

The attitudes of most inmates toward religion is similar to those of the people in a free society. Namely: Yes, it's important; yes, I believe in a God or at least in a supreme being; and yes, I believe in the Bible.

I also think I live a good life and do the best I can. Besides, what has religion to do with my everyday affairs?

It can't help me serve my time. I have a certain number of years to observe and whether I "get" religion or not I have to serve them. Why should I bother?

Seventy years is all we have, eight years if we are strong;
yet all they bring us is trouble and sorrow;
life is soon over, and we are gone. Psalm 90

Not recommended

Of the four prisons in which I have been housed in the past eight years, the percentage of participation in religious activities has remained nearly the same: Five to eight percent of the total population attend Mass or Sunday worship services of some kind. Less than two percent have any other religious contact through chaplain services.



The reasons for this sad state of affairs are numerous and are part of the reason for this article.

Incarceration cannot be fully comprehended except through experience. I don't recommend it. At the same time, however, I am not going to waste this God-given chance to study and perhaps improve on a system that has been plagued for years with failure.

The criminal justice system thus far has been successful in only two areas: keeping a person locked up and making him physically comfortable.

Many men coming to prison have been there two, three and even four times. They have spent most of their adult lives in and out of prison. They for the most part, come from broken homes, have been abused, neglected, etc. Their prison future, in reality, began at home during childhood.

Many inmates never had a father in the true sense of the term: someone to encourage them and love them unconditionally. They have never experienced approval, love and acceptance.

Factors intertwined

Numerous psychological studies have shown that environment strongly determines future behavior.

Respect for authority is directly related to parental relationships. If there are no solid, healthy relationships, it follows that respect for authority will be at best ambiguous. If the relationships are tyrannical, abusive, neglectful, unjust, etc., then a distrust of authority will be correspondingly manifested by the person involved.

Similarly, self-esteem is intertwined with discipline, love and attention. For example, if a person is not worth the trouble to discipline and love, etc., he is not worth much, or so it seems to the child, who, by this time, is well on his way to anti-social behavior.

The only sense of worth many inmates have ever experienced is when they gained something of monetary value through illegal means, or they gained status in the eyes of their peers by being louder, tougher and stronger than the next fellow.

In short, the need for acceptance and self-esteem has manifested itself throughout their childhood and adolescence and into young adulthood by acts of criminal behavior. In fact, it is during adolescence and young adulthood that the majority of inmates have their first serious conviction which sends them to prison.

The experience of incarceration has a terrible effect on a person's self-esteem. Even the most fortunate of people who, through God's grace, have been brought up by loving parents in a healthy environment are not exempt from this degradation. The trauma cannot be understood completely except by experience. It's been eight years since I was incarcerated and I am only now, by God's grace able to understand the full impact of prison on a person's life. To the individual who has been raised in a deprived environment, prison only reinforces his distrust of authority and adds an even heavier burden on his low self-esteem.

When imprisoned for the first time, the shock and trauma is inevitable for everyone. They are easy prey for the hardened career inmates. They are easily intimidated and easily swayed.

Many are lured by the possibility of a magical religious ideal, a miracle to end the nightmare. After an initial burst of religious fervor, i.e., asking God to grant a parole, release or some other miracle in return for their undying fidelity, they quickly drop out of the religious scene and eventually get into a routine of serving their sentence in a manner that ignores the passing of time.

Time
talent
treasure



On the other hand, if they remain on the religious scene they tend to ignore the reality of prison and live as though nothing really exists and that this phase of their life is just a dream. In short they use religion as an antidote to reality.

In order for a person to make informed, rational decision, whether moral, legal or religious, he must be of sound mental health, freely able to comprehend his actions and their results. If a person is mentally ill, psychotic, neurotic or plagued with a personality disorder, society does not expect him to be responsible for his action and attempts to treat his ailment. (Many inmates have been diagnosed as "personality disorders.")

Excessive low self-esteem and an inappropriate distrust and disrespect for authority can be and normally are just as disabling as any other mental problem and must be dealt with if the prisoner is to be helped. The inmate, in spite of this apparent distrust of authority still seeks approval from someone not on his level. The stall, for example. (This apparent contradiction is a carry over of the "love/hate" relationship never resolved in his formative years.)

Though helping the inmates overcome distrust of authority and low self-esteem sounds like an impossible task, it's not. It is difficult but there is much that can be done.

A personality disorder is simple a lifelong habit of dealing with problems in ways that are socially unacceptable. Habits can be broken but it takes time and perseverance.

God's power

There are numerous areas in the system which could be improved. For example, a more thorough evaluation is needed as to the inmates' motivation. Then current programs must be screened to determine the best course of action.

Improvements in the system, however, is a subject in itself and would take volumes to do it justice.

I will address what I, as an individual, can do to improve the situation. After all, 12 disciples changed the world through the power of God. One man, with God's power therefore, should have little difficulty with just 1,200 inmates.

I am convinced that men can be helped to help themselves. I have seen participation in religious programs at this institution grow from as few as one or two people at Mass and other services to a daily Mass of 40 men and a Sunday Mass of over 60 men with corresponding rise in attendance at other services.

I believe that God has instilled in every heart the need to love and be loved. I believe this need is the spark moved by the Holy Spirit to motivate a person to seek God. I believe in living my life in accord with Catholic teaching which insists on obeying all lawful authority out of love of God.

By treating everyone as my brother, I will be a positive example that will speak louder than words ever could. I know from experience that consistent Christian behavior is noticed by inmates and staff alike. By offering up my daily sufferings, mortifications and prayers in union with the Mass, I hope to be an instrument of God in bringing about a tremendous revival of the Holy Spirit and a movement among inmates to seek help in the only place where real help is available, God's living heart.

Many of the inmates desperately need someone who will listen to them, not talk, but listen. Listening to someone is, in itself, an act of kindness, and for many inmates, it is the first time anyone has ever just listened.

It says to them, "you are someone worth listening to." Listening to some of the inmates is often a painful experience in itself. If you listen long enough and are patient, he will eventually wind down and begin to really communicate his true feelings and begin to explore some of the things from which he is suffering. I have seen this method work successfully many times.

Another benefit of listening is that after a while he knows you are not going to reject him and that you truly are interested in him as a person. Then he begins to listen to himself and begins what may be the first self-examination of his life.

On a personal level, patience, love and kindness will normally bring any person to some type of self-examination. This consideration of the other person is something everyone can do. It takes sacrifice and perseverance.

Further, I believe, and the results verify my belief, that the prayers of my brothers and sisters in the Secular Carmelites across the country have already made a wonderful impact on this prison population, staff and inmates alike.

We have the first order of Secular Carmelites in a federal prison., It's named "Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners." This formation has been a wonderful blessing which I believe will be the instrument Our Blessed Mother uses to obtain God's grace for all His children here.

What if each of the 40 federal prisons had an order of Secular Carmelites? What if the local Carmelites near each prison made it their prayer and project to establish their order in that particular prison? What problem could withstand our Blessed Mother and an army of Secular Carmelites?

Taken from THE PRIEST, March 1989.

Art work added for the CLARION. Letters may be addressed directly to:

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ST TERESA MARGARET OF THE SACRED HEART
Carmelite Nun (1747-1770) Feast: March 11th.

Her father introduced her to a new devotion at that time: the Sacred Heart, a devotion centered upon the mystery of God's love. She responded with: God is love. She entered Carmel March 11th (her feastday now) at seventeen and died six years later of a strangulated hernia from caring for the sick. Her body is still incorrupt to this day. She was aware of the value of time.

"Force yourself to become like Jesus in humility. If we want to find God, no way is surer than humility of heart and simplicity of soul. We shall obtain nothing without a struggle, but have courage! We shall not lack the grace and help of the Sacred Heart. Let us not waste time, however, for every moment is precious...if we want to become saints, we must work and suffer in silence, keeping our souls in peace."

The symbols at the left are those for St Teresa Margaret Redi of the Sacred Heart: the shield of Carmel, the Sacred Heart and the motto: God is Love.

FROM OUR HOLY FATHER POPE JOHN-PAUL II

From Mt. Adamello in the Alps (July 16, 1988)

The last reflection which I wish to offer you, dear people of the Alps, is a thought about Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, whom the liturgy honors today, July 16th the special devotion to the Virgin of Carmel. I limit myself to citing some words of Pius XII, who wrote as follows in an important document.

"Among the expressions of devotion to the Mother of God, one should remember that of the Scapular of Carmel, which by its simplicity lends itself to the nature of all persons and is to be found universally among all Christian faithful and has borne such abundant spiritual fruit" (Neminem profecto latet, February 11th, 1950).

Always, but above all on this feast day, the Virgin Mary reminds us that the essential purpose of life is eternal salvation. And she assures us of her protection through final perseverance in faith and in grace until the end of our earthly pilgrimage.

From Castel Gandolfo (July 24, 1988)

In this month of July we have celebrated the memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, who is so present in the piety of the Christian people in all the world and is linked in a special way to the life of the great religious family of Carmel.

Our thoughts fly to the Holy Mountain, which in the biblical world was always considered a symbol of grace, of blessing and of beauty. On that mountain the Carmelites dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God their first church. She is the "Flos Carmeli" and possess every beauty and all the virtues. In this way they showed their will to consecrate themselves entirely to her and permanently to join their service of Mary to their service "in homage to Jesus Christ" (see the

Carmelite Rule, Prologue).

The great Carmelite mystics understood the experience of God in their own lives as a "way of perfection" (St. Teresa of Jesus) and as an "ascent of Mt Carmel" (St. John of the Cross). Mary fills this itinerary with her presence. The Carmelites invoke her as Mother, Patron and Sister. She, as the Most Pure Virgin, is the model contemplative. She sensitively listens to the Word of God and meditates on it. She is obedient to the will of the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, in Carmel and in every profoundly Carmelite soul, there flowers a life of intense communion and familiarity with the Holy Virgin. It is, as it were, a new way of living for God and of giving continuity her on earth to the love of the Son Jesus and to his Mother Mary.

A particular grace of the Virgin to the Carmelites is recalled by a venerable tradition linked to St. Simon Stock. It was spread through the Christian people and has borne abundant spiritual fruit. It is the Scapular of Carmel, which is a means of affiliation to the Order of Carmel leading to a share in its spiritual benefits as well as a sign of eternal and filial devotion to Mary.

By means of the Scapular, those devoted to the Virgin of Carmel express their will of forging their own existence according to the example of Mary -- the Mother, Patron, Sister, Most Pure Virgin -- by welcoming the Word of God with a heart purified and spotless and diligently giving themselves to the service of their brothers and sisters.

Therefore I invite all those devoted to the Holy Virgin to direct to her a fervent prayer so that she, by her intercession, may obtain for us the grace of decisively and safely continuing along the pathway of life until we "happily reach the Holy Mountain, Jesus Christ Our Lord" (from the prayer for her feast).

Taken from SIC, the Carmelite Friars' Newsletter.

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